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A Sacred History: External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon, Chapter V

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Abstract: Uses historical, linguistic, and archaeological evidence to prove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Basing his facts on research done by noted linguists and archaeologists of the time, the author writes concerning the god Quetzalcoatl, religious customs and ruins of advanced civilizations, comparisons between the Hebrew and Mayan languages, and the Egyptian hieroglyphic writings. Shreeve also tells of similarities in biblical beliefs between early people of both the western and eastern hemispheres and explains why Joseph Smith was incapable of writing the Book of Mormon without divine aid.

uses, and for the identical ones herein affirmed, why is it that scripture so highly exalts them, and repeatedly warns us against defiling them? Scriptural references to the point are so numerous and definite that we omit all quotations. They readily suggest themselves to all who are passably familiar with evangelical writings.

(To be Continued.)

A SACRED HISTORY.

External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A. SHREEVE.

Chapter V.

WE have now reached a point where it becomes advisable to examine history, as related in the Book of Mormon, and see whether it is substantiated by facts learned from external sources. Taking the Mosaic account of the flood and the building of Babel, and also the account, given in the Book of Mormon, of Jared and his party, we find as follows:

Noah and his wife, and their sons with their wives, making a total of eight persons, sought refuge in the ark from the promised flood of waters about 1656 years after the expulsion of Adam from the Garden. This ark was an enclosed vessel, and it floated finally upon fifteen cubits of water. All things of flesh not taken into the ark were destroyed. After forty days Noah sent forth a raven, which came not back, but flew to and fro until the waters dried from off the lands. After the raven, he thrice sent forth a dove; and the second time she brought back an olive leaf. And after the waters had subsided, Noah and his family came forth from the ark and received the command to multiply and replenish the earth. This command they strictly obeyed; and God said to Noah that He would set a bow in the cloud as a token of covenant between Him and the earth; and this bow should be one of promise which God would remember between Him and Noah and every living creature of all flesh, that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy the earth.

After one hundred and one years, the people having all been of one tongue, and being exceeding numerous and powerful, many of them sought idolatrously to build a tower unto heaven; and the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, and, being angered by their blasphemy, He cursed them with a confusion of tongues; and they were scattered abroad from this upon the face of all the earth; and the name of the tower was called Babel.

So far I have epitomized from the Bible. The Book of Mormon takes up the narrative in this way:

That one Jared and his brother had been in the midst of the builders of the tower; and when the Lord descended to lay His curse upon the idolaters, Jared, who was highly favored of his Creator, prayed with his brother that the Lord would not confound their language, nor the language of their friends, but would permit them to still understand each other. After crying long unto God, His anger was turned from them, and they were commanded to take their families and their flocks, and seed of the earth, and their friends and their families, and depart from that land. And after many days they dwelt beyond the sea in the wilderness; and thence they journeyed across the deep waters into the promised land.

The manner of their traveling, and the aids and inspiration which they received must be left for another chapter.

The first colonization described in the Book of Mormon, therefore, was that of a people who came from the tower of Babel. The great flood which preceded the building of the tower, therefore, is a striking event from which to begin our investigations. Are there any traditions or historical records in existence, outside of the sacred history, which show that the people ever traced back their origin to Noah, or the tower builders? If we can find no such tradition, then one strong external proof of the truth of the Book of Mormon will be missing; but if, on the other hand, we discover distinct traditions of such events, then we have the best possible evidence that the history and genealogy recorded in the Book of Mormon are true. Such traditions do exist; and to add to the value of this proof, they could not possibly have been known to Joseph Smith, through any earthly source, at the time he wrote. I quote now from Alfred Maury. He says:

"It is a very remarkable fact that we find in America traditions of the deluge coming infinitely nearer to that of the Bible and the Chaldean religion than among any people of the old world. It is difficult to suppose that the emigration that certainly took place from Asia into North America by the Kourile and Aleutian islands, and still does so in our day, should have brought in these memories, since no trace is found of them among these Mongol or Siberian populations which were fused with the natives of the New World. * * * The attempts that have been made to trace the origin of Mexican civilization to Asia have not as yet led to any sufficiently conclusive facts. Besides, had Buddhism, which we doubt, made its way into America, it could not have introduced a myth not found in its own scriptures. The cause of these similarities between the diluvian traditions of the nations of the New World and that of the Bible remains therefore unexplained."

