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## Indirect External Evidences (Continued)—American Traditions

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# NEW WITNESSES FOR GOD

## II.

### THE BOOK OF MORMON.

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#### CHAPTER XXX.

INDIRECT EXTERNAL EVIDENCES (Continued)—AMERICAN TRADITIONS.

##### I.

##### *The Signs of Messiah's Birth.*

The impressive signs given in the western world, according to the Book of Mormon, of the birth and death of Messiah were of such a character that they would doubtless obtain a fixed place in the traditions of the native American people, though, as in the case of all legends, the events are more or less distorted.

The signs of Messiah's birth, both as prophetically promised and historically described, are as follows:

And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his (Messiah's) coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it were day, therefore there shall be one day and a night, and a day as if it were one day, and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun, and also of its setting; therefore they shall know

of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born. And behold there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you.<sup>a</sup>

And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken; for behold at the going down of the sun, there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished, because there was no darkness when the night came. \* \* \* \* \* And it came to pass also, that a new star did appear, according to the word.<sup>b</sup>

And now the native legends on this subject. From the native Central American documents compiled and followed by Fuentes y Guzman, quoted by Juarrors, whom Bancroft follows, it is learned that a certain Quiche prince, Acxopil, the son of Nimaquiche, observing that his people had greatly increased in number and influence, divided his empire into three kingdoms. And now Bancroft, who is quoting Juarrors:

Retaining for himself the first, he gave the second to his oldest son, Jutemal, and the third to his second son, Acxiquat; and this division was made on a day when three suns were seen, which has caused some to think that it took place on the day of the birth of our Redeemer, a day on which it is commonly believed that such a meteor was observed.<sup>c</sup>

The "day when three suns were seen"—"the day of the birth of our Redeemer"—easily accords with the two days and a night of the continuous light of the Book of Mormon, especially when considered in connection with the appearance of a "new star" (the "meteor" of the quotation) as a sign to the Nephites of the birth of Messiah.

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<sup>a</sup>Helaman xiv: 3, 5.

<sup>b</sup>III. Nephi i: 15, 21.

<sup>c</sup>Native Races, Bancroft, Vol. V., p. 566.

Referring to the traditions of the primitive Nahua period, after dealing with the events of the first age, which treats of the creation, flood, dispersion of mankind, the migration of a colony of seven families to a new land, etc., Bancroft, following the native writer Ixtilxochiti, deals with the second Nahua age, as follows :

The second age, the "sun and air," terminated with a great hurricane which swept away trees, rocks, houses and people, although many men and women escaped, chiefly such as took refuge in caves which the hurricane could not reach. After several days the survivors came out to find a multitude of apes living in the land; and all this time they were in darkness, seeing neither the sun nor the moon. The next event recorded, although Veytia makes it precede the hurricane, is the stopping of the sun for a whole day in his course, as at the command of Joshua as recorded in the Old Testament,<sup>d</sup>

Let no one confound these cataclysms attended with darkness to the flood period of the first Nahua age—which is identical with Noah's flood; they relate to disasters subsequent to that period; they correspond in time and character to the disasters described in the Book of Mormon as taking place in the western hemisphere during the time of the crucifixion and interment of Messiah in Judea. This, I believe, will be established as reasonably clear as we proceed.

Concerning the foregoing passage, I also call attention to the fact that Veytia is said to place before the tempest and the darkness of the tradition the stopping of the sun for a whole day in his course, as at the command of Joshua. Instead of having reference to the Joshua incident, however, may not the incident of the American tradition have reference to the Book of Mormon sign of Messiah's birth, these two days and a night through which there was continuous

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<sup>d</sup>Native Races, Bancroft, Vol. V., pp. 209, 210.

light?<sup>e</sup> The apparent "stopping of the sun a whole day in his course" would certainly give the period of uninterrupted light required by the Book of Mormon sign of Messiah's birth; and the fact that so noted an authority as Veytia<sup>f</sup> places that singular event before the fierce tempest attended by darkness, restores the order of the events required by the Book of Mormon account of those matters.

De Roo, quoting Bastian,<sup>g</sup> says :

Another circumstance of the Savior's death seems to be remembered in Mexico, for it is related in its traditions that, at the disappearance of Topiltzin or Quetzalcohuatl, [a native culture hero most nearly resembling, as we shall see, the appear-

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<sup>e</sup>See Helaman xiv: 3, 4, 5; and III. Nephi 1: 15-21.

