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External Evidences of the Book of Mormon

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According to some scholars,¹ Palenque and the northern part of Guatemala were the cradle of the great Mayan culture (A.D. 250-850). The ancestors of the Maya, the Olmecs (1200-100 B.C.), built an impressive civilization even before the time of Christ. In Central and South America, we find the remains of this early Mayan culture which in some respects was equal to that of ancient Rome. The Mayan civilization persisted, under various ruling peoples² until 1500, when it and the neighboring Aztecs (A.D. 1400-1500)³ were conquered by the Spanish.

Research has shown that all these people—Olmecs, Maya, and Aztecs—were deeply religious, and among their most persistent beliefs was one concerning the Great Spirit called Quetzalcoatl, represented in numerous paintings and carvings. A great leader, he is believed to have once visited the American continent, teaching them about religion, agriculture, and government.

As we try to visualize these ancient people, we are intrigued by a comparison with their descendants—the simple, unspoiled, friendly people who still make their homes nearby. One striking similarity is that the knowledge of Quetzalcoatl, handed down through centuries, persists even today.

The legend of the Bearded White God appears almost everywhere in this hemisphere. And though he is given

various names,⁴ the allusion is always the same—a fair, bearded person with brown hair, blue eyes, and wearing a light robe.⁵ He counseled the people, taught them, and left with the promise that he would someday return.⁶

In letters that Columbus sent back to Spain, he vividly described his reception upon arrival in the New World.

The people of this land believed very firmly that I, with these ships and crew, came from the sky; and in such opinion, they received me at every place where I landed, after they had lost their terror.

And to this day many of them are still of the opinion that I came from heaven. And they were the first to proclaim it wherever I arrived; and the others went running from house to house . . . with loud cries of 'Come! Come to see the people from heaven!'⁷

When they landed in Mexico, Cortez and his conquerors also experienced a lavish welcome from the great Montezuma and his people, the Aztecs.⁸

To the simple natives, both Columbus and Cortez represented the promised return of Quetzalcoatl, and they were received with great joy. The crafty Cortez, taking advantage of the legend, told the chiefs he was indeed sent by Quetzalcoatl, and their belief in the Great White God was so strong it is recorded that with this news they "wept so that for a long space of time they could make no reply."⁹ The persistent belief in this white god is harmonious with the appearance of Christ in 3 Nephi 11-26.¹⁰ On the other hand, Ruth and Hyatt Verrill argue for a merely legendary source for the white god myth from early Sumner.¹¹ This, too, in its way, supports the Book of Mormon in pre-Columbian Old-New World contact.

Other evidence also argues for Old-New World communication. Cortez wrote back to Spain describing an advanced civilization with forts so large that a city of fifteen thousand inhabitants could live within its walls. He mentioned forts containing forty or more towers of heavy con-

struction built better, in fact, than the cathedrals in Spain.¹² He described aqueducts and water systems of great size and efficiency.¹³ King Montezuma indicated to Cortez that his ancestors were not native to the New World.¹⁴ Some scholars believe these seafarers brought with them a culture comparable to that of the Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Greeks.¹⁵ Teotihuacan, the ruin just outside Mexico City, exemplifies the high degree of civilization attained by these ancient peoples. Traveling further south, there are the pyramids of Tikal in Guatemala which served a vast population dating back before the time of Christ. In Copan, Honduras, is found what is thought to have been a great seat of learning. All of these great cities stretching from Mexico on the north down through the Yucatan Peninsula to Copan give mute evidence to the fact that an extremely high culture existed centuries before Columbus.

Francisco Pizarro, a later explorer, made conquests still farther south. He landed in Peru, and was amazed to find millions of people scattered from Ecuador to Chile. He discovered complex irrigation systems, including sluiceways and reservoirs,¹⁶ which suggest influence from already advanced cultures. The coastal plains thus watered by mountain streams produced many staple products, including cotton of such unique content that botanists conclude it to be a hybrid combination of the Old and the New World, and was likely brought to the Americas by ship or raft.¹⁷

The craftsmanship in New World pottery-making was high in quality. Some styles of pottery were Mediterranean, while others resembled the ceramics of the Orient.¹⁸ In Cuzco, Peru, an ancient capital, Pizarro found the city surrounded by a massive wall built centuries before. The enormous, beautifully cut and fitted stones were assembled without the aid of mortar. In fact, they are so perfectly fitted and laid that a knife blade cannot be forced into the joints. Some of these gigantic stones weigh more than a

hundred tons. Placing them atop one another was a remarkable engineering feat in itself.¹⁹ The only analogous structures in the world are the Egyptian pyramids.

