



Type: Book Chapter

Objections to the Book of Mormon (Continued)

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *New Witnesses for God: Volume III - The Book of Mormon*

Published: Salt Lake City; Deseret News, 1909

Pages: 461-510

CHAPTER XLVII.

OBJECTIONS TO THE BOOK OF MORMON (Continued).

IV.

Pre-Christian Era Knowledge of the Gospel.

Among the early objections to the Book of Mormon, supposed to be unanswerable, was that based upon the fact that the Nephites hundreds of years before the birth of Christ had knowledge of him and the redemption he would bring to pass for man, and the means of grace through which salvation would be accomplished. In fact, that they had knowledge of the Christian institution. "He," (Joseph Smith) represents the Christian institution," says Alexander Campbell, "as practiced among his Israelites before Christ was born! And his Jews are called 'Christians' while keeping the law of Moses, the Holy Sabbath, and worship in their temple, at their altars, and by their High Priest!"

Of late, however, not so much importance has been attached to this objection. It is becoming more and more recognized as a truth that the gospel of Christ was known from very ancient times, from before the foundations of the world in fact. Jesus, in scripture, is known as the "Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world," and certain ones are spoken of as having their names written in the "Book of Life" from the foundation of the world.^a

Paul speaks of the hope of "eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began."^b Men were not left in ignorance of the plan of their redemption

^aI Peter i: 18-25. Rev. xiii: 8.

^bTitus i: 1, 2.

until the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, even in the old world. Our annals are imperfect on that head, doubtless, but enough evidence exists even in the Jewish scriptures to indicate the existence of the knowledge of the fact of the Atonement and of the redemption of man through that means. Abel, the son of Adam, offered the firstlings of his flock as a sacrifice unto God. How came he to make such an offering, except that behind the sacrifice, as behind similar offerings in subsequent ages, stood the fact of the Christ's Atonement? In such sacrifice was figured forth the means of man's redemption—through a sacrifice, and that the sacrifice of the first-born. Paul also refers to the sacrifices and other things of the law of Moses as "having a shadow of good things to come."^c But where learned Abel to offer sacrifices if not from his father, Adam? It is reasonably certain that Adam as well as Abel offered sacrifices, in like manner and for the same intent. Paul bears unmistakable testimony to the fact that the gospel was preached unto Abraham; and also that it was offered to Israel under Moses before "the law of carnal commandments" was given. "I would not that ye should be ignorant," he says, "how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."^d

Paul's great controversy with the Christian Jews was in relation to the superiority of the gospel to the law of Moses. Many of the Christian Jews, while accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, still held to the law with something like superstitious reverence, and could not

^cHeb. x: 1.

^dI. Cor. x: 1-4.

be persuaded that the gospel superseded the law, and was, in fact, a fulfillment of all its types and symbols. This controversy culminated in Paul's now celebrated letter to the Galatians, wherein he says:

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He sayeth not And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

After this testimony to the knowledge of the gospel existing among the ancients, it is useless for modern critics of the Book of Mormon to complain of the knowledge of the Christian institution possessed by the Nephites, and the fact that the Book of Mormon proclaims the existence of that knowledge. If it shall be said that the Nephites had clearer conceptions of it than the people inhabiting the old world, that fact would arise not out of God's unwillingness to make known the great truth, but to the fact that the Nephites succeeded in living more nearly within his favor; and hence their clearer knowledge of the truth.

It should be remembered that prophecy is but history reversed. Known unto God are all his works and words

from the beginning to the end; and at various times he has made known future events in the clearest manner to his prophets who, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have recorded them. The Prophet Isaiah, 150 years before the birth of Cyrus, foretold his name; declared that he should subdue kingdoms, including Babylon, set free the people of God held in bondage there, and rebuild the House of the Lord at Jerusalem. And all this as clearly as the historians could write it after the events themselves took place. To Daniel he revealed the rise, fall and succession of the leading empires and nations of the world, even to the time of the establishment of God's Kingdom in power to hold universal sway in the latter days, an event not yet fulfilled.

It is clearer even from the Hebrew scriptures that the Lord has been willing, and even anxious, that a knowledge of the Christian institution should be had among men from the beginning. To the prophets of Israel, in fact, nearly every important event in the life of the Savior was made known. They foretold that he would be born of a virgin; that his name would signify "God with us;" that Bethlehem would be the place of his birth; that he would sojourn in Egypt with his parents; that he would reside in Nazareth, for "He shall be called a Nazarene;" that a messenger would prepare the way before him; that he should ride in triumph into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass; that he would be afflicted and despised; that he would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that he would be despised and rejected of men; that men would turn their faces from him in his affliction; that he would be esteemed as stricken and smitten of God; that he would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of us men would be laid upon him,

and by his stripes would be healed; that upon him would God lay the iniquity of us all; that for the transgressions of God's peoples would he be stricken; that he would be oppressed and afflicted, yet open not his mouth; that as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so would he be silent before his judges; that he would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver; that men would divide his raiment and cast lots for his vesture; that they would give to him gall and vinegar to drink; that not a bone of him should be broken; that he should be taken from prison and from judgment, and be cut out of the land of the living; that he would make his grave with the wicked and the rich in his death; but notwithstanding this he should not see corruption (i. e., his body decay), and that on the third day following his death he should rise triumphant from the grave. All this and much more was foretold by the ancient Hebrew prophets concerning the Messiah. This is prophetic history.

In like manner to the Nephites his prophetic history was made known, and is found in the Book of Mormon in some instances in greater plainness than in the Old Testament, because, for one thing—in addition to the suggestion made that the Nephites may have lived nearer to the Lord than other branches of the house of Israel—the Nephite scriptures have not passed through the hands of an Aristobulus, a Philo and other rabbis, who by interpretation or elimination have taken away some of the plain and precious parts of the Jewish scriptures. Surely if the Lord revealed to the Jewish prophets these leading events in the history of the Savior ages before the Messiah's birth, it ought not to be thought a strange thing if God imparted the same knowledge to the Nephite prophets. Nor can the fact that he did so, and that in plainer terms than in the revelations to the Jews, be held as valid objections to the Book of Mormon.

v.

The Unlawfulness of Establishing the Priesthood With Other Than the Tribe of Levi.

Somewhat akin to the objections last considered is one based upon the claim that it would be unlawful to establish a Priesthood other than that founded by Moses, when he chose the tribe of Levi to officiate in holy ordinances. In order that this objection, however, may be stated in its full force I quote it as set forth by Alexander Campbell, not even omitting the unfortunate coarseness of his language which was so unworthy of his character, and which I assign to the spirit of those times when coarseness was so often mistaken for forcefulness.

Smith, its real author [i. e., of the Book of Mormon], as ignorant and as impudent a knave as ever wrote a book, betrays the cloven foot in basing his whole book upon a false fact, or a pretended fact, which makes God a liar. It is this: with the Jews God made a covenant at Mount Sinai, and instituted a priesthood, he separated Levi, and covenanted to give him this office irrevocably while ever the temple stood, or till the Messiah came. "Then," says God, "Moses shall appoint Aaron and his sons and they shall wait on the priest's office, and the stranger (the person of another family) who cometh nigh shall be put to death." (Numbers iii: 10.) "And the priests and sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord, and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried." (Deut. xxi: 5). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with 250 men of renown, rebelled against a part of the institution of the Priesthood, and the Lord destroyed them in the presence of the whole congregation. This was to be a memorial that no stranger invade any part of the office of the Priesthood. (Numbers xvi: 40). Fourteen thousand and seven hundred of the

people were destroyed by a plague for murmuring against the memorial.

In the 18th chapter of Numbers the Levites are again given to Aaron and his sons, and of the priesthood confirmed to them with this threat—"The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." "Even Jesus," says Paul, "were he on earth, could not be a priest; for he was of a tribe concerning which Moses spake nothing of priesthood." (Heb. vii: 13). So irrevocable was the grant of the priesthood to Levi, and of the high priesthood to Aaron, that no stranger dare approach the altar of God which Moses established. Hence Jesus himself was excluded from officiating as priest on earth according to the law.

