



Type: Magazine Article

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

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 22, No. 18 (15 September 1887), pp. 284–285

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

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 XII. (Continued).

STILL drawing information from Donnelly and other writers of eminence and quoting them freely, I continue.

Even the temptation of Eve reappears in the American legends. Lord Kingsborough says: "The Toltecs had paintings of a garden, with a single tree standing in the midst; round the root of the tree is entwined a serpent, whose head appearing above the foliage displays the face of a woman. Torquemada admits the existence of this tradition among them, and agrees with the Indian historians, who affirm that this was the first woman in the world, who bore children, and from whom all mankind are descended." (*Mexican Antiquities, Vol. VIII., p. 19*). There is also a legend of Suchiquecal, who disobeyed to gather roses from a tree, and thereby disgraced and injured herself and all her posterity. (*Mexican Antiquities, Vol. VI., p. 401*).

The legends of the old world which underlie Genesis, and were used by Milton in the "Paradise Lost," appear in the Mexican legends of a war of angels in heaven, and the fall of Zoutem-Que (Soutem, Satan—Arabic, Shatana) and the other rebellious spirits.

We have seen the Central Americans possessed striking parallels to the account of the deluge in Genesis.

There is also a clearly established legend which singularly resembles the Bible record of the tower of Babel.

Father Duran, in his MS. "Historia Antiqua De La Nueva Espana," A. D., 1585, quotes from the lips of a native of Cholula, over one hundred years old, a version of the legend as to the building of the great pyramid of Cholula. It is as follows:

In the beginning, before the light of the sun had been created, this land [Cholula] was in obscurity and darkness, and void of any created being; all was a plain, without hill or elevation, encircled in every part by water, without tree or created thing; and immediately after the light and the sun arose in the east there appeared gigantic men of deformed stature and possessed the land, and desiring to see the nativity of the sun, as well as his occident, proposed to go and seek them. Dividing themselves into two parties, some journeyed to the west and others toward the east, these traveled until the sea cut off their road, whereupon they determined to return to the place from which they started, and arriving at this place [Cholula], not finding the means of reaching the sun, enamored of his light and beauty, they determined to build a tower so high that its summit should reach the sky. Having collected materials for the purpose, they found a very adhesive clay and bitumen, with which they speedily commenced to build the tower; and having reared it to the greatest possible altitude, so that they say it reached to the sky, the Lord of the Heavens, enraged, said to the inhabitants of the sky: "Have you observed how they of the earth have built a high and haughty tower to mount hither, being enamored of the light of the sun and his beauty? Come and confound them, because it is not right that they of the earth, living in the flesh, should mingle with us." Immediately the inhabitants of the sky sallied forth like flashes of lightning; they destroyed the edifice, and divided and scattered its builders to all parts of the earth.

One can recognize in this legend the recollection, by a ruder race, of a highly civilized people; for only a highly civilized people would have attempted such a vast work. Their mental superiority and command of the arts gave them the character

of giants. They were sun-worshippers; for we are told "they were enamored of the light and beauty of the sun," and they built a high place for his worship.

The pyramid of Cholula is one of the greatest constructions ever erected by human hands. It is even now, in its ruined condition, 160 feet high, 1400 feet square at the base, and covers forty-five acres; we have only to remember that the greatest pyramid of Egypt, Cheops, covers but twelve or thirteen acres, to form some conception of the magnitude of this American structure.

It must not be forgotten that this legend was taken down by a Catholic priest, shortly after the conquest of Mexico, from the lips of an old Indian who was born before Columbus sailed from Spain.

Observe the resemblances between this legend and the Bible account of the building of the tower of Babel:

"All was a plain without hill or elevation," says the Indian legend. "They found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there," says the Bible. They built of brick in both cases. "Let us build a tower whose top may reach unto heaven," says the Bible. "They determined to build a tower so high that its summit should reach the sky," says the Indian legend. "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men had builded. And the Lord said, Behold. Nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down and confound them," says the Bible record. "The Lord of the heavens, enraged, said to the inhabitants of the sky, Have you observed," etc. "Come and confound them," says the Indian record. "And the Lord scattered them abroad from thence on all the face of the earth," says the Bible. "They scattered its builders to all parts of the earth," says the Mexican legend.

Can any one doubt that these two legends must have sprung in some way from one another, or from some common source?

But the resemblances between Genesis and the American legends do not stop here.

We are told (*Gen. ii, 21*) that "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and while he slept God made Eve out of one of his ribs." According to the Quiche tradition, there were four men from whom the races of the world descended (probably a recollection of the red, black, yellow, and white races) and these men were without wives and the Creator made wives for them "while they slept."

In Genesis (*Chap. iii, 22*) "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live, forever:" therefore God drove him out of the garden. In the Quiche legends we are told, "The gods feared that they had made men too perfect, and they breathed a cloud of mist over their vision."

When the ancestors of the Quiches migrated to America the Divinity parted the sea for their passage, as the Red Sea was parted for the Israelites.

The story of Sampson is paralleled in the history of a hero named Zipanca, told of in the *Popol Vuh*, who being captured by his enemies and placed in a pit, pulled down the building in which his captors had assembled, and killed four hundred of them."

"There were giants in those days," says the Bible. A great deal of the Central American history is taken up with the doings of an ancient race of giants called Quinames.

This parallelism runs through a hundred particulars:

Both the Jews and Mexicans worshiped toward the east. Both called the south "the right hand of the world."

Both burnt incense toward the four corners of the earth.

