



Type: Magazine Article

A New Witness for God, III and IV

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *The Contributor*, Vol. 9, No. 10 (August 1888), pp. 377–382

Published by: The Contributor Company

Abstract: Bible passages are used to refute the belief that the Bible contains all the revelation God has ever given to man. Discusses the experiences of the Catholic priests who accompanied Cortez on his expedition to the Americas and conquest of the Aztecs. They discovered the Native American traditions and myths to be similar to their own traditions and rites of worship.

A NEW WITNESS FOR GOD.

III.

"Thou fool, that shall say, a Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. * * Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another. Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together, the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. * * * Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible, ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written."—*Word of the Lord to the Gentiles. (II Nephi, xxix chap.)*

Another belief nearly universal among Christians, and one equally as absurd as that considered in our last chapter, is that the Bible contains all the revelations God has ever given to man. One way of refuting this prevailing error would be to refer to the Bible itself, in which there are a number of references to revelations and scriptures which are not to be found in that compilation of sacred books. For instance, of certain wicked characters Jude says:

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His Saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."—*Jude 14, 15.*

It is quite evident that Jude was acquainted with some of the writings of Enoch—some of his prophecies relating to the glorious coming of the Son of God, and the judgments connected with that event. But this is the only reference in the whole Bible to the writings of Enoch,

10*

nor is there any way of accounting for this quotation from them by St. Jude. Even the tradition of the Catholic Church—held by them to be the unwritten word of God—cannot account for it. "She (meaning the Roman Catholic Church) does not dictate an exposition of the whole Bible, because she has no tradition concerning a very great portion of it, as for example the prophecy of Enoch, quoted by Jude" (End of Religious Controversy, p. 169). And yet, that such sacred writings as the prophecies of Enoch existed, who can doubt?

We give another example:

"And the Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."—*Gal. iii, 8.*

From this it is evident there were Scriptures in the days of Abraham—perhaps those written by Enoch—and from them Abraham learned something of the Gospel, and that God would justify the heathen through faith. Yet Lord Bacon calls Moses "God's first Pen," and the idea is generally accepted. Still here we have prophecies alluded to and scriptures spoken of which teach the Gospel to people ages before Moses was born, and predict the glorious coming of the Lord and the judgments that should attend it. What light, what intelligence these ancient Scriptures might impart to us if we only had them spread out before us! How many things that are now dark and inexplicable in the Scriptures we have might be made clear! But we have them not. They are lost to us, together with many other Scriptures of a later date.

To refer to Jude again:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the Saints."—*Jude 3.*

Here is a distinct, positive reference to a former work written by Jude upon the important subject of "The Common

Salvation," yet in the collection of sacred books—the Bible—we have but this one short epistle out of the writings of Jude.

We have but one epistle of Paul to the Ephesians; yet in that one we have a reference to one that he had before written to them, and which contained a revelation to Paul concerning the Gospel going to the Gentiles:

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ); * * * that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, * * * and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel."—*Eph. iii, 2-6.*

So we might continue until we referred to some fifteen or twenty books spoken of in the Bible and referred to as sacred, but of which the world has no knowledge. These facts of themselves prove beyond the power of all contradiction that the Bible does not contain all that God has revealed. But there are other phases of the question I am more particularly desirous of discussing.

When on Mars Hill among the philosophers of Athens, the Apostle Paul said:

"God that made the world and all things therein, * * * hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."—*Acts xvii, 24-27.*

From this passage we learn the following facts: (1) the fatherhood of God; (2) the brotherhood of man; (3) the right of all races of men to seek the Lord; (4) and a very strong intimation that if they do so they will find Him—for He is not far from every one of them. Yet with these facts before them, Christians will maintain that all the revelations that God has ever given are contained in the Bible. What a narrow, contracted view of God's hand-dealings with His children in respect to giving revelation is this! How partial does it make Him appear, of whom it is so often and with such emphasis said that He is no re-

specter of persons! Let us examine these thoughts more closely.

It is not yet four hundred years since the continent of America was discovered by Columbus. When that continent was discovered, it was not uninhabited. On the contrary, it was thickly populated. And while it is true that for the most part the inhabitants were savages, still there were some semi-civilized people among them, living in cities and towns, cultivating the soil, engaging in manufacturing industries, and living under a system of government more or less regular and stable. Such was the condition of the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru when found by the Europeans.

Throughout the land of America, from the north to the south, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but more especially in Mexico and Peru, were evidences of a higher civilization having existed than that found among the inhabitants of America at the advent of the Europeans among them. The evidences all go to show that an ancient civilization of a very high order had met with revolutions and disaster which had proven too much for the strength of its texture, and it had gone to pieces. Whatever of civilization the Europeans found among the Peruvians and Mexicans, was merely the half resurrected fragments of that grander civilization which had preceded it, the evidences of which exist throughout the land, and the splendor of which lived in the traditions of the people. I deem it unnecessary to quote authority to sustain these views. Indeed I believe among the informed they are universally conceded. The explorations of Carthwood and Stephens and Humboldt sustain them, the works of Wilson and Prescott, and lastly a more elaborate work—Bancroft's *Native Races*—confirms them.