<sup>f</sup>Don Mariano Veytia was born of an ancient and highly respected family at Puebli, Mexico, 1718. After finishing his academic education he went to Spain where he was kindly received at court. He visited several other countries of Europe, made himself acquainted with their languages and returned home and devoted the rest of his life chiefly to the illustration of the national history and antiquities of his country. He composed various works, but his "Antiquities of Mexico" is the only one which went to press. His history covers the whole period from the first occupation of Aauhuac to the middle of the fifteenth century, at which time his labors were unfortunately terminated by his death, which occurred in 1780. In the early portion of his "Antiquities" he endeavored to trace the migratory movements and historic annals of the race who entered the country. "Every page," remarks Prescott, "bears testimony of the extent and fidelity of his researches." (Conquest of Mexico, Vol. I., p. 40.) The author of the history of the "Antiquities of Mexico," tom. I., chapter ii, dates the first migration of the Nahuas from the year 2,237, after the creation" quoted by Nadaillac "Pre-historic America," p. 261. This date is somewhat in agreement with the time at which the Book of Mormon represents the Jaredites as arriving in the western world.

<sup>g</sup>Adolf Bastian was born in June, 1826. He was a Prussian ethnologist of note, being professor of that science at Berlin, and demonstrator of the ethnological museum. He succeeded Virchow as president of the Berlin Anthropological society. He traveled in Peru, Columbia and Centra America in 1851-66. It is from his works that De Roo quotes the above tradition.

ance and character of Messiah in the western world], both sun and moon were covered in darkness, while a single star appeared in the heavens.<sup>h</sup>

Here, clear enough, is allusion to the darkness that covered the land at Messiah's death; may not the star, which here appears out of order, according to Book of Mormon statements, really have been the one which appeared to the Nephites as the sign of Messiah's birth?

## II.

### *The Signs of Messiah's Death.*

The signs which were to be given to the inhabitants of the western hemisphere of Messiah's death were foretold by a Lamanite prophet as follows:

Behold, in that day that he shall suffer death, the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon, and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead; yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost, there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble, and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth; which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up; yea, they shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth; yea, both above the earth and beneath. And behold, there shall be great tempests, and there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places which are now called valleys, which shall become mountains, whose height is great. And many highways shall be broken up, and

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<sup>h</sup>History of America Before Columbus, p. 431.

many cities shall become desolate, and many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many. And behold thus hath the angel spoken unto me; for he said unto me, that there should be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours; and he said unto me that while the thunder and the lightning lasted and the tempest, that these things should be, and that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth<sup>t</sup> for the space of three days.<sup>f</sup>

This prediction was literally and awfully fulfilled. Mormon's condensed account of it being as follows:

And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land; and there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder; and there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land. And the city of Zarahemla did take fire; and the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned; and the earth was carried up upon the city of Moroni-hah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain; and there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest, and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth; and the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough, and many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the

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<sup>t</sup>"Darkness cover the face of the whole earth," etc. This expression should be understood as limited by one that precedes it in the quotation, viz., "there should be no light upon the face of this land," meaning America. Notwithstanding the "face of the whole earth" the darkness was limited to the western hemisphere.

<sup>f</sup>Helaman xiv:20-27.

buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain; and the places were left desolate; and there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceeding great, and there were many in them who were slain; and there was some who were carried away in the whirlwind; and whither they went, no man knoweth, save they know that they were carried away; and thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth. And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch, that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams, and in cracks, upon all the face of the land. And it came to pass that when the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the storm, and the tempest, and the quakings of the earth did cease—for behold, they did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater; nevertheless, all these great and terrible things were done in about the space of three hours; and then behold, there was darkness upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch, that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen, could feel the vapour of darkness; and there could be no light because of the darkness; neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all; and there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days, that there was no light seen; and there was great mourning, and howling, and weeping among all the people continually; yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon them.<sup>k</sup>

From the Book of Mormon we learn that it was in the morning that these terrible cataclysms began, and then were followed by the three days of darkness: for in giving an

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<sup>k</sup>III. Nephi viii: 5-23.



account of the passing away of this terrible calamity, Mormon says: "Thus did the the three days pass away. And it was in the morning, and the darkness dispersed from all the face of the earth and the earth did cease to tremble."<sup>1</sup> On this matter of the signs of Messiah's crucifixion taking place "in the morning," according to American time, the late Orson Pratt made the following valuable comment:

