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Indirect External Evidences - American Antiquities, Preliminary Considerations - Continued

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CHAPTER XXV.

INDIRECT EXTERNAL EVIDENCES—AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS—Continued.

III.

Of the Probability of Intercourse Between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres During Jaredite and Nephite Times.

Another remark should be made in these preliminary observations, viz.: It cannot possibly be in conflict with the Book of Mormon to concede that the northeastern coast of America may have been visited by Norsemen in the tenth century; or that Celtic adventurers even at an earlier date, but subsequent to the close of the Nephite period, may have found their way to America. It might even be possible that migrations came by way of the Pacific Islands to the western shores of America. I think it indisputable that there have been migrations from northeastern Asia into the extreme north parts of North America, by way of Behring straits, where the continents of Asia and North America are separated by a distance of but thirty-six miles. The reasons for this belief are first, a positive identity of race between the Esquimaux of North America and the Esquimaux of northern Asia; and, second, a very clear distinction of race between the Esquimaux and the American Indians of all other parts of North and South America.^j

^jVivier de Saint Martin, in the new Dictionary of Universal Geography, article "American Ethnology," states that the tribes all along the Arctic Ocean known as the Esquimaux are a race absolutely distinct from all other American natives, (De Roo, "History of America Before Columbus," Vol. I., pp. 305, 309.

None of these migrations are impossible or even improbable, though it must be stated in passing that the proofs for at least some of them rest on no historical evidence. Whether the theory that in ancient times the Phœnicians and their colonists, the Carthagenians, had intercourse with the shores of America is true or not I cannot determine. The historical evidence is insufficient to justify a positive opinion, neither does my treatise on the subject in hand require an extended consideration of this question. It will be enough to say that if there were such intercourse, both Nephite and Jaredite records in the Book of Mormon are silent with reference to it. Yet it must be conceded that the records now in hand, especially that of the Jaredites, are but very limited histories of these people. All we can say is that no mention of such intercourse is made in these records, and yet it is possible that the Phœnician vessels might have visited some parts of the extended coasts of the western world, and such events receive no mention in the Jaredite or Nephite records known to us.^k

Equally unnecessary is it for me to inquire whether or not the ancient inhabitants of America "discovered Europe," as some contend they did.^l It is not impossible that between the close of the Nephite period and the discovery of the western world by Columbus, American craft made their way to European shores. And even should further investigation prove that in Nephite or even in Jaredite times such voyages were made, it would not affect the Book of Mormon

^kAll these theories are considered at length in H. H. Bancrofts' "Native Races," Vol. V., ch. i., and also in the "History of America Before Columbus," by P. De Roo, Vol. I., chs. vi and viii.

^lThe question is considered at length by De Roo in his "History of America Before Columbus," Vol. I., ch. vii, in support of which theory he quotes many authorities.

and the inquiry we are making concerning it. As stated in respect of Phœnicians and other peoples making their way to America's extended coasts, so it may be said with reference to this other theory that Americans "discovered Europe," no mention is made of such an event in the Book of Mormon. But it should be remembered that for the history of the Jaredites we have but Moroni's abridgment of Ether's twenty-four plates. Had we Ether's history of the Jaredites in full, it could be but a very limited history of so great a people, and for so long a period—sixteen centuries—barely an outline, and wholly inadequate to give one any clear conception of their national greatness, the extent of their migrations, or the grandeur of their civilization. And yet, even of this brief history we have but an abridgment, of which Moroni informs us he has not written an "hundredth part."^m Hence our very limited knowledge of the Jaredites and their movements. While our knowledge of the Nephites is more extensive than our knowledge of the Jaredites, we have to confess its narrow limits also. The Book of Mormon is, in the main, but an abridgment of the larger Nephite records; and at the point where Nephite civilization reached its fullest development, Mormon informs us that "a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites, and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping, and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plunderings and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work." " I repeat, then,

^mEther xv: 33.

