



Type: Magazine Article

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

Author(s): Thomas A. Shreeve

Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 22, No. 22 (15 November 1887), pp. 340–341

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 XIV. (Continued.)

CLAVIGERO'S account is characteristically clear and comprehensible. It may be summed up as follows—

Among the Mexicans and other nations of Anahuac, Quetzalcoatl was accounted God of the air. He is said to have been sometime high-priest of Tulla. He is described as having been white—a large, broad-browed, great-eyed man, with long black hair and thick beard. His life was rigidly temperate and exemplary, and his industry was directed by the profoundest wisdom. He amassed great treasure, and his was the invention of gem-cutting and metal-casting. All things prospered in his time. One ear of corn was a man's load; and the gourds, or pumpkins of the day were as tall as one's body. No one dyed cotton then, for it grew of all colors; and all other things in like manner were perfect and abundant. The very birds in the trees sang such songs as have never since been heard, and flashed such marvelous beauties in the sun as no plumage of later times could rival. Quetzalcoatl had his laws proclaimed from the top of the hill Tzatzitepec [mountain of outcry] near Tulla, by a crier whose voice was audible for three hundred miles.

Bancroft says:

Why did this god [Quetzalcoatl] come from the east, depart toward the east, and why should he be expected from the east? The Toltecs have, according to almost unanimous statements, come from the north, and even Quetzalcoatl commences his rule in the north, in Tulla, and proceeds gradually on his journey from the north to the south-east, just like the Toltecs, who traveled southward from Tulla. It is plain that he departs for the east because this is his home, from which he came and will return.

Referring to the same expectation of the people to greet the return of Quetzalcoatl from the east, I quote from Norman's "Rambles in Yucatan:"

As evidence of the presence of a Hindoo population in the southern, as well as the western parts of North America, we bring the Mexican traditions respecting some great religious teacher who once came among them. These say, that a wonderful personage, whom they name Quetzalcoatl, appeared among them, who was a white and bearded man. This person assumed the dignity of acting as a priest and legislator, and became the chief of a religious sect, which, like the Songasis, and the Buddhists of Hindostan, inflicted on themselves the most cruel penances. He introduced the custom of piercing the lips and ears, and lacerating the rest of the body, with the prickles of the agave and leaves, the thorns of the cactus, and of putting reeds into the wounds, in order that the blood might be seen to trickle more copiously. In all this, says Humboldt, we seem to behold one of those Rishi, hermits of the Ganges, whose pious austerity is celebrated in the books of the Hindoos.

Respecting this white and bearded man, much is said in their tradition, recorded in their books of skin, and among other things, that after a long stay with them he suddenly left them, promising to return again in a short time, to govern them and renew their happiness. This person resembles, very strongly, in his promise to return again, the behavior of Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver, who on his departure from Lacedæmon, bound all the citizens under an oath, both for them selves and posterity, that they would neither violate nor abolish his laws till his return, and soon after, in the isle of Crete, he put himself to death, so that his return became impossible.

It was the posterity of this man whom the unhappy Montezuma thought he recognized in the soldiers of Cortez, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico. "We know," said the unhappy monarch, in his first interview with the Spanish general, "by

our books, that myself and those who inhabit this country, are not natives, but strangers who came from a great distance. We know, also, that the chief who led our ancestors hither returned, for a certain time, to his primitive country, and thence came back to seek those who were here established, who after a while returned again, alone. We always believed that his descendants would one day come to take possession of this country. Since you arrive from that region where the sun rises, I cannot doubt but that the king who sends you is our natural master."

Biart says that the most contradictory ideas have been current in regard to this divinity, Quetzalcoatl, who, now considered of celestial origin, and now regarded as a man who had acquired the immortality of the gods, seems in reality to be a union of several personages. It is an incontestible fact that Quetzalcoatl created a new religion, based on fasting, penitence and virtue. He certainly belonged to a race other than the one he civilized; but what was his country? He died announcing that he would return at the head of white-faced men; and we have seen that the Indians believed his prophecy fulfilled when the Spaniards landed on their shores.

