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Ancient American Civilization

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Abstract: Relates the Book of Mormon to archaeological finds throughout the Americas. Discusses marriage customs, baptism, and legends. Adds information about the Mexican calendar, textiles, and landscaping.

Council. Instructions were given to the people to immediately proceed to the cutting of hay in sufficient quantities to supply the stock of the camp during the Winter.

(To be Continued.)

ANCIENT AMERICAN CIVILIZATION.

BY J. H. W.

IN ancient times Rome had taught that the earth was flat; and that the whole habitable world was comprised in the three divisions of the eastern continent. To these divisions were assigned respectively the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, the three sons of Noah.

When America was discovered, these dogmas were obliged to fall. If indeed Columbus had, as he supposed, reached the Indies by a westward voyage, then the world was proven to be a vast ball. If on the other hand America was a separate continent, divided from the eastern by a wild waste of waters of many thousand miles in extent, as was shown by the voyage of Magellan, a few years later, then it was found necessary to account for the origin of the inhabitants.

The teachings of Rome were altogether against their being descended from Adam since none such were mentioned in their scriptures. The protestant sects were too busy in their rivalries, dissensions and civil wars, to give much attention to the subject. The stupendous event recorded in Gen. x. 25, seems to have entirely escaped their notice. Hence they proceeded to act towards the unfortunate inhabitants of ancient America, as though they did not belong to the human race.

The conquest of Mexico and Peru by the Spaniards will ever remain one of "the bloodiest pictures in the book of Time." By millions upon millions whole races and nations were ruthlessly destroyed. It was one unspeakable outrage, one unutterable ruin, without discrimination of age, sex or character. Those who fell not by the sword, died under the lash in a tropical clime, or perished in the darkness and dampness of the mines. From the fever-stricken coasts of Mexico, and the gloom of dense forests in Central America; from hiding places in the clefts of the rocks, and from the eternal snows of the Andes, where there was no witness but the all-seeing eye of God, there went up to Him a cry of human despair.

The Bishop of Chiapa affirms that more than fifteen millions were destroyed in his time. From Mexico and Peru was crushed out a civilization that might have instructed Europe. What treasures would now be given for a view of that wonderful civilization and people that met the gaze of Cortez and his companions!

Is it for nothing that Spain has been made a hideous skeleton among the nations—a warning spectacle to the world? Had not her punishment overtaken her, men would have surely said, "There is no retribution; there is no God." She has been the instrument in the hands of Rome of ruining two civilizations: an eastern and a western; and both of the seed of Abraham: and in turn she has been ruined thereby herself.

With circumstances of dreadful barbarity, she expelled the Jews and Saracens who had become the children of her soil by a residence of more than seven hundred years, and in America destroyed nations, in some respects more civilized

than herself. By expulsion she lost some of her best citizens, and the wealth of Mexico and Peru, induced habits of luxury and effeminacy among the remainder. Her great cities have sunk into insignificance, and towns that once boasted of more than a million inhabitants can now only show a few scanty thousands. Surely the hand of God is visible in the degradation of Spain.

It is not alone the massive ruins of Central America, Yucatan, Peru and Mexico, that astonish the beholder. In almost every part of the western continent may be found the footprints of a mighty race, now vanished from the earth.

In the copper mines on the shores of Lake Superior, have been found the implements of those who worked in those mines many centuries ago. These instruments are made of copper, yet some of them are of so fine a temper that they will turn the edge of the best steel instruments of our times.

A few years ago in digging down a hill near the town of Fall River, Massachusetts, a mass of earth slid off uncovering a human skull, which was found to belong to a human skeleton buried in a sitting posture. When the covering was removed, the astonished workman saw that the trunk of the skeleton was encased in a breastplate of brass. This breastplate was oval in form, about thirteen inches long, ten in width and nearly one fourth of an inch in thickness. Below the breastplate, and entirely encircling the body, was a belt composed of brass tubes, each four and a half inch in length and one-fourth of an inch in diameter. The poet, Longfellow, has written a poem on this subject with which, no doubt, many of our readers are familiar. The poem commences:

"Speak, speak thou fearful guest
Who with thy hollow breast,
Still in rude armor drest
Comest to daunt me."

Not far distant, on the bank of the Taunton River, is the celebrated Dighton Rock, a huge piece of fine-grained granite covered with sculptures and hieroglyphic inscriptions. Both the skeleton and the inscriptions on the rock seem to be of Asiatic origin. The armor is the same as appears in drawings taken from the sculptures found at Palanque, Mexico.