Who were these people inhabiting America? Who were those ancient inhabitants whose cities, judging from the ruins still existing, equaled in splendor and greatness, the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and Ninevah and Babylon, and whose empires rivaled in power and extent ancient Egypt, Persia and Macedon

—for, as Marcus Wilson says, of these cities and empires of the east, the plains of Asia exhibit fewer signs of their having existed than is to be found in America, to testify to the grandeur and extent of the cities and empires which at one time, perhaps coeval with the cities and nations of the east, referred to, must have flourished there.

But who were they, and whence their civilization? However various and unsatisfactory the answers given by the learned to that question may be, of one thing we may be certain, and I think there can be no variation of opinion on the subject, and that is they form a part of the same great race as ourselves—children are they of the self same God—since “God * * * hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath decreed the time before appointed and the bounds of their habitation.” Yet see how partial and unjust this idea that the Bible contains all the revelations of heaven to man makes our God! Here are two vast continents, peopled by the children of the same Father, but separated by two mighty oceans, with no means of communicating with each other for many centuries. The population of these two continents have equal claims upon their common Father, for if there is one truth made more emphatic in Holy Writ than another, it is that God is no respecter of persons; “but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him:” and as we have before seen, God hath not only made of one blood all nations of men, but has also given them the privilege of seeking for and finding Him.

Yet with these facts and principles standing out in bold relief before us, Christian sects ask us to believe that God sent prophets and holy men to teach and instruct His children on the eastern continent; that He revealed to them something of His own character and attributes; that by revelation direct from heaven, accompanied by demonstrations of His own marvelous power, He made known to them something of the object of their creation, and gave

them the hope of eternal life; that in the meridian of time He sent His Only Begotten Son among them, in order that life and immortality might be more clearly brought to light; that the matchless Son of God by example as well as by precept taught the inhabitants of the eastern continent the way of life—the divine will—taught them the Gospel—organized a Church to perpetuate His doctrines—commissioned apostles and others to carry on the glorious work of salvation—and thus by a continuous stream of revelation made ample provisions for carrying the Gospel throughout Asia, Africa and Europe, for His Church was organized and established where these natural divisions of the continent centre.

Yet, while the Lord made all these efforts for the instruction and salvation of His children in the east, this idea that the Bible contains all the revelations that God has ever given, compels us to believe that He altogether neglected His children on the western continent. No prophet was sent to them with a message to explain the mystery of existence, to let them know whence their origin, the object of their creation, or bid them indulge in the pleasing hope of immortality. No angel from the bright worlds on high came to reveal the splendor of heaven, or show the path which leads to endless bliss; no messenger came bounding from the wilderness to them crying repentance, and making the glorious announcement that the kingdom of heaven was at hand: no Messiah of gentle meek and sweetest disposition taught them the mystery of the divine love which works out man's redemption, healed their sick, raised their dead, or even so much as blessed their children. No, according to the Christian theory of the extent of revelation, God neglected them entirely—left them to perish in darkness and ignorance and unbelief; unknowing and unknown! Out upon all such narrow and contracted, not to say bigoted views of the hand dealings of God with His children! They are a travesty on His mercy and justice, a base libel on His character.

IV.

"Mythology is a muddy, troubled pool; which like a mirror shattered into a thousand fragments, reflects while it distorts into fantastic shapes the objects on its banks."

Notwithstanding the greater part of the mythology of heathen nations is absurd and unreliable, lacking both consistency and order, still, mixed up with the rubbish of human invention and childish fable, there are many great truths to be found therein. They may at times be difficult to trace, but their existence is none the less real. And it is not difficult to see reflected in said mythologies the principal incidents of Bible cosmogony and history, and likewise more or less distinct traces of the doctrine of the atonement.

Indeed some unbelievers in the inspiration of the Bible have considered the coincidences between Christian theology and heathen mythology so marked as to put forth the theory that the Christian scheme of man's redemption, as brought about by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, has been known from the earliest ages; and instead of the Gospel being derived from heathen mythology, it will be found, on more careful investigation, that it was from the Gospel as understood by the patriarchs in the earliest ages, and in the days of Noah, that mythology obtained those ideas which, though distorted beyond measure, bear some analogy to the teachings of the Gospel.