ⁿHelaman iii: 14.

even in Jaredite and Nephite times voyages could have been made from America to the shores of Europe, and yet no mention of it be made in Nephite and Jaredite records now known.

I know of but one utterance in the Book of Mormon that would in any respect be against the probability of intercourse between the old world and the new, in Nephite times; and that is found in the following passage:

And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments, they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.^o

This was uttered in the first half of the sixth century B. C. It will be observed, however, that the covenant with Lehi was based upon the condition that those whom the Lord led to the land of America must keep his commandments; a condition which was complied with only in part, even during Nephite supremacy; and at the last it was wholly violated on the part of both Nephites and Lamanites, and therefore may be eliminated as a substantial objection to the idea of intercourse between the old and the new world even during Nephite times. Still, in a general way, this land was preserved unto the descendants of Lehi until the coming of the Spaniards in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

^oII. Nephi i: 3-9.

IV.

*The Western World Since the Close of the Nephite Period
—The Lamanite Civilization.*

Other considerations that may affect the evidences of American antiquities to the Book of Mormon arise out of the conditions which have obtained in the western world since the close of the Nephite period. What I have called the Nephite period closes with the commencement of the fifth century A. D., and as it was towards the close of the fifteenth century before America was discovered by the Spaniards and made known to Europeans, there is a thousand years during which time many things may have happened to affect conditions in America by the time it was discovered by the Spaniards; and which, at the time of that discovery, and now, influence, not to say confuse, our knowledge of American antiquities, by indiscriminately mingling the ancient with the modern, confounding local movements with more ancient and general migrations, and mixing merely tribal events with the national affairs of more ancient times, until things are rendered in some respects well nigh unintelligible.

When the Nephites were overthrown in those last great battles about Cumorah, it appears that the victorious Lamanites were possessed with the most frenzied determination to destroy the last vestige of civilization, government, and religion; but when they had destroyed their enemies, the Nephites, they continued the fighting among themselves, until the whole face of the land was one continual scene of intestine wars.^p How long such conditions continued no one knows, since the Book of Mormon closes with its sad story of the overthrow of the Nephites, and there is nothing beyond

^pSee Mormon, ch. viii: 1-11.

this point—the early part of the fifth century A. D.—by which we can be guided. It is probable, however, that even anarchy at last spent its forces; something like tribal relations may have been brought into existence to take the place of the more elaborate and complex forms of government which had been overthrown, and from these may have arisen confederacies of tribes as interest or fortune, good or ill, may have dictated, until at last something like semi-civilization begun to arise out of the chaos which followed the destruction of the Nephites.

The maddened Lamanites might succeed in destroying every vestige of government, religion and that order of society which had prevailed in former times, but the memory of those things, and the advantages of them, could not be obliterated; and the memory of them would be an incentive to strong minds to re-establish a settled order of things.

It should be remembered in this connection—as lending probability to what is said here—that when the ancient distinctions of Nephite and Lamanite were revived in 231 A. D. they no longer stood the former for the descendants of Nephi and his following and the latter for the descendants of Laman and his following, as in earlier times; nor did the former name now stand for a civilized people, and the latter for a barbarous one, as they had done in some parts of former ages. In civilization the two parties stood equal, and remained so through the one hundred and seventy troubled years which followed. For more than two centuries following the appearance of the Messiah in the western world, there had been but one people on the land, and these followers of the Messiah—Christians. This was the American golden age—the age of peace, of prosperity, of expansion, until both the continents were inhabited by a numerous and

happy people. Then came pride which follows wealth; and corruption which follows ease. Sects arose within the church, schism followed schism. Then the wicked, schismatical sects persecuted the true followers of Christ. The old distinctions of Lamanite and Nephite were revived; and under these names an internecine war was begun. The true followers of Christ, who had taken the name of Nephites, unhappily fell away from righteousness—were no longer Christians, in fact, but fought on under the name the Christians had assumed until the series of wars between the two parties ended in anarchy. This much to remind the reader that there was no distinction in the matter of civilization during this period between Lamanites and Nephites. After the fall of the Nephite party—more proper than to say Nephite people—followed the Lamanite wars and anarchy; from which, however, I have ventured the conjecture that there was a revolt, and an effort made to return to settled orders of government, and to some sort of civilization.

