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

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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.

reverence for his parents and progenitors, and great respect for the teachings of ancient sages. The following is related of him: "Coun-tse, his grand-father, was one day sitting absorbed in a melancholy reverie, in the course of which he fetched several deep sighs. The child observing him, after some time approached, and with many bows and formal reverences, spoke thus: 'If I may presume, without violating the respect I owe you, sir, to inquire into the cause of your grief, I would gladly do so. Perhaps you fear that I who am descended from you may reflect discredit on your memory by failing to imitate your virtues.'

"His grand-father surprised, asked him where he had learned to speak so wisely.

"From yourself, sir," he replied: 'I listen attentively to your words, and I have often heard you say that a son who does not imitate the virtues of his ancestors deserves not to bear their name.'

His life is an example of what it is possible for man to accomplish by perseverance, study and faithfulness in the pursuit of some definite object. Though the truths of his creed were mixed with error, his doctrines exerted a salutary influence upon all his countrymen who accepted them, and his moral influence has increased as years have passed. After his death his grave became a holy shrine around which his disciples congregated to do him honor, and a great number of temples were erected near the sacred spot.

In our illustration we see a temple of bronze, dedicated to this man. It cost an immense sum of money, as it is finished in the most expensive and elaborate style. In every city of the empire above the third class there is at least one temple dedicated to Confucius. All persons, the emperor himself not excepted, are bound to worship here. In the larger temples images are seldom found, but the sage and his followers are worshiped through the medium of their tablets, these being painted strips of boards standing upright upon which the names and titles of the deceased are carved. The tablet of Confucius stands in the center of the main hall facing the court, while on either side and facing inward are four tablets of his most illustrious disciples. Ten tablets, five on either side, stand in front of these and face inward; these are for the followers next in order of merit. Then on either side of a long room which is in front of the hall are tablets of fifty-eight other disciples. Before each tablet is a stand for offerings, incense and candles.

Literary men of the nation especially worship the sage, and boys about to enter school are first taken to the altar of "the world's most illustrious scholar and righteous being," that they may invoke his aid in their studies.

Many of the maxims and doctrines of Confucius were very excellent and his teachings for a good part could be profitably read by people of to-day. One day as he was passing a fowler who was separating his birds he said; "I do not see any old birds here, where have you put them?"

The answer was, "The old birds are too wary to be caught; they are on the lookout, and if they see a net or cage, far from falling into the snare, they escape and never return. Those young ones which are in company with them likewise escape, but only such as separate into a flock by themselves and rashly approach are the birds I take. If perchance I catch an old bird it is because he follows the young one."

Turning to his followers Confucius said: "You have heard him; the words of this fowler afford us matter for instruction. The young birds escape the snare only when they keep with the old ones, the old ones are taken when they follow the

young: it is thus with mankind. Presumption, hardihood, want of forethought and inattention, are the principal reasons why young people are led astray. Inflated with their small attainments, they have scarcely made a commencement in learning before they think they know everything; they have scarcely performed a few common virtuous acts, and straight they fancy themselves at the height of wisdom. Under this false impression, they doubt nothing, hesitate at nothing, pay attention to nothing; they rashly undertake acts without consulting the aged and experienced, and thus securely following their own notions, they are misled and fall into the first snare laid for them. If you see an old man of sober years so badly advised as to be taken with the sprightliness of a youth, attached to him, and thinking and acting with him, he is led astray by him, and soon taken in the same snare. Do not forget the answer of the fowler."

Is there not considerable of truth in these suggestions?

A SACRED HISTORY.

External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A SHREEVE.

Chapter VI.

AS I previously stated, the manner of traveling adopted by Jared and his brother, and the aids and instruction which they received, are entitled to a chapter in the consideration of this question.

Jared and his brother (Mahonri Moriancumer) were brought forth to the great sea which divided the lands, and they dwelt in tents upon the sea-shore for the space of four years; and at the expiration of that time the Lord came unto the brother of Jared and stood in a cloud and talked with Mahonri Moriancumer, and the Lord said:

"Go to work and build after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built"—for already in their wanderings these emigrants from the tower of Babel had crossed many waters, and they were now to proceed across the great sea to the land of promise, to which the Lord should lead them. And Jared and his brother did as they were commanded, and constructed eight barges, which they were able to close against water and air. And when they were finished Mahonri Moriancumer cried unto the Lord, saying:

"Oh, Lord, I have performed the work which thou hast commanded me, and I have made the barges according as thou hast directed me."

"Behold, oh Lord, in them there is no light, whither shall we steer? And also we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them; therefore we shall perish."

The Lord gave further instruction unto the brother of Jared, showing how the voyagers should receive air in the barges, and how they should be protected from the coming of the floods into their vessels.

And again Mahonri Moriancumer cried unto the Lord, saying:

"Oh, Lord, behold I have done even as Thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold there is no light in them. Behold, oh Lord, wilt Thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?"

Then the brother of Jared went forth unto the mount and melted out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white

and clear, even as transparent glass; and he did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount, and cried again unto the Lord:

"Oh, Lord, Thou hast all power and can do whatsoever Thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, oh Lord, with Thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.

"And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth His hands and touched the stones one by one with His finger; and the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. * * *

"And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which thou hast seen and heard, to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify My name in the flesh. Wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and shall show it to no man.