This Joseph Smith overlooked in his impious fraud, and makes his hero, Lehi, spring from Joseph. And just as soon as his sons return from the roll of his lineage, ascertaining that he was of the tribe of Joseph, he and his sons acceptably "offer sacrifices and burnt offerings to the Lord. (p. 15, first edition).^e Also it is repeated (p. 18)—Nephi became chief artificer, ship-builder, and mariner; was scribe, prophet, priest, and king unto his own people, and "consecrated Jacob and Joseph, the sons of his father, priests to God and teachers—almost 600 years before the fulness of the times of the Jewish economy was completed. (p. 72.) Nephi represents himself withal "as under the law of Moses" (p. 105). They built a new temple in the new world, and in 55 years after they leave Jerusalem, make a new priesthood which God approbates. A high priest is also consecrated and yet they are all the while "teaching the law of Moses, and exhorting the people to keep it!" (pp. 146, 209.) Thus God is represented as instituting, approbating and blessing a new priesthood from the tribe of Joseph, concerning which Moses gave no commandment concerning priesthood. Although God had promised in the law of Moses that if any man, not of the tribe and family of Levi and Aaron should approach the office of priest, he would surely die; he is represented by Smith as blessing, approbating, and sustaining another family in this appropriated office. The God of Abraham or Joseph Smith must, then, be a liar! And who will hesitate to pronounce him an im-

^eMr. Campbell cites the first edition throughout.

poster? This lie runs through his record for the first 600 years of his history.

I have stated this objection, at length, because much importance has been attached to it and many have regarded it as unanswerable. I consider its importance has been exaggerated, and the whole objection based upon conceptions of the right and power of God and his freedom of action, as altogether too narrow and dogmatic.

It is to be observed, first of all, that the inhibitions against others being appointed to the priesthood that was given to Aaron and the Levites, are inhibitions against "men" assuming the right to institute any other order of priesthood in Israel, or to grant the rights of this priesthood to any other tribe than that appointed by the Lord. Because of these inhibitions against "men" presuming to change the order which God has established, to therefore assume that God, to meet other conditions—such as these, for instance in the establishment of a branch of the house of Israel in the new world—the case of Lehi and his colony—that God cannot make such changes in the matter of establishing a priesthood as seemeth him good, is preposterous.

I think the argument of this point might be closed here, for surely no one would be so unreasonable as to contend that the inhibitions which God imposes upon men are to be made operative upon himself.

In the treatment of the objection preceding the one now under consideration I pointed out the fact of the antiquity of the gospel, showing that even unto Abraham the gospel had been preached, and that the law of Moses, usually called the law of carnal commandments, had been "added" to the gospel because of the transgressions of Israel, from which fact it is evident that the gospel was administered in those ancient, patriarchal times. It was a high-

er law than the law of Moses. It was the everlasting covenant of God with man and the blood of Christ is spoken of as being the blood of that everlasting covenant.^f There was a priesthood that administered the ordinances of that gospel, and as the gospel was a higher law than the law of Moses, it is reasonable to conclude that the priesthood which administered in those ordinances was a higher order of priesthood than that conferred upon Aaron and the tribe of Levi, and undoubtedly the higher priesthood could, on occasion, administer in the ordinances of the inferior law. It was, doubtless, this higher order of Priesthood that such characters as Abraham, Melchizedek, and other prophets in Israel held, and by which they administered in sacred things. It was this order of priesthood that was held by Lehi and Nephi, and which the latter conferred upon his brothers, Jacob, and Joseph.^g The former referring to his priesthood says, that he had been “ordained after the manner of this (the Lord’s) holy order,” that being the way in which this higher priesthood, of which I am speaking, is designated throughout the Book of Mormon.^h Called also a priesthood “after the order of the Son of God.” It was this priesthood, therefore, that was conferred upon the Nephites—not the Aaronic priesthood—and by which they officiated in sacred things; of things pertaining to the gospel as well as to the law given of Moses. The justification for administering in the things of the law by this priesthood consist in the fact that the superior authority includes all the rights and powers of the inferior authority, and certainly possesses the power to do what the inferior authority could do.

It may be claimed that the inconsistency of the Book

^fHeb. xiii: 20.

^gII. Nephi v: 26. II. Nephi vi: 2.

^hAlma v: 44. Alma xiii.

of Mormon, relative to this matter, consists in this: It claims that the Nephites were living according to the law of Moses, and the law of Moses provided that the house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi alone should exercise the priesthood; whereas, among the Nephites others than the Levites held and exercised the priesthood; technically, that inconsistency exists, but it is a technicality and is capable of bearing no such weight of argument as Mr. Campbell puts upon it. In Lehi's colony there was no representative of the tribe of Levi so far as known, and hence others had to be chosen to officiate before the Lord in the priest's office.

That the Lord in making his covenant with the house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi concerning the priesthood reserved to himself the right on occasion to appoint others to perform priestly functions, even in Israel, in Palestine, is evident from the case of Gideon, the fifth judge in Israel after Moses. Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh,ⁱ and when the Lord would deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites he sent his angel to this man, and though he was not of the tribe to whom the priesthood had been given by covenant, nevertheless, the Lord commanded him to build an altar, and he did so, and called it Jehovah-shalom. He also threw down the altar of Baal and built an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings, all of which were priestly functions.^j Shall these acts be denounced as a violation of the covenant of the Lord with Aaron and the tribe of Levi? Shall the angel of the Lord, who commanded Gideon in these priestly things, be declared a spirit of evil, a violator of God's covenant? Shall the book of Judges be rejected as a spurious book, and unworthy of being accepted as part of the scriptures because it relates these circum-

ⁱJudges vi: 15.

^jJudges vi.

stances? In a word, shall we employ against it all the thunder of Mr. Campbell's criticism of the Book of Mormon? His criticism would be just as effective against the book of Judges as it is against the Book of Mormon, but as a matter of fact it would amount to nothing in either case, since the action of Gideon, and also of Lehi and Nephi, were of the Lord's appointing, and the Lord had certainly reserved to himself the right to appoint men other than members of the tribe of Levi when occasion should require, though he had forbidden "men" to appoint priests other than from that tribe. This was to avoid confusion and the bringing into existence rival priesthoods among God's people, but certainly when the Lord conferred a higher order of priesthood upon the Nephites, under which they were to operate in the New World, there was no infringement of the rights of the tribe of Levi. It was no more a violation of the covenant the Lord made with the tribe of Levi, than it would be for the Lord to appoint an inhabitant of Mars to that order of priesthood and give him the right of administration in that distant world.

The whole objection is captious, and manifests the weakness of the objections urged against the Book of Mormon, since so great stress must needs be laid upon this supposed contradiction of the Bible covenant.

In his objections to the Book of Mormon, in addition to those already noted, Mr. Campbell also lays stress upon the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem, and also the establishment of a temple and its service in the New World, as a great violation of God's covenant with Israel. "To represent God," he says, "as inspiring a devout Jew [Lehi was not a Jew, by the way, but of the tribe of Manasseh] and a prophet, such as Lehi and Nephi are represented by Smith, with resolution to forsake Jerusalem and God's own house,

and to depart from the land which God gave to their fathers so long as they were obedient; and to guide by miracle and bless by prodigies a good man in forsaking God's covenant and worship, is so monstrous an error that language fails to afford a name for it."

One can scarce refrain from characterizing this sort of criticism as nonsense. Nor does it represent the facts in the case. Lehi was not forsaking God's covenant nor worship; he was leaving Jerusalem by the Lord's own commandment at a time when God's judgment was about to fall and shortly afterwards did fall upon the place, so that it was no great calamity that was happening to Lehi's righteous colony to be taken from such a place and brought to the great American continents, agreeable to the covenants of the Lord with the house of Joseph, Lehi's ancestor.^k The establishment of a temple in the New World was a necessity to this colony, but Mr. Campbell, together with all who have followed him in this and similar objections, seem determined to so limit the power of God that they will not allow of him making provisions to meet such occasions.

