



Type: Magazine Article

Old America - Jared (Continued)

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (23 January 1875), pp. 14–15

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

towards his fellow men. Then, still worse, he does not only speak his own praise, but also accuses his neighbors of all sorts of crimes. "I thank thee," he exclaims, "that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," etc. But, although he thus differed from others, and fasted and paid his tithes, which the Savior does not deny, yet the poor publican, who was conscious of his own weakness and the goodness of God, was the more justified of the two; and his simple cry of "God be merciful to me a sinner." was more acceptable before the Lord than the boastful vaunting of the man who despised Him.

This simple yet most beautiful parable teaches us that while it is acceptable to God for us to keep His laws, it is not well for us to glory in our goodness. Jesus once said there are none good but God; and the apostle Paul says that our self-righteousness is as filthy rags. We must work out our salvation before God with fear and trembling, and rely on the strength given by the Spirit of God, and not in the strength of our own good actions, or we may, like the Pharisee, go from our prayers without the blessing and justification of God.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

JARED.

(Continued.)

THE Zapotekas, of South America, boast of being antediluvian in America, and to have built the city of Coatlan, so called because it was founded at a place which swarmed with serpents, Coatlan meaning snake-city. It was built, according to their tradition, three hundred and twenty-seven years before the flood. At the time of the flood a remnant of their people, together with their king, named Petela, saved themselves on a mountain.

The Aztec tradition, in fact, their laws and religion, were received from the Toltecs, whom they supplanted. They begin by telling us that Noah, whom they call Tezpi, saved himself and his wife, whom they call Xochiquetzal, on a raft or canoe. The raft or canoe rested at the foot of a mountain called Colhuacan after the flood. They say that on this raft, besides Tezpi and his wife, there were several children and animals, with grain, the preservation of which was of great importance to mankind. When the Great Spirit, Tezcatipoca, ordered the waters to withdraw, Tezpi sent from his raft a vulture, which never returned, on account of the great number of dead carcasses found to feed upon. He then sent other birds, one of which was a humming-bird, which alone returned, holding in its beak a branch covered with leaves. Tezpi, seeing that fresh verdure covered the earth, quitted the raft near the mountain. They say that the men born after this deluge were born dumb, but a dove distributed the languages to them.

Professor Schoolcraft, in his elaborate report to the Smithsonian Institute, and Catlin, in his history of the North American Indians, describe a very interesting ceremony, commemorative of the deluge and releasing of the birds, as annually performed by the Mandans, a nation now extinct, but who formerly inhabited the country between the Little Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. They are described as being of a much fairer complexion than the Indians of other nations, it

being no unusual thing to find persons with blue eyes and fine reddish colored hair among them. They were domestic in their habits, resided in villages and engaged in agricultural pursuits. Among the painted pictures or books made of animals' skins (parchment) and of leaves (the aloe), examined by Humboldt were not only delineated pictures of the deluge, but of all the leading circumstances in the history of the fall of man, and of the seduction of the woman by means of the serpent; also of the first murder, perpetrated by Cain on the person of his brother Abel.

These traditions and paintings go far to prove the truthfulness of the book of Genesis, and sustain and verify the record of Ether. No one can charge the aboriginal inhabitants, as found by Columbus and his followers, with priestcraft, their religion at that time not being of a Christian character. It is a link that connects them with Asia and their ancestor Noah, and all the circumstances connected with the stranding of the ark on Ararat, and the confounding and separation at Babel.

Here, for some fifteen hundred years, the Jaredites flourished and grew into a great nation, building cities, cultivating the land and drifting into wickedness, until they were destroyed by the Lord, some six hundred years before Christ. Their historian lived to see and record this destruction, and his records were found by a colony of Israelites who came from Jerusalem about that time under the leadership of Nephi. This colony grew and multiplied into two mighty nations, called the Nephites and Lamanites. The latter nation, falling into idolatry, was cursed by God, and became dark and benighted. The American Indians are the descendants of this nation. The Nephites remained a civilized and enlightened nation, and had many blessings and privileges conferred upon them, but falling into wickedness in their turn, some time during the third or fourth century of the Christian era, they were finally destroyed by the Lamanites. The history of these two nations is found systematically recorded in the Book of Mormon, only, and it is impossible to separate the mass of secular evidence of the enlightenment and high cultivation of those ancient people that I shall give, or definitely ascribe a tradition, a record or a ruin to the people of Jared, or to the people of Nephi. The Jaredites undoubtedly left records, and monuments, and cities scattered over the land. These same cities were re-occupied by the Nephites, and their records and traditions were amalgamated. The Nephites in turn were destroyed, and the uncivilized Lamanites had so entangled and interwoven and lost the connecting links of the several and distinct histories of the two great nations they supplanted, and so confounded and mixed the records with their own traditions by the time of the European occupancy, that it is beyond the power of man to fix data or determine as to what portion is of Jaredite and what of Nephite origin.

Herrera, a Spanish historian of the sixteenth century, in his history of America (vol. 4, page 172), says, "*Baptism* was known in Yucatan; the name they gave it signified *to be born again*." Here is a ceremony undoubtedly of Nephite origin.