The last battles of the great and long continued war which ended in the destruction of the Nephite party, took place south of the great lake region, about Cumorah; and to this part of the land had been drawn if not the bulk, then certainly a very large proportion of the inhabitants of the land.^a These moved southward in time, tribe pressing upon tribe, as ocean wave press on ocean wave towards the shore; and doubtless this movement of population southward after the disaster at Cumorah, accounts for those universal traditions found among the natives of Mexico and Central America of successive migrations from the north of powerful tribes or races who so much affected the political history

^aSee Mormon vi.

of those countries." As these tribes from the north reached the old centers of population and civilization they revived settled orders of government, fastened themselves upon the weaker inhabitants as their rulers, compelled industry among the lower orders, gave encouragement to the arts that ministered to their ease and vanity, encouraged learning at least among the sacerdotal orders, and received the credit of founding a new order of civilization, when in reality it was but a partial reviving of a former civilization, upon which they fastened the dark and loathsome Lamanite superstitious idolatry with its horrors of human sacrifice and cannibalism. I believe these conjectures to be warranted by the fact that in several parts of the American continent, viz.:

Very naturally there is much confusion on the subject of migratory movements among the ancient native inhabitants of America, and this owing to the confounding of migrations from the old world with later intercontinental movements. Also there is a great division of opinion among authorities upon the subject, some alleging, for instance, that the tribes who established the civilization found in Mexico, by the Spaniards came from the north—some from the northeast, others from the northwest while others insist that the movement was from Central America northward. The controversy waged on this subject is too extensive to be introduced into this note or even into this work. But I may here say that the disagreement among so many writers worthy of our respect grows out of the fact that there were movements both north and south which leads to their confusion. We know from the Book of Mormon that the general migratory movement of the Nephites at an early date—55 B. C.—was from the south northward; while during the period of peace which followed Messiah's advent, there was unrestricted movements of population north and south between the two continents. Then came the period of gathering in the north continent, south of the great lakes, ending in the disaster about Cumorah; then the movement of the people from the north southward to the old centres of population, and the reviving of civilized conditions. One class of writers seizes upon the fragmentary tradition concerning this northward movement for their conclusion, while others seizes upon the tradition of the southward movement of their authority, and hence the conflict. Of the traditions of the northern origin of the Aztecs Prescott remarks: "Traditions of the western, or northwestern origin were

in Mexico, Central America, and Peru, a civilization of no mean degree of advancement was found to exist at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards; and, indeed, there are not wanting authorities who assert that the civilization found in America by the Spaniards, both in Mexico and Peru, was equal to their own. Such is the assertion of Dr. John W. Draper who says, in speaking of the crimes of Spain:

From Mexico and Peru a civilization that might have instructed Europe was crushed out. * * * * It has been her [Spain's] evil destiny to ruin two civilizations, Oriental and Occidental. * * * In America she destroyed races more civilized than herself.⁵

found among the more barbarous tribes, and by the Mexicans were preserved both orally and in their hieroglyphical maps, where the different stages of their migrations are carefully noted. But who, at this day, shall read them? They are admitted to agree, however, in representing the populous north as the prolific hive of the American races. In this quarter were placed their Aztlan, and their Huehuetapallan; the bright abode of their ancestors, whose warlike exploits rivalled those which the Teutonic nations have recorded of Odin and the mythic heroes of Scandinavia. From this quarter the Toltecs, the Chichimecs, and the kindred races of the Nahuatlacs, came successively up the great plateau of the Andes, spreading over its hills and valleys, down to the Gulf of Mexico." (Conquest of Mexico, Vol. II., pp. 137, 138) Also Nadaillac speaking of the invaders of the valley of Mexico says: "All these men, whether Toltecs, Chichimecs, or Aztecs, believed that their people came from the north, and migrated southward, seeking more fertile lands, more genial climates, or perhaps driven before a more warlike race; one wave of emigration succeeding another. We must, according to this tradition, seek in more northern regions the cradle of the Nahuatl race." (Pre-Historic America, p. 13). Baldwin, quoting Brasseur de Bourbourg and Sahagun allows a northeast migration for the Toltecs (Ancient America, pp. 200, 202, but insists that the Aztecs who succeeded these races in the occupation of the valley of Mexico came from the south. (pp. 217, 218). This view of the southern origin for the Aztecs is also maintained at some length and by an extensive citation of authorities by Bancroft. (Native Races, Vol. V., ch. iii).