VI.

Nephite Knowledge of the "Call of the Gentiles."

Much stress is laid by Mr Campbell and others upon what Paul says respecting the "call" of the Gentiles to the grace of the gospel of Christ, "which in other ages," says Paul, "was not made know unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."^l

^kSee this Vol. chapter xxxv.

^lEphesians iii: 5, 6.

The making this truth known to the world, according to Mr. Campbell's views of Paul's declaration was reserved to Paul and his fellow apostles of that dispensation. "But Smith," remarks Mr. Campbell, "makes his pious hero Nephi 600 years before the Messiah began to preach, disclose these secrets concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and blessings flowing through the Messiah to Jews and Gentiles, which Paul says was hid from ages and generations."^m

This objection could be disposed of in several ways. First, it could be held that when Paul, and the other apostles of the old world, spoke concerning the development of the work of the Lord in that land, they were limited by their knowledge of the world. They did not speak with reference to the people inhabiting the American continents who were unknown to them. For example, when Paul said:

"Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."

No one for a moment thinks Paul had in mind the inhabitants of the western hemisphere when he said, "the Gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven." He had reference to the world with which he was acquainted, as he knew the world.

Second, it could be held that the knowledge of this mystery revealed to the Nephites by no means interfered with the purposes of God in keeping that matter hidden from the Gentiles and the world. The fact made known to the Nephites never reached the Gentiles until after the publication of the Book of Mormon, in 1830, long ages after Paul had published the fact to the Gentile world. What was revealed to

^mI. Nephi x; also book of Jacob, chapter v.

ⁿCol. i: 2, 3.

the Nephites in no way detracted from the glory of Paul and the other apostles, making known the mystery of God's grace to the Gentiles.

Third. It could be held that Paul meant that himself and fellow apostles knew in a different way that the Gentiles were to be fellow heirs with the house of Israel in the privileges of the gospel. Indeed, I think this must be the solution of the matter, for Mr. Campbell's version of it would bring Paul and Isaiah into pronounced conflict with each other, and prove that one or the other of them did not speak by the inspiration of God. That it was revealed to the ancients that the Gentiles were to partake of the advantages of Christ's atonement, and have part in the salvation that is possible though it is evident from the following passages, which all allow makes direct reference to Christ and his mission.

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.^o

Again:

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.^p

In the light of these revelations, concerning the part the Gentiles were to have in the salvation that comes through Christ, it can scarcely be said that this "mystery," was not

^oIsaiah xlii: 6, 7.

^pIsaiah xlix: 6-9 et seq., specially verses 20-22: Paul himself quotes Isaiah xlix: 6; see Acts xiii: 47. Simeon in the temple quotes Isaiah; see Luke ii: 30, 32.

revealed in ages previous to the days of Paul; but it could be said, and this I contend is what Paul meant, that it was not as fully known in former ages that the Gentiles were "to be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Before Paul's time it was only in prophecy that this was known; but after his day it was known both in prophecy and as accomplished fact.

VII.

The Difficulty of the Three Days Darkness.

An effort is sometimes made to bring the Book of Mormon into contradiction with the New Testament in the matter of "three days darkness," connected with the death of Jesus. The objection was recently stated in these terms:

In Helaman xiv: 20-27, and in I. Nephi xix: 10, we read about three days of darkness which should cover "all the earth," and the isles of the sea at the crucifixion of the Savior. Neither the Bible nor history speaks of three days of darkness on the eastern hemisphere, hence it did not cover "all the earth" as we understand it.

The objection as here stated, and the argument to be inferred from it, is: the Book of Mormon says that at the crucifixion of Messiah there will be three days of darkness that will cover all the face of the earth and the isles of the sea. History and the Bible are silent about such an event; therefore, the Book of Mormon makes a false statement and must itself be untrue, and consequently uninspired, and is not at all what it claims to be, viz., a record of the ancient inhabitants of America, and brought forth by the power of God for the enlightenment and instruction of the world.

This statement of the objection differs a little from the ordinary manner in which the objection is made. Objectors usually try to make it appear that the Book of Mormon's statement that there were three days darkness in the Western World during the time Messiah was in the tomb is in conflict with the New Testament's statement that there were three hours' darkness during the crucifixion; but the fact that the New Testament refers to an event that took place while Jesus hung upon the cross in Judea, and the Book of Mormon statement refers to an event that took place after his crucifixion, while he was lying in the tomb, and in the western hemisphere, instead of at Jerusalem, it must be apparent that there is no conflict between the two accounts.

But now to meet the objection as here presented. All that is necessary will be to present just exactly what the Book of Mormon does say with reference to the three days of darkness:

The God of our fathers * * * * yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man into the hands of wicked men to be lifted up according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake, concerning the three days of darkness which should be a sign given of his death, unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the House of Israel.⁹

This is one of the passages referred to in the objection, but there is nothing here about the three days of darkness extending over "the whole face of the earth." It speaks of it as extending to the isles of the sea; i. e. to lands distant from Jerusalem beyond the seas—to those more especially inhabit-

⁹I. Nephi xix: 10.

ed by the house of Israel. In passing, and merely by the way, it may be interesting to call attention to the fact that here are three Hebrew prophets referred to by Nephi—Zenock, Neum, and Zenos—each of whom had recorded an important prophecy respecting the coming and mission of Christ; and had not the Jews eliminated the books of these prophets from their collection of scriptures, it could not have then been said, as it is now said, that the Bible is silent respecting these three days of darkness, which were to be a sign of the Messiah's death; for then they would have had the words of Zenos that there was to be such a sign given in the isles of the sea, inhabited by the house of Israel.

Behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign, a sign of his death, 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 also; 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. * * * And behold thus hath the angel * * said unto me, that these things should be, and that darkness shall cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days. And the angel said unto me, that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders come to pass upon all the face of this land. (Helaman, 20:28.)

This is the other passage quoted, and in it is found the phrase, "that darkness shall cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days." But it should be remembered that this is preceded by a statement concerning the three days darkness that limits this otherwise general statement, namely, "and there shall be no light upon the face of this land"—meaning America—"for the space of three days." This clearly limits the particular sign under consideration to America and the adjacent islands of the sea, in other

words, to the western hemisphere. Moreover, the phrase, "that darkness shall cover the face of the whole earth," is followed as well as preceded by the limiting clause—"these signs and these wonders"—namely, the three hours of tempest and of earthquake followed by the three days of darkness—"shall come to pass upon all the face of this land"—meaning of course, America.

Then again, when the prophecy is left and you turn to the history of its fulfillment, the whole of the thrilling narrative is clearly confined to the statement of events that occurred in the lands occupied by the Nephites—that is, to the western hemisphere. Yet in that narrative is found the same form of expression as in the prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite. While describing events that are clearly confined to Nephite lands, Mormon says: "and thus the face of the whole earth became deformed because of the tempests and the thunderings and the lightnings. * * * And behold the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon all the face of the whole earth."—(III. Nephi, 8:17, 18). Now did the prophet really mean that the convulsions he was describing extended to Europe and Asia and Africa because he said "the rocks were broken upon the face of the whole earth?" No; you limit the general expression here by the facts of the whole circumstance under consideration, so that "broken up upon the face of the whole earth," means upon the face of the whole earth so far as the Nephite lands are concerned—that is the limitation of the general phrase.

As an example of this kind of interpretation, I introduce a passage or two from the Bible. Daniel, in giving the interpretation of the king of Babylon's dream, says:

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And

wheresoever the children of men dwell the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

Does this prophecy really mean "wheresoever the children of men dwell," there, too, was the rule and dominion of Nebuchadnezzar? Did he rule all of Europe and Africa? Did his dominion extend to the western hemisphere, for there the children of men dwelt as well as in Asia? It is a matter of common information that Nebuchadnezzar's dominion was not thus extended, but really was quite limited. What, then? Shall we reject the prophecies of Daniel because a strict and technical construction of his language does not meet the facts?