Confession of sin and sacrifice of atonement were common to both peoples.

Both were punctilious about washings and ablutions.

Both believed in devils, and both were afflicted with leprosy.

Both considered women who died in childbirth as worthy of honor as soldiers who fell in battle.

Both punished adultery with stoning to death.

As David leaped and danced before the ark of the Lord, so did the Mexican monarchs before their idols.

Both had an ark, the abiding place of an invisible God.

The same singular custom which is found among the Jews and the Hindoos, for "a man to raise up seed for his deceased brother by marrying his widow," was found among the Central American nations. (*Las Casas, MS. Hist. Apoloq. chap. ccxiii., ccxv. Torquemada, Monarq. Ind., Tom. II., 377-8.*)

No one but the Jewish high priest might enter the Holy of Holies. A similar custom obtained in Peru. Both ate the flesh of the sacrifices of atonement; both poured the blood of atonement on the earth; they sprinkled it, they marked persons with it, they smeared it upon walls and stones. The Mexican temple, like the Jewish, faced the east. "As among the Jews the ark was a sort of portable temple, in which the Deity was supposed to be continually present, so among the Mexicans, the Cherokees, and the Indians of Michoacan and Honduras, an ark was held in the highest veneration, and was considered an object too sacred to be touched by any but the priests." (*Kingsborough, Mex. Antiq. Vol. VIII., p. 258.*)

The Peruvians believed that the rainbow was a sign that the earth would not be again destroyed by a deluge. (*Ibid p. 25.*)

The Jewish custom of laying the sins of the people upon the head of an animal, and turning him out into the wilderness, had its counterpart among the Mexicans, who, to cure a fever, formed a dog of maize paste and left it by the roadside, saying the first passer-by would carry away the illness. (*Dorman, Prim. Super., p. 59.*) Jacob's ladder had its duplicate in the vine or tree of the Ojibbeways, which led from the earth to heaven, up and down which the spirits passed. (*Ibid, p. 67.*)

Both Jews and Mexicans offered water to a stranger that he might wash his feet; both ate dust in token of humility; both anointed with oil; both sacrificed prisoners; both periodically separated the women, and both agreed in the strong and universal idea of uncleanness connected with that period.

Both believed in the occult power of water; and both practiced baptism.

Then the Mexican midwife gave the child to taste of the water, putting her moistened fingers in its mouth, and said, "Take this; by this thou hast to live on the earth, to grow and to flourish; through this we get all things that support existence on the earth; receive it." Then with moistened fingers she touched the breast of the child, and said, "Behold the pure water that washes and cleanses thy heart, that removes all filthiness; receive it: may the Goddess see good to purify and cleanse thine heart." Then the midwife poured water upon the head of the child, saying, "O my grandson—my son—take this water of the Lord of the world, which is thy life, invigorating and refreshing, washing and cleansing. I pray that this celestial water, blue and light blue, may enter into thy body, and there live; I pray that it may destroy in thee

and put away from thee all the things evil and adverse that were given thee before the beginning of the world—wheresoever thou art in this child, O thou hurtful thing begone! Leave it, put thyself apart; for now does it live anew, and anew it is born; now again is it purified and cleansed; now again is it shaped and engendered by our mother, the Goddess of water." (*Bancroft's Native Races, Vol. III., p. 372.*)

The Mexicans hung up the heads of their sacrificed enemies; this was also a Jewish custom:

And the Lord said unto Moses, take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor. (*Numb. x cv., 4, 5.*)

The Scythians, Herodotus tells us, scalped their enemies, and carried the scalp at the pommel of their saddles: the Jews probably scalped their enemies.

But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses. (*Psa., lxxviii., 21.*)

The ancient Scandinavians practiced scalping. When Harold Harefoot seized his rival, Alfred, with six hundred followers, he "had them maimed, blinded, hamstringed, scalped or emboweled." (*Twine's Hist. Eng. Lit., p. 35.*)

Herodotus describes the Scythian mode of taking the scalp: "He makes a cut round the head near the ears, and shakes the skull out." This is precisely the Indian custom. "The more scalps a man has," says Herodotus, "the more highly is he esteemed among them."

The Indian scalp lock is found on the Egyptian monuments as one of the characteristics of the Japhetic Libyans who shaved all the head except one lock in the middle.

(*To be Continued.*)

TRUE ECONOMY OF LIFE.

THE true economy of human life looks at ends rather than incidents, and adjusts expenditures to a moral scale of values. De Quincey pictures a woman sailing over the water, awakening out of sleep to find her necklace untied and one end hanging over the stream, while pearl after pearl drops from the string beyond her reach; while she clutches at one just falling, another drops beyond recovery. Our days drop one after another by our carelessness, like pearls from a string, as we sail the sea of life. Prudence requires a wise husbanding of time to see that none of these golden coins are spent for nothing. The waste of time is a more serious loss than the extravagances against which there is such loud acclaim.

There are thousands who do nothing but lounge and carouse from morning till midnight—drones in the human hive, who consume and waste the honey that honest workers wear themselves out in making, and insult the day by their dissipation and debauch. There are ten thousand idle, frivolous creatures who do nothing but waste and wear what honest hands accumulate, and entice others to live as worthless lives as they do. Were every man and woman honest toilers, all would have an abundance of everything, and half of every day for recreation and culture. The expenditure of a few dollars in matters of taste is a small matter in comparison with the wasting of months and years by thousands who have every advantage society can offer, and exact every privilege it affords as a right.