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

Author(s): Thomas A. Shreeve

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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.

A SACRED HISTORY.

External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A. SHREEVE.

Chapter VII.

WE will not attempt to follow the Jaredites through the centuries of their national life upon this continent, further than to epitomize very briefly as follows:

Mahonri Moriancumer and Jared established themselves in this land, which was promised to them, and they built here a nation as great as any of which history gives record. During the greater part of sixteen centuries they continued to hold the lands and the cities of this hemisphere. Then stupendous quarrels occurred, and in a fierce battle which ensued between two factions of the race, the people were annihilated. With the exception of the prophet Ether [who was preserved to bear record of these things] the only survivor of the most sanguinary struggle which is detailed in human annals, was Coriantumr, the warrior king. This final battle was fought about the fifth century B. C. and after its conclusion Coriantumr wandered from the scene southward toward the region of his nation's former glory.

While these momentous events were closing, a new hegira to this hemisphere took place—the immigration to this land of Lehi and his friends. And also Mulek, son of king Zedekiah of Jerusalem, with a party of his people, reached this land. This latter people occupied the land Zarahemla, and after they had been settled some time in their new possessions, they were met by Coriantumr, who dwelt with them for the space of nine moons. During this brief but significant period he related to them many things concerning his people. Subsequently the people of Zarahemla and the people descended from Lehi discovered each other in these lands and joined together under one king, so that practically—since their origin was the same, and they joined together after less than three centuries of life in these lands—they were in truth as well as name one people.

This prominent fact, that America had two separate and distinct civilizations, as detailed in the Book of Mormon, leads one naturally to the inquiry, is such a view borne out by the legends and the ruins pertaining to the antiquities of this land? And is there anything to show that another people than the Jaredites landed anciently from abroad upon the shores of America?

Bancroft's *Native Races*, Vol. V. says that the Chilians claimed that their ancestors came from the west. This coincides with the account given in the Book of Mormon of the journey pursued by Lehi and his people.

The greatest student of the ancient history of Peru, in the original records of the country and in the traditions of that land in their purity, was Fernando Montesinos, who visited Peru about one century after the conquest. He was an industrious student whose service from Spain required him to travel over every part of Peru; and he gave the closest attention to the subject and embraced every one of the fine opportunities afforded him. His labor lasted fifteen years, during which time he learned to talk fluently with the Peruvians in their native tongue, and thoroughly gained their confidence. According to the account given by Montesinos, Peru had in her history three distinct periods. Discarding all the impossible

stories, he gives the Peruvian nation a beginning which Baldwin says is at least not impossible. Montesinos declares that it was originated by "a people led by four brothers, who settled in the valley of Cuzco and developed civilization in a very human way." Of these four scions of one father, the youngest was accorded supreme authority, and he became the ancestor of a long line of rulers. The list of kings which Montesinos gives succeeding this founder, whom he calls Puhua Manco, or Ayar-Uchu-Topa, of the first period, numbers sixty-four. During the time that the first six sovereigns were on the throne the people were taught the use of letters, the art of writing on leaves of the plantain tree, and also learned something of astrology; and the fifth king, so Baldwin says, "divided the kingdom into districts and sub-districts, introduced a complete civil organization, and instituted the solar year of 365 days." A succeeding sovereign was proficient in astronomy, and he "convened a scientific council which agreed that the sun was at a greater distance from the earth than the moon, and that they followed different courses."

After the Christian era, Montesinos shows that there was a period of disintegration, decline and disorder introduced by successful invasion from the east and south-east, during which the country was broken up into small states, and many of the arts of civilization were lost. This period lasted more than a thousand years, and then came the period of the Incas, who revived civilization and restored the empire as it was found by the Spanish conquerors when they came to Peru.

Baldwin, Prescott and other writers agree that long before the time of the Incas there existed in the country a race advanced in civilization.

I am not prepared to draw the line concerning the antiquities of America, and say which belonged to the Jaredites and which belonged to the Nephites. In many cases probably the Nephites rebuilt cities which were left by the Jaredites; and also in many cases the Nephites, doubtless, themselves made more than one occupation of certain districts; wandering, or being driven away after a period of inhabitation, and subsequently returning and resuming the occupancy of their fields and cities. These are points established in the Book of Mormon, and everything which I can find relating to the subject shows not only the possibility of these things, but shows the impossibility of anything else. In a preceding chapter I showed how civilization in these lands almost received its death-blow after the extinction of the Nephites proper; and that it was probably resumed in part at a subsequent time by the apostate Nephites and the Lamanites with whom they mingled. I cannot pretend to say where one civilization begins and the other leaves off, but I can only refer once more to the account of the Book of Mormon showing the wanderings of the people, and the vicissitudes and occasional cessations of their culture, and call to the reader's mind emphatically what all historians agree upon: Prescott says that the ruins on the shores of Lake Titicaca are older than the reign of the first Inca. Rivero and Don Tsehudi state that a careful examination of the monuments "indicates two very different epochs in Peruvian art; at least so far as concerning architecture—one before, and the other after the arrival of the first Inca." And Baldwin says, "among the ruins which belong to the older civilization are those at Lake Titicaca, old Huanuco, Tia Huanaco, and Gran-Chium, and it probably originated the roads and aqueducts. At Cuzco and other places are remains of buildings which represent the later time; but Cuzco of the Incas appears to have occupied the site of a ruined city of the older period."