"And behold, when ye shall come unto Me ye shall write them and seal them up, that no one shall interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read.

"And behold, these two STONES will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also, with the things which ye shall write."

The foregoing embodies the epitomized account concerning the party of Jared, as given in the Book of Mormon. Now let us examine the authorities, to learn what legends, if any, modern research has brought to light bearing upon these points.

In the *Letlilzochtli Relaciones* of Kingsborough, *Mexicana antiquities*, occurs the following passage:

"The Toltecs, consisting of seven friends, with their wives, who understood the same language, came to these parts, having first passed great lands and seas, having lived in caves, and having endured great hardships in order to reach this land; they wandered 104 years through different parts of the world before they reached Hue-Tlapalan, which was in Ce Teepatl, 520 years after the flood."

Bancroft says:

"According to the quiches, traditions, the primitive portion of the Nahoas, or ancestors of the Toltecs, were in a distant east, beyond immense seas and lands. Amongst the families and tribes that bore with least patience this long repose and immobility, those of Canub, and of Tlocab may be cited, for they were the first to determine to leave their country. The Nahoas sailed in seven barks or ships, which Sahagun call Chicomoztoc, or the seven grottos. It is a fact worthy of note, that in all ages the number seven was a sacred number among the American people, from one pole to the other. It was at Panuco, near Tampico, that those strangers disembarked; they established themselves at Paxil, with the Votanites' consent, and their state took the name of Huehue-Tlapallan. It is not stated from whence they came, but merely that they came out of the regions where the sun rises. The supreme command was in the hand of a chieftain, whom history calls Quetzalcohuatl, that is to say, Lord par excellence. To his care was confided the holy envelope, which concealed the divinity from the human gaze, and he alone received from it the necessary instructions to guide his people's march."

The Tezendals have a legend, much confused in its details, but still having some distinct elements around which the minor matters are grouped. This tradition makes it appear that Votan, the god whom the people worshiped, had come to this land under divine instruction, bringing with him several of his family, to form the nucleus of a nation, and here had portioned out the lands.

Speaking of the Chiapan traditions concerning this same Votan, Bancroft says:

"But whatever value may be attached to their details, the traditions in question have great weight in establishing two general propositions—the existence in the remote past of a great and powerful empire in the Usamacinta region, and a

general belief among the subjects of that empire that the beginning of their greatness was due to a hero or demi-god called Votan. They point clearly to the appearance and growth of a great race, nation, or dynasty; and they carry us no further.

Ordonez relates that Votan visited his former home after the establishment of his kingdom upon this land; and that one of his visits to his former home was paid to an edifice which had been originally intended to reach heaven, an object defeated by a confusion of tongues.

Now I quote again from Bancroft:

"The tradition of the Toltecs regarding their travels before they reached Huehue-Tlapallan has been the theme of much speculation, especially as connected with their descent from the Babel builders."

Ixtlilzochtli writes of this tradition as follows:

"They say that the world was created in the year Ce Teepatl, and this time until the deluge they call Atonatiuh, which means the age of the sun of water, because the world was destroyed by the deluge. It is found in the histories of the Toltecs that this age and first world, as they term it, lasted seven hundred and sixteen years; that man and all the earth were destroyed by great showers and by lightnings from heaven, so that nothing remained, and the most lofty mountains were covered up and submerged to the depth of castilmoletlitl, or fifteen cubits; and here they add other fables of how men came to multiply again from the few who escaped the destruction in a toplipetlacali, which word very nearly signifies a closed chest; and how, after multiplying, the men built a zacual of great height, and by this is meant a very high tower, in which to take refuge when the world should be a second time destroyed. After this their tongue became confused, and, not understanding each other, they went to different parts of the world. The Toltecs, seven in number, with their wives, who understood each other's speech, after crossing great lands and seas, and undergoing many hardships, finally arrived in America, which they found to be a good land, and fit for habitation; and they say that they wandered one hundred and four years in different parts of the earth before they arrived at Huehue-Tlapallan, which they did in the year Ce Teepatl, five hundred and twenty years—or five ages—after the flood."

In another place Bancroft says:

"Votan, another mysterious personage, closely resembling Quetzalcoatl in many points, was the supposed founder of the Maya civilization. He is said to have been a descendant of Noah and to have assisted at the building of the tower of Babel. After the confusion of tongues he led a portion of the dispersed people to America. There he established the kingdom of Xibalba and built the city of Palenque."

Among the various works ascribed to Votan is the writing of 'a book,' in which was inscribed a complete record of all he had done. In this is the statement that he was the first man sent by God to portion out this land.

THE KING AND THE CHILD.—King Frederick VI. of Denmark while traveling through Jutland, one day entered a village school and found the children lively and intelligent, and quite ready to answer questions.

"Well, youngsters," he said, "what are the names of the greatest kings of Denmark?"

With one accord they cried out: "Canute the Great, Waldemar and Christian IV."

Just then a little girl, to whom the school-master had whispered something, stood up and raised her hand.

"Do you know another?" asked the king. "Yes, Frederick VI."

"What great act did he perform?"

The girl hung her head and stammered out: "I don't know."

"Be comforted, my child," said the king, "I don't know either."