⁵Intellectual Development of Europe, Vol. II., pp. 166-167.

Nadaillac remarks:

To sum up, every thing goes to prove that the ancient races of Central America possessed an advanced culture, exact ideas on certain arts and sciences, and remarkable technical knowledge. As pointed out in 1869, by Morgan, in the *North American Review*, the Spanish succeeded in destroying in a few years a civilization undoubtedly superior in many respects to that which they endeavored to substitute for it.^f

Prescott places scarcely less value upon it. He says:

Enough has been said, however, to show that the Aztec and Tezcucan races were advanced in civilization very far beyond the wandering tribes of North America. The degree of civilization which they reached, as inferred by their political institutions, may be considered perhaps, not much short of that enjoyed by our Saxon ancestors, under Alfred [849-901 A. D.]. In respect to the nature of it, they may be better compared with the Egyptians; and the examination of their social relations and culture may suggest still stronger points of resemblance to that ancient people.^g

H. H. Bancroft says:

This, however, I may safely claim; if the preceding pages inform us aright, then were the Nahuas, the Mayas, and the subordinate and lesser civilization surrounding these, but little lower than the contemporaneous civilization of Europe and Asia, and not nearly so low as we have hitherto been led to suppose.^h

John D. Baldwin, writing in 1871, says:

We are told repeatedly that the Spaniards employed "Mexican masons" and found them "very expert" in the arts of building

^fPre-Historic America, p. 386.

^gConquest of Mexico, Vol. I., pp. 57, 58.

^hNative Races, Vol. II., pp. 804, 805.

and plastering. There is no good reason to doubt that the civilized condition of the country when the Spaniards found it was superior to what it has been at any time since the conquest.^w

Tezcucó and Mexico are both known to be comparatively modern cities, Mexico itself being founded no earlier than 1325 A. D., and Prescott, in speaking of an era of prosperity which followed the tripple alliance of the states of Mexico, Tezcucó, and Tlacopan says:

The Aztec capital, [Mexico] gave evidence of public prosperity. Its frail tenements were supplanted by solid structures of stone and lime. * * * * The dimensions of which, covering the same ground, were much larger than those of the modern capital of Mexico.*

His description of the valley of Mexico, and its cities, fields and orchards, when first beheld by the invading Spaniards under Cortez, is as follows:

Stretching far away at their feet, were seen noble forests of oak, sycamore, and cedar, and beyond, yellow fields of maize and the towering maguey, intermingled with orchards and blooming gardens; for flowers, in such demand for their religious festivals, were even more abundant in this populous valley than in other parts of Anahuac. In the centre of the great basin were beheld the lakes, occupying then a much larger portion of its surface than at present; their borders thickly studded with towns and hamlets, and, in the midst—like some Indian empress with her coronal or pearls—the fair City of Mexico, with her white towers and pyramidal temples, reposing, as it were, on the bosom of the waters—the far-famed ‘Venice of the Aztecs.’ High over all rose the royal hill of Chapultepec, the residence of the Mexican monarchs, crowned with the same grove of gigantic

^wAncient America, (Baldwin) n. 215.

