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## Aztec History and the Book of Mormon

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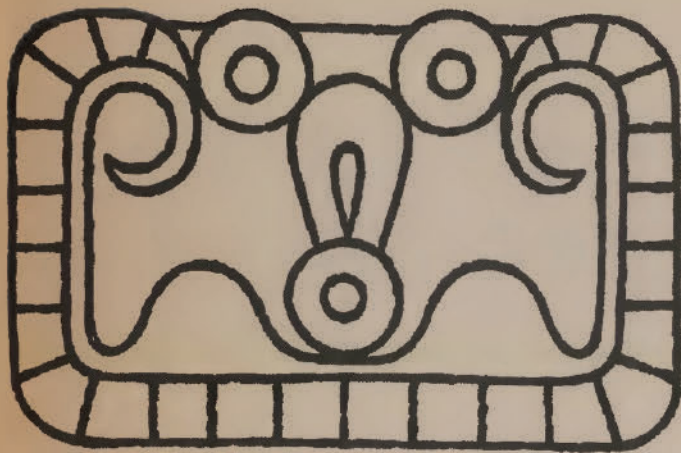
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**Abstract:** External evidences of the Book of Mormon provide an additional witness for the truth of the Book of Mormon. For instance, Aztec history has several parallels in the Book of Mormon.

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# AZTEC HISTORY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON



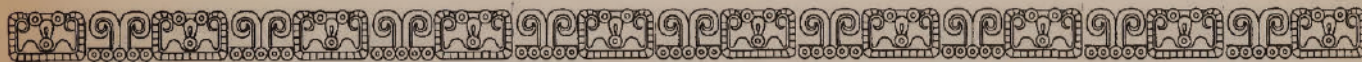
Sample of ancient Aztec design in stone and cement.

(For Course 15, lessons of April 9 and 30, "Nephi Instructed the People" and "Completion of the Small Plates"; for Course 19, lesson of May 14, "The Apostasy"; for Course 27, lessons of April 2 and 9, "The Gods of This Earth" and "Man's Communion with God"; for Course 29, lesson of March 5, "Divinity of Book of Mormon"; to support family home evening lesson 8; and of general interest.)

For centuries, philosophers and others have argued the existence of God. To the Latter-day Saint, trying to resolve this matter through human resources alone is inconsistent with the basic purpose of our life on earth. We believe that God has sent us here to prove our faith and to gain further experience outside of His immediate presence. As the Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (*II Corinthians 5:7.*)

To be able to prove God's existence through purely natural means would destroy the element of faith necessary to this probationary state. The Lord has said in a modern revelation: "But, behold, faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe." (*Doctrine and Covenants 63:9.*) During His earthly ministry the Saviour condemned men who sought sure knowledge through signs as "an evil and

(Continued on following page.)



## THE SEVEN CARDINAL VIRTUES (Concluded from opposite page.)

seven cardinal virtues. After defining the principle of love for the Corinthians, Paul says:

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [the pure love of Christ]. (I Corinthians 13:13.)*

Paul thinks of love as the all-inclusive virtue. With love we can fulfill the whole law. To the Romans he wrote:

*... For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10.)*

Further to emphasize the power and universal nature of love, Paul wrote to the Galatians:

*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. (Galatians 5:14, 15.)*

How closely this parallels the power of love as given by Jesus. To the lawyer who asked which was the great commandment, Jesus responded:

*... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matthew 22:37-39.)*

When I learn to love my neighbor as myself I will cease my selfishness and greed and will work in the interest of others. I will cease to be egoistic and become sociocentric. I will appreciate the point of view of the old Mayan civilization in the Yucatan Peninsula: If I take too much, there will not be enough for others.

John the Beloved stressed the power of love by contrasting it with hate. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (*I John 3:15.*)

We are rapidly learning in this world of atomic power that we must love or perish. In all seven cardinal virtues, we know that there runs a common element. We cannot cultivate them perfectly without a deep and abiding faith in God.

Library File Reference: CHARACTER.

adulterous generation.” (Matthew 12:39.) Thomas, one of the Twelve, wanted proof that the Lord had risen from the dead. After Jesus had appeared and Thomas believed, the Lord said to him:

“ . . . Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (See John 20:24-29.)

In the same spirit, the Prophet Alma taught that those who are “compelled to be humble” because of poverty or because of signs are not as blessed as those who humble themselves because of hearing the word of God, because faith is not to be based on perfect knowledge. (See Alma 32.)

Are external evidences, then, to be regarded as being totally worthless in building faith? Another experience of the Prophet Alma may help us answer this question. A man named Korihor challenged Alma’s faith in God and demanded *proof* that God did exist. Alma responded:

“ . . . Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator. (Alma 30:44.)

Alma did not claim that these external evidences *proved* that there is a God, but he employed them as evidence which *witnesses* that there is a God.

In a similar way, men have tried for more than a century to prove or disprove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon by purely natural means. Faithful Latter-day Saints, however, know that the only sure way to answer this question is to carry out Moroni’s instructions when he directed:

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4.)

External evidences cannot replace this sure witness, but they do play a valuable role by influencing persons to “ask God.” External evidences can sup-

port the sure testimony received through prayer and the Holy Ghost.

In their book, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon*, Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy and Thomas Stuart Ferguson compare the history of the Book of Mormon with the writings of the Aztec historian, Ixtlilxochitl. (This name is pronounced approximately as if it were spelled Eesht-lil-sho-she-tl.) He was one of the last Aztec historians—born about 1568; died in 1648—and he served as an interpreter for the Spanish in courts of justice for the Indians in Mexico. He compiled an account in Spanish of his people’s history, based on the records in his custody. Ixtlilxochitl’s history remained relatively inaccessible until it was published in Spanish in 1848 (18 years after the publication of the Book of Mormon); so far as is known, none of it was published in English until 1950. Numerous parallels exist between the Aztec and Book of Mormon histories. Because Joseph Smith did not have access to Ixtlilxochitl’s account, and the latter obviously did not have access to the Book of Mormon, these parallels must be regarded as evidences, each history testifying to the truthfulness of the other.

