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

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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.

leave. They bade him good-by with as much courtesy as they had welcomed him, and he started down the mountain. He descended without accident, and reached the bottom in much less time than it took him to go up. Mindful of his wife and children, he struck out for home, and arrived there in safety before supper. On entering his own abode he was somewhat surprised to find the place occupied by people he had never seen. What was worse they ordered him off the premises as an intruder. He remonstrated at thus being turned out of his own house, and in the altercation that ensued the master of the place came out from an inner room to see what was going on. He was a man well on in life, and yet the woodman never remembered to have laid eyes on him before. Appealing to him, however for redress, the woodman was asked his name, and on giving it the man replied that such was his first name, too. [In Corea the first name is equivalent to our last name.] On further questioning it turned out that the present incumbent was the woodman's own grandson. The wanderer had come back to another world. His wife had long since died, his children all were buried; most of their children, too, had passed away, and his great grandchildren had grown up to manhood. He had been gone 100 years."

The natives are a very superstitious race and some of their ideas seem ridiculous to us, but of their sincerity there can be no question. When the cholera was raging in Corea, in the Summer of 1886, its ravages are supposed to have been checked by the firing of guns at the "cholera god" (or devil). The disease was stopped very suddenly and whatever the cause may have been the object sought by the people was attained. It is not improbable that their faith had considerable to do with the realization of their hopes.

Now, however, a new affliction is overtaking them. The hair of all those who reach manhood is worn in a little knot on the top of the head, while unmarried men and boys wear their hair in a braid down their backs. This knot is first worn when a young man is betrothed and ever afterwards is tended with great care. To be deprived of this badge of manhood is a great misfortune, but as quite a number of men, some of whom are of the aristocracy, are now losing their hair in an unaccountable way, the matter has become a source of national concern as well as of shame and disgrace to the afflicted individuals. No natural cause for this misfortune being discovered, it is attributed to the workings of an evil spirit and the cannon are again brought into service to drive away the troublesome invader. This may seem a trifling matter, but should the people become impressed with the idea that the cause of this or any other of their many misfortunes is association with foreigners, they would quickly drive from their borders all strangers and close their ports against every person but their countrymen. In fact the great amount of sickness that existed among them last year had its cause, so many began to believe, through their associations with the strange westerners, and had not the cholera god been scared away, and a rich harvest of the earth's products gladdened their hearts it is not improbable that another massacre of whites would have now been on record.

THE YOUTHFUL MIND.—A straw will make an impression on the virgin snow; let it remain but a short time, and a horse's hoof can scarcely penetrate it. So is it with the youthful mind. A trifling word may make an impression on it, but after a few years the most powerful appeals may cease to influence it. Think of this, ye who have the training of the infant mind, and leave such impressions thereon as will be safe for it to carry amid the follies and temptations of the world.

A SACRED HISTORY.

External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A. SHREEVE.

Chapter VIII.

THE architectural ruins upon these lands are very numerous, and from them we can draw many facts substantiating the assertions of the Book of Mormon concerning the origin of the ancient peoples inhabiting America. I will not attempt to develop any theory of my own, nor even to assimilate and restate all the facts advanced by standard writers and explorers upon this subject; rather leaving the matter to appear in their own words, for some of these writers are recognized, even by a skeptical world, to be beyond dispute.

Baldwin says:

Ruins and other vestiges revealing an ancient civilization are found throughout the whole southern section of North America, extending as far north as New Mexico and Arizona. But here the antiquities do not all belong to the same period in the past, nor exhibit unvarying likeness and unity of civilized life. They are somewhat less homogeneous, and do not constantly represent the same degree of civilization. In this region the monuments suggest successive and varying periods in the civilized condition of the old inhabitants, some of the oldest and most mysterious monuments seeming to indicate the highest development.

