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Confirming the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: The Book of Mormon teaches of ancient connections between Asia and America. The article quotes G. Elliot Smith, who theorizes that a cultural migration took place from Egypt to ancient America, c. 900 B.C., citing archaeological evidence.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1917.

EDITORIAL.

CONFIRMING THE BOOK OF MORMON.

ACCORDING to the belief of the Latter-day Saints, the American continents were inhabited before the Flood. Somewhere in America, they believe, Enoch built his marvelous city, which was taken from the earth before the deluge. Somewhere in that region, Noah built the ark, and preached the gospel of repentance, and from America he was carried across the mighty deep until the vessel in which he and his family had found safety rested on Mount Ararat.

The Book of Mormon tells us that some of those who were engaged in the construction of the Tower of Babel and who were scattered over the face of the earth were brought to America. There they grew to become a mighty nation. In course of time, however, they became exceedingly wicked and destroyed each other. These people are known as the Jaredites.

The sacred record mentioned also tells us that about six hundred years before our era, the Lord brought another colony of settlers to America. They came from Jerusalem. They also increased, prospered, and became wicked. Like the Jaredites, they destroyed each other, and but few remained after their sanguinary wars. From these the Red Indians have descended.

The Book of Mormon teaches, then, that there has been communication between Asia and America during the past ages, and that the American ancient civilization, of which many marvelous monuments still remain, are of Semitic origin, influenced, however, by Egyptian culture. This is implied by Nephi, when he says that he makes his record in the language of his father, "which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians," and, when the circumstances of the time in which Lehi lived before he emigrated from Jerusalem are considered, it is easily understood that the Egyptian influence must have been considerable upon the Hebrew mind and intellectual life generally. He lived at a time when Babylonia and Egypt were striving for supremacy in Palestine, and when the shortsighted leaders of the people favored the Egyptians in preference to the Chaldeans, to such an extreme degree that many of them fled to Egypt, when the army of Nebuchadnezzar approached their beloved city. They even forced Jeremiah to accompany them to Egypt. Under the circumstances it is natural that Egyptian in-

fluence should have had a strong hold on the leading men among the Jews, as indicated in the Book of Mormon.

Lately, scientists have been inclined to doubt our belief in this respect. They have tried to account for the similarity observed in the civilizations of the Old World and the New, by supposing that similar needs and circumstances in different parts of the world may well lead isolated groups of men to work out systems of civilization of the same type. How much this theory owes to a desire to disprove the Book of Mormon, no one knows. Even scientists may have their prejudices. It is all the more noteworthy that a recent contributor to *Science* (New York, August 11th, 1916), G. Elliot Smith, contends that the pre-Columbian civilization of the Americas came from Egypt. He places the date of its exodus from that country at 900 B.C. A "cultural migration," he thinks, took place at that time, which left its influence also in India, China, and Polynesia. On this theory the trek eastward from the Red Sea, of Lehi and his company, would appear quite natural, though miraculously guided by divine power.

As quoted in the *Literary Digest*, September 9th, 1916, G. Elliot Smith writes:

"The proof of the reality of this great migration of culture, is provided, not merely by the identical geographical distribution of a very extensive series of curiously distinctive, and often utterly bizarre, customs and beliefs, the precise dates and circumstances of the origin of which are known in their parent countries, but by the fact that these strange ingredients are compounded in a definite and highly complex manner, to form an artificial cultural structure, which no theory of independent evolution can possibly explain, because chance played so large a part in building it up in its original home.

"For instance, it is quite conceivable (though, I believe, utterly opposed to the evidence at our disposal) that different people might, independently the one of the other, have invented the practices of mummification, building megalithic monuments, circumcision, tattooing, and terraced irrigation; evolved the stories of the petrification of human beings, the strange adventures of the dead in the underworld, and the divine origin of kings; and adopted sun-worship.

"But why should the people of America and Egypt who built megalithic monuments, build them in accordance with very definite plans compounded of Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, and East Asiatic models? And why should the same people who did so, also have their wives' chins tattooed, their sons circumcised, their dead mummified? Or why should it be the same people who worshiped the sun, and adopted the curiously artificial winged-sun-and-serpent symbolism, who practised terraced irrigation in precisely the same way, who made idols, and held similar beliefs

regarding them, who had identical stories of the wanderings of the dead in the underworld?

"If any theory of evolution of customs and beliefs is adequate to explain the independent origin of each item in the extensive repertoire, either of the New Empire Egyptian or the pre-Columbian American civilization (which I deny), it is utterly inconceivable that the fortuitous combination of hundreds of utterly incongruous and fantastic elements could possibly have happened twice. It is idle to deny the completeness of the demonstration which the existence of such a civilization in America supplies of the fact that it was derived from the late New Empire Egyptian civilization, modified by Ethiopian, Mediterranean, West Asiatic, Indian, Indonesian, East Asiatic, and Polynesian influences. * * *

"All that I claim, then, is that the influence of Egypt was handed on from place to place; that the links which all ethnologists recognize as genuine bonds of union can with equal certainty be joined up into a cultural chain uniting Egypt to America.

"In almost every one of the focal points along this great migration-route the folk-lore of to-day has preserved legends of the culture-heroes who introduced some one or other of the elements of this peculiarly distinctive civilization. * * *

"At every spot where they touched and tarried, whether on the coasts of Asia, the islands of the Pacific, or on the continent of America, the new culture took root and flourished in its own distinctive manner, as it was subjected to the influence of the aborigines or to that of later comers of other ideas and traditions; and each place became a fresh focus from which the new knowledge continued to radiate for long ages after the primary inoculation.

"The first great cultural wave (or the series of waves of which it was composed) continued to flow for several centuries. It must have begun some time after 900 B.C., because the initial equipment of the great wanderers included practices which were not invented in Egypt until that time. The last of the series of ripples in the great wave set out from India just after the practice of cremation made its appearance there, for at the end of the series the custom of icinerating the dead made its appearance in Indonesia, Polynesia, Mexico, and elsewhere."

J. M. S.

THE annual message of greeting from the First Presidency of the Church will appear in next week's *Star*.

"WE will stand firmly upon the rock of revelation, and God will guide our footsteps in the way of life, and, by and by, we will learn the things that we forgot when we came on the earth in the flesh, and we will retain all the light, and truth, and experience gained while in mortality, and if we are faithful to the last, we will shine forth in the presence of the Father, like the stars of the heavens, and like the sun, for ever and ever."—CHARLES W. PENROSE.