Again he says, speaking of the political powers that would succeed Babylon :

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

This third kingdom is generally agreed to have reference to the kingdom of Alexander; but did Alexander "bear rule over all the earth?" Did he bear rule over the western hemisphere? No; nor did he know of its existence. What, then, shall we do with this inspired prophet who says he "shall bear rule over all the earth?" Shall we reject him and his book? Or say that his statements do not agree with the facts? That would be absurd. The particular phrase is limited by the general circumstances under which the prophet was speaking. That is of course taken by all who believe the book of Daniel, and it is a course amply justified by reason.

Again, it is recorded in Luke, speaking of the events which happened during the crucifixion of the Savior:

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

Did this inspired writer really have in mind the whole round earth, or was he speaking with reference to what happened right there in Judea where the main event occurred? Undoubtedly he had reference to what had been stated to him by the eye witnesses of the scene, who merely related what appeared to them; namely, that a darkness settled down over the land, but they were not thinking of the face of the whole earth when they told the story to Luke, nor was he when he wrote his statement of the event.

One other example:

Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister. (Col. i: 23.)

Is this statement of Paul's literally true? Had the gospel at that time, or, for matter of that, has it at any time since then, been preached unto every creature under heaven? Certainly not. And when Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians there were millions of the children of men, as there are to this day, who never had heard of Messiah or the gospel. Paul could only have meant by this over-statement of the matter, that the gospel had been generally preached in the kingdoms and provinces with which himself and the Colossians were acquainted; and no one thinks of rejecting Paul or his books because of such seeming inaccuracies. His use of such broad-sweeping phrases are interpreted in the

light of reason, and limited by the well known circumstances under which he wrote. It should be remembered in this connection, that hyperbole is a habit of speech with oriental peoples, to whom the Jews belonged; and indirectly, too, the Nephites are descendents of the same people, and have retained to a large extent the same habits of expression; all of which should be taken into account in the interpretation of the Nephite records as it always is in exegeses of the Hebrew scriptures.

v.

The Birth of Jesus "at Jerusalem."

The following prediction concerning the birth place of Jesus is found in the book of Alma.

And behold he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers.

Jesus, it is well known, was born at Bethlehem, Judea, between four and five miles south of Jerusalem, really a suburb of the larger city. Nearly all objectors point to this prophecy as being in contradiction of the well attested historical fact of Christ's birth at Bethlehem. The objection is seldom fairly stated. It is charged that the Book of Mormon says that Jesus was born "at Jerusalem," and Alexander Campbell quotes it as being "in Jerusalem," and all omit the qualifying clause "the land of our fathers," which clearly indicates that it is not the "city" which the Nephite historian gives, but the "land" in which Jesus would be born.

This explanation of the supposed difficulty is further strengthened when it is remembered that it was a custom of the Nephites to name large districts of country—such as

might correspond to provinces and principalities in other nations—after the chief city of the land:

Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi, to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah.^r

And hence, too, came the practice of calling large districts of country after the chief city therein. In this same book of Alma—as throughout the Book of Mormon—we have the city named after the man who founded it, and the district of country named from the chief city, thus: “The Land of Zarahemla,” “the land of Melek;” “the land of Ammonihah;” “the land of Gideon;” “the land of Lehi-Nephi, or the city of Lehi-Nephi;” and so on ad infinitum. It became a habit of speech with them, especially with reference to Jerusalem, whence their forefathers came, as witness the following few out of many such quotations that could be given:

I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem.” (Mosiah 1:11.)

That same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem.” (Mosiah 7:20.)

Why will he not show himself in this land, as well as in the land of Jerusalem? (Helaman 16:19).

Hence when it is said that Jesus should be born “at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers,” the Nephite writer merely conformed to a habit of speech, and meant the “land” of Jerusalem, not the “city.”

^rAlma viii: 7.

VI.

The Settlement of Modern Controversies.

This prophet Smith * * * * wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his Book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies;—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry and general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man. All these topics are repeatedly alluded to.

Then in mockery:

How much more benevolent and intelligent this American Apostle than the Holy Twelve and Paul to assist them! He prophecied of all these topics, and of the apostasy, and inially decides by his authority every question. How easy to prophecy of the past or of the present time!

Such the statement of Alexander Campbell in the criticism so often quoted in these pages. Some critics of the Book of Mormon have charged that it contained nothing of importance on such matters;^s nothing that was really worth while considering, but if it considers this long list of subjects enumerated by Mr. Campbell, the charge of not dealing with questions of importance must surely be set aside. As a matter of fact, the Book of Mormon deals with at least

^sSo Hyde: "He [Joseph Smith, through the Book of Mormon] determines none of the great questions pending in the world at large, but only the minor difficulties that would have been likely to have reached a western village." Hyde's "Mormonism," p. 281.

the most of the subjects enumerated, not, however, as they were discussed in New York between 1820 and 1830, but as they arose in the experience of the ancient inhabitants of America, or as the Nephite prophets moved upon by the Holy Spirit saw what would arise within the experience of the Gentiles who would inhabit the land. The chief complaint against Mr. Campbell's objection on these points consist in the spirit in which he makes it. For example, the Book of Mormon says nothing of "free masonry," but throughout the work it does discuss the question of secret societies that existed both among the Jaredites and Nephites, which societies were factors in bringing about the overthrow of both these nations; and it contains also prophetic warning to the Gentiles against such secret combinations.

If in the treatment of theological questions and difficulties enumerated by Mr. Campbell there appears in the Book of Mormon the same difficulties that have agitated the eastern world, it must be remembered that the source of error is the same—the limitation of human knowledge, reason and judgment; the ever present inclination in man to follow after his own devices; and that the same tempter to evil operated in the western hemisphere as in the eastern hemisphere, and evidently has reproduced the same theological difficulties and led men into the same errors.

Take for example the matter of infant baptism, which Mr. Campbell says the Book of Mormon settles, and indeed it does, by most emphatically pointing out the error and wickedness of it when the doctrine is made to teach the salvation of one innocent child because it is baptized, and the eternal damnation of another innocent child because it was not baptized;[†] but the Book of Mormon condemnation of that

[†]Moroni viii.

wicked doctrine was not recorded in its pages because of any controversy existing on the subject in New York, as Mr. Campbell pretends, but because the Nephite prophets were aroused against this doctrine by reason of their people running into the same error—the doctrine of eternal damnation of unbaptized infants—which burdened the teachings of so called Christian Churches. The proof of this statement is in the fact that the native Americans at the time of the Spanish invasion of their country were practicing infant baptism. The fact is related by all the authorities, varying slightly in their description of it, according as they get the tradition from this, that, or the other section of the country. Perhaps, however, Sahagun's description is the most minute and covers the subject more completely than any other of the writers, and hence I give at length the passage on the subject as quoted by Prescott in his appendix to the "Conquest of Mexico."

When every thing necessary for the baptism had been made ready, all the relations of the child were assembled, and the midwife, who was the person that performed the rite of baptism, was summoned. At early dawn they met together in the court-yard of the house. When the sun had arisen, the midwife, taking the child in her arms, called for a little earthen vessel of water, while those about her placed the ornaments which had been prepared for the baptism in the midst of the court. To perform the rite of baptism, she placed herself with her face towards the west, and immediately began to go through certain ceremonies. * * * * After this she sprinkled water on the head of the infant, saying, "O, my child! take and receive the water of the Lord of the world, which is our life, and is given for the increasing and renewing of our body. It is to wash and purify. I pray that these heavenly drops may enter into your body, and dwell there; that they may destroy and remove from you all the evil and sin which was given to you before the beginning of the world; since all of us are under its power, being all the children of Chalchivitlycue" (the goddess of water),

She then washed the body of the child with water, and spoke in this manner: "whencesoever thou comest, thou that are hurtful to this child; leave him and depart from him, for he now liveth anew, and is born anew; now he is purified and cleansed afresh, and our mother Chalchivitycue again bringeth him into the world." Having thus prayed, the midwife took the child in both hands, and, lifting him towards heaven, said, "O Lord, thou seest here thy creature, whom thou hast sent into this world, this place of sorrow, suffering, and penitence. Grant him, O Lord, thy gifts, and thine inspiration, for thou art the Great God, and with thee is the great goddess." Torches of pine were kept burning during the performance of these ceremonies. When these things were ended, they gave the child the name of some one of his ancestors, in the hope that he might shed a new lustre over it. The name was given by the same midwife, or priestess, who baptized him.

