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

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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 XIV. (Concluded.)

OF a festival of the Winter solstice, the date and further particulars are given by the Vatican codex as follows:

The name Panquetziliztli, of the Mexican month that began on the first of December, means, being interpreted, "The elevation of banners." For, on the first day of December, every person raised over his house a small paper flag in honor of this god of battle; and the captains and soldiers sacrificed those that they had taken prisoners in war, who before they were sacrificed, being set at liberty, and being presented with arms equal to their adversaries, were allowed to defend themselves till they were either vanquished or killed, and thus sacrificed. The Mexicans celebrated in this month the festival of their first Captain, Vichilopuehtli. They celebrated at this time the festival of the wafer or cake. They made a cake of the meal of bledos, which is called *tzoulli*, and having made it they spoke over it in their manner and broke it into pieces. These the high priest put into certain very clean vessels, and with a thorn of Meguey, which resembles a thick needle, he took up with the utmost reverence single morsels, and put them into the mouth of each individual, in the manner of a communion, and I am willing to believe that these poor people have had the knowledge of our mode of communion or preaching of the gospel; or perhaps the devil, most envious of the honor of G. d. may have led them into this superstition in order that by this ceremony he might be adored and served as Christ, our Lord. On the twenty-first of December they celebrated the festival of this god, through whose instrumentality, they say, the earth became again visible after it had become drowned with the waters of the deluge; they therefore kept this festival during the twenty following days; in which they offered sacrifices to him.

Bancroft says:

One of the most remarkable emblems of Maya worship, in the estimation of the conquerors was the cross, which has also been noticed in other parts of Central America and in Mexico, although less prominently than here. Among the many conjectures as to its origin it is supposed that it was received from Spaniards who were wrecked on the coast before Cordova discovered Yucatan, as, for instance, the pious Aguilar, Cortez' interpreter; but this would not account for the crosses that existed in other parts of Central America. The natives had a tradition, however, which placed the introduction of the cross a few years before the conquest. Among the many prophets who arose at that time was one who predicted the coming of a strange people from the direction of the rising sun, who would bring with them a monotheistic faith having the cross for its emblem. He admonished them to accept the new religion, and erected a cross as a token of his prophecy. Another tradition states that a very handsome man passed through the country and left the cross as a memento, and this many of the *padres* readily believed, declaring this personage to be none other than the wanderer St. Thomas.

In "The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors," by Kersey Graves, I find the following:

Quexalcote of Mexico crucified. 587 B. C.

Historical authority, relative to the crucifixion of this Mexican god, and to his execution upon the cross as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind, is explicit, unequivocal, and ineffaceable. The evidence is tangible, and indelibly engraven upon steel and metal plates. One of these plates represents him as having been crucified on a mountain; another represents him as having been crucified in the heavens, as Saint Justin tells us Christ was. According to another writer, he is sometimes represented as having been nailed to a cross, and by other accounts as hanging with a cross in his hand. The

"Mexican Antiquities," (Vol. VI, page 166) says, "Quexalcote is represented in the paintings of 'Codex Borgianus' as nailed to the cross." Sometimes two thieves are represented as having been crucified with him. That the advent of this crucified savior and Mexican god was long anterior to the era of Christ, is admitted by Christian writers, as we have shown elsewhere. In the work above named, "Codex Borgianus," may be found the account, not only of his crucifixion, but of his death, burial, descent into hell, and resurrection on the third day. And another work, entitled "Codex Vaticanus," contains the story of his immaculate birth by a virgin mother by the name of Chimalman. Many other incidences are found related of him in his sacred biography, in which we find the most striking counterparts to the more modern gospel story of Jesus Christ, such as His forty days' temptation and fasting, His riding on an ass. His purification in the temple, His baptism and regeneration by water, His forgiving of sins, being anointed with oil, etc. "All these things, and many more, found related of this Mexican god in their sacred books," says Lord Kingsborough (a Christian writer) "are curious and mysterious."

According to Anatonæ, "The ancient Peruvians, after sacrificing a lamb, mingled his blood with flour and distributed it among the people."