Another astonishing engineering wonder is Machu Picchu, situated high in the Peruvian Andes, atop a peak with a sheer precipice on one side and a high peak on the other. It is believed to be a fortress city built in pre-Incan times to protect its citizens from invasion. The advanced technological expertise in this city's construction seems to have sprung up in Peru with no archaeological evidence of developmental or intermediate stages.²⁰ This may suggest infusion from already advanced cultures.

Furthermore, a number of ancient American skills were noteworthy, such as metal working and medicine. That the ancients on the American continent were exceptional goldsmiths is well known. Pizarro records that it took "sixty Incan goldsmiths working steadily day and night for one month" to reduce all of the stolen artifacts down into bullion for transportation to Spain.²¹ Gold was so common, in fact, that some gold objects were painted other colors to break the monotony. Gold alloy was formed into breastplates, and even flat, thin plates have been found much like the aluminum foil in use today. The ancients also worked with copper, silver, and some bronze in a way similar to their Near Eastern counterparts.

In addition to being outstanding metalsmiths, artisans, and builders, these ancient Americans were skilled in other areas as well. They were gifted in the art of medicine to an astonishing degree. They were familiar with the use of narcotics, treated abnormal pregnancies, and even performed successful skull operations.²² They were also accomplished musicians with a musical scale similar to that found in the Mediterranean area. They were highly skilled in astronomy and mathematics, using the zero even before the Old World.²³ And over a thousand years before the Old World had today's calendar, New World mathema-

ticians were using a more accurate system. The Aztec calendar, while not as accurate as the Mayan, is still quite efficient.²⁴

This people also showed a great interest in religion. According to many interesting discoveries that have been made, religion was the center of their lives. Some of these early Americans possessed a story of the creation of the world, of a great flood, a closed ark, the building of a high tower, and a confusion of languages. Scholars obtained this knowledge from the works of a royal Indian prince, Ixtlilxochitl, who was taught the Spanish language by padres, who followed the conquistadors. This prince inherited ancient Aztec records from his royal grandfather and translated them into Spanish, working all his life on the project. This history tells of how the Toltecs came to this continent many years after the flood, and their dating begins with the time "when Christ suffered."²⁵

Later, some early Spanish scholars learned the native language and translated the ancient histories and traditions into Spanish. These translations are very interesting, and one of these Spanish scholars, Sahagun, wrote of pre-Christian and Christian Aztec beliefs, among which were similarities to such basic Christian doctrines as the afterlife and the kingdom of heaven, fasting, repentance, and a kind of eucharist in which an imitation body of the god was made of Amaranth dough and eaten.²⁶ There is some evidence that the natives practiced circumcision and some form of baptism.²⁷ These suggest that there may have been pre-Columbian influences from the Old World.

The use of incense²⁸ in the ceremonies of the Indians is another tie to the Old World. The marriage covenant was sacred, indicating a high degree of morality among these people.²⁹ In fact, the Spanish padres were surprised at the great number of parallels between the religion and practices of the ancient Indians and those of the Catholics of the Old World—such things as sacrificial altars,³⁰ the

burying of honored deceased individuals inside the temples or pyramids,³¹ and the manner of burial that indicated belief in immortality.³² The Aztec Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan bears great similarity in size and structure to those found in Egypt.³³ Most scholars today believe that the American Indian is a mixture of many races and blood types.³⁴ Recent studies and discoveries also link the Americas with Mediterranean cultures.³⁵

So, there are a number of possible links between the Americas and the ancient world: belief in a white god, advanced building and engineering feats, metallurgy, and artisanship. An additional link with the Book of Mormon is the practice in the ancient world of writing on metal plates and their burying them in stone boxes.