This is a perverted form of baptism preserved in the customs of the native Americans. The Nephites, in the days of Mormon—and how much before that is not known—fell into this error of infant baptism and were evidently teaching the damnation of those infants who did not receive that ordinance. When young Moroni was called to the ministry, his father, Mormon, charged him strictly against this error and sharply proclaimed against the iniquity of it. Yet it seems to have persisted in the customs of the native Americans until we see it in the form represented by Saha-gun, though of course it may have received modifications—such for instance as being administered by women—since the period with which the Book of Mormon closes.

It is in this manner that the Book of Mormon settles the question of infant baptism, not, as Mr. Campbell insinuates, viz., that the question of infant baptism being under discussion in western New York Joseph Smith inserted a decision on the controversy in the Book of Mormon.

Further in relation to this matter of baptism. The Book

of Mormon, it does settle the question of the manner of baptism through the instructions which Jesus is represented as giving to the Nephites—and was there a subject in relation to the gospel on which Christians needed instructions more than upon this? And now Jesus to the Nephites:

Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them; behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name ye shall baptize them. And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying. "Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." And then shall ye immerse them in the water and come forth again out of the water.

There can be no doubt as to the manner of Christian baptism after these instructions from the Master, by those who accept the Book of Mormon as an authority. How much rangling and idle disputation would have been saved the Christian world if something as definite as this had been found in the Christian annals of the eastern world! In passing, and in proof of the divinity of this ceremonial, I call attention to the simplicity and yet comprehensiveness of it; to the directness of it. Place the simplicity and directness of this formula of baptism in contrast with Sahagun's description of baptism among the native Americans, or contrast it with the same ceremony as practiced among the paganized Christians of the old world," and the simplicity and dignity of

* Following is Mosheim's description of baptism in the third century: "Baptism was publicly administered twice a year, to such candidates as had gone through a long preparation and trial; and none were present as spectators, but such as had been themselves baptized. * * * None were admitted to the sacred font until the exorcist, by a solemn menacing formula, had declared them free from bondage to the prince of darkness and now servants of God. * * * The persons baptized returned

the ordinance as given by the Savior to the Nephites will not only appear, but will strongly plead for its divine origin.

I also call attention to the settlement of what Mr. Campbell calls "transubstantiation," this is, to the Christian memorial known as the Lord's supper, about which gathers some of the most vexed questions of Christian controversy. For the manner in which this simple memorial of Christ's atonement was changed to what was considered a magnificent spiritual, yet real sacrifice, the reader is referred to what is said in volume I of the New Witness, chapter v. Here I only wish to call attention to the simple beauty and comprehensiveness of the prayer which consecrated the emblems of the body and blood of Christ, found in the Book of Mormon. Trusting to the presence of qualities of simplicity and appropriateness to establish the divine origin of said formula, which result, if accomplished by the citation, will tend also to prove the general claims of the Book of Mormon.

Now the prayer of consecration:

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the

home, decorated with a crown and white robe; the first being indicative of their victory over the world and their lusts, the latter of their acquired innocence." (Mosheim's Institute, Century Three, chapter iv.) In describing baptism in the century previous—and the same things accompanied it in the third and fourth—he tells how "the baptized were signed with the cross, anointed, commended to God by prayer and imposition of hands, and finally directed to taste some milk and honey;" also how "Sponsors, or Godfathers, were employed for adults, and afterwards for children likewise." All of which mummeries were additions to the sublimely beautiful and simple ordinance of the baptism of the gospel.

name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

“The manner of administering the wine. Behold, they took the cup, and said :

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them, that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

Of this formula I have already said what Archdeacon Paley has said of the Lord's prayer, when appealing to its excellence as evidence of its divine origin—“For a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention on a few great points, for suitableness, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, this prayer is without an equal.” Its composition in excellence arises far above any performance that Joseph Smith could be considered equal to, and, in a word, carries within itself the evidence of a divine authorship. Such passages as these need no argument in support of their divine origin. We may trust entirely to the self-evidence which breathes through every sentence. A Campbell's mockery against such passages amounts to nothing.

VII.

The Book Contains Nothing New.

Relative to the objections urged against the Book of Mormon that it reveals nothing new, that it adds nothing to

our Christian treasury of knowledge, in other words, the charge that it contains no revelation—I refer for answer to all that, to what I have said concerning the knowledge which the Book of Mormon imparts on so many great and important subjects in chapters xxxix and xl.

Moreover, objections based upon this plea that the Book of Mormon reveals no new moral or religious truth, is a position not well taken by Christians at least. It must be conceded that the things which Christians would be compelled to allow as the important things for men to know—the existence of God the Father; the relationship of Jesus Christ to him, and the latter's relationship to men in effecting their redemption; the means by which that redemption is achieved; the final coming and universal reign of God's kingdom on earth, etc.,—all these important truths are repeated in Christ's ministry among the Nephites.

When Messiah came to the new world he had the same announcement to make concerning himself and his relations to the world, the same ethical and spiritual doctrines to teach; and as he had been accustomed to state these doctrines in brief, aphoristic sentences while in Judea, it is not strange that the same things were given to the Nephites in their language much in the same form. In a word, he not only had the same revelation to make to the inhabitants in the western hemisphere as to those in the eastern hemisphere, the same religion to teach, and therefore, as I have already remarked, it is sameness of doctrine, identity of construction, that should be looked for rather than something new in religion and ethics.

I would also remind the Christian reader of the fact that this same alleged want of originality, this alleged lacking of that which is new, is charged against the Lord Jesus Christ both by infidels and Jews. They demand to know

what moral and religious truth Jesus taught the world that was not already taught by Buddha and the Jewish Rabbis. Not only is it claimed that Christ's moral truths were borrowed from more ancient teachers, but that the principle events of his life, also, from his birth of a virgin to his crucifixion and resurrection as a God, were stolen from myths concerning old world heroes and teachers.

One writer devotes a volume to the subject in which he traces in the heathen mythologies sixteen crucified Saviors; the traditions concerning whom more or less bear some resemblance to chief events in the life of Messiah.

Perhaps one of the most elaborate and carefully prepared comparisons of the teachings of the Messiah as recorded in the New Testament, and the Rabbis in the Talmud appear in "The Open Court" for October, 1903, (Vol. 17). Of the long parallel I can only give samples:

New Testament.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."

"Thy kingdom come. They will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."

"How wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye."

Talmud.

"More acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice is the humble spirit."

"Let this be thy short form of prayer: Thy will be done in heaven, and may peace of heart be the reward of them that reverence thee on earth."

"Lead me not into sin, even from its temptations deliver thou me."

"Whoso judges his neighbor charitably, shall himself be charitably judged."

"Do they say: Take the splinter out of thine eye? He will answer: Remove the beam out of thine own eye."

New Testament.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

"Freely ye have received, freely give."

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master."

Talmud.

"What is hateful unto thee, that do not unto another. This is the whole Law, all the rest is commentary."

"As freely as God has taught you, so freely shall ye teach."

"The Sabbath has been delivered into your power, not you into the power of the Sabbath."

"It is enough for the servant that he be as his master."

