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## A Sacred History: External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon, Chapter II

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**Abstract:** Uses historical, linguistic, and archaeological evidence to prove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Basing his facts on research done by noted linguists and archaeologists of the time, the author writes concerning the god Quetzalcoatl, religious customs and ruins of advanced civilizations, comparisons between the Hebrew and Mayan languages, and the Egyptian hieroglyphic writings. Shreeve also tells of similarities in biblical beliefs between early people of both the western and eastern hemispheres and explains why Joseph Smith was incapable of writing the Book of Mormon without divine aid.

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was completed four years later. Its erection was in commemoration of French successes in Germany. The pedestal, an elegant piece of workmanship, is twenty-one feet high and twenty feet square, while the column itself is one hundred and thirty five feet high and thirteen feet in diameter. A winding staircase of one hundred and seventy-six steps is within the shaft, by which ascents are made to the summit.

Four hundred and twenty-five plates made out of twelve hundred cannon captured from the Russians and Austrians during a three months' campaign in 1805, compose the column. These weigh in the aggregate one million, eight hundred thousand pounds, and are covered with two thousand figures in relief three feet high. The whole is crowned by a sixteen-foot bronze statue of Napoleon the Great.

When the Allies entered Paris, in 1814, they attempted to hurl this monument to the ground by attaching a rope to the neck of the bronze figure and placing twenty horses to pull it, but it was too firmly fixed to yield to such a force.

April 12, 1861, saw the issuance of the following decree:

"The Commune of Paris, considering that the imperial column in the Place Vendome is a monument of barbarism, a symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, a negation of international law, a permanent insult cast by the victors on the vanquished, a perpetual attack on one of the great principles of the French Republic Fraternity, decrees the column of the Place Vendome shall be demolished."

On the 16th of May following, a large crowd assembled to witness the work of demolition. The excitement was very great. Ropes were fastened around the top of the column and attached to a windlass and anchor in the Rue de la Paix. At a given signal the force was applied. Very soon the great mass tottered and fell, breaking into a thousand pieces when it touched the ground. Fortunately this satisfied the foolish rabble and they left the fragments to be gathered up by those who carefully preserved them until the proper time, when they were employed in the construction of the grand column which now proudly rears its lofty head in one of the most beautiful parts of the French metropolis.

## A SACRED HISTORY.

### External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A. SHREEVE.

#### Chapter 11.

THE Book of Mormon is a history of two separate race colonizations in this hemisphere by ancient voyagers from the Old World. The first was that of Jared and Mahonri Moriancumer, who left the Tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues; and, being inspired and led by God, they wandered into the wilderness, "where there had never man been." They dwelt by the sea shore in tents for a space of years; and then, being still inspired of the Lord, they built barges of peculiar construction, and with their families and all their belongings entered these vessels and trusted themselves to heavenly guidance across the trackless deep. After many days they landed upon the west coast of the Isthmus of Darien; and here the people flourished and became a powerful

nation. But divisions occurred, warfare ensued, and after many centuries the different factions of the people, or branches of the nation, destroyed each other, and only one man was left. This final annihilation of the powerful people which had flourished in these lands for fifteen centuries took place in the eastern central part of North America, probably near the shore of Lake Ontario in the State of New York; for, during their contests the people had been steadily advancing northward.

Shortly before this sanguinary end of the people of Jared, another colony was established on the western shore of South America. It consisted of one Lehi and his family, who, under guidance of the Almighty, had left Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, to escape the vengeance which was threatened upon that land because of the abominations of the people. This colony also flourished and spread through the land, building cities, as had the first colony; occupying fertile spots, and gaining vast wealth and a numerous population. As with the people of Jared, dissensions arose. A curse was laid upon one faction of the people, because of their wickedness—a curse of a dark skin. In subsequent years the people divided into two nations; the whites, or Nephites; and the Lamanites, or the dark-skinned. Constant warfare, except for brief intermissions, was waged between the nations; and a thousand years after the landing of Lehi the remnant of the superior or white race was destroyed on the same spot which had witnessed the annihilation of the people of Jared. Only the Lamanites, or dark-skinned people, remained; and they lived on, wandering about the lands which had been populated by a people cultured in the arts and sciences, builders of cities and founders of kingdoms and republics.