This book, the Book of Mormon, informs us that the time of day at which Jesus was crucified, I mean the time of day here in America, was in the morning; the New Testament tells us that Jesus was crucified in Asia in the afternoon, between the sixth and ninth hour according to the Jews' reckoning. They commenced their reckoning at six o'clock in the morning, and consequently the sixth hour would be twelve o'clock at noon, and the ninth hour three o'clock in the afternoon. Jesus, from the sixth to the ninth hour, in other words from twelve o'clock to three, was hanging on the cross. Now the Book of Mormon, or the historians whose records it contains, when relating the incidents that transpired at the time of the crucifixion—the darkness that was spread over the face of the land, the earthquakes, the rending of rocks, the sinking of cities and the whirlwinds—say these events occurred in the morning; they also say that darkness was spread over the face of the land for the space of three days. In Jerusalem it was only three hours. But the Lord gave them a special sign in this country and the darkness lasted three days, and at the expiration of three days, and three nights of darkness, it cleared off, and it was in the morning. That shows that, according to the time of this country, [America] the crucifixion must have taken place in the morning.

Says one, "Is not this a contradiction between the Book of Mormon and the New Testament?" To an unlearned person it would really be a contradiction, for the four Evangelists place it [the time during which Jesus was on the cross] from twelve to three in the afternoon, while the Book of Mormon says in the morning. An unlearned person, seeing this discrepancy, would say, of course, that both books cannot be true.

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<sup>1</sup>III. Nephi x: 9 and note "f."

If the Book of Mormon be true the Bible cannot be; and if the Bible be true the Book of Mormon cannot be.

I do not know that anybody ever brought up this objection, for I do not think they ever thought of it. I do not think that the Prophet Joseph, who translated the book, ever thought of this apparent discrepancy. "But," says one, "how do you account for it being in the morning in America and in the afternoon in Jerusalem?" Simply by the difference in longitude. This would make a difference of time of several hours; for when it would be twelve at noon in Jerusalem it would only be half-past four in the morning in the north-west part of South America, where the Book of Mormon was then being written. Seven and a half hours difference in longitude would account for this apparent discrepancy; and if the Book of Mormon had said the crucifixion took place in the afternoon we should have known at once that it could not be true. This is incidental proof to learned or scientific men that they cannot very well reason away, and especially when the instrument [i. e. Joseph Smith] who brought forth the Book of Mormon is considered. It must be remembered that he was but a youth, and unlearned; and, when he translated this work, I presume that he was unaware that there was any difference in the time of day, according to the longitude, in different parts of the earth. I do not suppose that Joseph ever thought about it to the day of his death. I never heard him or any other person bring forth this as confirmatory evidence of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. I never thought of it myself until years after Joseph's death; but when I did reflect upon it, I could see the reason why the Lord, through his servants, has said in the Book of Mormon, that the crucifixion took place in the morning.<sup>m</sup>

In addition to the passages already quoted, giving the native traditions which, doubtless contain references to the cataclysms at the death of Messiah, as well as to the signs of his birth, Bancroft gives a Toltec tradition directly bearing on the subject, as follows:

The sun and moon were eclipsed, the earth shook, and the rocks were rent asunder, and many other things and signs

<sup>m</sup>Orson Pratt, Journal of Discourses, Vol. XIII., pp. 128, 129.

happened, though there was no loss of life. This was in the year Ce Calli, which, the chronology being reduced to our system, proves to be the same date when Christ our Lord suffered, 33 A. D.<sup>1</sup>

The statement in the foregoing that there was no loss of life resulting from this cataclysm is the only item that mars its perfect agreement with the Book of Mormon incident.

Bouturini, commending the exact chronology of the ancient Mexicans says: "No pagan nation refers primitive events to fixed creation of the world, of the deluge, of the confusion of tongues at the time of the Tower of Babel, of the other epochs and ages of the world, of their ancestors' long travel in Asia, with the years precisely distinguished by their corresponding characters. They record in the year of Seven Rabbits the great eclipse which happened at the crucifixion of Christ our Lord."<sup>m</sup>

The date assigned for this eclipse of sun and moon (darkness), and the attendant earthquakes in the foregoing quotations, is corroborated in a very remarkable manner by the native Peruvian historian Montesinos, quoted by Rivero and Tschudi. In giving a list of the Peruvian monarchs, when reaching the sixtieth, Manco-Capac III., our authors say:

<sup>1</sup>Native Races, Vol. V., p. 210.