The mythology and traditions of no other nation are so rich in these analogies to Bible cosmogony, historical incidents and Gospel scheme of redemption, as Peru and Mexico. So distinct and clearly defined are these analogies, that the Catholic priest who accompanied Cortez in his expedition to Mexico, looked upon the whole as the delusion of the Devil, who counterfeited the rites of Christianity, and the traditions of the chosen people (the Jews), that he might allure his wretched victims to their own destruction.*

Humboldt says:

"The cosmogony of the Mexicans; their tra-

*Prescott, *Con. of Mex.*—Appendix, p. 465.

ditions of the mother of mankind, fallen from her state of happiness and innocence; the idea of a great inundation, in which a single family escaped on a raft; the history of a pyramidal edifice raised by the pride of men, and destroyed by the anger of the Gods; the ceremonies of absolution practiced at the birth of children; those idols made with the flour of kneaded maize, and distributed in morsels to the people assembled in the temples; the confession of sins made by the penitents; those religious associations, similar to our convents, of men and women; the universal belief, that white men with long beards and sanctity of manners had changed the religion and political systems of nations;—all these circumstances had led the priests who had accompanied the Spanish army [into Mexico] at the time of the conquest [under Cortez] to the belief, that at some very distant epoch Christianity had been preached in the new continent. Some learned Mexicans have imagined that the Apostle St. Thomas was the mysterious personage, high priest of Tula whom the Cholulans acknowledged under the name of Quet-zel-coatl."—*Travels in America, vol. 1, p. 196-7.*

Having adduced the high authority of Humboldt respecting the existence of these remarkable coincidences between Mexican mythology and the leading incidents of Bible history, I think it best to give some few statements in which those analogies are pointed out by another high authority—W. H. Prescott, the author of the *Conquest of Mexico and of Peru*. He says:

"Another point of coincidence is found in the goddess Cioacoatl 'our lady and mother;' 'the first Goddess who brought forth;' 'who bequeathed the sufferings of child-birth to women, as the tribute of death;' 'by whom sin came into the world.' Such was the remarkable language applied by the Aztecs to this venerated deity. She was usually represented with a serpent near her; and her name signified the 'serpent woman.' In this we find much to remind us of the mother of the human family, the Eve of the Hebrew and Syrian nations."—*Conquest of Mexico, (Appendix) p. 464.*

"No tradition has been more widely spread among nations than that of a deluge. * * * It was the received notion under some form or other, of the most civilized people in the Old World, and of the barbarians of the New. The Aztecs combined with this some particular circumstances of a more arbitrary character, resembling the accounts of the east. They

believed that two persons survived the Deluge, a man named Coxcox and his wife. Their heads are represented in ancient painting, together with a boat floating on the waters at the foot of the mountain. A dove is also depicted, with a hieroglyphical emblem of language in his mouth, which he is distributing to the children of Coxcox, who were born dumb. The neighboring people of Michoacan, inhabiting the same high plains of the Andes, had a still further tradition, that the boat in which Tegpi, their Noah, escaped, was filled with various kinds of animals and birds. After some time, a vulture was sent out from it, but remained feeding on the dead bodies of the giants which had been left on the earth as the waters subsided; The little humming bird, *huitzitzilin*, was then sent forth, and returned with a twig in his mouth. The coincidence of both these accounts with the Hebrew and Chaldean narratives is obvious."—*Ibid*, p. 463-4.

"On the way from Vera Cruz and the capital (Mexico), not far from the modern city of Pueblo, stands the venerable relic * * * called the temple of Cholula. * * * The popular tradition of the natives is, that it was erected by a family of giants, who had escaped the great inundation, and designed to raise the building to the clouds; but the Gods offended with their presumption, sent fires from heaven on the pyramid, and so compelled them to abandon the attempt. The partial coincidence of this legend with the Hebrew account of the Tower of Babel, received also by other nations of the East, cannot be denied."—*Ibid*, p. 464.

"But none of the deities of the country suggested such astonishing analogies with Scripture as Quetzalcoatl. * * * He was the white man, wearing a long beard, who came from the east; and who, after presiding over the golden age of Anahuac, disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, on the great Atlantic ocean. As he promised to return at some future day, his reappearance was looked for with confidence by each succeeding generation. There is little in these circumstances to remind one of Christianity. But the curious antiquaries of Mexico found out, that to this God were to be referred the institution of ecclesiastical communities, reminding one of the monastic societies of the Old World; that of the rite of confession and penance; and the knowledge even of the great doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation! One party, with pious industry, accumulated proofs to establish his identity with the Apostle St. Thomas; while another with less scrupulous faith saw, in his anticipated advent to regenerate the nation, the type demi-veiled of the Messiah!"