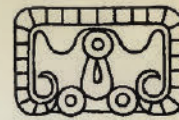
*The Book of Omni* contains one of the most striking parallels with ancient American histories. About two hundred years before Christ a group of righteous Nephites under King Mosiah I left their homes in the Land of Nephi and journeyed north into the Land of Zarahemla where they united with a people known as the Mulekites. Like the Nephites, the Mulekites had left Jerusalem about the time of the Babylonian captivity. The Mulekites reported that some time previous to their uniting with the Nephites, they had encountered Coriantumr, the last survivor of the Jaredites, a group which had come to this hemisphere centuries earlier. It is interesting to note that both the secular history and *The Book of Omni* state that (1) the third group (Mulekites) encountered a remnant of the first group (Jaredites); (2) the second group (Nephites) and the third group (Mulekites) became a single united people; but (3) there is no indication that the first group (Jaredites) and the second group (Nephites) ever had contact with each other. Other interesting parallels are suggested in the accompanying chart.

—Richard O. Cowan.

Library File Reference: BOOK OF MORMON—EVIDENCES.



# AZTEC HISTORY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON



## Writings of Ixtlilxochitl\*

(Aztec Historian—lived in 16th Century)

### FIRST SETTLERS

At the time the people were building "the very high tower, in order to shelter themselves in it when the second world should be destroyed . . . their languages were changed and, not understanding each other, they went to different parts of the world. . ." (Page 24.)

One group ". . . who understood their language among themselves, . . . having first crossed large lands and seas . . . came to this land, which they found good and fertile for their habitation." (Page 25.)

". . . They settled the greater part of it [Mexico], especially that toward the north. . ." (Page 39.)

These "giants" were "destroyed and exterminated by great calamities and punishments from heaven, for some grave sins that they had committed. . ." (Page 49.)

### SECOND SETTLERS

"The Tultecas were the second settlers of this land after the decline of the giants. . . Tulteca means artisan and wise man, because the people of this nation were great artisans, as is seen . . . in the ruins of their buildings. . ." (Page 57.)

### THIRD SETTLERS

The Ulmecas and Xicalancas landed on the east coast of Mexico (page 123) which is the same area where the first group landed. (Pages 30-31.)<sup>1</sup>

The Ulmecas "found some of the giants that had escaped the calamity and extermination of the second age." (Page 136.)

### QUETZALCOATL'S VISIT

"During the first days of the year" when Christ was crucified, ". . . the sun and the moon eclipsed, and the earth trembled, and the rocks broke, and many other things and signs took place. . ." (Page 190.)

Quetzalcoatl arrived in the land; he was considered "as just, saintly [holy], and good; teaching them by deeds and words the path of virtue and forbidding them their vices and sins, giving laws and good doctrine." He instituted fasting and used the symbol of the cross. (Page 203.)

### HUEMAN'S COMPILATION

A great religious and military leader, Hueman, ". . . gathered together all the histories the Tultecas had, from the creation of the world up to that time . . . and he entitled this book calling it Teoamoxtli, which well interpreted means Various Things of God and divine book: the natives now call the Holy Scriptures Teoamoxtli, because it is almost the same. . ." (Pages 337-338.)

## Writings in the Book of Mormon

### JAREDITES

Jared and his group departed from the Old World at the time the people were building the Tower of Babel. At that time the Lord confounded the people's language and scattered them to all parts of the world. (Ether 1:33; see also Genesis 11:1-9.)

The Lord did not confound the language of Jared and his friends. (Ether 1:36-37.) After journeying in the wilderness (Ether 2:5), they were on the sea for 344 days before reaching the promised land (Ether 6:2-12), which was "choice above all other lands." (Ether 2:7, 12.)

". . . The whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants." (Ether 10:21.)

"And thus we see that the Lord did visit them in the fulness of his wrath, and their wickedness and abominations had prepared a way for their everlasting destruction." (Ether 14:25.)

### NEPHITES

The Nephites were an industrious people, working with wood, iron, copper, brass, steel, gold, and silver. Under Nephi's direction they built a temple patterned after the Temple of Solomon. (2 Nephi 5:15, 16.)

### MULEKITES

The Mulekites landed in the same area where the bones of the Jaredites had been found. (Alma 22:30.)

The people of Zarahemla or Mulekites discovered Coriantumr, the last survivor of the Jaredites. (Omni 1:21.)

### CHRIST'S MINISTRY

On the fourth day of the year there arose a terrible storm with "exceeding sharp lightnings"; as a result of earthquakes, some cities sank into the sea while others were covered by mountains. Vapors of darkness blotted out the light of the sun, moon, and stars. (3 Nephi 8:5-23.)

3 Nephi, chapters 11-28, give the account of the Saviour's ministry in America.

### MORMON'S ABRIDGMENT

Mormon was one of the last great prophets of the Nephites and also led their armies at the final battle at Cumorah. Before his death he prepared an abridgment of Nephite history; his inspired volume (the Book of Mormon) is regarded as a companion to the Bible and is America's witness for Christ.

\*The writings of Ixtlilxochitl were taken from Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *ANCIENT AMERICA AND THE BOOK OF MORMON*; Kolob Book Co., Oakland Calif., 1950. Numbers in parentheses in the lefthand column refer to specific pages in this volume.

<sup>1</sup>Extract from Bernardino de Sahugun's *History of New Spain*.

Compiled by Richard O. Cowan.