*Conquest of Mexico, (Prescott) Vol. I., p. 39.

cypresses, which at this day fling their broad shadows over the land. In the distance beyond the blue waters of the lake, and nearly screened by intervening foliage, was seen a shining speck, the rival capital of Tezcucó, and, still further on, the dark belt of porphyry, girdling the valley around, like a rich setting which nature had devised for the fairest of her jewels.¹

From the statements of Bernal Diaz we are also justified in believing that a somewhat similar state of civilization obtained in Yucatan and other parts of Central America. While the well-known works of Squier,² Baldwin, Rivero and Tschudi,³ and the very excellent and popular volumes of Prescott on Peru, justify us in the belief that while differing somewhat in its character, the civilization of Peru was equal and even superior in some respects—to that of Mexico at the time of the conquest; and the empire of the Incas was even more extensive than that of the Montezumas.

The civilization in America upon the advent of the Spaniards—since there is no substantial historical evidence of foreign migrations in which it could have had its origin—must have arisen, as already suggested, from among the Lamanites after the fall of the Nephites at Cumorah—it was Lamanite civilization. I would not have the reader form too exalted an opinion of that civilization, however. It found its chief expression, where it attained its highest development, in the existence of numerous cities, palaces, and temples; in the existence of regular pursuits of industry, of agriculture, and manufactures; in a settled order of society, a regular order of government, and a fixed establishment of religion.

¹Conquest of Mexico, (Prescott) Vol. I., p. 354.

²Peru, Incidents of Travel and Exploration of the Land of the Incas, E. George Squier, M. A. F. S. A.

³Peruvian Antiquities, by Rivero and Tschudi; the former director of the National Museum at Lima, the latter a doctor of philosophy and medicine.

So far as these conditions make for civilization, Mexico, some parts of Central America, and Peru can be said to be civilized. But after this is said it must be claimed that much was lacking in the conditions existing in those parts of America in order to make them conform to the generally accepted idea of civilization. The governments were cruel despotisms; the industrial system reduced the masses to conditions scarcely removed from abject slavery; the religion of Mexico and Central America, at least, were the darkest, the most sanguinary, and repulsive described in the annals of human history; while the revolting practice of refined cannibalism was more widespread and horrible than among any other people whatsoever. These and many other considerations, too numerous to mention in detail, must forbid our entertaining exalted notions of this Lamanite civilization. We shall see as we proceed with the unfoldment of our evidences, that these horrible conditions were but the natural outgrowth of Lamanite tendencies through all the course of their history.

v.

Of the Writers on American Antiquities.

Still another remark is necessary in these preliminary observations. The authorities upon which we have to depend for our knowledge of American antiquities are widely conflicting. There is not one that may be followed unreservedly, and it is impossible to say with any degree of exactness what is even the concensus of opinion of authorities upon very many subjects, so widely divergent and conflicting are their views. This conflict of opinion extends to such important subjects as the following: Who were the first inhabitants of America? Were they indigenous races, or is

their presence in America due to migration? If due to migration, from what lands did they come? Was there one or several migrations? What was the course of their migration? Are they of one or a number of distinct races? Are the monuments of civilization found in America ancient or modern? Do they represent the civilization of vanished races, or are they the work of the most very remote ancestors of the Indians? Is the civilization represented by these monuments really of a very high order, or was it but a step or two removed from savagery? In support of any one of these conflicting opinions about America's ancient inhabitants and their civilization one need not be at a loss to find respectable authorities. One may support with honored names in this field of research the Lost Tribes of Israel theory of the origin of the American Indians; the Malay theory of origin; the Phoenician theory; the Egyptian, the Atlantic, and a number of other minor theories.^b One can array a formidable list of authors in favor of the indigenous theory of origin or ancient American civilization; and perhaps a still longer and equally learned list of authorities in favor of an exotic origin. All of which makes it evident that writers upon the subject are to be weighed as well as counted; and also warns us that in the presence of such a diversity of opinions many things pertaining to American antiquities must remain open questions. It must be remembered that as yet, so far as man's researches are concerned, but little is really known about ancient America. "That,"