<sup>m</sup>Kingsborough's Mexican Antiquities, Vol. VI., p. 176, note. Bouturini is an authority frequently quoted by Prescott, who has an extended note upon the valuable collection of native memorials of primitive civilization of America made by Bouturini. (See "Conquest of Mexico" Vol. I., p. 126). He was a Milanese by birth, and came to America in 1735 on some business of the Countess Santibanez, a lineal descendant of Montezuma. While in America he traveled extensively in Mexico and Central America, and made the before mentioned collection of memorials. Baldwin also mentions him with approval. (See "Ancient America," p. 195.)

According to the *Ámautas* [Peruvian "wise men," or philosophers] this prince reigned in the year two thousand nine hundred and fifty after the deluge, and consequently at the birth of Jesus Christ, an epoch when Peru had reached her highest elevation and extension.<sup>n</sup>

Following this sixtieth monarch came Cayo-Manco-Capac III., who reigned twenty years. He was followed by Sinchi-Ayar-Manco, who reigned seven years. He, by Huamantaco-Amauta, who reigned five years; which brings us to the year thirty-two A. D., and then follows this statement by our authors, which corroborates the date cited by Bancroft for the cataclysm under consideration, viz:

During his reign [thirty-two or thirty-three A. D.],<sup>o</sup> they experienced earthquakes that lasted several months.<sup>p</sup>

Brasseur de Bourbourg,<sup>q</sup> to whom Bancroft gives high praise as an authority on the languages and traditions of Central America, speaks of physical cataclysms which, according to the native traditions, took place in that part of America, and which are undoubtedly the imperfect accounts of those cataclysms which occurred at the death of Messiah, as recorded in the Book of Mormon. Brasseur became in-

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<sup>n</sup>Peruvian Antiquities, Tschudi, p. 59.

<sup>o</sup>Peruvian Antiquities, Tschudi, p. 60. Compare III. Nephi, chap. viii.

<sup>p</sup>I say the year A. D. 32, or 33, for the reason that we do not know how long the reign of Manco-Capac III—who is represented in the foregoing quotation as reigning "at the time of the birth of Christ"—continued after the birth of Messiah; not long evidently; but sufficiently long to make up the difference between A. D. 32 and the time of Messiah's death. Baldwin also refers to the same event, *Ancient America*, p. 266.

<sup>q</sup>Born in France, 1814. Died at Nice, 1874. A French clergyman, ethnologist and author. He was teacher and priest in Canada and the United States 1845-48. From 1854-1863 he traveled extensively in Mexico and Central America studying Indian antiquities and ancient manuscripts.

fatuated with the Atlantis theory, and regarded the native American traditions concerning the physical convulsions in nature as describing the submergence of the ancient Atlantis. With the theory of the learned Frenchman I have nothing to do. He may have made a wrong application of the facts of the native traditions. I think he did. But what I am interested in is the fact that so highly commended an authority draws from native sources the tradition of physical cataclysms which so nearly accord with the statements of fact in the Book of Mormon.\* After relating Brasseur's connection with the Atlantis theory, Baldwin says:

In the first place, Brasseur de Bourbourg claims that there is in the old Central American books a constant tradition of an immense catastrophe of the character supposed [i. e., the convulsions which submerged Atlantis]; that this tradition existed every where among the people when they first became known to Europeans; and that recollections of the catastrophe were preserved in some of their festivals, especially in one celebrated in the month of Izcalli, which was instituted to commemorate this frightful destruction of land and people, and in which "princes and people humbled themselves before the divinity, and besought him to withhold a return of such terrible calamities." This tradition affirms that a part of the continent extending into the Atlantic was destroyed in the manner supposed, [submerged] and appear to indicate that the destruction was accomplished by a succession of frightful convulsions. Three are constantly mentioned, and sometimes there is mention of one or two others. "The land was shaken by frightful earthquakes, and the waves of the sea combined with volcanic fires to overwhelm and engulf it." Each convulsion swept away portions of the land, until the whole disappeared, leaving the line of the coast as it is now. Most of the inhabitants, overtaken amid their regular employments, were destroyed; but some escaped in ships, and some fled for safety to the summits of high mountains, or to portions of the land which, for the time, escaped

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\*Native Races, Vol. V., pp. 127, 129.

immediate destruction. Quotations are made from the old books in which this tradition is recorded which appear to verify his report of what is found in them. To criticise intelligently his interpretation of their significance, one needs to have a knowledge of those books and tradition equal at least to his own.<sup>s</sup>

Nadaillac also refers to the native traditions collected by Brasseur on this subject and quotes him as follows:

"If I may judge from allusions in the documents that I have been fortunate enough to collect, there were in these regions, at that remote date, convulsions of nature, deluges, terrible inundations, followed by the upheaval of mountains, accompanied by volcanic eruptions. These traditions, traces of which are also met with in Mexico, Central America, Peru, and Bolivia, point to the conclusion that man existed in these various countries at the time of the upheaval of the Cordilleras, and that the memory of that upheaval has been preserved.<sup>t</sup>

Treating of a number of old Central American traditions on his own account, Nadaillac says:

Other traditions allude to convulsions of nature, to inundations, and profound disturbances, to terrible deluges, in the midst of which mountains and volcanoes suddenly rose up.<sup>u</sup>

Nothing, perhaps, connected with the signs of Messiah's death would be more impressive than the awful fact of the three days' darkness, and nothing would be more likely to be preserved in the traditions of the people than this singular fact. From generation to generation it would be remembered with terror. It is beyond question the traditional remembrance of that event which so terrorized the native

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<sup>s</sup>Ancient America, pp. 176, 177.

<sup>t</sup>Pre-Historic America, pp. 16, 17.

<sup>u</sup>Pre-Historic America, p. 527.

Americans at every recurrence of an eclipse of the sun. Of this fact Bancroft remarks :

The Mexicans were much troubled and distressed by an eclipse of the sun. They thought that he was much disturbed and tossed about by something, and that he was becoming seriously jaundiced. This was the occasion of a general panic, women weeping aloud, and men howling and shouting and striking the hand upon the mouth. There was an immediate search for men with white hair and white faces, and these were sacrificed to the sun, amid the din and tumult of singing and musical instruments. It was thought that should the eclipse become once total, there would be an end of the light, and that in the darkness the demons would come down to the devouring of the people.<sup>w</sup>

It was also the traditional remembrance of the terror of darkness, connected with the death of Messiah, which undoubtedly created the anxiety concerning the renewal of fire at the conclusion of each cycle of fifty-two years recognized in the Mexican chronology. The Mexicans, as represented in some of the notes we have quoted from different authors, hold the tradition of the destruction of the world at four successive epochs. And, says, Prescott :

They looked forward confidently to another such catastrophe, to take place like the preceding, at the close of a cycle, when the sun was to be effaced from the heavens, the human race from the earth, and when darkness of chaos was to settle on the habitable globe. The cycle would end in the latter part of December, and, as the dreary season of the winter solstice approached, and the diminished light of day gave melancholy presage of its speedy extinction their apprehensions increased; and on the arrival of the five unlucky days which close the year, they abandoned themselves to despair. They broke in pieces the little images of their household gods, in whom they no

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<sup>w</sup>Native Races, Vol. III., p. 110.

longer trusted. The holy fires were suffered to go out in the temples, and none were lighted in their own dwellings. Their furniture and domestic utensils were destroyed; their garments torn in pieces; and everything was thrown into disorder, for the coming of the evil genii who were to descend on the desolate earth. On the evening of the last day, a procession of priests, assuming the dress and ornaments of their gods, moved from the capital towards a lofty mountain, about two leagues distant. They carried with them a noble victim, the flower of their captivities, and an apparatus for kindling the new fire, the success of which was an augury of the renewal of the cycle. On reaching the summit of the mountain, the procession paused till midnight; when, as the constellation of the Pleiades approached the zenith, the new fire was kindled by the friction of the sticks placed on the wounded breast of the victim. The flame was soon communicated to a funeral pile, on which the body of the slaughtered captive was thrown. As the light streamed up towards heaven, shouts of joy and triumph burst forth from the countless multitudes who covered the hills, the terraces of the temples and the house-tops, with eyes anxiously bent on the mount of sacrifice. Couriers, with torches lighted at the blazing beacon, rapidly bore them over every part of the country; and the cheering element was seen brightening on altar and hearthstone, for the circuit of many a league, long before the sun, rising on his accustomed track, gave assurance that a new cycle had commenced its march, and that the laws of nature were not to be reversed for the Aztecs. The following thirteen days were given up to festivity.\*

Whence this terror of the darkness? Whence this rejoicing at the assurance of continued light, unless back of both terror and rejoicing somewhere in the history of the people there was some such circumstance as described in the Book of Mormon which gave cause for this terror of darkness on the one hand, and the rejoicing at the assurance of a continuation of light on the other?

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\*Conquest of Mexico, Vol. I., pp. 105, 106.