In 1830, some ancient writing on plates was found in Palmyra, New York, by a young man named Joseph Smith, who described them as follows:

These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold, each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed.³⁶

At that time, in 1830, Joseph Smith's discovery was new. But was it unique? Was writing on metal plates completely unknown? The answer is no.

In the 1400s in the medieval city of Gubbio, Italy, seven large bronze tablets, called the Iguvine Tablets,³⁷ which contained instructions for religious ceremonies, were discovered. Since then, lead plates containing commercial records of Italian families have been found in Bologna and Venice³⁸—a common practice until the sixteenth century. Early Greek and Latin writings tell of metal plates used for treaty tablets and temple prayers.³⁹ These writings were

translated and read widely in Europe and America. Therefore, anyone familiar with these texts in 1830 would not have been surprised at the idea of writing on metal.

Writing on metal took a variety of forms. When Sir Francis Drake sailed into San Francisco Bay in the 1500s, he claimed the territory and erected a bronze plaque to document his claim.⁴⁰ The Tookabatcha Indians of Mississippi and Alabama refer to five copper plates and two brass plates that their tribe has preserved for generations. The plates contain symbols resembling those of early Rome and Greece. Several authors, including James Adair, described these plates.⁴¹

All of these examples of writing on metal were found before Moroni's first visit to Joseph Smith in 1823. Nevertheless, his discovery created much excitement – and some skepticism – because it involved *gold* plates. Ancient writing on *gold* plates was not thought in 1823 to have been as historically commonplace, but many have been found worldwide since that time.

In Korea in 1965, nineteen gold plates dating back to the tenth century A.D. were found buried in a bronze box at the base of a pagoda. They were hinged together in accordion style and measured 14 x 15 inches.⁴² In the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem there is a plaque of thin gold foil from the Roman period. On this plate, used to cover the lips of the dead, is inscribed, "Take Courage Gosmos."⁴³ In 1920, at the headwaters of the Tigris River, explorers found a gold tablet of King Shalmaneser in the land now known as Iraq. Though the tablet is undated, we know Shalmaneser lived about eight hundred years before Christ.⁴⁴

In 1938, while excavating the palace of King Darius I, who reigned over Persia in the sixth century before Christ, a team from the University of Chicago discovered the closest and most spectacular parallel to the Book of Mormon plates: King Darius, in commemoration of the completion

of his palace at Persepolis, placed eight metal tablets (four gold and four silver) in four stone boxes⁴⁵ at the corners of the structure. Translations of the tablets reveal that they gave thanks to God and asked for protection of the royal household.

One of the oldest examples of writing on gold plates is found in the Louvre in Paris. It is the gold plate of Djokha Umma, and was discovered in the foundation of a sacred building in Iraq.⁴⁶ It measures less than 2 x 3 inches. Also in the Louvre are the six plates of Sargon II from King Khorsabad's palace in Assyria (ca. 700 B.C.).⁴⁷ Encased in a box were several plates, one of which was gold. The others were silver, lead, tin, and copper.

In Rome, prominently displayed in a famous archaeological museum, are three magnificent gold plates of Pyrgi (ca. 500 B.C.),⁴⁸ written in the language of the Phoenicians and Etruscans. The plates are about 5 x 7 inches. You can still see the holes where they were originally fastened with nails to the door of the temple of the goddess, Astarte. These plates were very nearly the size of those described by Joseph Smith.⁴⁹ In the British Museum in London are found two beautiful Maunggun gold plates, each measuring 1 x 14 inches, containing Buddhist scriptures⁵⁰ and dating back to the first century A.D. They each have three lines of writing in the Pali language.

Writing on gold plates was indeed a common practice anciently. When gold was not plentiful, other metals were used. Lead and bronze plates were found with inscriptions; an inscribed bronze scoop dating back to 2000 B.C., along with writing on mirrors and even on metal moulded animals were found; also, bronze statue pedestals bearing inscriptions have been found. An outstanding example of writing on silver comes from Bethany. This scroll, dated A.D. 400, was found rolled up in a copper tube. It can be seen at the Information Center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah.⁵¹ It is very small (7-1/4 x 2-1/8 inches) and

had to be photographed and magnified in order for the ancient Greek writing to be read. It lists religious beings who could ward off evil influences. A scroll similar to the Bethany scroll is on display in the archaeological museum in Jerusalem.