A parallel somewhat similar, though neither so closely identical nor so extended, can be drawn between the teachings of Buddha and Christ, which any one may verify for himself by consulting Max Muller's lecture on *Dhammapada*, or The Path of Virtue.^v

To a limited extent, also, a similar parallel might be drawn between the teachings of Christ and Confucius, and even of other moral philosophers. To illustrate what I mean, take the "Golden Rule," for so long, and even now, by a great many people, regarded as an exclusively Christian utterance, and you will find the substance of it in the utterance of many teachers before the time of Christ:

1. Golden Rule by Confucius, 500 B. C.

"Do unto another what you would have him do unto you, and do not to another what you would not have him do unto you. Thou needest this law alone. It is the foundation of all the rest."

2. Golden Rule by Aristotle, 385 B. C.

"We should conduct ourselves toward others as we would have them act toward us."

^vSee Science of Religion, p. 193-300.

3. Golden Rule by Pittacus, 650 B. C.

“Do not to your neighbor what you would take ill from him.”

4. Golden Rule by Thales, 464 B. C.

“Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing.”

5. Golden Rule by Isocrates, 338 B. C.

“Act toward others as you desire them to act toward you.”

6. Golden Rule by Aristippus, 365 B. C.

“Cherish reciprocal benevolence, which will make you as anxious for another’s welfare as your own.”

7. Golden Rule by Sextus, a Pithagorean, 406 B. C.

“What you wish your neighbors to be to you, such be also to them.”

8. Golden Rule by Hillel, 50 B. C.

“Do not to others what you would not like others to do to you.”^w

Though perhaps not properly belonging to my treatment of this objection to the Book of Mormon, I may say in passing—and to keep those who read these pages in the presence of the full truth—I may say that the presence of ethical and religious truths, in what we call heathen mythology, is easily accounted for. The gospel was taught in very ancient times, in fact from the beginning—a dispensation of it was given to Adam—and although men departed from it in large measure as a system of truth, still fragments of it were preserved in the mythologies of all people. So that as a matter of fact Christianity, as taught by Jesus, derived nothing from heathen mythology, but heathen mythologies were made rich by fragmentary truths from the early dispensations of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

^w“The World’s Sixteen Crucified Saviors.” (Graves), pp. 303-4.

VIII.

Modern Astronomy in the Book.

From a remark of the younger Alma's (first century B. C.), and from one of Mormon's (fourth century A. D.), it is evident that the Nephites had knowledge of the movement of the earth and of the planets. Alma, in his remark, appeals to the earth's motion, "yea, and also of the planets which move in their regular form," as being evidence of the existence of the Creator.*

Mormon's remark comes in course of some reflections of his upon the power of God, when abridging the Book of Helaman, in which he says:

Yea, and if he say unto the earth, move, it is moved; yea, if he say unto the earth, thou shalt go back, that it lengthen out the day for many hours, it is done; and thus according to his word, the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for sure it is the earth that moveth, and not the sun.^y

Both these passages are referred to by Lamb^z as evidence of the Book of Mormon being modern, and the second passage he sarcastically refers to as "a modern scientist attempting to explain Joshua's miracle:" to which I might say: Why not an ancient Nephite's explanation of Joshua's miracle, since the Nephites were acquainted with that same miracle, having with them the book of Joshua with other Hebrew scriptures? Moreover, the knowledge of the move-

*Alma xxx: 44.

^yHelaman xii: 13-15.

^z"Golden Bible," p. 336.

ment of the earth and of the planets is not modern knowledge. It is quite generally conceded that the ancients had the knowledge of these facts, and that the discoveries by Copernicus, Kepler and others are but a revival or restoration of ancient knowledge concerning the movement of the earth and planetary system.^a

The Holy Inquisition in passing sentence on Galileo took occasion to say something of the Copernican system, teaching which was the philosopher's offense, and denounced it as "that false Pythagorean doctrine utterly contrary to the Holy Scriptures." ("Intellectual Development of Europe," Draper, Vol. II., p. 263).

Again: Because the inhabitants of the eastern hemisphere were fallen into ignorance concerning the facts of astronomy, it does not necessarily follow that the inhabitants of the western hemisphere were without correct knowledge on that subject. Indeed, the authorities on American antiquities agree that the ancient native Americans were well advanced in knowledge on that subject. Priest, for instance, has the following passage on the subject:

As it respects the scientific acquirements of the builders

^a"In the sixth century before our era," remarks Andrew D. White ("History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom," Vol. I, pp. 120, 121), "Pythagoras, and after him Philolaus, had suggested the movement of the earth and planets about a central fire; and, three centuries later, Aristarchus had restated the main truth with striking precision. Here comes in a proof that the antagonism between theological and scientific methods is not confined to Christianity; for this statement brought upon Aristarchus the charge of blasphemy, and drew after it a cloud of prejudice which hid the truth for six hundred years. Not until the fifth century of our era did it timidly appear in the thoughts of Martianus Capella; then it was again lost to sight for a thousand years, until in the fifteenth century, distorted and imperfect, it appeared in the writings of Cardinal Nicholas de Cusa."

of the works in the west, now in ruins, [the mounds], Mr. Atwater, says, "when thoroughly examined, have furnished matter of admiration to all intelligent persons who have attended to the subject. Nearly all the lines of ancient works found in the whole country, where the form of the ground admits of it, are right ones; pointing to the four cardinal points. Where there are mounds enclosed, the gateways are most frequently on the east side of the works, towards the rising sun. Where the situation admits of it, in their military works, the openings are generally towards one or more of the cardinal points. From which it is supposed they must have had some knowledge of astronomy, or their structures would not, it is imagined, have been thus arranged. From these circumstances also, we draw the conclusion that the first inhabitants of America, emigrated from Asia, at a period coeval with that of Babylon, for there it was that astronomical calculations were first made, 2,234 years before Christ.^b

"These things could never have so happened, with such invariable exactness, in almost all cases, without design. 'On the whole,' says Atwater, 'I am convinced from an attention to many hundreds of these works, in every part of the west which I have visited, that their authors had a knowledge of astronomy.'"

Baldwin has the following passage on what he regards as a telescopic device, discovered in an ancient mound:

Mr. Schoolcraft gives this account of a discovery made in West Virginia: "Antique tube: telescopic device. In the course of excavations made in 1842 in the eastern-most of the three mounds of the Elizabethtown group, several tubes of stone were disclosed, the precise object of which has been the subject of various opinions. The longest measured twelve inches, the shortest eight. Three of them were carved out of steatite, being skilfully cut and polished. The diameter of the tube externally was one inch and four tenths; the bore, eight

^b"American Antiquities" (Priest), p. 272.

tenths of an inch." This calibre was continued till within three eighths of an inch of the sight end, when it diminishes to two tenths of an inch. By placing the eye at the diminished end, the extraneous light is shut out from the pupil, and distant objects are more clearly discerned.' He points out that the carving and workmanship generally are very superior to Indian pipe carvings, and adds, if this article was a work of the Mound-Builders, 'intended for a telescopic tube, it is a most interesting relic.' An ancient Peruvian relic, found a few years since, shows the figure of a man wrought in silver, in the act of studying the heavens through such a tube. Similar tubes have been found among relics of the Mound-Builders in Ohio and elsewhere. In Mexico, Captain Dupaix saw sculptured on a peculiar stone structure the figure of a man making use of one. Astronomical devices were sculptured below the figure. This structure he supposed to have been used for observation of the stars."^c

Later, referring to the Dupaix Mexican observatory, Baldwin says:

"In this part of Mexico Captain Dupaix examined a peculiar ruin, of which he gave the following account: "Near the road from the village of Tlalmanalco to that called Mecamecan, about three miles east of the latter, there is an isolated granite rock, which was artificially formed into a kind of pyramid with six hewn steps facing the east. The summit of this structure is a platform, or horizontal plane, well adapted to observation of the stars on every side of the hemisphere. It is almost demonstrable that this very ancient monument was exclusively devoted to astronomical observations, for on the south side of the rock are sculptured several hieroglyphical figures having relation to astronomy. The most striking figure in the group is that of a man in profile, standing erect, and directing his view to the rising stars in the sky. He holds to his eye a tube or optical instrument. Below his feet is a frieze divided into six compartments,

^c"Ancient America," (Baldwin), p. 42.