In the northern part of this region we find ruins of great buildings similar in plan and arrangement to those still used by the Pueblos, but far superior as monuments of architecture, science, and skill, and much more unlike those farther south than is apparent in the principal structures of the mound-builder. They show that the old settlers in the Mississippi Valley did not belong to the Pueblo branch of the Mexican race. Farther south, in the central part of the region specified, development was more advanced. Here, in the last ages of American ancient history, was the seat of the Mexican or Aztec civilization, but the monuments in this part of the country are mostly older than the Aztec period. The most astonishing remains are found still farther south, in Chiapa, Tabasco, Oaxaca, Yucatan, Honduras, Tehauantepec, Guatamala and other parts of Central America. In this southern region, mostly buried in heavy forests, are wonderful ruins of great cities and temples. Only a small part of modern Mexico is included in the region where these ruins are situated, and most of them, probably, were not much better understood by the ancient Mexicans than they are by us. Many of those explored in later times were unknown to that people, just as others, more in number, doubtless, than those already described, still remain unvisited and unknown in the great and almost impenetrable forests of the country.

Brantz Mayer was secretary of the United States legation to Mexico in 1841-2. After his return he published an exhaustive volume upon the subject of "Mexico, as it was and as it is." From his 25th letter I quote as follows:

Now, separated by thousands of leagues of sea from the eastern hemisphere, and with men who had no means, but the frail canoe of transporting themselves over it, you suddenly alight on these shores, in the midst of the 16th century; and find temples, idols, the remains of dwellings, fortifications, weapons of defense and chase, astronomical calendars, and people, worshipping, living and governing in the midst of every external evidence of ancient civilization. The whole of North America, we have seen, and a large portion of South America, is strewn with these or similar remains, from Canada to far below the equator. Here, in the north, it is supposed that there were *three races*, succeeding each other, two of which have vanished even from tradition.

The monuments of the *first*, or primitive race, said the late William Wort, are regular stone walls, wells stoned up,

brick hearths, found in digging the Louisville canal, medals of copper, silver swords, and other implements of iron. Mr. Flint assures us that he has seen these strange ancient swords. He has also examined a small iron shoe, incrustated with the rust of ages, and found far below the soil, and a copper axe, weighing about two pounds, singularly tempered and of peculiar construction.

These relics, he thinks, belonged to a race of *civilized* men who must have disappeared many centuries ago. To this race he attributes the hieroglyphic characters found in the limestone bluffs; the remains of cities and fortifications in Florida; the regular banks of ancient live-oak near them; and the bricks found at Louisville, *nineteen feet below the surface, in regular hearths, with the coals of the last domestic fire upon them*; these bricks were hard and regular, and longer in proportion to their width than those of the present day.

To the *second* race of beings are attributed the vast mounds of earth, found throughout the whole western region, from Lake Erie and western Pennsylvania to Florida and the Rocky Mountains. Some of them contain skeletons of human beings, and display immense labor. Many of them are regular mathematical figures, parallelograms and sections of circles; showing the remains of gateways and subterranean passages. *Some are eighty feet high, and have trees growing on them, apparently of the age of five hundred years.* They are generally of a soil differing from that which surrounds them, and they are most common in situations where it since has been found most convenient to build towns and cities.

One of these mounds was leveled in the centre of Chillicothe, and cart loads of human bones removed from it. Another may be seen in Cincinnati, in which a thin circular piece of gold, alloyed with copper, was found last year. Another in St. Louis named the Falling Garden, is pointed out to strangers as a great curiosity.

Many fragments of earthenware, some of curious workmanship, have been dug up throughout this vast region; some represented *drinking vessels*, some *human heads*, and some *idols*; they all appear to have been moulded by the hand, and hardened in the sun. These mounds and earthen implements indicate a race inferior to the *first*, which was acquainted with the use of iron.

The *third* race are the Indians now existing on the western territories. In the profound silence and solitude of these regions, and above the bones of a buried world, how must a philosophic traveler meditate upon the transitory state of human existence, *when the only traces of the beings of two races of men are these strange memorials*, on this very spot generation after generation has stood, lived, married, grown old and passed away; and not only their names, but their nation, their language has perished, and utter oblivion has closed over their once populous abodes! We call this the *New World*. It is old! Age after age, and one physical revolution after another have passed over it, but *who shall tell its history?*

Who? asks Mayer. We have seen the memorials of three distinct races; but who can tell the origin of the first two, or even of the last? And yet, these are only part of the inhabitants of North America.

