



Type: Magazine Article

Old America - Ancient Peru (Continued) (3)

Author(s): G.M. Ottinger

Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 10, No. 26 (25 December 1875), pp. 302–303

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.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

ANCIENT PERU.

(Continued.)

THE Peruvians fully believed in a Supreme Creator of the universe. The sun was the great object of adoration. "If it rained, the sun shone, filling the sky with rainbows; if it snowed or hailed he still withheld not his light or warmth; so that whether it was spring, summer, autumn or winter, the air was always dry, the sun never absent. No wonder they worshiped it." They also revered the moon and stars, thunder and lightning and the rainbow, to which they built temples. They believed in the existence of the soul after death, and connected with it the resurrection of the body, which prompted them to preserve the dead with much care. The centre of the earth was designated as the place of the wicked, where they should expiate their crimes by ages of weary toil. The good, they supposed, would pass a life of luxurious tranquillity and ease.

One of their customs was a kind of infant baptism. They gave to their children a name to distinguish them from all others. In some districts the child was baptized immediately after birth; in others not until it was two years old. The father gave the name to his child, and one of the relations acted as god-father. At the age of fourteen the candidates receive another name and a second baptism, or initiation as a subject into the kingdom, the name given at this time having some special meaning or allusion to family history or national event. This was a time of great public rejoicing. The head of the department bestowed the new name. The finger nails were pared and the hair cut off in the sight of all the people and offered as a sacrifice to God. "Was this," asks a writer, "meant to signify that their talents and their beauty were consecrated to heaven, or did this cutting off of hair and nails point to the duties of personal mortification, and that their bodies with their desires, their wills and inclinations were to be kept in subjection to a higher power?"

The feast of summer (the feast of the sun) was celebrated in the royal city of Cuzco, with wonderful pomp and magnificence. It was called "the great feast of Raymi." Princes, governors and chiefs assembled together for worship. If by reason of old age, sickness or infirmity or for being on service at a distance, any of these could not attend they sent their sons or some other near relative to represent them. All came in splendid robes, bearing arms, each one, in his national costume, rivaling the other in the gorgeousness of his symbols and ornaments. The multitude of people as well as nobles was so great that there was no room in the houses to receive them all, and they camped in the great squares, streets, on the hillsides and in the valley surrounding the city, under their own tents. Three days of rigorous fasting preceded their feast. During this time no fire was allowed to be kindled in any house, and their only food consisted of a little maize and an herb called "chucan." The Inca with all his court, presided. He left his palace early in the morning barefoot and walked to the great square, where the multitude assembled to salute the rising sun. Here the nobles and chiefs, with their servants bearing their parasols of feathers, gave the great plaza a covering or awning of one vast, many colored feathery field. As the sun rose, one grand simultaneous shout or jubilee

burst from the assembly. Drums beat, pipes played, and the voices of one hundred thousand people sang in praise. "They lifted up their arms to embrace the heavenly rays and kissed the air as if it were the raiment of God." Two golden vessels filled with concentrated wine were then offered to the deity by the Inca. The one in his right hand was emptied through a tube of gold, leading from the plaza to the altar of the temple. From the one in his left hand he drank to the health of his family, and then poured a little into the golden cups brought for the purpose by the nobles, who also drank with the Inca. Then the Inca, his family and the nobility, proceeded barefooted to the temple, and there offered those small cups thus consecrated on the inner altar. Only the nobility were allowed to enter the temple. The people, also barefoot, remained without and worshiped. Having made these offerings the high priest commenced his sacrifices on an altar richly adorned and placed in the centre of the great square. First was a llama lamb, black, without a spot or blemish, in the entrails of which the priests searched for some signs by which to read the future. After this came the general sacrifice, which consisted of numerous llamas. The entrails and heart were burned to ashes, the flesh distributed among the poor, and the wool made into clothing for the army. After this came the drink offerings. The Inca, seated on a throne of gold, drank to his family and certain nobles and warriors who had distinguished themselves in battle. Then the members of the royal family drank to each other, the chiefs following their example. In time, so much drinking produced its exhilarating effects and the general rejoicing became hilarious. Fancy balls, plays, charades, with all kinds of music and games and other amusements were indulged in for eight days. "No temples were built to the unseen God, for it was taught that the Creator of the universe, who was an animating, sustaining spirit, could only be worshiped in the unseen temple of each worshiper's heart, but to the sun, as the expression of the glory and power of the creating spirit, they ought to build temples." The name given to the deity was Pachacamac. "*Iacha*, meaning the world, or universe, and *cama*, to animate" (Garcilaso).

The Peruvians admit that they got their architectural notions; from the ruined buildings found in the vicinity of Lake Titicaca, and it is universally admitted by historians and antiquarians that Peru was inhabited long previous to the Incas, by a race of refined people, greatly in advance and more highly civilized than they. The extensive ruins found in the country, assert this fact and we have from their own traditions, the history of a people, who worshiped the Creator and erected the great temple and city, the ruins of which are situated on the sea coast near Lima, and called Pachacamac. The inhabitants of this city, after being conquered by the Peruvians, were gradually weaned from their worship, and their temple was re-dedicated to the sun. But still the religion of these old inhabitants was not entirely obliterated. During the reign of the Inca Roca the foundation of certain colleges and schools somewhat changed the current religion and there was a sun party and a skeptical party; but the sun party, being the party of the court and aristocracy, prevailed. The Incas still maintained their heavenly origin (children of the sun), and yet Roca is reported to have repeatedly said that "considering the grandeur of the heavens their beauty and constant splendor, the Creator of the world, judging from the palace he occupied, must be a Being superior to the heavens; and if he (the Inca) were inclined to worship anything on this side of those palace walls, he would certainly adore a man of wisdom and discretion; for he who is born a child is here to-day and gone to-morrow; and he who cannot deliver himself from death ought not to be worshiped."