One of the famous Dead Sea copper scrolls from the Qumran community near Jerusalem, which existed before Christ, is proudly displayed in the National Archaeological Museum in Jordan.⁵² This scroll, written in Hebrew, told of a buried treasure which has never been found. It told of tithing and temple receipts from the Qumran community.

In Rome, in addition to the gold plates of Pyrgi and the bronze tablets of Gubbio, there are two ancient books from America called codices. They were written on the pounded bark of trees and folded like an accordion. They contain beautiful colorful drawings and hieroglyphs which were made A.D. 1400 and are now being translated. These Mayan books are renowned for their perfect preservation and are housed in the Vatican Library.⁵³ Not only did ancient peoples write on metal plates, but they also wrote on metal columns,⁵⁴ such as the giant pillar from the Near East dating back to 1100 B.C., now housed in the Louvre.

When Joseph Smith reported that his ancient gold plates were bound with metal rings, once again the idea seemed novel. Actually, though, the ancient Sanskrit and Tamil plates from India dating to A.D. 769 are bound together with a copper ring. They are in the British Museum along with other copper, silver, bronze, and gold plates from India written in ancient Pali.⁵⁵ Some of these plates were a base metal covered with gold, with enameled black writing.

Joseph Smith is no longer alone in declaring that ancient American inhabitants in the New World could not only write, but that they preserved their writings in much the same manner as was previously done in the Old World.

Archaeologist Rivero and historian Tschudi mention possible instances of the ancient Peruvians writing on metal.⁵⁶ The well-known Hugo Cohen Museum in Lima, Peru, houses an intriguing gold plate found in a Peruvian area called Lambayeque.⁵⁷ It measures 4 x 8 inches and contains possible writing symbols. Several plates of copper, bronze, and gold have been found by modern natives digging in the ruins of Cuenca, Ecuador. Scientists are now studying the plates to determine their authenticity and relationship to the ancient languages of the Old World.

One of the best-known examples of ancient writing on metal in the New World comes from the sacrificial well, or *cenote*, in Chichen Itza on the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. When the Peabody Museum crew from Harvard University began dredging this well, they found embossed gold discs, among which was one with Mayan inscriptions.⁵⁸ This well predates Columbus, and the gold disc is now in the Peabody Museum. J. Eric S. Thompson, the Maya hieroglyph expert, says that inscriptions have been found (though rarely) on metal in postclassic Mesoamerica.⁵⁹ Juan de Torquemada, in discussing the ancient Toltec of Mexico, noted that they wrote in two columns — one of metal, and the other of stone.⁶⁰ A native Mexican writer of Colonial times wrote: "It is certain that there were this kind of Artisans in Oaxaca, . . . for [probably before 1880] the Mixtecs sold to some European antiquarians some very thin gold plates, evidently worked by hammering that their ancestors had been able to preserve, and which were engraved with ancient hieroglyphs."⁶¹

Six bell-shaped brass plates were found in Kinderhook, Illinois, in 1843, in a mound with a skeleton.⁶² The date and origin are questionable and unknown. The writing is being studied, but no translation has been made. The Museum of the American Indian in New York City displays a gold disc thought to be a calendar. Inscriptions may have

been placed on this metal about 800 B.C. somewhere in the Chavin area of Peru.⁶³

Scholars and adventurers have been in awe as they have viewed the magnificent temples and carvings of ancient American cultures. They have marveled at their advanced society which revealed a knowledge of engineering, architecture, highway construction, astronomy, mathematics, religion, government, and art – evidences on every hand of a highly civilized people. Is it unreasonable to expect, then, that some of these ancient peoples were skilled communicators in the manner of their ancestors? I think not.

When Joseph Smith reported that he had found inscribed gold plates buried in a stone box, the idea seemed novel. Yet, prominently on display in the Louvre is a stone box⁶⁴ containing copper plates with writing from the foundation of the temple of Dagan at Mari.⁶⁵ These date back to 3000 B.C. The British Museum also houses two ancient boxes – one is from Balawat and contains two stone tablets;⁶⁶ the other is of clay and was found in Babylonia, dated 600 B.C.