But during the time that the Nephites and Lamanites were holding their contentions upon this land, the Christian era, long foretold here among both nations by chosen prophets, opened; and Christ Himself, after His crucifixion and resurrection, came to teach and bless the people of this land. He chose apostles among the Nephites, and left them His gospel in its fullness. The official historians of both these colonies kept record of the events in the lives of their nations, and sealed up the plates upon which the records were engraved, under instructions from Almighty God, who promised that in a later age their words should be brought forth to the knowledge of man.

After the destruction of the Nephites only the Lamanites and the apostate Nephites who had mingled with them and become of their race and blood, possessed all the domain of North and South America. Some of them had even yet a goodly degree of civilization, and they founded kingdoms and empires, built cities and temples, and engaged in many other works for their physical advancement.

The Lamanites and the apostate Nephites mingling together were the ancestors of the nomadic tribes of the Indians, Aztecs and Mayas, the Peruvians and other peoples who inhabited and held the vast domain of this hemisphere at the time of the European discoveries in the fifteenth century.

NEPHI was the first historian of the colony established by Lehi. In regular succession, the duties of his office were devolved upon some chosen servant, and the last of these historians was Moroni. Moroni not only had charge of the records of his own people, but he had received the records of the people of Jared, long since extinct in the land; and from these voluminous archives he made an abridgement, which he

placed with the engraved history of his own people. And when he saw that his end was near he sealed them all up, under divine instruction, and hid them in the side of the hill around which the mighty conflicts between the two nations had occurred. Moroni being the final custodian, in that age, of these holy records, was charged with the mission to bring them forth at a later period; and it was from his authorized hand that Joseph Smith received them on the side of the Hill Cumorah, the spot where they were buried 1,400 years earlier. The language in which Nephi wrote was doubtless Hieratic Egyptian; because Nephi was taught in the learning of the Egyptians, including the method of engraving or writing known to the priests of Egypt. Since this was doubtless the most advanced method of writing known to the people of that age, it would necessarily be the system chosen by Nephi in which to keep his record. Another proof of this fact is, that he would undoubtedly choose a system of writing which could not be easily read by inquisitive or prying persons who had no authority to examine the records. He would be able to transmit to his successor as historian the language in which the plates were to be kept. And as a final and absolutely conclusive proof that this theory is correct, reference is only necessary to the words of Mormon, who wrote a thousand years after the time of Nephi. Mormon says:

"We have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters which are called among us the Reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us according to our manner of speech."

The first portion of the Book of Mormon, as we now receive it, Joseph Smith translated from Hieratic Egyptian, the language in which Nephi wrote. The remaining portion, as we have it, he translated from Reformed Egyptian, the language in which Mormon wrote; for Mormon had made an abridgement or copy of the records kept by all his predecessors. He had even made an abridgement of the plates of Nephi; but he also attached the original plates of Nephi to his own. And it is from the original plates of Nephi, written, as I have said, in the Hieratic Egyptian, that Joseph made the translation of that portion of the work. The reader should bear in mind distinctly, that he may never be misled upon this point, that the entire Book of Mormon, as we have it, is not translated from Reformed Egyptian, but that the two languages were used, as stated.

Joseph Smith, before he had the company or aid of any person in the translation, made copies of certain ones of the characters; and through the Urim and Thummim he made some translations. He says that he was engaged in this preliminary work during a period of about two months immediately following his establishment in Pennsylvania. I do not know that Joseph was engaged at this hour in a definite and methodical work of translating the book from the plates. In fact, I believe to the contrary. It is my opinion that Joseph, not having received special and particular instruction how to proceed to translate the work and give it to the world, was left for a brief time to his own devices—at least I find nothing authentic to disprove this idea. It is not unlikely, therefore, that he did as other human beings would do under similar circumstances. He probably looked at the treasure often and examined, with greater or less minuteness, the various portions of that part which was unsealed. He then made copies of characters shown on the plates, and of some of them he made translations by the aid of the Urim and Thummim. He doubtless had several sheets of these characters, and at least one sheet of translations; because he himself says that during two

months from December, 1827, to February, 1828, while at the house of his father-in-law in Pennsylvania, he made copies of a "considerable number of characters and translated some of them." It is perfectly reasonable to say that Joseph copied some of the Hieratic Egyptian characters, as also some of the Reformed Egyptian.