At Marietta, Ohio, are ancient works that cover an area about three-fourths of a mile long, and half a mile broad. But the most intricate, and perhaps the most extensive, are those in the Licking Valley, near Newark, Ohio, extending over an area of two square miles.

These mounds are evidently the remains of ancient fortifications, as they are invariably situated on a commanding eminence, or by the side of a stream. Many of these mounds have been found to contain skeletons; and the appearance of the bones would seem to point to an antiquity of more than a thousand years.

Curious pottery known as "coil-made pottery," has been found in the mounds and caves, and at the ruined "pueblos," or ancient villages in Utah. These vessels seem to have been formed without the aid of a potter's wheel, by coiling bands of clay upon themselves.

Other relics have been discovered in various parts of the continent which throw some light on the mental and social condition of the ancient inhabitants of America. In August, 1875, on an island in the Mississippi river, near the city of Davenport, Iowa, was found a petrified skeleton. But the most singular part of the find came to light in the hardened and petrified straps, bronze buckles and wooden leg which continued the right extremity, that limb having been removed about midway between the hip and knee. This very interest-

ing discovery proves that the art of manufacturing bronze, and artificial limbs, as well as the art of surgery, was well known among the ancient Americans. These remains were handed over to the Academy of Sciences and a photograph was taken of the inscription contained on a rock in the vicinity. A copy of this photograph was forwarded to the late Mr. Barfoot, then curator of the Deseret Museum in Salt Lake City.

On the 16th of April, 1843, in a mound near Kinderhook, Pike County, Illinois, were found *six plates of brass* of a bell shape, each having a hole near the small end, and a ring through them all. The plates were so completely covered with rust, as almost to obliterate the characters inscribed upon each side of them. But after undergoing a chemical process, the inscriptions were brought out plain and distinct.

There were indications that lead to the belief that this mound was the tomb of a family or person of distinction, in ages long gone by; and these plates probably contain the history of a person or people who existed at a time far beyond the memory of the present race. (*For further particulars see appendix to O. Pratt's Works.*)

"In 1815, near Pittsfield, Mass., at a place called *Indian Hill*, was found what appeared to be a black strap about six inches in length and one and a half in breadth, and about the thickness of a leather trace to a harness. On examination it was found to be formed of two pieces of thick raw hide sewed and made water tight with the sinews of some animal and gummed over; and in the fold were contained pieces of parchment, of a dark yellow hue and on which was some kind of writing. Three of the pieces were preserved and sent to the University of Cambridge, Mass., where they were examined and discovered to have been written with a pen in *Hebrew*, plain and legible. The writing was quotations from the Old Testament, Deut. vi. 4-9, inclusive, and chap. xi. 13-21, inclusive, and Exodus xiii. 11-16, inclusive. (*See Voice of Warning.*)

The ancient Mexican pyramids, "teocallis," or temples of the sun, were still more remarkable. Two of the most ancient of these, near the city of Mexico, were each nearly 200 feet high, and the larger of these two, covers an area of eleven acres, which is nearly equal to that of the pyramid of Cheops, in Egypt. Now the question arises, who built these mounds in the Mississippi Valley, and these pyramids in Mexico? To what race belong the relics found in Massachusetts, Illinois and Iowa? Surely not to the Indians who were found in America when the country was discovered; for these things indicate a greater skill and culture than those tribes possessed.

Antiquaries have furnished many theories to answer this question which arises in the mind of every student. Some of these theories are very ingenious, but all are lacking in that important element, truth.

For more than three hundred years no certain light was thrown upon the history of that race. But that which man could not find out, with all his learning and research, God has revealed in His own due time. And here we see a wonderful manifestation of the hand of God in the history of this continent. A record, authentic, though brief, has been given to the world. The writings of some of the ancient worthies of that race have been preserved in the earth and have now come forth for the guidance and instruction of living men.

The Book of Mormon contains sketches of their history and the dealings of God with these peoples in a similar manner, as the Bible teaches the history and dealings of God with his ancient people, the Jews. It also contains many incidental

references to their mental and social condition and the extent to which the arts and sciences were cultivated among them.

It teaches us that when the Lord confounded the languages at Babel, He led forth a colony from thence, to the western continent, now called America. This colony, after crossing the ocean in eight vessels and landing in this country, became in process of time a great nation. They inhabited America about fifteen hundred years but were at length destroyed for their wickedness, about six hundred years before Christ. A prophet by the name of Ether wrote their history and an account of their destruction.

