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

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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 IX.

TO show that these people possessed the astronomical and mathematical knowledge which, in the ancient Egyptians, has been the wonder of all modern times, I quote the following from Le Plongeon; with notes by Ober:

On the "Gnomon Mound" of Mayapan there were found two *stelae*, situated about one hundred meters from the south-west corner of the principal pyramid (named anciently Kukulcan), the first of the kind seen during a long and careful exploration of the ruined cities of Yucatan. Of them Dr. Le Plongeon says:

Following the detours of an obscure trail, we at last reached the foot of a small mound, eight metres high, eleven metres fifty centimetres wide at the base. The platform on top, four metres seventy centimetres on the north and south sides by three metres on the east and west, sustained two perpendicular *stelae*, forty-five centimetres in diameter and one metre high from the floor, which once was perfectly level and paved with beautifully hewn slabs of stone. To-day it is covered with ten centimetres of loam, the product of three centuries and a half of deposition. The distance between the centers of the *stelae* is one metre seventy centimetres, their orientation as perfect as it could be done to-day with our improved instruments.

By careful measurements Dr. Le Plongeon arrived at the conclusion that the ancient Mayas correctly calculated the true declination of the sun; and he adds that the Maya astronomers divided their astronomical year into twelve months of thirty days each, to which they added the five days when they said the sun was resting. "Here again we find another point of contact with the Egyptians and the Chaldeans." Of course, says the Doctor, by noticing the length of the shadows projected by the *stelae* on the smooth floor of the platform, they could know the hour of the day; at night—as the Indians do even to-day—they could tell the time quite accurately by observing the courses of the stars. By placing a style, or any narrow object, on the top of the columns so as to rest on the centers, and noticing when its shadow fell perpendicularly on the platform, and covered exactly the line they had traced for that purpose between the *stelae*, they knew when the sun passed their zenith, which phenomenon occurs twice every year, in March and July.

The Doctor remarks that he has adopted the use of the metric standard of linear measure as much from necessity as from choice, and from "the strange discovery that the metre is the only measure of dimension which agrees with that adopted by these most ancient artists and architects." The explorer continues:

We cannot suppose that the Gnomon was built at random; that the diameter of the *stelae* and the distance they are placed from one another are wholly fortuitous. Judging of past humanity by the present we must of necessity agree that these diameters and this distance of the centres are the result of accurate calculations and knowledge. I have taken for granted that they knew when the sun had reached the tropics, and therefore its greatest declination,— $23^{\circ} 27'$.—because the days that the declination does not vary they called by a name signifying, according to Pio Perez, the bed or place where the sun rests.

To sum up: these builders seem to have taken as bases for their calculation the latitude of the place and the declination of the sun when at his resting place,—as they called the solstitial points. That this manner of computing time was

used by the primitive inhabitants of the great metropolis, Chichen-Itza, or by those who dwelt in it when at the height of its splendor, when scholars flocked from all parts of the world to consult its wise men, is more than at present we can positively know.

This adoption of the metrical system of measurement recalls what Seiss says in his *Miracle in Stone* under the head of A Metrological Monument:

Thus the Great Pyramid proves itself abundantly competent to determine on a natural and most scientific basis all measures of length, weight, capacity, and heat. Even the degrees in the circle if arranged on the pyramid numbers, say one thousand degrees instead of the fractional Babylonian three hundred and sixty, some think would be vastly more natural and easy than it is. This would divide the quadrant into the convenient two hundred and fifty with even tenths for minutes and seconds, whilst it would at the same time harmoniously commensurate with navigation and itinerary measures of knots and miles, into which it is now so troublesome to translate it from the indications of the sextant.

There would seem, therefore, to be nothing wanting in this mighty monument of hoary antiquity for the formation of a metrical system the most universal in its scope, the most scientifically founded in its standards, the most happily inter-related, and the most easy in its common use that ever was presented to the contemplation of man or that can be employed for our earth purposes. And it is devoutly to be wished, if the present agitation of the human mind with regard to standards and systems of measure is to result in any change for the nations that they should be in the line of what Providence has thus set before mankind.

At Papantla, says Baldwin, in the state of Vera Cruz, there is a very ancient pyramidal structure somewhat peculiar in style and character. It is known that important ruins exist in the forests of Papantla and Mesantla which have never been described. The remarkable pyramid at Papantla was examined and described by Humboldt. The only material employed in constructing it was hewn stone. The stone was prepared in immense blocks, which were laid in mortar. The pyramid was an exact square at the base, each side being 82 feet in length, and the height about 60 feet. The stones were admirably cut and polished, and the structure was remarkably symmetrical. Six stages could be discerned by Humboldt, and his account of it says, "A seventh appears to be concealed by the vegetation which covers the sides of the pyramid." A great flight of steps leads to the level summit, by the sides of which are smaller flights. The facing of the stones is decorated with hieroglyphics, in which serpents and crocodiles carved in relief are visible. Each story contains a great number of square niches symmetrically distributed. In the first story there are 24 on each side, in the second 20, and in the third 16. There are 366 of these niches on the whole pyramid, and twelve in the stairs toward the east.

(To be Continued.)

A Good SUGGESTION.—One gallon of whisky costs about \$3, and contains, on the average, sixty five ten-cent drinks. Now if you must drink whisky, buy a gallon and make your wife the bar-keeper; then, when you are dry, give her ten cents for a drink. When the whisky is gone she will have, after paying for it, \$3.50 left, and every gallon thereafter will yield the same profit. This money she should put in the savings bank, so that, when you have become an inebriate, unable to support yourself and shunned and despised by every respectable person, your wife may have enough money to keep you until your time comes to fill a drunkard's grave.

It is not work that spoils men, it is worry. Work is healthy, you can hardly put more upon a man than he can bear. Worry is rust upon the blade. It is not revolution that destroys the machinery, but the friction. Fear secretes acids; but love and trust are sweet juices.