It is clear to any reasonable mind that we must expect to find these traditions of our Savior's presence in this land sadly mixed up with other things. Many of His attributes are divided among several of their gods, who also share pagan qualities which never belonged to our Savior.

An evidence that the sacrament was known to the people who inhabited North America is given in Bancroft, as follows:

The third festival of Huitzilopochtli takes place during the winter solstice, a period which plays a great role in all worships and myths. The best known festival of this kind is the one held on the 25th of December throughout the Roman Empire, to celebrate the birth of Mithras, the invincible sun. The Chippewas in North America call December the month of the small spirit, and January, that of the great spirit. The Mexican festival of this month represented the character of the entering season, and the new state of nature. The cold sets in, the mountains are covered with snow, the ground dries up, the plants search in vain for their nourishment, many trees lose their foliage—in a word, nature seems dead. And so it happened with their god. The priests prepared his image of various seeds kneaded with the blood of sacrificed children. Numerous religious purifyings and penances, washings with water, blood-lettings, fasts, processions, burning of incense, sacrifices of quails and human beings, inaugurated the festival. One of Quetzalcoatl's priests then shot an arrow at this image of Huitzilopochtli, which penetrated the god who was now considered as dead. His heart was cut out, as with human victims, and eaten by the king, the representative of the god on earth. The body, however, was divided among the various quarters of the city, so that every man received a piece. This was called *Tequilo*, "the god who is eaten."

* * * * *

As regards the custom of eating the god, this also occurs at another feast which is celebrated during this season, in honor of the gods of the mountains and the water. Small idols of seeds and dough were then prepared, their breasts were opened like those of human victims, the heart was cut out, and the body distributed for eating. The time at which this occurs, shows that it stands in necessary connection with the death of the god. When the god dies it must be as a sacrifice in the fashion of his religion, and when the anthropomorphized god dies, it is a human sacrifice amid all the necessary usages pertaining thereto: he is killed by the priests, the heart is torn out, and his body eaten at the sacrifice meal, just as was done with every human sacrifice. Could it be meant that the god, in being eaten, is imparted to, or incorporated with, the person eating him? This is, no doubt, so, though not in the abstract, metaphysical, Christian or moral sense, but only with regard to his nature-sense (*seiner Natursense*) which is the real essence of the god. He gives his body, in seed, to be eaten by his people, just as nature, dying at the approach of winter, at this very period, has stored up an

abundance of its gifts for the sustenance of man. It gives man its life-fruit, or its fruit of life as a host or holy wafer. As a rule, the god during the time of sacrifice, regales with the offering those bringing sacrifices; and the eating of the flesh of the slave, who so often represents the god to whom he is sacrificed, is the same as eating the god. We have heard of the custom among some nations of eating the ashes of their forefathers, to whom they give divine honors, in order to become possessed of their virtues. The Arkansas nation, west of the Mississippi, which worshipped the dog, used to eat dog-flesh at one of its feasts. Many other peoples solemnly slaughter animals, consume their flesh, and moreover pay divine honors to the remains of these animals. Here the eating of the god, in seeds, is made clear. This custom also existed among the Greeks and the division of the year-god by the ancients, in myth and religious system, has for the rest, no other sense than has this distribution of the body of Huitzilopochtli. This is done with the sun-bull at the festival of the Persian Mithras, as at the feast and in the myth of Dionysos-Zagreus, of Osiris and Attys.

(To be Continued.)

A LEADER, NOT AN ORATOR.

IT is a popular opinion that oratory is essential to leadership in a deliberative assembly. Facts, however, do not support this judgment, though it has the endorsement of such an eminent authority as Lord Macaulay.

Writing about Parliamentary government, which he defines as "government by speaking," Lord Macaulay asserts in one of his brilliant essays that "in such a government the power of speaking is the most highly prized of all the qualities which a politician can possess."