An important manuscript work, written two hundred years ago by Francisco Ximenes, is preserved in Guatemala. It is a translation from some of the "old books" of the natives; one of them, known as the "Popol-Vuh," in the native tongue (Quiche), has the Spanish translation annexed. This translation remained in Guatemala, unprinted and unknown, until discovered in our time by Brasseur de Bourbourg, who has translated the work into French. The "Popol-Vuh" was written in 1558, as an abridged reproduction of a very ancient

Quiche book, containing the history, traditions, religion and cosmogony of the Quiches. Professor Baldwin, speaking of this book, says: "It shows us their conceptions of the Supreme Being, and His relation to the world; it enables us to see what they admired in character, as virtue, heroism, nobleness, and beauty: it discloses their mythology, and their notions of religious worship; in a word, it bears witness to the fact that the various families of mankind are all of "one blood," so far, at least, as to be precisely alike in nature." The cosmogony of the Quiches is undoubtedly far more ancient than the beginning of this people as a nation. According to the "Popol-vuh," the world had a beginning; there was a time when it did not exist; only "heaven" existed; below all was emptiness. Nothing existed in this space; neither man, animal, earth or tree. Then appeared water, over which divine beings moved in brightness. They created earth; it came into being like vapor, and mountains rose above the waters. Thus was earth created by the Heart of Heaven. Next came the creation of animals; but the gods were disappointed. They could not tell their names, nor worship the Heart of Heaven. It was then resolved that man should be created. First he was made of earth, but the flesh had no cohesion; he was inert; he could speak, but could not move, and had no mind; therefore he was consumed in the water. Next, man was made of wood; they multiplied, but had neither heart nor intellect, and could not worship, so they withered up. Man was then made of a tree called tzite, and woman of the pith of a reed, but they could not think, speak or worship, and were destroyed, all save a small remnant, which still exists as a race of small monkeys, found in forests. A fourth attempt was successful, but the circumstances attending this creation remain veiled in mystery. *It took place before the beginning of dawn*, before the sun or moon; it was a wonder work of the Heart of Heaven. Four men were created; they could reason, speak and see in such a manner as to know all things at once. They worshiped the creator, giving Him thanks for their existence and the manifold blessings they enjoyed; but the gods, frightened and dismayed, breathed clouds or mist over their eyes, to limit their vision, and caused them to be men, not gods. While the four men were asleep, the gods, made them beautiful wives, and from these came all the inhabitants of the earth.

Whether the origin of this interesting tradition comes from Jared or from Nephi, it is impossible to say. We only know that it bears witness to the fact that ages long past a race of people inhabited our continent, far advanced morally and religiously above the nations discovered by the Europeans of the sixteenth century; and it also bears witness of the fact that ages long past a race of men worshiped and adored the true God, and undoubtedly had prophets and seers among them.

Some speculators have represented the human race as a race of savages, until a comparatively modern date. Such an idea is most preposterous, and not worthy of the time or thought of a sensible man, and merely shows the dreaminess of unbridled fancy. The Quiche manuscript was certainly not written by a barbarian.

PREFER diligence before idleness, unless you esteem rust above brightness.—

THOSE who have not suffered, know not what they have to gain.

VENTRILOQUISM, OR AN OLD MAID'S ADVENTURE.

BY CHAS. W. STAYNER.

I SUPPOSE our young friends have heard of ventriloquists. If not I will explain. A ventriloquist is one who can throw his voice into a distant corner of a room or under the floor so that it appears to come from either of those places instead of from where the ventriloquist is standing. A person having this gift, can imitate the voice of another person, or of an animal or bird, causing the sound to issue from the place where the owner of the assumed voice is supposed to be; hence a great many practical jokes have been played upon people, by ventriloquists creating much amusement for those who understood the nature of the gift. I am reminded of one of these funny incidents which occurred some time ago.

A very nervous maiden lady, Miss Sophia Crimp, a person noted alike for her timid nature and cross temper, was taking a walk, attired in the oddest of the queer fashions which such ladies adopt, including an immense pannier, high heeled shoes and long trailed dress. Now if there was any creature that Miss Crimp hated worse than she did a child it was a strange dog. She would walk several blocks out of her way, to avoid the crying of an infant; and the barking of a dog would almost send her into fits. A gentleman who was acquainted with Miss Crimp and her failings determined to play a practical joke, so, as she was passing a gate in haste one evening, a sudden snap and growl like that of a vicious dog, right at her heels caused her to spring straight up in the air a matter of two or three feet. The movement was of necessity so sudden, and the lady made such a violent effort to face her tormentor that she did not land fairly again on her feet, the high heels caused her to lose her balance, and in trying to catch herself she stepped on the long trail of her dress; this together with a natural desire to escape the dog's teeth gave her a backward tendency, and with a shriek of despair Miss Crimp sat violently upon the ground. She was so jarred with the fall, and so entangled in her costume, that she could not regain her footing but sat screaming for help, while the growling and barking which had been kept up all the time from behind, now appeared to issue from the very pannier itself, which she supposed would become an easy prey to the dog's ferocity, especially as the sound of rending and tearing garments, accompanied the spasmodic efforts of the dog.

At last a man's voice approaching the spot, commanding the dog to desist, and the whining of the brute as he retreated under a supposed shower of rocks gave her sufficient presence of mind to rise, and look around her. On rising she very naturally expected to see her protector, but, although a man's voice had enquired whether she was hurt, no person was visible. This proceeding alarmed the lady more, if anything, than the angry dog, as she now feared something supernatural, and although she had never seen a ghost nor any one who had, she was always expecting to see one, so the condition of the lady's mind was well nigh distraction. But there is an end to all mortal sorrows, and Miss Crimp was soon relieved by seeing an old friend emerge from a neighboring lot. She was escorted to her home with great kindness, and it was not till the lady had become a matronly wife that her husband dared to reveal how his powers of ventriloquism had been the cause of that evening's adventure, and the amount of satisfaction he had derived from the joke.