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A Sacred History: External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon, Chapter XII, Concluded

Author(s): Thomas A. Shreeve

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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.

A SACRED HISTORY.

External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A. SHREEVE.

Chapter XII. (Continued).

HUMBOLDT says that it was most evident to him that the monuments, methods of computing time, systems of cosmogony, and many myths of America, offered striking analogies with the ideas of Eastern Asia—analogs which indicate an ancient communication—not simply the result of that uniform condition in which all nations are found in the dawn of civilization.

What communication more reasonable to believe in than the communication described in the sacred history? The various people who came here brought with them the ideas which were popular in the old world at the time of their departure; and naturally those ideas would be perpetuated in the form described by archaeologists and antiquarians.

In Prescott's history of Mexico I find an idea somewhat similar to that expressed by Humboldt:

The coincidences are sufficiently strong to authorize the belief that the civilization of Anahuac was in some degree influenced by that of Eastern Asia; and secondly, that the discrepancies are such as to carry back the communication to a very remote period.

In a volume entitled "Builders of Babel" is this paragraph:

In the ruined cities of Cambodia, which lies further to the east of Burmah, recent research has discovered teocalls like those in Mexico, and remains of temples of the same type and pattern as those of Yucatan. And when we reach the sea we encounter at Suku, in Java, a teocalle which is absolutely identical with that of Tehauteppec.

Ferguson says:

As we advanced eastward from the valley of the Euphrates, at every step we met with forms of art becoming more and more like those of Central America.

The curious ball containing spindles, which pointed the way for Lehi and his people, may have been a type of the compass of the present age. While it is not impossible for the Lord to have provided His wandering children with a miraculous appliance of this kind, it may be that no miracle was necessary. A recent scientific writer has attempted to show that the compass was of much more ancient origin than is popularly supposed. For many years it was held that the compass originated in Italy early in the fourteenth century. But already it has been shown that in the ninth century it was employed by Northmen; and an Italian poem of the twelfth century described it as having been in use among the Italian sailors of that age. The ancient Sanscrit which has been a dead language for 2200 years, describes the magnet as the precious stone beloved of iron. In the Talmud it is called the stone of attraction, and "it is alluded to in the early Hebrew prayers as *kalamital*, the same name given it by the Greeks, from the reed upon which the compass floated."

Donnelly declares:

The Phœnicians were familiar with the use of the magnet. At the prow of their vessels stood the figure of a woman holding a cross with one hand and pointing the way with the other; the cross represented the compass, which was a magnetized needle, floating in water, crosswise, upon a piece of reed or wood.

The Hindoos learned of the magnet from the Phœnicians; and the Chinese in turn, probably, learned its use from the

Hindoo. 2700 years before the birth of Christ one of the Chinese emperors had a carriage upon which was placed a magnetic figure with an extended arm, which always turned and pointed to the south. The Chinese regarded the south as the principal pole.

All the scoffings which have been directed at Joseph Smith, because of his description of the compass used by Nephi are therefore misapplied, even judging from a natural standpoint.

Prescott, speaking of the rites of marriage in ancient Mexico, says that they were celebrated with as much formality as in any Christian country, and the institution was held in such reverence that a tribunal was instituted for the sole purpose of determining questions relating to marriage.

The priests of ancient Mexico were numerous and powerful. Whence came the idea of a Priesthood possessing temporary as well as ecclesiastical authority, if not from the Nephites, through the apostate faction?

Prescott says:

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 ancient Romans, seem willingly to have incorporated into their own—until the same funeral superstitions settled over the farthest borders of Anahuac.

Among the Toltecs the forms of sepulture were the same as prevailed among the ancient races of the east; in both cases the bodies of great men were burned, and the dust was enclosed in funeral urns. It was not uncommon to bury the dead in a sitting position; others reclined at length; and some among the Toltecs were embalmed, like the mummies of Egypt.

Speaking of the vastness of the kingdom whose seat of power was in Mexico, Donnelly says that the grand nobles were able to raise from their own estates a total of three million of soldiers. And yet the Book of Mormon is reproached by some of its opposers for speaking of the vast multitudes which went into the field to make battle!

In Mexico the religion found by the first Spanish priests who reached there, possessed so many features similar to those of old world religions, that the Spanish priests declared the devil had given the people of the new world a bogus imitation of pure religion.

In Delafield's "Antiquities of America," a letter of Jomard is quoted as follows:

I have recognized in your memoir on the division of time among the Mexican nations, compared with those of Asia, some very striking analogies between the Toltec characters and institutions observed on the banks of the Nile. Among these analogies there is one which is worthy of attention—it is the use of the vague year of three hundred and sixty-five days, composed of equal months, and of five complementary days equally employed at Thebes and Mexico—a distance of three thousand leagues. In reality, the intercalation of the Mexicans being thirteen days on each cycle of fifty-two years, comes to the same thing as that of the Julian calendar, which is one day in four years; and consequently supposes the duration of the year to be three hundred and sixty-five days *six hours*. Now such was the length of the year among the Egyptians—they intercalated an entire year of three hundred and seventy-five days every one thousand four hundred and sixty years. The fact of the intercalation (by the Mexicans) of thirteen

days every cycle—that is, the use of a year of three hundred and sixty-five days and a quarter—is a proof that it was borrowed from the Egyptians, or that they had a common origin.