In this month of February, 1828, Martin Harris visited Joseph, being led thereto by a good spirit of inquiry, for he had already heard much concerning Joseph and his mission. Martin was more than half convinced; but probably he had some remaining doubts, and he desired to take the copies of characters which Joseph had made to some professed linguist for examination. Joseph therefore permitted him to have some of the sheets and translations; and Martin carried them to New York. Harris visited Charles Anthon, a famous scholar, professor of languages in Columbia College, and a man making considerable pretension to a knowledge of Oriental and ancient languages. Martin first presented to Anthon a sheet of characters and asked him what they were. The professor replied that the characters were Egyptian. Martin Harris then offered the translation which Joseph had made of these same characters. Anthon examined both sheets, and declared that the translation was correct—"more so than any other he had ever seen from the Egyptian." Martin Harris then showed him another sheet of characters, not accompanied by a translation, and Anthon replied that these characters were from various other ancient languages. Anthon gave Martin Harris a certificate to the effect stated; but, as is well known to every student upon this subject, he subsequently regained possession of the paper and destroyed it, that he might not be accused of giving endorsement to the ministrations of angels in this enlightened day.

Two pertinent inquiries here arise: Was Anthon qualified to speak on this subject? Did he use the words attributed to him by Martin Harris? The first we can settle quickly beyond reasonable dispute. The Rosetta Stone is the source from which Egyptologists derive their knowledge of the ancient Egyptian language. This stone was discovered at the close of the eighteenth century at the Rosetta Branch of the Nile. During twenty years next ensuing, various efforts were made to interpret it, and by an interpretation to formulate an alphabet from which all inscriptions of ancient Egypt could be read. These efforts met with comparatively little success until a Frenchman, Champollion, took the matter in hand in 1800. Profiting by the incomplete, but very hopeful work of his predecessors, Young and others, he accomplished the task satisfactorily. Though he did not publish his dictionary for some years, he did issue much memoranda on the subject, and put himself into immediate communication with scholars everywhere. The whole theory of Champollion was known, adopted and, as perfected, was finally accepted long before the year 1827 among scholars; but it was not known out of this select circle. Was Anthon within this circle? We have his own pretensions, his high standing as a scholar and an Egyptologist, and many other direct evidences of the fact that he was.

The second question can be as conclusively, if not as briefly, answered: First, Martin Harris made this investigation for the purpose of deciding whether he would continue to assist the Prophet. If Anthon had not answered to the absolute satisfaction of Martin Harris he would have joined the multitude in denouncing Joseph. He was a man of that positive, impulsive character; besides, his wife and all his friends would have applauded his act. Instead, however, of making a