In "Curious myths," by S. Baring Gould, M. A., is a chapter on the legend of the cross, of which I extract the following paragraphs:

In the depths of the forests of Central America is a ruined city. It was not inhabited at the time of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards. They discovered the temples and palaces of Chiapa, but of Palenque they knew nothing. According to tradition it was founded by Votan in the ninth century before the Christian era. The principal building of Palenque is the palace, 228 feet long, by 180 feet, and 40 feet high. The eastern facade has fourteen doors opening on a terrace, with bass-reliefs between them. A noble tower rises above the courtyard in the center. In this building are several small temples or chapels, with altars standing. At the back of one of these altars is a slab of gypsum, on which are sculptured two figures standing, one on each side of a cross to which one is extending his hands with an offering of a baby or a monkey. The cross is surrounded with rich featherwork, and ornamental chains.

The style of sculpture, and the accompanying hieroglyphic inscriptions, leave no room for doubting it to be a heathen representation. Above the cross is a bird of peculiar character, perched, as we saw the eagle Nisroch, on a cross upon a Babylonish cylinder. The same cross is represented on old pre-Mexican MSS., as in the Dresden codex, and that in the possession of Herr Fejervary, at the end of which is a colossal cross, in the midst of which is represented a bleeding deity, and figures stand around a tau cross, upon which is perched the sacred bird.

The cross was also used in the north of Mexico. It occurs among the Mixtecas and Queredaro. Signonza speaks of an Indian cross which was found in the cave of Mixteca Baja. Among the ruins on the island of Zapatero in Lake Nicaragua were also found old crosses revered by the Indians. White marble crosses were found in the island of St. Ulloa, on its discovery. In the state of Oaxaca, the Spaniards found that wooden crosses were erected as sacred symbols, so also in Aguatelec, and among the Zapatecas. The cross was venerated as far as Florida on one side, and Cibola on the other. In South America, the same sign was considered symbolical and sacred. It was revered in Paraguay. In Peru the Incas honored a cross made out of a single piece of jasper; it was an emblem belonging to a former civilization.

Among the Musesas at Cumana the cross was regarded with devotion, and was believed to be endued with power to drive away evil spirits, consequently new-born children were placed under the sign.

Mayer says:

I cannot conclude the account of this god (Huitzilpotehtli) without referring to a tradition which is given in relation to him by Acosta, in his natural and moral history, book 4th,

chapter *xxiv*, and is repeated by Clavigero and Dr. McCulloh.

Two days before his festival, an idol representing him was made by the sacred virgins, of grains of parched corn and seeds of beets, mixed together with honey or the *blood of children*. This they clothed with a splendid dress and seated on a litter.

On the morning of the festal day this figure was borne in solemn procession around the city of Mexico, and then carried to the temple, where they had prepared a great quantity of the same paste of seeds and blood, of which the priests also made an idol, called "the flesh and bones" of Huitzilopotchli.

After certain ceremonials and consecration, the image was sacrificed as they sacrificed their human victims, "and his body was broken into small pieces, which, together with those portions called his *flesh and bones*, were distributed among the people" who, according to Acosta, "received the same with tears, fear and reverence, as if it was an admirable thing, saying that *they did eat the flesh and bones of God*, wherewith they were grieved. Such as had any sick folks," continues Acosta, "demanded thereof for them, and carried it with great reverence and devotion."

This extraordinary ceremonial was no coinage of the Spanish priests, for Acosta calls it "a communion which the devil himself, the prince of pride, ordained in Mexico, to counterfeit the holy sacrament!"

STRUCK TO THE HEART.

Poor Patty Mayborn! she felt so useless and delicate among the great girls; and it had hurt her so—it seemed to strike against her heart—when she heard one of them say to the other—

"Only think! her mother takes in washing!"

It had never occurred to her before that there was anything to be ashamed of in the calling her mother pursued. To be sure, she remembered that when her father was alive they lived in a pretty cottage, and the mother only washed once in the week, and seemed to do it with a pleasant face and with singing. Now she never sang, and seldom smiled. It also occurred to her that most of the girl's mothers did their own washing. As a general thing, Hillstown people were not rich.