with as many celestial signs carved on its surface." It has been already stated that finely-wrought "telescopic tubes" have been found among remains of the Mound-Builders. They were used, it seems, by the ancient people of Mexico and Central America, and they were known also in ancient Peru, where a silver figure of a man in the act of using such a tube has been discovered in one of the old tombs.^d

Even Prescott, who is inclined to be sceptical of the statements made concerning astronomical instruments among the Aztecs, and ridicules Dupaix's assertion of the existence of an astronomical observatory, nevertheless says:

We know little further of the astronomical attainments of the Aztecs. That they were acquainted with the cause of eclipses is evident from the representation, on their maps, of the disk of the moon projecting on that of the sun. Whether they had arranged a system of constellations is uncertain; though, that they recognized some of the most obvious, as the Pleiades, for example, is evident from the fact that they regulated their festivals by them.^e

Nadaillac, always conservative concerning the civilization and knowledge of the native Americans, on this point says:

The various races which occupied Central America had some knowledge of astronomy. They were acquainted with divisions of time founded on the motion of the sun, and long before the conquest they possessed a regular system.^f

Bancroft, on the same subject, remarks:

Perhaps the strongest proof of the advanced civilization of

^d"Ancient America," (Baldwin), pp. 122, 123.

^e"Conquest of Mexico," (Prescott), Vol. I., p. 103.

^f"Pre-Historic America," (Nadaillac), p. 305.

the Nahuas was their method of computing time, which, for ingenuity and correctness, equaled, if it did not surpass, the systems adopted by contemporaneous European and Asiatic nations. The Nahuas were well acquainted with the movements of the sun and moon, and even of some of the planets, while celestial phenomena, such as eclipses, although attributed to unnatural causes, were nevertheless carefully observed and recorded. They had, moreover, an accurate system of dividing the day into fixed periods, corresponding somewhat to our hours; indeed, as the learned Sr. Leony Gama has shown, the Aztec calendar-stone which was found in the plaza of the city of Mexico, was used not only as a durable register, but also as a sundial.^g

IX.

The Geography of the Book.

It is objected to the Book of Mormon that it lacks "local coloring" and definiteness in respect of its geography; and it is usually contrasted to its disadvantage with the Bible in this respect. "I have not been able to find an edition of the Book of Mormon with maps in it," says one objector, "nor have I been able to find with perfect surety the location of the land in which Christ is supposed to have appeared to the Nephites."^h

"We find almost nothing," continues Dr. Paden, "which would fit with the tropical climate; in fact, the general description would better coincide with Pennsylvania or New York."ⁱ "The grandest mountains in the world, and the highest table lands," says another objector, "are as entirely ig-

^gBancroft's Works, Vol. II., p. 502.

^hDr. W. M. Paden, Pastor of the first Presbyterian Church, Salt Lake City, Utah, in a Discourse against the Book of Mormon, March 21, 1904.

ⁱIbid.

nored as is the general shape of the two continents and other physical facts. While the physical characteristics of Palestine are woven as a web into almost every page of Bible history, the Book of Mormon is unable to appeal to a single geographical fact in confirmation of its pretended histories, except the general one that there was a 'land south' and a 'land north.'"^j

This is an exaggerated statement of the supposed difficulty, and so also is it an exaggerated statement concerning the geography of the Bible. Suppose, for instance, you separate the Book of Isaiah from the rest of the library of books comprising the Bible, and how much of a figure does geography cut in that book? The same may be said of the book of Psalms, the book of Proverbs, and, separating the preface from it, the same could be said of the book of Deuteronomy. Mistakes in criticism of the Book of Mormon are continually made through entertaining the idea that the Book of Mormon in its structure is the same as the Bible; that it is the translation of a people's original literature, and that the books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, etc., are the books written by the men bearing those names. Whereas, what we have is but Mormon's abridgment of the writings of those men. The Book of Mormon, in other words, save for the writings of Nephi and Jacob (149 pages), and seven other writers^k—whose entries upon the small plates of Nephi make but about eight pages—is an abridged record throughout. Historical events, doctrines, prophecies, not geographical descriptions, the location of cities, the course of rivers, the grandeur of mountains or the extent of valleys, will be the objective of Mormon's research through the larger Nephite

^jGolden Bible, pp. 308, 309.

^kThis work Vol. II., p. 138.

records. I may say, therefore, in answer to this criticism of the Book of Mormon, while by no means granting all that is claimed in respect of its geographical defects—its imperfections in geography arise from the very nature of the book's construction. In such a work you do not look for geographical knowledge.

I may say also that as these pages go to press the question of Book of Mormon geography is more than ever recognized as an open one by students of the book. That is to say, it is a question if Mormon views hitherto entertained respecting Book of Mormon lands have not been a misconception by reason of premises forced upon its students by the declaration of an alleged revelation. In a compendium of doctrinal subjects, published by the late Elders Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little, the following item appears:

Lehi's Travels.—Revelation to Joseph the Seer: The course that Lehi and his company traveled from Jerusalem to the place of their destination: They traveled nearly a south, southeast direction until they came to the nineteenth degree of north latitude; then, nearly east of the Sea of Arabia, then sailed in a southeast direction, and landed on the continent of South America, in Chili, thirty degrees south latitude.^a

The only reason so far discovered for regarding the above as a revelation is that it is found written on a loose sheet of paper in the hand writing of Frederick G. Williams, for some years second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church in the Kirtland period of its history; and follows the body of the revelation contained in Doctrine and Covenants, Section vii., relating to John the beloved disciple, remaining on earth, until the glorious coming of Jesus to reign with his Saints. The hand-writing is certified to be that of

^aCompendium, p. 289.

Frederick G. Williams, by his son, Ezra G. Williams, of Ogden; and endorsed on the back of the sheet of paper containing the above passage and the revelation pertaining to John. The indorsement is dated April the 11th, 1864. The revelation pertaining to John has this introductory line: "*A Revelation Concerning John, the Beloved Disciple.* But there is no heading to the passage relating to the passage about Lehi's travels. The words "Lehi's Travels;" and the words "Revelation to Joseph the Seer," are added by the publishers, justified as they supposed, doubtless, by the fact that the paragraph is in the hand writing of Frederick G. Williams, Counselor to the Prophet, and on the same page with the body of an undoubted revelation, which was published repeatedly as such in the life time of the Prophet, first in 1833, at Independence, Missouri, in the "Book of Commandments," and subsequently in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until now. But the one relating to Lehi's travels was never published in the life-time of the Prophet, and was published no where else until published in the Richards-Little's Compendium as noted above. Now, if no more evidence can be found to establish this passage in Richards and Little's Compendium as a "revelation to Joseph, the Seer," than the fact that it is found in the hand writing of Frederick G. Williams, and on the same sheet of paper with the body of the revelation about John, the beloved disciple, the evidence of its being a "revelation to Joseph, the Seer," rests on a very unsatisfactory basis.

Yet this alleged "revelation" has dominated all our thinking, and influenced all our conclusions upon the subject of Book of Mormon geography. Whereas, if this is not a revelation, the physical description relative to the contour

of the lands occupied by the Jaredites and Nephites, that being principally that two large bodies of land were joined by a narrow neck of land—can be found between Mexico and Yucatan with the isthmus of Tehuantepec between. If the investigation now going on shall result in relieving us of the necessity of considering ourselves bound to uphold as a revelation the passage in Richards and Little's Compendium, here considered, many of our difficulties as to the geography of the Book of Mormon—if not all of them in fact, will have passed away. In that event much found in this treatise of the Book of Mormon relative to the Nephites being in South America—written under the impression that the passage in the above named Compendium was, as is there set forth, a revelation—will have to be modified.