The Peruvians believed in confession and they had some singular rites connected with this ceremony. Each penitent at the time received from the priest the ashes of the burnt offerings, which he blew reverentially into the air. Afterwards he received a small white stone to wash in a neighboring stream, set apart and made sacred for the purpose. Then returning, he called upon the heavens, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field to testify against him if he did not adhere to the truth. This done, to prove the truth, the penitent threw a handful of maize into a basin. If the number of grains on being counted, proved even, the confession was good; if odd, it was bad and had to be made over again. The punishments imposed upon transgressors were not light, and consisted of separation from the society of women for a time, abstinence from salt and pepper and wine. Sometimes they stripped themselves of the clothes which they had transgressed, burnt them and procured new ones, thus putting off the old man with his deeds and beginning a new and cleanly life.

Though their temples were adorned not only with symbols of the sun, moon, rainbow and the planets, there was another object which has been a puzzle to the learned men who have investigated the ancient Peruvian religion. This was a marble cross of which there were several copies placed in various parts of the city Cuzco. Many attempts have been made to explain the origin of this sacred emblem and its usages by the Peruvians, the most popular being that it was their representation of the starry constellation called by us the "Southern Cross," and not an emblem of the crucifixion. But it is difficult for us to escape from the conclusion that its reverence was derived from the same source and prompted by the same motives that has made it so sacred in our eyes. And the Book of Mormon gives us the most reasonable grounds and most convincing proof to sustain us in our opinion.

(To be Continued.)

A FREE AND EASY LIFE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the perfect simplicity of the Digger Indian's life, he is an inveterate gambler; his principal game is very simple, consisting of holding both hands behind him, in one of which is a stick, while another bets he can tell in which hand he holds it. It is stated that Diggers scorn cheating, and after the bets are made never change the stick from one hand to the other. Their money consists of little round shells with a hole in the center, which one of their number is selected to manufacture. No counterfeiting is ever attempted. Each shell represents about half a cent of American money, and is taken by their tribe as greedily as gold. Their social habits are, to say the least, peculiar. The wigwams are built throughout of redwood bark, and are round in shape, which can be better explained by saying that they are in the shape of a bowl upside down with a smaller one placed also upside down on top. There are no windows, and aside from the aperture for entrance, which is about two feet square, and a small opening at the top to allow the smoke to escape, there is no opening in this cone-shaped enclosure. To enter one of these huts it becomes necessary to get down and crawl in. Once inside a strange sight meets the eye. The majority of both sexes go perfectly naked, and being scrupulously particular, each one does his or her own cooking. They sleep in hollow places in the ground, with feet to the center. Their cooking apparatus, which consists of good sized rocks, hollowed out, is in convenient reach, and the Digger need not rise to prepare his breakfast. The food consists of bread made from acorns, which are first buried,

then roasted, then pulverized, and lastly mixed with water and baked. This bread is said to be very nourishing.

WONDERS OF A HEN'S EGG.

THE hen has scarcely sat on her eggs twelve hours before some lineaments of the head and body of the chicken appear. The heart may be seen to beat at the end of the second day; it has at that time somewhat the form of a horse-shoe, but no blood yet appears. At the end of two days two vessels of blood are to be distinguished, the pulsation of which is visible; one of these is the left ventricle, and the other the root of the great artery. At the fiftieth hour one auricle of the heart appears, resembling a noose folded down upon itself. The beating of the heart is first observed in the auricle, and afterward in the ventricle. At the end of seventy hours, the wings are distinguishable; and on the head two bubbles are seen for the brain, one for the bill, and two for the fore and hind parts of the head. Toward the end of the fourth day, the two auricles already visible draw nearer to the heart than before. The liver appears toward the fifth day. At the end of seven hours more, the lungs and the stomach become visible; and four hours afterward, the intestines, and loins, and the upper jaw. At the one hundred and forty-fourth hour two ventricles are visible, and two drops of blood instead of the single one which was seen before. The seventh day the brain begins to have some consistency. At the one hundred and nineteenth hour of incubation the bill opens, and the flesh appears in the breast. In four hours more the breast bone is seen. In six hours after this the ribs appear, forming from the back, and the bill is very visible, as well as the gall-bladder. The bill becomes green at the end of two hundred and thirty-six hours; and if the chicken is taken out of its covering, it evidently moves itself. At the two hundred and eighty-eighth the ribs are perfect. At the three hundred and thirty-first the spleen draws near the stomach and lungs to the chest. At the end of three hundred and fifty-five hours the bill frequently opens and shuts; and the end of the eighteenth day the first cry of the chicken is heard. It afterward gets more strength and grows continually, till at length it is enabled to set itself free from its confinement.

STRONG CHARACTERS.—Strength of character consists of two things, power of will and power of self-restraint. It requires two things, therefore, for its existence—strong feelings and strong command over them. Now we all very often mistake strong feelings for strong character. A man who bears all before him, before whose frown domestics tremble, and whose bursts of fury make the children of the household quake—because he has his will obeyed, and his own way in all things—we call him a strong man. The truth is that he is the weak man; it is his passions that are strong; he mastered by them is weak. You must measure the strength of a man by the power of those that subdue him. And hence, composure is very often the highest result of strength. Did we never see a man receive a flagrant injury, and then reply quietly? That is a man spiritually strong. Or did we never see a man in anguish, stand, as if carved out of solid rock, mastering himself? Or one bearing a hopeless daily trial, remain silent, and never tell the world what cankered his home peace? That is strength. He who, with strong passions, remains chaste; he who, keenly sensitive, with many powers of indignation in him, can be provoked and yet restrain himself, and forgive—these are the strong men, the spiritual heroes.