The child—she was but nine years old, and exceedingly sensitive—pondered it over as she tried to study her lesson. The look of scorn, the thoughtless pointing of the finger, the expression of the voice, all were repeated by active memory. The effort to banish this unpleasant scene, and to study at the same time brought on a nervous headache, to which she was often subject.

"If you ever have one of your headaches, dear," her mother had said to her more than once, "go and tell Miss Green, and she will let you come home. I have spoken to her about it."

It happened that Miss Green had come to school that morning irritable from a disappointment. The disappointment, whatever it was, had come in a letter, and the girls who knew Miss Green best, read in her face that no allowances would be made that day, and redoubled their diligence.

It would have taken strong nerves to ask a favor of the teacher, but pretty, pale little Patty, knew nothing about that, and when her head ached so that the letters began to spin, she put her book aside, and marched confidently toward the desk. Miss Green was writing. She looked up with a frown.

"Oh," said she to herself, crossly, "it's that washerwoman's daughter! Well?" was the sharp interrogation.

"Please, Miss Green, my head aches."

"I can't help that," said Miss Green.

"Mother said you'd let me go home."

"Go back to your seat. I never let the children go home without written excuses."

The manner and the tone, not the words, hurt. It was the second time the little heart had been cruelly wounded. The child burst into tears, with a cry of "mamma! mamma!" and Miss Green, very angry, ungently pushed the weeping girl before her till she had reached her seat.

"You must stop your crying," she said, sternly.

"I—I can't," was the sobbing response.

"Then I shall punish you."

The child looked up gaspingly in her effort to be quiet, but in vain. The tears would run out of the frightened, wide-open eyes, and the sobs would choke her poor little throat—and oh, her head did ache so! The blood seemed to gallop through the veins, and great throbs beat, beat at each temple, as if two wounded and suffering hearts had been placed there.

"I see you don't intend to be quiet, and I can't have you disturbing the whole school," said Miss Green, taking, in her irritated state of mind, an almost malicious pleasure in the sorrow she saw before her. "I shall stand you up on a bench, and if you don't stop then, I shall put you in a dark closet."

"Oh," cried the child, shaking from head to foot, "don't punish me! Mamma never does!"

"No, I should think not by this behavior," retorted Miss Green, elevating the child upon a bench higher than the rest. "I teach children to control themselves. Stand up; if you are stubborn, I shall whip you. Now you are to remain there till you stop disturbing the school with your noise."

Poor little Patty felt as if she were the only and the wickedest culprit in all the world. Her tears and wretchedness had thrown her into a profuse perspiration, and unfortunately there was a strong east wind blowing through the room, exactly in the center of which the child stood.

She grew suddenly very calm, bore the stares of the scholars, some of pity, some of malice, till the maps and all the heads before her began spinning round and round.

There arose a great cry, and the school sprang to its feet. Little Patty had fallen head foremost to the floor.

The mischief was all done, and nothing could be gained by either sorrow or remorse. The girl whose scornful speech pierced the child's heart may have thought of it, as, a week later, she looked within the little coffin, and heard the clouds fall heavily. For there was a sad and terrible ending—first fever, during which the child begged Miss Green continually not to punish her—and then death.

The poor mother, who had lived and worked only for her little daughter, never held up her head again. For six weary months she toiled with the grip of the destroyer tightening on her vitals, and then she, too, laid calmly down to rest.

But Miss Green was always haunted by that timid, white face, those scared blue eyes, the plaintive voice. It was a lesson that would never need to be repeated. Henceforth she was tender and gentle to all little children for Patty's sake, and the child's memory became a sacred influence permeating her whole school life.

WHEN General Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Confederate armies, came home from the war, his wife found *unopened* a bottle of brandy she had placed in his trunk to be used in case of sickness. *He never touched tobacco*. He refused promotion to an officer who drank, saying, "I cannot *pluice* in control of others one who cannot control himself."