denunciation of the Prophet, Martin Harris, upon his return from New York, made a free offer of his services as a scribe for Joseph in the work of translation; and thereby placed within the Prophet's hands the means of beginning his work in a methodical manner. Then we have Anthon's own words in his subsequent correspondence, when this point became of public interest, to the effect that Martin Harris did present him with certain sheets of characters. Anthon declares, however, that the characters had no system, but presented a strange jumble, and that various languages were intermingled in a confused and incoherent shape. At this point we may well stop to enquire which of the two men is most entitled to credence. Let everyone judge for himself. Martin Harris went straightway and repeated word for word the statement to which he always adhered; and he acted upon it so seriously and honestly as to devote his time and money to the cause which for him at that hour depended largely upon the words of Anthon. Anthon, on the other hand, kept perfectly quiet about the matter for years; and when finally he was forced to speak, he reluctantly admitted that he had been visited by Harris as stated—a fact which he could not dispute, because there was other evidence of Harris' visit to Anthon—he then made public for the first time his version of the interview. Another fact exists which bears directly upon the main point in this inquiry as to the authenticity of the characters and indirectly upon the question of Martin Harris' interview with Anthon. Anthon says: "THE CHARACTERS WERE ARRANGED IN COLUMNS, LIKE THE CHINESE MODE OF WRITING, and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters more or less distorted, either through unskillfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican Zodiac." Later than this, Professor Rafinesque, the celebrated antiquarian, in speaking of discoveries made by him among the ruins of an ancient Mexican city, writes: "THE GLYPHS OF OTOLUM ARE WRITTEN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, LIKE THE CHINESE, OR FROM SIDE TO SIDE, INDIFFERENTLY, LIKE THE EGYPTIAN." Anthon professed to have made but a very brief and cursory examination of the characters presented to him by Harris, and to have taken but little interest in them. Does it not impress the reader as very strange that after the lapse of several years he should have been able to describe the characters with such particularity? For my part, I take the view that Professor Anthon wilfully misstated the facts; that so far from making a cursory examination he made a long and carefully scrutiny of the characters. Visits of the kind paid to him by Martin Harris were not so common as to be passed by in such a casual manner, as he would have us now believe; representations of the Mexican Zodiac were not so frequently presented to him by "plain-looking countrymen" from the back-woods of New York as to occasion him so little anxiety upon the subject. I also take the view that Professor Anthon maintained his silence of years because, being filled with the learning of this world, and being a skeptic about angelic visitations, he desired to avoid giving any prominence to the experience claimed to have been had by Joseph Smith. And I further believe, from the accumulated evidence we have upon this subject, that if Professor Anthon had not published his version of the visit of Martin Harris until after the publication concerning the glyphs of Otolum by Rafinesque, Professor Anthon would have so phrased his letter as to conceal the

statements that the characters were written up and down, and that a Mexican Zodiac accompanied them. At the time he made his statement public it is very clear that he did not know of Rafinesque's discoveries, and he very shrewdly, as he thought, framed his statement that it might not give even a grain of comfort or help to the despised "Mormons" in proving the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. But he overreached himself, as we have seen.

## PLAIN FACTS.

BY J. C.

THERE never was a time so big with events, and so fraught with interest to the Latter-day Saints, as the present time.

The Lord is speedily fulfilling His purposes, and working a marvelous work and a wonder in the eyes of the nations, as well as in the midst of His Saints.

Event seems to tread on the heels of event, to declare the wonderful wisdom of His ways, and the surety of His predictions, ancient as well as modern.

The wicked, in their wrath, are made to praise God, and, at the same time, to prove and test the fidelity of all who have enlisted under His banner.

As if through a sieve, the wheat is being gradually separated from the chaff, and the fame of Israel's sons and daughters is being scattered broadcast in all lands, and the way paved, better than ever before, for the honest in heart of all climes to hear and obey the truth.

The various processes of litigation enacted against us have also their benefits. Many who otherwise would have remained ignorant on points of law and government, are, through the constant fermentation of judicial broils, caused to reflect and study for themselves, and, thus, much latent talent is brought to the surface.

Truly indeed, as the poet says:

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform."

And equally true it is that He takes the weak things of the earth to confound the wise and the mighty.

The present crusade against the Latter-day Saints, adds one more proof to the fact that history repeats itself, and that the same cause will produce the same effects in all ages; as, also, that truth and error can never shake hands, and be reconciled. It also proves how even an inspired form of government, in the hands of those who think themselves smart enough to rule without consulting God, may be maimed, equivocated and perverted, to suit the supposed needs of the hour, involving a breach of right that can never again be made permanent, for, like the pebble from the sling, that speeds to slay, it cannot be recalled, even at the cost of a world.

Platform, pulpit and press are fully equipped with what are considered the ablest and best advocates of the people's interests and rights, and still we find the world in a pitiable plight. All seem baffled in their endeavors to make the clashing factors of society agree and harmonize with the religious and the moral law. Christ's teachings clearly show that the gospel cannot be consistently taught or practiced by those who are proud or extortionate. He says in language plain and simple that the gospel must be preached without money and without price, by men duly appointed and authorized of Him, and that