Joseph Smith said that the history written on his gold plates was of a people whose roots began in the Middle East and who brought with them to the New World the traditions and customs of their land. These customs included writing on metal plates and burying them in stone boxes. Although stone boxes were used commonly in the Old World to bury and preserve histories and other treasures, only recently have ancient stone boxes been discovered in America in significant numbers. Many of these are now on display in the archaeological museum in Mexico.

Stone boxes have been found in the Old World as well as the New. These boxes usually contained gold, jewelry, tools, or other valuables. A stone box found in Persepolis, Iran, contained two thin metal plates – one of gold and the

other of silver—upon which was an engraved record of King Darius.⁶⁷ Several hundred different histories engraved on gold, silver, and copper plates have been discovered in the Old World. In the year 1823, a stone box, much like those discovered later in Latin America, was shown to Joseph Smith in the side of a hill near Palmyra, New York. The stone box contained ancient golden plates with strange engravings upon them much like those found in Iran.

This record, when translated, was found to be God's dealings with some of the early inhabitants of the American continent, and was destined to change the course of history. It told of three groups of people migrating here by ship from the Old World. It described the rise and fall of two glorious civilizations that prospered under the hands of the Lord when they kept his commandments and were destroyed when they did not.

Eleven reputable men besides Joseph Smith were privileged to see these gold records. Eight of them signed the following statement:

Be it known unto all nations, kindred, tongues, and people unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.⁶⁸

Running throughout the Book of Mormon narrative is

the story of two groups of people – one light-skinned and the other dark. We see possible evidence of this in murals at Bonampak, Mexico, as well as in murals at Chichen Itza. Legends still exist among these Indians about a dark people and a light people who lived there anciently.

The Book of Mormon also speaks of frequent warfare in this civilization. The actuality of this is borne out by the numerous fortifications and weapons found in Mexico and in Central and South America – weapons similar to those used in the Old World.

One of the most unforgettable stories in the Book of Mormon is Lehi's "tree of life" vision. References to the tree of life continue to crop up in such diverse places as Egypt, Mesoamerica, and in Paracas, Peru. Carved centuries ago in a mountain in Paracas, a representation is still called the tree of life by local natives. And in Izapa, Mexico, is one of the most detailed tree of life carvings to be found anywhere. One modern scholar who has made a thorough study of this stela has suggested 110 similarities between this sculpture and the dream of Lehi and Nephi in the Book of Mormon.⁶⁹

Perhaps the most beautiful and memorable segment of the Book of Mormon is the portion that tells of the story of a visit of Jesus Christ. He taught the people, blessed the children, and, upon leaving, promised to return someday. His teachings were very similar to those of the Bearded White God who taught all goodness and virtue, and then promised to return. So great was the impact of Christ's visit to this continent that his story was repeated and handed down by word of mouth for centuries. Is it any wonder that the natives bowed down and worshiped Columbus, Cortez, and Pizarro upon their arrival here?

And this brings us full circle to the question of the Bearded White God, the most widely held legend in this part of the world. The story of the Bearded White God in these great civilizations of the past is no longer a complete

mystery. We still have much to learn about them, but we have many clues.

There are the history of Ixtlilxochitl, the Mayan prince; the translated histories of the Spanish chronicles; and the Book of Mormon, which contains the most lengthy and detailed history of these people and emerges as the most valuable record known concerning this pre-Columbian civilization.

The Book of Mormon was not intended to be read as an archaeological document. Certain mundane activities were only mentioned to provide cohesion to the narrative. Discussing these factors, however, can raise, for some people, interest in the record itself. Evidence of their mathematics, astronomy, agricultural practices, mastery of weaving textiles, and so forth, helps document their greatness. The main purpose of the Book of Mormon is spiritual. The book contains God's dealings with three groups of immigrants to the American continent and is a second witness and testament of the mission and plan of Jesus Christ.