^b"Under the broad range allowed by a descent from the sons of Noah," says Mr. John L. Stephens, to whom we are indebted for most excellent works on American antiquities, "the Jews, the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Greeks, the Scythians in ancient times; the Chinese, the Swedes, the Norwegians, the Welsh, and the Spaniards in modern have had ascribed to them the honor of peopling America." *Central America*, Vol 3., pp. 96, 97.)

as a Frenchman remarks, "has yet to be discovered." True, many of her ancient monuments have been located, but they seem to tell a different story to each explorer who looks upon them. There are not wanting stone tablets of hieroglyphics, and ancient documents writ on skins and paper;^c but up to the present time they are sealed books even to the learned. Meantime no Rosetta Stone is discovered^d to furnish the key to their decipherment, and no learned American Champollion as yet^e comes forward to reveal their mystery.

In considering authorities upon American antiquities, one thing should be especially observed: one should be upon his guard against the credulity and bias of the early writers; and equally upon his guard against the skepticism and bias of the more modern ones. The former, living in an age of superstition and credulity and having special interests to serve, would have us believe too much; the latter, living in an age super-critical and doubting, would have us believe too little. There is no doubt but what the Spanish writers connected with the conquest of America colored their narratives to give importance in the eyes of their countrymen in Europe to the events with which they were associated; and they likely exaggerated whatever had such a tendency. Hence greater empires, more formidable armies and more imposing civilizations than really existed in America at the time of the conquest were described. So with the missionaries who accompanied the first European expeditions and those that immediately followed them. They sometimes

^cThere are eight or ten such collections. Their contents for the most part, are published in Lord Kingsborough's monumental work. A list of them and a description will also be found in Bancroft's Native Races, Vol. II., ch. xvii.

^dSee chapter i., pp. 12-14.

^eIt was the French linguist and archeologist, Jean Francois Champollion, who discovered from the Rosetta Stone the key to the Egyptian hieroglyphics.

very likely saw analogies between the Christian faith and some of the traditions and superstitions of the natives where none existed. So closely did some of the native traditions and ceremonies resemble Catholic Christian dogma and rites that the over zealous priests came to the conclusion that the devil had in America counterfeited some parts of the Christian religion and intermixed it with the native paganism, the better to encompass the damnation of the natives and hinder the progress of the Christian religion. This led to the destruction of many Aztec manuscripts which were regarded by some of the priests as works on magic, and in other ways were supposed to uphold the idolatry of the natives. This idea strongly impressed the first archbishop of Mexico, Don Juan de Zumarraga,^f who from a number of cities caused large quantities of the native manuscripts to be collected and destroyed. The collection from Tezcuco was especially large, since—as Prescott describes it—Tezcuco was “the great depository of the national archives.” The archbishop caused these collected manuscripts “to be piled up in a ‘mountainlike heap,’—as it is called by the Spanish writers themselves—in the market place at Tlateloco and reduced them all to ashes. * * *

The unlettered soldiery were not slow in imitating the example of their prelate. Every chart and volume which fell into their hands was wantonly destroyed: so that when the scholars of a later and more enlightened age anxiously sought to recover some of these memorials of civilization, nearly all had perished, and the few surviving were jealously hidden by the natives.”^g And thus was destroyed materials which might have gone far towards solving the mystery that enshrouds the people and civilization of ancient America.

^fBorn 1486, died 1549.

^gConquest of Mexico, Vol. I., pp. 89, 90.