This people is known in modern history by the name of Toltecs, the ruins of whose edifices are widely scattered in Yucatan and Central America.

The sculptures and hieroglyphics on these ruins bear a striking resemblance to those found in the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh. It also appears that the mammoth, or American elephant, and mastodon—animals which are now extinct—then roamed the wilds of the western continent; for representations of these animals are often found sculptured on the walls of Toltec ruins. It is no doubt to these animals that reference is made in the fourth chapter of the book of Ether.

After this, another colony came from Jerusalem about six hundred years before Christ and re-peopled America. This last colony grew and multiplied, and finally gave rise to two mighty nations. One of these was called Nephites, the other Lamanites.

The Nephites were a civilized and enlightened people. For nearly one thousand years they were, from time to time, favored with revelation from God. Prophet after prophet was raised up from among them, and at length they were blessed with a personal appearance of Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, from whose mouth they received the doctrine of the gospel and a knowledge of the future down through all succeeding ages. But, after all the blessings and privileges conferred upon them, they fell into great wickedness in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, and finally were destroyed by their enemies, the Lamanites.

But though that mighty race has vanished from the earth; still the grandeur of their ruins attest the greatness of their civilization. Indeed it seems impossible to understand the character and extent of these ruins unless we admit the truth of the records given by Mosiah, Alma and Nephi, concerning the arts, sciences, mode of warfare, religion and subsequent apostasy and degradation of that people. In fact, as researches continue it becomes more and more evident that ancient American civilization was only a transcript of ancient Jewish and Egyptian architecture, manners, customs and modes of thought. In matters of government, the pomp of their monarchs, the arbitrary power, and the obligation of all to military service present a striking resemblance to the powers and privileges of the kings of ancient Israel. Likewise their religious state was only a reflection of that of Asia. Their worship was an imposing ceremonial. Though the common people had a mythology of many gods, similar to the saint-worship of Rome, yet the higher-cultured classes acknowledged but one almighty Creator.

Marriage was celebrated by religious ceremonies and the laws pertaining thereto bore a striking resemblance to those of ancient Israel. Polygamy was sanctioned, but in practice was generally confined to the wealthy.

The priests administered a rite of baptism to infants and proselytes for the purpose of washing away their sins. They also taught that there are rewards and punishments in a world

to come—a paradise for the good, and a hell of darkness for the wicked. But the highest glory and reward was reserved for the noble few who fell in sacrifice or in battle for the cause of right. They went directly into the presence of the sun, whom they accompanied in his bright progress through the heavens. After a few years these spirits went to animate the clouds and add lustre to the glories of the sunset, or were sent to rule over and increase the pure and undying light of the stars. Who does not see in all this the traces of a purer religion, which centuries of apostasy and degradation had not been able to entirely destroy. This is all the more manifest when we consider some of their maxims and forms of prayer. One was: "Bear injuries with humility, God, who sees, will avenge you." Another was: "Clothe the naked and feed the hungry, whatever privations it may cost thee; for remember, *their flesh is like thine and they are men like thee.*" Again: "Impart to us, O Lord, out of Thy great mercy Thy gifts which we are not worthy to receive through our own merits." Also: "O, merciful Lord, *thou who knowest the secrets of all hearts,* let thy forgiveness and favor descend." In all these we find sentiments such as are contained in the scriptures of the Old Testament.

One of the most important duties of the priesthood was that of education, to which certain buildings were appropriated. To each of the principal temples, schools were attached and lands were annexed for the maintenance of the priests. Their writing was on cotton cloth or skins or on papyrus, a kind of paper made from the aloe. At the time of the Spanish conquest vast collections of these manuscripts were in existence; but the first Archbishop of Mexico, burned them in the market-place. Rome was determined that no literature should exist but her own.

The Mexican year consisted of eighteen months and each month of twenty days; five days were added to make the number to three hundred and sixty-five. To provide for the leap years they added twenty-four days to each century. The Mexican mode of reckoning was then superior to that of Europe. When the nations of Europe adopted the calendar discovered and perfected by the Jews and Saracens, then their mode of reckoning corresponded with that discovered by the seed of Abraham on this continent and both were true.

The ancient Americans had ascertained the globular form of the earth previous to their contact with Europeans. Catholic Europe would not admit that truth till compelled to by the voyages of Columbus and Magellan.