He frankly admits that oratory may exist in the highest degree without skill in governing, or even knowledge of legislation. Nevertheless, he declares that, in a deliberative assembly, the ingenious orator will almost always exercise much greater influence than the member who, though he may be skillful in reading the signs of the times, learned in the principles of legislation, and fitted to meet a pressing emergency, is not gifted with those qualities of speech which charm an assembly of men.

But Earl Russell, whose long experience in the House of Commons, both as a private member and as a leader, qualifies him to express a judicial opinion, says that "in these remarks Macaulay is greatly mistaken. Lord Castlereagh," continues the earl, "was a very tiresome, involved and obscure speaker; Lord Althorp was without any powers of oratory; yet I never knew two men who had more influence in the House of Commons than Lord Castlereagh and Lord Althorp."

The reasons which caused the House to follow the lead of these two men, so "slow of speech," were its conviction of their sincerity and integrity, and its confidence in their wisdom, and in their possession of that common sense, which is a trustworthy guide at a moment of difficulty.

Such qualities as these are more influential in obtaining the support of a deliberative assembly than the most brilliant flights of eloquence, the happiest illustrations, and the keenest wit.

Lord Althorp, referred to by Earl Russell, led the House of Commons from 1830 to 1834, during the stormy debates on the Reform Bill. He entered Parliament with diffidence, and with great reluctance accepted the leadership of the Whig members. For his humility compelled him to make a modest, and, as his friends thought, even a low estimate of his own abilities. He was destitute of eloquence, and had but little skill as a

debater. He was neither witty nor brilliant. His voice was unmelodious, and his manner ungraceful. He possessed not one showy accomplishment, nor was he covered with the thinnest veneering of plausibility.

And yet this plain man, wanting in all that captivates the imagination of a popular assembly, who could neither amuse the vulgar nor delight the scholarly, and was barely able to speak plain sense in still plainer language, "exercised in the House of Commons"—we quote from a contemporary and a critic not noted for geniality—"an influence, and even a domination, greater than any leader either after or before him."

The sources of Lord Althorp's influence were in his character. Spotless integrity and plain good sense, fearless frankness and winning simplicity, devotion to duty, and good-nature, these won the enthusiastic devotion of friends, and disarmed political antagonists of all personal animosity.

The House confided in the integrity and sound judgment of the leader, but they regarded Lord Althorp himself with sentiments that, passing beyond universal esteem, were akin to personal affection.

A striking illustration of Althorp's influence over the House and of the confidence of the members in their leader occurred during the heated debates on the third Reform Bill.

John Wilson Croker made a most able and argumentative speech against the bill. It told upon the members, many of whom, though friendly to the measure, were disturbed by Mr. Croker's figures, showing that the bill would enfranchise thousands of the lower classes. He moved an amendment, seriously crippling the bill, and sat down.

Lord Althorp rose immediately, and merely observed—we quote the report of the day—that he had made some calculations which he considered as entirely conclusive in refutation of the right honorable gentleman's arguments; but, unfortunately, he had mislaid them, so that he could only say that if the House would be guided by his advice, they would reject the amendment—which they did accordingly.

There was no standing against such influence as this. The man in whom the first deliberative assembly of the world reposed such confidence as to accept his bare word as a sufficient answer to an able argument which had disturbed them, could do anything he pleased with that House. As long as he maintained his integrity and sound judgment, and, above all, his good temper, he would command the admiration of his opponents and the following of his friends.

We commend these elements of influence to the study of young men. Honesty, calm, unpretending good sense, excellent temper, sound judgment, a conciliatory address, and gentleman-like feelings, are more powerful in governing men than polished sentences, witty epigrams, or the loftiest flights of eloquence.

Oratory is a power; but the judgment which foresees, and the administrative faculty that executes, is a greater power. The brilliancy of the lightning astonishes, but it is in the steady sunlight that men prefer to read.

What a man is, and not what he says, whether his convictions take hold of him, or whether he lays hold of his convictions, how he is governed within, by self or duty, intellect or conscience, these being determined, decide if the man shall be the trusted leader, or the admired advocate of his party.

He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself, for every one has need to be forgiven.