This mysterious personage, Quetzalcoatl, was said to have been tall in stature, with a white skin, long dark hair and a flowing beard. The Mexicans looked confidently forward to the return of this person, this kind deity, and it was that tradition, deeply imbedded in their hearts, that made it possible for the Spanish under Cortez to succeed in their remarkable but disgraceful conquest of that country, for the Mexicans thought they recognized in Cortez and his followers the descendants of Quetzalcoatl. "We know by our books," said the Emperor Montezuma in the first interview he held with Cortez, "that myself and those who inhabit this country are not natives, but strangers who came from a great distance. We know, also, that the chief who led our ancestors hither returned, for a certain time, to his primitive country, and thence came back to seek those who were here established, who after awhile returned again, alone. We also believed that his descendants would one day come to take possession of this country. Since you arrive from that region where the *Sun rises*, I cannot doubt but that the king who sends you is our natural master."

The surprise of the Catholic priests who accompanied the expedition of Cortez was unbounded when everywhere they met with rites and ceremonies and symbols that reminded them of their own faith. The author we have already quoted so liberally says on this point:

"They could not suppress their wonder, as they beheld the cross, the sacred emblem of their own faith, raised as an object of worship in the temples of Anahuac. They met with it in various places; and an image of a cross may be seen at this day, sculptured in bas-relief on the walls of one of the buildings of Palenque, while a figure bearing some resemblance to that of a child is held up to it, as if in adoration. Their surprise was heightened, when they witnessed a religious rite which reminded them of the Christian communion. On these occasions, an image of the tutelary deity of the Aztecs was made on flour of maize mixed with blood, and, after consecration by the priests, was distributed among the people, who, as they ate it, 'showed signs of humiliation and sorrow, declaring it was the flesh of the deity.' How

could the Roman Catholic fail to recognize the awful ceremony of, the Eucharist? * * * With the same feelings they witnessed another ceremony, that of the Aztec baptism. * * * The Jewish and Christian schemes were strangely mingled together, and the brains of the good fathers were still further bewildered by the mixture of heathenish abominations, which were so closely intertwined with the most orthodox observances. In their perplexity they looked on the whole as the delusion of the Devil, who counterfeited the rites of Christianity and the traditions of the chosen people, that he might allure his wretched victims to their own destruction."—*Con. of Mex., Appendix, p. 465.*

I shall trouble you with but two more quotations. They are significant in view of what I shall have to state in a subsequent chapter, and for this reason your attention is especially called to them:

"In contemplating the religious system of the Aztecs, one is struck with its apparent incongruity, as if some portion of it had emanated from a comparatively refined people, open to gentle influences, while the rest breathes a spirit of unmitigated ferocity. *It naturally suggests the idea of two distinct sources, and authorizes the belief that the Aztecs had inherited from their predecessors a milder faith, on which was afterwards engrafted their own mythology. The latter soon became dominant and gave its dark coloring to the creeds of the conquered nations—which the Mexicans, like the Romans, seem willingly to have incorporated into their own—until the same funereal superstition settled over the furthest borders of Anahuac.*"—*Con. of Mex., lib. I, p. 18.*

The other is in relation to their ideas respecting the future state of man; and with it I close this chapter:

"They imagined three separate states of existence in the future life. The wicked, comprehending the greater part of mankind, were to expiate their sins in a place of everlasting darkness. Another class, with no other merit than that of having died of certain diseases, capriciously selected, were to enjoy a negative existence of indolent contentment. The highest place was reserved, as in most warlike nations, for the heroes who fell in battle, or in sacrifice. They passed at once into the presence of the sun, whom they accompanied with songs and choral dances in his bright progress through the heavens. * * * Such was the heaven of the Aztecs; more refined in its character than that of the more polished pagan, whose elysium reflected only the martial sports or sensual gratifications of this life. In the destiny they assigned to the wicked we discern similar traces of refinement; since the absence of all physical torture forms a striking contrast to the schemes of suffering so ingeniously devised by the fancies of the most enlightened nations. In all this, so contrary to the natural suggestions of the ferocious Aztec, we see the evidences of a higher civilization inherited from their predecessors in the land.—*Con. of Mex., lib. I, p. 20.*"

B. H. Roberts.

The superiority of man to nature: Nature needs an immense number of quills to make a goose with, but a man can make a goose of himself with one.

THE HUMORS OF A MINOR THEATRE.

Now that the value of the drama as an educational factor is becoming so widely recognized, a paper which merely professes to treat of it in one of its humbler phases may yet be held entitled to some moderate amount of consideration.

And however this may be, there are readers, it is hoped, who take a sufficient interest in humanity to render them not unwilling to read an account of the kind of entertainment which finds favor with the inhabitants of a neighborhood more populous than select.

Such entertainment is provided by an

establishment which is probably unknown to most London theatre-goers beyond its immediate vicinity, a squalid region of dingy streets abounding in fried-fish shops, small coffee-houses, pawnbrokers; and second-hand dealers of every description—an unlovely region, where there is little to delight any one of the senses.

Still it is not quite so destitute as certain districts in the far East; it has a theatre of its own, a large and simply decorated house, where the prices are by no means prohibitive—a stall costs but one