After the age of forty-two, I attended Brigham Young University for graduate studies and became a student of Hugh Nibley, admiring him as a scholar and friend. Dr. Nibley accompanied Dr. LaMar Garrard and me on a trip through the Navajo and Hopi Indian country, and later he and I accompanied a group on a tour through the Mexican pre-Columbian ruins. These experiences, along with the inspiration I have received from reading his many works, have endeared him to me immeasurably.

Notes

1. Constance Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces* (New York: St. Martin's, 1963), 102, 166; J. Eric S. Thompson, *Maya History and Religion* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 106; A. Hyatt Verrill, *Old Civilizations of the New World* (New York: Tudor, 1938), 100.

2. Cf. the Toltecs, for example, who ruled A.D. 950-1200.

3. The Aztec chieftain was the now famous Montezuma (ca. A.D. 1480-1520).

4. He was known by various names. To the Toltecs and Aztecs of Mexico, he was Quetzalcoatl; to the Incas, Viracocha; to the Maya, Kukulcan; to the Chibchas, Bochica; to the Peruvian Aymara, Hyustus. Cf. Pierre Honoré, *In Quest of the White God*, trs. Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger (New York: Putnam, 1964), 16. This god Quetzalcoatl should not be confused with an eighth-century hero who took upon himself the name of Quetzalcoatl.

5. Verrill, *Old Civilizations*, 182; see also A. Hyatt Verrill, *Great Conquerors of South and Central America* (New York: Appleton, 1929), 53-55; and A. Hyatt Verrill and Ruth Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Putnam, 1953), 67.

6. See Honore, *In Quest of the White God*, 16, 98, 108; cf. Thompson, *Maya History and Religion*, 44.

7. John B. Thacher, *Christopher Columbus*, 3 vols. (New York: AMS Press/Kraus Reprint, 1967), 2:22-23.

8. Verrill, *Great Conquerors of South and Central America*, 61-62.

9. Hernando Cortez, *Five Letters 1519-1526*, tr. J. Bayard Morris (London: Routledge, 1928), 82.

10. Cf. Bruce Warren and Thomas S. Ferguson, *The Messiah in Ancient America* (Provo, UT: Book of Mormon Research Foundation, 1987), esp. 29-50.

11. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 109, 293.

12. Cortez, *Five Letters*, 78, 90.

13. *Ibid.*, 92-93.

14. Verrill, *Great Conquerors*, 51; Honore, *In Quest of the White God*, 26-27.

15. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 293; Honore, *In Quest of the White God*, 22, 200-208.

16. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 256, on the complex irrigation and reservoir system.

17. Cf. George Carter, "Before Columbus" in Paul R. Cheesman, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 164-86; cf. J. B. Hutchinson, R. A. Silow, and S. G. Stephens, *Evolution of Gossypium* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947).

18. Cf. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 173.

19. *Ibid.*, 235-38, 243-45, 247.

20. *Ibid.*, 196-97, 246.

21. Verrill, *Great Conquerors of South and Central America*, 20-21.

22. Verrill and Verrill, *Ancient American Civilizations*, 153-54, 309.

23. For a reference on mathematics, see Donald Ediger, *The Well of Sacrifice* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 16; cf. Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces*, 107, 110-11, 115, 273; for astronomy, see Ediger, *The Well of Sacrifice*, 142, and Verrill and Verrill, *Ancient American Civilizations*, 195.

24. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 260.

25. For the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl* compared with the Book of Mormon, see Milton R. Hunter and Thomas S. Ferguson, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* (Oakland, CA: Kolob, 1950), esp. 189-94, for the chronological correspondence between Christ's death and the Toltec calendrical dating, and cf. 89-90 for Toltec knowledge of the creation and flood. Cf. E. Wyllys Andrews, "Chronology and Astronomy in the Maya Area" in Clarence L. Hay et al., eds., *The Maya and Their Neighbors* (New York: Appleton Century, 1940), 150-61.

26. Fray Bernardino Sahagun, *General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex*, tr. Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson, 13 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: School of American Research and the University of Utah, 1950-70), 1: prologue to the argument against idolatry, chaps. 1, 12, 14, 19, 24; 2:chaps. 4 and 6; 3: chap. 1.