Donnelly gives a list of remarkable coincidences which existed between the ancient Peruvians and the ancient European races. They are so brief, and yet so emphatic, that I quote them; although some of them are in repetition of statements which have preceded in this series of articles:

1. They worshiped the sun, moon and planets.
2. They believed in the immortality of the soul.
3. They believed in the resurrection of the body, and accordingly embalmed their dead.
4. The priest examined the entrails of the animals offered in sacrifice, and, like the Roman augurs, divined the future from their appearance.
5. They had an order of women vowed to celibacy—vestal virgins—nuns; and a violation of their vow was punished, in both continents, by their being buried alive.
6. They divided the year into twelve months.
7. Their enumeration was by tens; the people were divided into decades and hundreds, like the Anglo-Saxons; and the whole nation into bodies of five hundred, one thousand and ten thousand, with a governor over each.
8. They possessed castes, and the trade of the father descended to the son, as in India.
9. They had bards and minstrels, who sung at the great festivals.
10. Their weapons were the same as those of the old world, and made after the same pattern.
11. They drank toasts and invoked blessings.
12. They built triumphal arches for their returning heroes, and strewed the road before them with leaves and flowers.
13. They used sedan-chairs.
14. They regarded agriculture as the principal interest of the nation, and held great agricultural fairs and festivals for the interchange of the productions of the farmers.
15. The king opened the agricultural season by a great celebration, and, like the kings of Egypt, he put his hand to the plow, and plowed the first furrow.
16. They had an order of knighthood, in which the candidate knelt before the king; his sandals were put on by a nobleman, very much as the spurs were buckled on the European knight; he was then allowed to use the girdle or sash around the loins, corresponding to the *Toga Virilis* of the Romans; he was then crowned with flowers. According to Fernandez the candidates wore white shirts like the knights of the middle ages, with a cross embroidered in front.
17. There was a striking resemblance between the architecture of the Peruvians and that of some of the nations of the old world.

Winchell, in his "Pre-Adamites," says:

I can personally testify that a study of ancient Peruvian pottery has constantly reminded me of forms with which we are familiar in Egyptian archaeology.

It is not possible to indulge anger, for any other wrong feeling, and conceal it entirely. If not expressed in words, a child feels the baneful influence. The evil sympathies of his moral nature are excited as unconsciously as his bodily frame may be affected by a subtle and destructive poison, infused into his lungs with the imperceptible atmosphere he breathes; and the beautiful little image of God is more and more defaced and disqualified for his home in heaven.

A WONDERFUL FORTRESS.

BY VERGILIO.

THE Prussian fortress of Ehrenbreitstein (broad stone of honor) situated on the right bank of the Rhine River, directly opposite Coblenz, is one of the best fortified and strongest places in Europe. Its origin is unknown, though there is a record of its having been occupied by the Romans many centuries ago when they had subdued and while they were waging war against the hardy German tribes. They erected here a watch-tower called Caesar's Tower, which stood for many hundreds of years, and might have remained until the present time but for the French who besieged the fortress in the year 1688, but without success, and attacked it again in 1798 and after a fourteen month's siege accomplished its capture. When, however, the peace of Luneville was effected they destroyed all the fortifications and with them this historical tower.

Various rulers of the middle ages occupied this place at different times who made numerous improvements in it. In the year 1484 Prince John of Baden had a well built some four hundred feet deep by which means communication can be had with the Rhine River, and when the fact is known that the work had to be done through solid rock, the magnitude of this labor can be better appreciated.

On three sides of Ehrenbreitstein nature has provided such precipitous sides as to preclude the possibility of them being scaled, and yet the German nation has provided for these parts a battery of four hundred guns. The north-west portion, which is considered the weakest, is fortified by three lines of defenses, one within another, which must be taken in succession by the attacking party before an entrance can be effected in this direction.

The French have contributed to the amount of fifteen million francs toward the fortifications now in existence at this point because of the destruction which they caused. This was in 1814 when the Congress of Vienna assigned the fortress to Prussia. But this sum was not quite one-fourth of the whole cost of reconstruction.

The platform on the top of the rock is used as a parade ground and covers large cisterns wherein a supply of water may be contained sufficient for the use of eight thousand men three years, while the magazines are capable of holding provisions for the same number of men to last ten years. A garrison of fourteen thousand men can be accommodated, though in a time of peace it is not customary to have more than about five hundred here stationed. Two or three years ago, free access was given to travelers to visit and inspect the wonderful fortifications of Ehrenbreitstein, but since the present agitation commenced between France and Germany the number of visitors is very much limited, and suspicious persons are not allowed to enter at all. This is a most excellent position and there is no doubt but that in case of an open rupture between these neighboring nations, France would use every effort to secure this stronghold. But Germany watches it with a jealous eye, and it does not seem probable that its present possessor will yield, unless reduced to the greatest straits this "Gibraltar of the Rhine."

HOWEVER frequently you are injured, if real penitence and contrition follow the offence, a Christian is always bound to forgive.