Their agriculture was in some respects superior to that of Europe. There was nothing in the Old World to compare with the menageries and botanical gardens of Huax-tepec, Chapultepec and Tezcuco.

They excelled in the arts of the jeweller and enameller. They were skillful weavers of fine cloth. They were not ignorant of the use of iron; and understood the manufacture of bronze, of which they also made use. To them we are indebted for tobacco, snuff, chocolate and cochineal. From them we learned the use of the potato, which has now extended to all parts of the civilized world. They, like us, knew the use of intoxicating drinks; and like us sometimes partook of them to excess.

This sketch would be incomplete without a reference to the civilization of Peru. As Egypt was the cradle of civilization in the Old World, so Peru was in the New. Like Egypt also it was in most parts a rainless region. The ancient Peruvian empire was nearly two thousand four hundred miles in length,

but scarcely sixty miles in width—a narrow strip hemmed in between the grand Andes mountains and the Pacific ocean.

The sides of this great mountain range might seem altogether unfitted for agriculture. But the advanced state of Peruvian civilization is at once demonstrated when it is said that these mountain slopes had become a garden. Immense terraces were constructed wherever required, and irrigation was employed on the grandest scale the world has ever seen. Peru possesses a varied climate. In the lower valleys near the coast could be raised all the products of tropical regions, at an elevation of a few thousand feet the climate was adapted for grains of a temperate zone. On table-lands, at a great elevation above the sea, there were villages and even cities. Thus the plain on which Quito stands, under the equator, is nearly ten thousand feet high, and enjoys a climate of perpetual spring. So great was their industry that the Peruvians had gardens and orchards above the clouds and on ranges still higher flocks of sheep and llamas, in regions bordering on the limit of perpetual snow.

In Cuzco, the metropolis, was the residence of the *Inca* or emperor, and the great temple of the sun.

The Inca was both temporal prince and ruling priest of their religion. Though they ostensibly worshiped the sun, yet the higher classes recognized the existence of one almighty, invisible God.

Like the Egyptians, the Peruvians understood the art of embalming the dead. The mummies of their Incas being placed in the vaults beneath the temple of the sun at Cuzco.

The enormous crime of Spain in destroying this civilization has never been fully appreciated. In vain the Spaniards excuse their atrocities, on the plea that these nations were savages and permitted human sacrifices. True, the nations of America sank very low when the light of the gospel was withdrawn; but every candid mind will ask: "Which was the more degraded, papal Europe or apostate America?" Human sacrifice, however cruel, has nothing in it degrading to its victim. It may be rather said to enoble him by devoting him to the gods. Although so terrible with the Mexicans, it was sometimes voluntarily embraced by them as the most glorious death, and one that opened a sure passage into paradise.

There was no spectacle on the American continent, at which a just man might so deeply blush for his race as that presented in Western Europe when the martyr, from whom confession had been wrung by torture, passed to the stake in a sleeveless garment, with flames of fire and pictures of devils painted upon it. Let it be remembered that from A. D. 1481 to 1808, more than 340,000 persons had been tortured, and out of these nearly 32,000 burnt. Let it also be remembered that the body of man is of less value than the immortal soul, for the redemption of which the agony and death of the Son of God was not too great a price to pay. Let it not be forgotten that at that period the entire authority of Europe was directed to the enslaving of the minds and souls of men and making that noblest creation of heaven a worthless machine.

Everywhere throughout the continent may be found traces of Bible and Nephite history. Humboldt, in his travels, mentions a multitude of native books in which were described all the leading circumstances and history of the deluge, of the fall of man, and the first murder as perpetrated by Cain.

Clavigero, in his history of Mexico, tells of an ancient native manuscript, found at Chiapa, which gives a plain and brief account of the building of the tower of Babel, the confusion of tongues and the subsequent migration of Votan or Joran,

(Do doubt a corruption of Jared,) and his companions to the continent of America.

The Indians of Cuba related to Bernal Diaz, the companion and historian of Columbus, a complete and scarcely corrupted account of the deluge, the intoxication of Noah and Ham's shameful conduct.

Humboldt mentions numerous traditions existing among the natives of Yucatan and Central America concerning a great religious teacher, a wonderful personage, whom they called Quetzalcoatl, and who was a white and bearded man. "Many things are said of him in their books of parchment, and among others, that when he left them he gave them wise laws and maxims, and promised to return and rule over them and renew their happiness." Compare with this the record of Nephi. (*See III. Nephi, chap. ii. to xxviii. inclusive.*)

A tradition of the Wyandott Indians, published by Frederick Falley, of Sandusky, O., in 1823, gives a plain account of the battle of Cumorah. Both Brickenridge and Humboldt conclude that "a great battle took place in the region of the great lakes not later than the year 544 of the Christian era, after which the Aztecs (Lamanites) took possession of the country southward."