27. *Ibid.* Baptism as immersion is uncertain, but some form of ceremonial washing (1: chaps. 1 and 19), including washing of the feet (1: chap. 19) was performed. In addition, circumcision is also unclear since the term "man's skin" (2: chap. 21) might merely refer to the skin of the entire body, as in "wearing human skins" (1: chap. 18). Reference is elsewhere made to the wearing of "woman's skin" after a female sacrificial victim had been skinned (2: chap. 11; 1: chap. 8).

28. Thomas Gann, *Glories of the Maya* (New York: Scribners, 1939), 20-21, 84, 209-10.

29. Adultery was violently punished. See Oliver La Farge, "Maya Ethnology: The Sequence of Cultures," in Hay et al., *The Maya and Their Neighbors*, 284.

30. C. Bruce Hunter, *A Guide to Ancient Maya Ruins* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 16, 49-52, 55, 66, 77, 121-22.

31. Patrick Culbert, "Early Maya Development at Tikal, Guatemala" in Richard E. W. Adams, ed., *The Origins of Maya Civilization* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 40-41; cf. Gann, *Glories of the Maya*, 113, 154, 172-77, 197, 206, 210, 264.

32. Cf. Gann, *Glories of the Maya*, 71, 145, 206, who claims that many ancient beliefs still persist.

33. Ediger, *The Well of Sacrifice*, 19, 142.
34. W. W. Howells, "The Origins of American Indian Race Types" in Hay et al., *The Maya and Their Neighbors*, 7.
35. Ibid.
36. HC 4:537.
37. See Irene Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cults of Pre-Roman Iguvium* (London: Christophers, 1937); cf. Ambros J. Pfiffig, *Religio Etrusca* (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1975); cf. Paul R. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings on Metal Plates* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1985), 57-59.
38. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 63.
39. For example, on the bronze treaty tablets in the Athens Archaeological Museum, see Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 47-48; on the nine gold Orphic plates buried in Greece and now in museums in England, Naples, and Athens, see Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 55-56, 63.
40. *Drake's Plate of Brass: Evidence of His Visit to California in 1579* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1937), 1.
41. James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968), 178-79; cf. Albert J. Pickett, *The History of Alabama* (Birmingham, AL: Birmingham, 1962), 81-83.
42. National Museum, Seoul. Examined by the author in Korea, 1979.
43. Cf. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 69.
44. Peabody Museum, Boston, Massachusetts.
45. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 59-60; cf. H. Curtis Wright, "Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes," in this volume.
46. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 64.
47. Ibid., 61-62.
48. Ibid., 63.
49. National Museum of Villa Giulia in the Piazza de Villa Giulia 9.
50. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 72, 75.
51. Ibid., 65.
52. Ibid., 59, 61.
53. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 78.
54. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 63.
55. Etruscan gold sheets with holes and rivets in a book format have also been found, *ibid.*, 56-57.
56. Mariano Eduardo de Rivero y Ustariz and Dr. Juan Diego de Tschudi, *Antiguedades Peruanas* (Arequipa, Peru: Primer Festival de Libro Arequipeno, 1958; repr. of an 1851 ed.) However, the Spanish word for metal used here, "materia," can also mean subject matter or topic, so the reference to writing in metal is not clear.

57. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 50.
58. Richard E. W. Adams, *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 244-45.
59. J. Eric S. Thompson, "Maya Hieroglyphic Writing," in Gordon R. Willey, ed., *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, 16 vols. and suppl., Robert Wauchope, general ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 3:634.
60. Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquia Indiana*, 3 vols. (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1969; first ed. Seville, 1615), 1:chap. 14.
61. Jose A. Gay, *Historia de Oaxaca Mexico*, 2 vols. (Oaxaca: Tall-Tip. del Gobierno Oaxaca, 1933), 1:62 .
62. HC 5:372-79.
63. Verrill and Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations*, 304.
64. Cf. Wright, "Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes," in this volume.
65. Cheesman, *Ancient Writings*, 77-78.
66. *Ibid.*, 78-79.
67. *Ibid.*, 59-60.
68. Introductory pages, "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," in the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984).
69. M. Wells Jakeman, *The Complex "Tree of Life" Carving on Izapa Stela 5: A Reanalysis and Partial Interpretation* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1958).