In Le Plongeon I find some account of his conclusions drawn from long and studious exploration, which substantiate the assertion that the ancient inhabitants of this region came from the Old World, as related in the Book of Mormon, and brought their civilization with them:

The great mound of Mayapan which reveals such perfect mathematical symmetry in all its parts, shows that the Maya architects were as well acquainted with the rules of trigonometry as their friends the astronomers. It will call to mind that oldest structure of the Plains of Chaldea—the graduated towers so characteristic of Babylonia, of which the oldest type known in history is the tower of Babel—and on its top the priests of the Mayas, as the magi, elevated above the mists of the plain below, could track through the cloudless sky the movements of the stars; instead of cutting out there the hearts of human victims, as a celebrated author suggests.

This mound, now very dilapidated, is an oblong, truncated pyramid, measuring on the north and west sides at the base thirty-two metres, and fourteen metres on top; on the east and west sides at the base twenty-seven metres, and ten metres

on top. On the four faces stairways are cut of sixty steps, each twenty-five centimetres high; it appears as if composed of seven superposed platforms, all of the same height—one metre seventy centimetres,—each one being smaller than the one immediately below. Throughout Yucatan seven seems to have been the mystic number, as among other ancient nations. In the plains of Babylon there were no stones, and the builders of the "Temple of Seven Lights" made the core of the structure with sun-dried clay, and the facings with hard-burned bricks. In Yucatan, where there is no clay, but stones, the core is found of loose stones with blocks of the same material carefully hewn for the facing. The mode of building, however, was identical among the Mayas and the Chaldeans. Again, there is shown an identity of ideas in the artists who decorated the walls at Chichen Itza and Babylon.

Dr. Le Plongeon wrote an essay on the language of the Maya people. In it he declares that they employed many words and names common to nearly all of the ancient languages of which the world to-day has knowledge—using letters and characters belonging to the most ancient Chaldaic alphabet. He adds that their mode of writing in squares was similar to that of the Babylonians. I quote further from him;

So also we see that their architecture partakes of that of the Egyptians and the Babylonians, besides having a style that belongs to none of these ancient nations. That they had "perpendicular" pyramids, with their faces to the cardinal points like the Egyptians, the mound of Mayapan proves. But the Great Mound situated on the north side of the principal square of Izamal, on the top of which used to be a temple dedicated to Kinich-Kamo, the queen of Chichen, is an oblique pyramid, the very counterpart of the Temple of the Moon at Mugheir.

(To be Continued.)

SITTING UP LATE.

A young man gave a reason for discontinuing his visits to a certain smart young lady that she was too sarcastic; he was spending the evening with her, and he noticed that she seemed to be absent-minded, or tired, or something. About two o'clock in the morning he said she started up suddenly in alarm, and exclaimed: "My, what was that?" He said he didn't hear anything, and asked her what it sounded like, and she said she thought may be it was the milkman coming with the milk. He said that was too sarcastic, and he would never go to see her again. Well, probably he could not suit her better than by staying away. There is no girl who is well, and wants to keep so, that wants to sit up all night with any ordinary young man. She has got to have some sleep or she is not worth the powder to blow her up. She can get all the information that he has to impart in six or seven hours, and every hour he stays after that is a dead loss. Some young fellows never know enough to go. They speak of it being time to go about ten o'clock, and the girl, to be polite, says: "Oh, don't hurry away; it is early yet," and the idiot thinks she means it, and settles himself for a few hours more. No girl wants to seem impolite, so she suppresses her yawns while she silently prays for relief, and when the stayer finally goes she is devoutly thankful. A girl ought to have the courage to tell a young man, when he has remained long enough, that it is time for him to retire, and if he gets angry at her frankness, give him his dismissal as well.

THE habit of dissipating every serious thought by a succession of agreeable sensations, is as fatal to happiness as to virtue; for when amusement is uniformly substituted for objects of moral and mental interest, we lose all that elevates our enjoyment above the scale of childish pleasures.