These native records were more numerous than they are generally thought to be. Baldwin, in speaking of the people of Central America and Mexico says: "The ruins show that they had the art of writing, and that at the south this art was more developed, more like a phonetic system of writing than we find in use among the Aztecs. The inscriptions of Palenque, and the characters used in some of the manuscript books that have been preserved, are not the same as the Mexican picture writing. It is known that books of manuscript writings were abundant among them in the ages previous to the Aztec period. * * * Las Casas wrote on this point as follows: 'It should be known that in all the commonwealths of these countries, in the kingdoms of New Spain and elsewhere, among other professions duly filled by suitable persons was that of chronicler and historian. These chroniclers had knowledge of the origin of the kingdoms, and of whatever relates to religion and the gods, as well as to the founders of towns and cities. They recorded the history of kings, and of the modes of their election and succession; of their labors, actions, wars, and memorable deeds, good and bad; of the virtuous men or heroes of former days, their great deeds, the wars they had waged, and how they had distinguished themselves; who had been the earliest settlers, what had been their ancient customs, their triumphs, and defeats. They knew, in fact whatever pertained to history, and were able to give an account of all past events. * * * Our priests have seen those books, and I myself have seen them likewise, though many were burned at the instigation of the monks, who were afraid they might impede the work of conversion.' Books such as those here described by Las Casas must have contained important historical information. The older books, belonging to the ages of Copan and Palenque, went to decay doubtless long pre-

vious to his time, in the wars and revolutions of the Toltec period, or by the wear of time. The later books, not otherwise lost, were destroyed by Aztec and Spanish vandalism."^h

Respecting native writers following the conquest, they were men who acquired the Spanish language and wrote on the history of their people either in Spanish, or, if in their own language they employed the Spanish alphabet—of them it is said, and one may readily admit the reasonableness of the statement—"most of them were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of their converters, and their writings as a class are subject to the same criticism."ⁱ

Naturally these native writers would emphasize that which would glorify their own country and exalt the character of its civilization; belonging to a conquered race—the soreness of the conflict past—they would be but too prone to please, in order to stand in favor with, their conquerors; while their religious zeal would prompt them to find as many analogies as possible between their old faith and the one to which they were converted. All of which would tend to exaggeration in the same general direction as that followed by the early Spanish writers. But because of these tendencies to exaggeration it does not follow that all the works of early Spanish or native writers on America are to be described as of no value or even as of little value.

As justly remarked by H. H. Bancroft, "Do we reject all the events of Greek and Roman history, because the historians believed that the sun revolved about the earth, and attributed the ordinary phenomena of nature to the actions of the imaginary gods? * * * And finally, can we re-

^hAncient America, pp. 187, 188, J. D. Baldwin.

ⁱNative Races, Bancroft, Vol. V., p. 147.

ject the statements of able and conscientious men—many of whom devoted their lives to the study of aboriginal character and history, from an honest desire to do the natives good—because they deem themselves bound by their priestly vows and the fear of the inquisition to draw scriptural conclusions from each native tradition? The same remarks apply to the writings of converted and educated natives, influenced, to a great degree, by their teachers; more prone, perhaps, to exaggeration through national pride, but at the same time better acquainted with the native hieroglyphics. To pronounce all these works deliberately executed forgeries, as a few modern writers have done, is too absurd to require refutation.”^j And to this I would add a protest against that spirit of skepticism which in these same modern writers, when they do not pronounce the works referred to by Bancroft as forgeries, insist upon so far discrediting them by their sophistries of criticism that they might as well pronounce them outright forgeries. Undoubtedly the trend of modern writers is in support of the theory both of an indigenous people and civilization for America, and the latter of no very high order. In support of this theory they do not hesitate to discredit most of the native traditions recorded by the earlier writers, which tell of migrations of their ancestors from distant countries; of golden ages of prosperity and peace, and of an ancient, splendid civilization. It is difficult to determine always which is most to be discounted, the writers through whom the traditions of the glorious past are

^jNative Races, Vol. V., pp. 145, 146. The whole chapter from which the above passage is quoted deals with the subject of the early writers on ancient America, and could with profit be considered by the reader. W. H. Prescott also has a very choice set of notes on the subject of the same class of writers in his first book on the conquest of Mexico, especially those notes following each chapter on some special authority on whom he mainly relies for the statements in his text.

transmitted to us, or those who would dismantle that part of its glory and present us with an ancient America undeveloped beyond the point of middle savagry. Perhaps in this, as in so many other things where man's prejudices are involved, the truth will be found at about an equal distance between the two extremes; and even under this adjustment of the conflicting claims of authorities, I am sure we shall find much that will be in an incidental way support the claims of the Book of Mormon.