And let me here say a word in relation to new discoveries in our knowledge of the Book of Mormon, and for matter of that in relation to all subjects connected with the work of the Lord in the earth. We need not follow our researches in any spirit of fear and trembling. We desire only to ascertain the truth; nothing but the truth will endure; and the ascertainment of the truth and the proclamation of the truth in any given case, or upon any subject, will do no harm to the work of the Lord which is itself truth. Nor need we be surprised if now and then we find our predecessors, many of whom bear honored names and deserve our respect and gratitude for what they achieved in making clear the truth, as they conceived it to be—we need not be surprised if we sometimes find them mistaken in their conceptions and deductions; just as the generations who succeed us in unfolding in a larger way some of the yet unlearned truths of the Gospel, will find that we have had some misconceptions and made some wrong deductions in

our day and time. The book of knowledge is never a sealed book. It is never "completed and forever closed;" rather it is an eternally open book, in which one may go on constantly discovering new truths and modifying our knowledge of old ones. The generation which preceded us did not exhaust by their knowledge all the truth, so that nothing was left for us in its unfolding; no, not even in respect of the Book of Mormon; any more than we shall exhaust all discovery in relation to that book and leave nothing for the generation following us to develop. All which is submitted, especially to the membership of the Church, that they may be prepared to find and receive new truths both in the Book of Mormon itself and about it; and that they may also rejoice in the fact that knowledge of truth is inexhaustible, and will forever go on developing.

x.

Of the Objection that the Transcript of Characters Made from the Nephite Plates by Joseph Smith, a Few Lines of which have been Preserved, Bear no Resemblance to the Hieroglyphics and Language Characters Discovered in Central America on Stone Tablets, Maya Books and Mexican Picture Writing.

This is an objection most vehemently urged by Rev. M. T. Lamb, author of "The Golden Bible," already several times quoted in this division of my treatise. Mr. Lamb takes the three lines of characters of Joseph Smith's transcript, and confronts them with a *fac simile* of Landa's Maya Alphabet, and also engravings from some of the stone tablets from Palenque and Copan, and then triumphantly invites comparison in the following passages:

We ask the candid reader carefully to examine these characters, and then look back again to page 261. Those [Joseph's transcript from the plates] are the characters Joseph Smith tells us were universally used in Central America 1,500 and 2,000 years ago—while the ruins, the engraved stones, the chiselled marble, tell us that these [Mr. Lamb's reproduction of Landau's Maya Alphabet] were the characters actually used in that locality, and at that time. Look at the two attentively—see if you can discover any likeness whatever between them. A woeful fatality, is it not? that there should not happen to be even one of Mr. Smith's characters that bears a family likeness, or the least particle of resemblance to the characters actually used by the ancient inhabitants of Central America!^a

Commenting again upon the characters of Joseph Smith's transcript, Mr. Lamb says:

The longer you look at them the more modern and familiar they will become until Professor Anthon's designation, a "hoax" will not seem at all surprising even to a candid Mormon. And if that word is not the proper one, this certainly must be acknowledged, that they are the most unfortunate specimen of ancient characters that have ever been exhibited; for they have a fearfully suspicious look, and it would take the clearest possible evidence to drive away that suspicion from any intelligent and unprejudiced mind.^b

These are rather formidable conclusions to force upon us from a basis of comparison so narrow as that furnished by the three lines of Joseph Smith's transcript. This preserved scrap, published first in the "Prophet," New York, December 21st, 1844,^d of three lines, or even that of seven lines preserved with the Whitmer Manuscript, are evidently

^a"The Golden Bible," p. 265. I quote from the 1887 edition, which I understand to be the revised and enlarged one.

^bIbid., p. 260.

^d"The Prophet" was a Mormon weekly periodical, published by S. Brannan from May, 1844, to May 24, 1845.

not all that were submitted to Professor Anthon^e by Martin Harris. Professor Anthon in describing the characters submitted to him as a transcript from the plates, says:

This paper in question was, in fact, a singular scroll. It consisted of all kinds of singular characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets, Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes; Roman letters inverted or placed sideways were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, arched with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican calendar by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived.

Neither the three lined transcript,^f nor the seven, meets this description of Anthon's though they may have constituted a part, and doubtless were a part of what was submitted to Professors Anthon and Mitchell. But neither of the two transcripts furnishes data for the conclusions of Mr. Lamb, since we have in them so few of the Nephite characters as a basis of comparison. But even from data so meagre as that furnished by these transcripts, it is possible to show that Mr. Lamb and others who have made like objection are too hasty in their conclusions. On a separate page, I give a photographic reproduction of the ancient Maya Alphabet as engraved by Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon, from the mural inscriptions of the Mayas, and the Egyptian Hieratic Alphabet according to Messrs. Champollion, Le Jeune and Bunsen. The whole page is a photograph reproduction of a page from the preface of Le Plongeon's Work, "Sacred Mysteries Among the Mayas and the Quiches," page xii.

^eA fac simile of which is given in Vol. II., p. 72.

^fVolume II., this work n. 76. This is from his letter to E. D. Howe; in a second letter to Rev. Coit, Anthon gives a similar description. (Ibid., pp. 79, 78.)

Ancient Maya Hieratic alphabet according to mural inscriptions

Egyptian Hieratic alphabet according to Messrs. Champollion J Jeune and Bunsen.

A	○. ^ . ◊ .	⊗ . 4 . ^ .
B	▣ . □ .	▣ . ▣ . □ .
C	☞ . ♁ . ○ .	☞ .
H	⊙ . □ . ☞ . □ .	⊙ . □ . □ .
I	/ . // .	/// . //
K	K . △ . △ . ♁ . ⊙ .	△ . △ . ♁ . ⊙ . ☞ . ○ .
L	○ . △ .	○ . // . √ .
M	∩ . □ . ☞ .	∩ . ▣ . ☞ . □ .
N	⋈ . — . ☞ . ☞ .	⋈ . — .
O	○ .	⊙ .
P	▣ . □ . 8 . .	▣ . □ .
PP	☞ . ☞ .	□ . ☞ .
T	T . △ . △ .	△ . △ . ☞ .
TH	☞ .	☞ .
U	♁ . ☞ . ☞ .	⊙ .
X	X . 2 .	☞ . ☞ . ☞ .
Y	/ . /// . /// .	∩ . /// .
Z	∩ . ☞ .	
CH	□ . ☞ .	
CM	☞ .	☞ . ☞ .
TZ	X .	X .
∩	☞ . ☞ .	☞ . ☞ .
E	∩ .	// .

Two things are to be observed with reference to these two alphabets: First, the strong resemblance between many of the American and Egyptian characters; second, the resemblance of some of the characters in the transcript from the Nephite plates to some of the characters in both the so-called Maya and the Egyptian Alphabet. And although the Nephite characters are so few, and some allowance must be made for unskilfulness in making the transcriptions, yet there is to be seen a strong family likeness between the characters of all three productions here presentd, Mr. Lamb and others to the contrary notwithstanding. And that family likeness between the Nephite characters and Egyptian writing is made more impressive by the second page of *fac similies* herewith presented, consisting first of a photographic reproduction of a transcript, of the three kinds of writing employed by the Egyptians in ancient times, from the work of George Rawlinson, compared with Joseph Smith's transcript of Nephite characters. The first line from Rawlinson's work is the Hieroglyphic form of Egyptian writing, the second the Hieratic, the third the Demotic.^f

It will be observed, as Mr. Rawlinson himself points out, that "there is not much difference between the hieratic and the demotic." The former is the earlier of the two. And now, notwithstanding the fact that the Nephites wrote in characters that they called "Reformed Egyptian"—which I understand to mean, in altered or changed Egyptian characters, yet, I submit, that when the transcript of Nephite characters made by Joseph Smith is compared with the transcript from the works of Mr. Rawlinson, there is a strong family likeness very gratifying to believers in the

^fBoston 1882, two volumes. The photographed transcript will be found in Vol. I. of Rawlinson, p. 120.

Book of Mormon, and the force of Mr. Lamb's objection on this head is destroyed by these submitted facts, viz., the few Nephite characters preserved from Joseph Smith's transcripts, disclose a strong family resemblance to the ancient forms of Egyptian writing, and even some similarities to the ancient Maya Alphabet published by Le Plongeon.