Montesinos mentions that at the site of Cuzco there was discovered by its founders the ruin of an old city; and Baldwin says: "perhaps the first Inca found nothing but a heap of ruins."

A LIFE SKETCH.

BY ELDER B. B.

(Continued from page 172.)

ON one occasion when attending the public service the elder who was speaking related a portion of the experience that had befallen him while preaching the gospel. Among other things he informed us that he and his companion had been driven out of a certain town—that they had been stoned, and that dogs had been hissed upon them. At the recital of these lawless deeds my blood boiled, and it was with difficulty that I restrained myself from rising to my feet and interrupting the meeting. I wanted to tell the "Mormons" that if they could not go anywhere in a Christian country and preach such doctrines as I had heard them teach without being abused like brutes, it was my purpose to cast my lot with them and, to a certain extent, share their destiny. If they could not be treated in accordance with the instincts of a civilized humanity, I was fully resolved to aid them against their brutal oppressors.

The elder continued speaking, however, for some time thereafter on other subjects and when he finished I felt less inclined to commit myself than I had been when he was recounting his wrongs, and so I allowed the occasion to pass without giving expression to my feelings. But my natural hostility to the spirit of religious persecution was not abated in the least.

Following this the spirit moved the speakers one Sabbath day to dwell upon the gifts and blessings which had characterized the early Church, and in a forcible manner they showed the necessity for a continuance of the same powers in the Church in all ages, and closed by hearing a bold and unequivocal testimony that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now in possession of them. To all this I listened with absorbing interest. My inmost soul was yearning to know that the elders told the truth in their testimony. In my boyhood days I had been blessed with a vision of what the Church of Jesus ought to be, and as I then longed to see it in reality, so, now, with the forgotten impressions reproduced, I again yearned for a realization of my youthful hopes. Language can but feebly express the emotions that filled my heart. But I could not then believe that the "Mormons" were the people among whom I had once vowed to cast my lot. There was but little question in my mind that the claims they made in behalf of Christ's Church were correct, but the difficulty was to identify the "Mormons" as the Saints of God. The spirit bore no testimony to this effect, but it pleased God to bring me at once face to face with the question of my loyalty to principle for principle's sake. I thought of all the horrible tales I had heard respecting the "Mormons," and reflected much on the character of those about me. The best of them disclosed weaknesses which seemed to comport but illy with what I thought the lives of saints should be, and, to make matters worse, my lot had been cast in a locality which was never referred to as a settlement of model Saints. My most intimate acquaintances were Gentiles and apostates, and after them faint-hearted

"Mormons" who apparently condemned their own system by lax allegiance to it. The struggle which my circumstances thus forced upon me can be imagined far better than described, and the issue was satisfactory simply because God's love and favor continued with me.

After hearing the testimony of the elders I earnestly besought God to direct me and at once set about an investigation of the question of evidence in favor of the Mormon Church as being the true Church of Christ. Though it was generally known that I was interested, none of the Saints offered officious counsel and advice. They seldom sought to engage me in conversation on religious subjects and in this emergency I was obliged to go to them. I made inquiries of several respecting different points of doctrine where a variance existed between their views and mine, and to my astonishment discovered that the humblest of the elders were able to explain the scriptures in a manner so simple and consistent, that I perceived they possessed a spiritual insight which was denied to the wisest theologians of the world whose writings I had read. This fact impressed me deeply and in my efforts to assign a cause for their greater knowledge of divine things I was obliged to refer it to the operations of God's spirit. The Bible as interpreted by the elders seemed like a new book, and my ignorance of many of the doctrines it inculcates was made too conspicuous to be flattering.

I continued diligently seeking after the truth, and one day was prompted by the spirit to visit the house of an apostate, and request the loan of a book to read. He readily complied, and selecting from his library Apostle Orson Pratt's works asked me if I would like to read his writings. I took the book remarking that it would suit probably as well as some other volume. A short time thereafter I could have told him, that the book was exactly adapted to my condition at the time. It was the last volume that an apostate might wish to place in the hands of an inquirer after the truth of Mormonism.

The principles which this apostle uttered went straight to my heart, and demolished the last plea that I could suggest in favor of sectarian Christianity. The perusal of these writings severed the last tie that bound me to the religion of my fathers, and shortly thereafter I requested baptism at the hands of the elders and was admitted into the Church.

While returning homeward from the waters of baptism the elder who had officiated informed me that I would be subjected to a severe struggle to maintain my integrity. I had come into the Church after a contest in which every inch of my progress had been hotly disputed, but the conflict which had just terminated was to be dwarfed into comparative insignificance before the one that was at hand. So long as I was an avowed sectarian the whole body of Saints, without exception, treated me with the most marked consideration, and our intercourse with each other had been most cordial and friendly, but the very day of my baptism witnessed a change of feeling, on their part. Instead of being admitted to a closer intimacy with those whose society I most needed, I was held aloof, and could not repress a feeling that I was regarded with suspicion. That my impressions were well founded was subsequently confessed.

(To be Continued.)

THERE are no principles but those of religion to be depended on in cases of real distress; and these are able to encounter the worst emergencies, and to bear us up under all the changes and chances to which our life is subject.