Mr. Maury has a very clear idea of the situation up to a certain point; but he is mistaken when he says that the cause of these similarities is unexplained. The explanation is simple: It is distinct to every reasonable man who will investigate the Book of Mormon.

Maury then goes on to say:

"The most important among the American traditions are the Mexican, for they appear to have been definitely fixed by symbolic and mnemonic paintings before any contact with Europeans. According to these documents, the Noah of the Mexican cataclysm was Coxcox, called by certain peoples Teo-cipactli or Tezpi. He had saved himself together with his wife Noehiquetzal, in a bark, or, according to other traditions, on a raft made of cypress-wood (*cupressus disticha*). Paintings retracing the deluge of Coxcox have been discovered among the Aztecs, Miztecs, Zapotecs, Tlascaltecs, and Mechoacaneses. The tradition of the latter is still more strikingly in conformity with the story as we have it in Genesis, and in Chaldean sources. It tells how Tezpi embarked in a spacious vessel with his wife, his children, and several animals, and grain, whose preservation was essential to the subsistence of the human race. When the great god Tezcatlipoca decreed that the waters should retire, Tezpi sent a vulture from the bark. The bird, feeding on the carcasses with which the earth was laden, did not return. Tezpi sent out other birds, of which the humming bird only came back with a leafy branch in its beak. Then Tezpi, seeing that the country began to vegetate, left his bark on the mountain of Colhuacan."

"The document, however, that gives the most valuable information," says Lenormant, "as to the cosmogony of the Mexicans is one known as 'Codex Vaticanus,' from the library where it is preserved. It consists of four symbolic pictures, representing the four ages of the world preceding the actual one. They were copied at Chobula from a manuscript anterior to the conquest, and accompanied by the explanatory commentary of Pedro De Los Rios, a Dominican monk, who, in 1566, less than fifty years after the arrival of Cortez,

devoted himself to the research of indigenous traditions as being necessary to his missionary work."

According to the statements made in this document, the world had four ages; the fourth age was the age of water, ending in a veritable deluge. It was following this deluge, which ended the fourth age that the ancestors of these ancient Americans came to this land; for Bancroft says—Vol. III, page 270:

"It is in this fourth period that the Mexican historian places the Toltecs' arrival in New Spain."

The following flood legend is taken from the Aztec "Codex Chimal Popoca," by Abbe Brasseur De Bourbourg:

"This is the sun called Nahui-atl, '4 water.' Now the water was tranquil for forty years, plus twelve, and men lived for the third and fourth times. When the sun Nahui-atl came there had passed away four hundred years, plus two ages, plus seventy-six years. Then all mankind was lost and drowned, and found themselves changed into fish. The sky came nearer the water. In a single day all was lost, and the day Nahui-Xochitl, '4 flower,' destroyed all our flesh.

"And that year was that of Ce-calli, '1 house,' and the day Nahui-atl all was lost. Even the mountains *sank into the water*, and the water remained tranquil for fifty-two springs.

"Now at the end of the year the god Titlacahuan had warned Nata and his spouse Nena, saying, 'Make no more wine of agave, but begin to hollow out a great cypress, and you will enter into it when in the month Tozontli the water approaches the sky.

"Then they entered in, and when the god had closed the door, he said, 'thou shalt eat but one ear of maize and thy wife one also.'

"But as soon as they had finished they went out, and the water remained calm, for the wood no longer moved, and, on opening it, they began to see fish.

"Then they lit a fire, by rubbing together pieces of wood, and they roasted fish.

"The gods Citlallinque and Citlalatonac, instantly looking down, said: 'Divine Lord, what is that fire that is making there? Why do they thus smoke the sky?' At once Titlacahuan-Tezcatlipoca descended. He began to chide, saying, 'who has made this fire here? And, seizing hold of the fish, he shaped their loins and heads, and they were transformed into dogs [*chichime*]."