The foregoing will indicate to some extent the workings of the hand of God, as manifest in the history of this continent. Volumes might be written on this subject, but enough has been said to awaken inquiry among the honest in heart and indicate the treasures contained in the Nephite annals, and corroborated by the ruins of

"This old, old land, which men call new;
This land as old as time is old."

INDIAN IDEAS AND CUSTOMS.

BY LLEWELLYN HARRIS.

THE Indian has an idea that the place now occupied by the earth which we inhabit was at one time an unbounded expanse of water, and that the darkness which here had its abiding place was never penetrated by a single ray of light. At that time the human family dwelt in an upper region of the creation—a place abounding in everything that could add to the comfort and happiness of man. There, the forests were full of game; the streams swarmed with fish and water-fowl; the earth produced spontaneously a profusion of vegetables for the use of man; an unclouded sun enlivened their days, while storm and tempests were unknown; the inhabitants of that delightful region were strangers to death and its harbingers, pain and disease, and their minds were free from the corroding passions of jealousy, hatred, malice and revenge. This is the "happy hunting ground" to which the Indian expects to return when he dies.

There is a tradition among nearly all the Indian tribes, that at some day not far distant the Great Spirit will raise up a mighty prophet among them who will perform great and wonderful works. Many of the tribes in southern Arizona and northern Mexico believe that just beyond the Maricopa wells, in the Estrella range of mountains, Montezuma is and has been sleeping for centuries. They say, however, that when the before-mentioned prophet appears, Montezuma will awaken from his long sleep, and will gather the brave and faithful of his people around him. He will then raise a standard of liberty, elevate his down-trodden people and restore to his kingdom the power and glory which it possessed before the Spaniards invaded and conquered it.

These events are expected to transpire at no distant day, and this hope has cheered the poor Indian in centuries that are past. But year after year passed and Montezuma's slumber was not broken, neither by the battle-cry of the tribes that fought near the mountains where he sleeps, nor by the dying shrieks of the children, who had come from distant lands to rob him of his scepter and crown. These all fell unheeded on the rocks and deserts that guard his resting place.

When an Indian council is held, he that desires to speak arises, and the others present remain perfectly quiet. When this speaker has finished he takes his seat, and he is then allowed five or six minutes in which to collect his thoughts and add anything which he may have forgotten before another takes the floor. For one Indian to interrupt another even in general conversation is considered very improper and rude. Again, when two persons are conversing privately, it is contrary to their customs for a third person to in any way interfere and thus disturb the parties talking. These items should be remembered by those who anticipate traveling among the red men; and the lessons in politeness imparted by them are worthy of the consideration of every person.

A WILL AND A WAY.

A LITTLE boy was very much in need of suitable clothes to wear to Sunday school. So he made up his mind that in some way he would earn them. All his spare time he was planning or carrying out some plan to increase his little store. It grew a few cents at a time, until he chanced to know that a druggist wished dandelion roots for some medical preparation. He went to work in a business way by first making an arrangement and fixing a price with the druggist, and then set himself to work with enthusiasm. It was hard work for small fingers, and hands grew soiled and rough, but he did not mind that. The dandelions were springing up everywhere, and their golden stars pointed out the spots to dig. It took a good many roots to make a pound; but Willie persevered, and won his reward. The neat Sunday suit was bought; and I know it gave him double pleasure because it was the fruit of his own industry.

"I don't see how you ever earned it all, Willie," said a friend.

Willie's answer was worth thinking over by much older people:

"When my mind is very much set on anything I generally find a way to do it."

He had an element of character which would go far towards making him a successful man.

Ways of useful industry open up before almost any intelligent lad who trusts in God and tries with all his might. The best place for growing boys is the school-room, where that is possible; but if there is a need-be for them to be earning money, let them pray earnestly to God for guidance, and then take every honest method for accomplishing their purpose. Do not let them scorn a work because it is lowly. He that "is faithful in the least" is in a fair way to promotion. Men respect and God honors such workers.

A man who amassed a large fortune said that he never failed in an enterprise over which he had prayed earnestly. Such a practice will be likely to keep one out of any crooked ways of making money, and what is gained will have the blessing of God upon it.