Donnelly says:

"The name of the hero of the Aztec story, *Nata*, pronounced with the broad sound of a, is not far from the name of Noah, or Noe. The deluge of Genesis is a Phœnician, Semitic, or Hebraic legend, and yet, strange to say, the name of Noah, which occurs in it, bears no appropriate meaning to those tongues, but is derived from Aryan sources; its fundamental root is Na, to which in all the Aryan language is attached the meaning of water—*nympha*, *neptunus*, water deities. (Lenormant and Chevallier, *Anc. Hist. of the East*, Vol. 1, p. 15.) We find the root Na repeated in the name of this Central American Noah, Na-ta, and probably in the word 'Na-hui-atl'—the age of water."

And in the Sacred Book of the Central Americans is the following legend of the deluge, which shows a striking analogy to the Chaldean:

"Then the waters were agitated by the will of the heart of heaven (*hurricane*), and a great inundation came upon the heads of these creatures. * * * They were engulfed, and a resinous thickness descended from heaven; * * * the face of the earth was obscured, and a heavy darkening rain commenced—rain by day and rain by night. * * * There was heard a great noise above their heads, as if produced by fire. Then were men seen running, pushing each other, filled with despair; they wished to climb upon their houses, and the houses, tumbling down, fell to the ground; they wished to climb upon the trees, and the trees shook them off; they wished to enter into the grottoes (caves), and the grottoes closed themselves before them. * * * Water and fire con-

tributed to the universal ruin at the time of the last great cataclysm which preceded the fourth creation."

(To be Continued.)

SUNSHINE AND HEALTH.

WITHOUT the sun our globe would be a frozen mass immersed in utter darkness. But the sun is more than light for the eye, and heat for the man and beast, and every living thing. It is an inexhaustible reservoir of health-giving energy, which it incessantly pours forth to man through ninety-three millions of miles of space.

Everybody knows the fact that plants will not thrive in the dark, however complete to all the other conditions of growth. When placed in the window they turn all their leaves to the light, and climbers, at a little distance from the window, will leave their supports and stretch out straight towards the sunshine.

It is not so generally known that human beings thrive only in the sunshine, though the wonderful medical power of sunshine was known to the ancients, and is now recognized by all our best physicians. What that mysterious influence is which the sunshine exerts on the plants to cause them to turn their leaves towards it, and thus drink in a fuller measure of life, and to force even the climbing plant to break away from its twining nature, the wisest cannot tell us. Equally mysterious, but equally real, is the invigorating power of sunshine on human beings. Without it men pine; all morbid tendencies are strengthened, and in a multitude of cases are developed into actual disease, and diseases otherwise contracted become liable to a fatal termination.

"What proportion of these crippled patients recover?" asked a visitor at one of the New York hospitals of Dr. Griscom, who had been connected with it for twenty years. "Nearly all on the sunny side of the hospital recover," he replied, "while many on the shady side linger along till gangrene sets in, when death comes to their relief." A similar fact is true universally.

We make some practical suggestions:

1. Get sun-baths as often as possible, sick or well.
2. Let the living-rooms and sleeping-rooms of the house be on the sunny side. We add sleeping-rooms, though we use them in the dark, for the sunshine acts as a disinfectant besides giving an invigorating power to the air that fills them.
3. Don't shut out the sunshine because it fades a choice carpet. A new one now and then won't cost as much as doctor's bills, to say nothing about loss in business and by death.
4. Take the sunny side of the street (except in sultry weather) in going back and forth to business.
5. Let mothers see that their babies get a double portion of sunshine, and make sure that their nursery-maids, when drawing them out in their carriages, don't take the shady side of the street for their own special comfort.
6. Be sure that the sick have a room which the sun enters daily.

EVERY created thing glorifies God in its place, by fulfilling His will, and the great purpose of His providence: but man alone can give tongue to every creature, and pronounce for all a general doxology.