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Book of Mormon Evidence

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Abstract: This article illustrates similarities between the ancient Nephite and Toltec civilizations. The history of the Toltec peoples and their destruction by the Aztecs lends evidence to the historicity and truth of the Book of Mormon.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1917.

EDITORIAL.

BOOK OF MORMON EVIDENCE.

As is well known, some of the authors of the Book of Mormon note the abundance of horses on the American continents during the period covered by their sacred records. Enos says the people of Nephi owned not only cattle of every kind, but also "many horses" (Enos 1:21), and of King Lamoni it is stated that horses were among his valued possessions (Alma 18:9; 20:6).

These statements of the Book of Mormon authors have been questioned by some of their critics. It has been urged as a proof of the very human origin of the Book that the author was ignorant of the fact that there were no horses in America, until they had been imported there by settlers who came after the discovery of the New World by Columbus, and it has been said, in derision, that his ignorance is fatal to the claim that the Book of Mormon is divinely inspired.

But it appears that the critics have been too previous in their haste to condemn the remarkable Record which the Prophet Joseph Smith added to the literary treasures of the world. For, according to later discoveries, there were horses in America before the arrival of Columbus, and the Book of Mormon is confirmed and vindicated by scientific discoveries, in this particular, as in so many others.

In proof of this proposition, let us refer to *The American Geographic Magazine* for November, 1916, which contains an illustrated article on excavations in America. In this we learn that parts of skeletons of horses have been found which, in the judgment of geologists, have been in the earth for three thousand years. We may also quote an *Associated Press* dispatch, dated Tucson, Arizona, January 23rd, this year, in which we read:

"Relics of huge settlements of a prehistoric race of highly civilized Indians, who built great dams and irrigated desert lands in the southwestern corner of New Mexico were found by Ranger Don S. Sullivan of the Peloncillo and Animas district of the Chiricahua forest, who reported his discovery to the forestry headquarters here to-day. His report has been forwarded to the American archaeological association. Picture writing, which showed the dinosaur and the four-toed horse, was found on a crude paper made of reeds and on walls of caves. Ranger Sullivan reported he believed the settlements were the original dwellings of the Aztec tribe."

Here is another testimony to the existence of horses in America before the advent of Columbus, and also of "paper made of reeds," a discovery which points to some connection between the ancient civilizations of America and that of Egypt, where paper made of reeds (papyrus) was in use for centuries, until it was superseded by other material.

Critics of the Bible have also made the mistake of supposing that they knew more about Bible lands and peoples than the authors of that volume themselves did, but they have seen their surmises and theories burst, like flimsy soap bubbles, in collision with the latest discoveries. Doctor Kyle says that in 1904 one of the foremost archaeologists of Europe—possibly one of the scholarly gentlemen who obligingly assured the late Bishop Spaulding, of Salt Lake City, that Joseph Smith did not know the meaning of Egyptian picture-writing—said to him, "I do not believe there ever was such people as the Hittites." This was meant as a slam at the Old Testament, where the Hittites are mentioned in several places (Jos. 1: 14; II. Sam. 24: 6; II. Kings 7: 6; Gen. 23: 10). Professor George Frederick Wright quotes a prominent Bible critic who declared that an alliance between Egypt and the Hittites was as improbable as would be, in our day, one between Great Britain and the Choctaw tribe of Indians. This scholar did not deny the existence of the Hittites, but he denied the Bible representations of them as a powerful people. And yet, now it is known, from records found in Egypt, that the Egyptians waged wars against them, and that one of the Pharaohs, Rameses the Great, was unsuccessful in an attempt to capture their capital, whereupon the Egyptian king signed a treaty of peace with them and accepted a Hittite princess as one of his wives. Hittite sculptures and inscriptions have been found in abundance, and they all testify to the accuracy of the Bible and the foolishness of some critics, who do not know enough to realize their own ignorance.

It is very much the same with the Book of Mormon and some of its prejudiced critics and assailants. The archaeology of America is but in its infancy, as yet. Scientists have so far failed to find a key to most of the mysteries revealed by excavations in the Western World, but as far as they have been able to read and comprehend the records and monuments unearthed, the Book of Mormon has been corroborated in every particular. Let us quote one more illustration. In the Book of Mormon we read that the women of the land of Lehi-Nephi were engaged in spinning and making "all manner of fine linen," while the men were tilling the soil (Mosiah 10: 5). In corroboration of this we read in *Harper's Magazine* for July, 1916:

"If perfection in textile art were the measure of a people's culture, ancient Peru would rank with the great civilizations of antiquity. For, whether we judge by fineness of texture, purity of design, or harmony of

color, her great art is rivaled only by the highest standards of Asia. And her technique of fabric construction, comprising as it does every method elsewhere known and certain crafts apparently unique, is in advance of the textile science of any single people.

“Two years ago, at the suggestion of Doctor Clarke Wissler, Curator of the Department of Anthropology, and Mr. C. W. Mead, Curator in charge of Peruvian Collections of the American Museum of Natural History, the writer commenced a technical examination of Peruvian fabrics along lines pursued in the evaluation of modern textiles.

“Coastal Peru, from the Pacific to the Cordillera Mountains, is one vast desert. The only arable soil is in the valleys of her few snow-fed rivers. An intensive agriculture, aided by the most marvelous system of irrigation which the ingenuity of man ever devised, was barely sufficient to support the great population of ancient times. Every foot of ground on which the scantiest crops could be raised was used. The dead were seldom buried in tillable soil. They are found in stone-heaps, or in the deserts surrounding the ancient centers of population. In these regions rain falls scarcely once in a man's lifetime. To this condition, and to the presence of certain nitrous substances in the soil, we owe the preservation of these matchless fabrics. Some have been discolored by copper stains; the exhalations from the bodies have destroyed the dyes and rotted the fibres in others; but the great majority come from the graves as fresh and beautiful as when they were first taken from the looms.

“This ancient people used four kinds of fibre—cotton, wool, human hair, and a species of hemp known as maguey. They carried spinning to the highest perfection the world has ever seen.

“Their fabrics range from rough cotton sleeping mats to gossamer veils and exquisite tapestry; their technique, from simple embroidery and painting to the complex gauzes and brocades. All these methods, carried to varying degrees of perfection, occur in Peru, together with a species of fancy weave somewhat like modern Jacquard work. Perhaps the most astonishing discovery of all is a few fragments of pile-knot fabric, oddly reminiscent in its surface appearance of the same class of work in the Orient.

“The exact age of these textiles is a matter of conjecture, but modern knowledge resigns them to an antiquity commensurate with their development. It must be obvious that such a degree of skill could not be the result of merely a few centuries, but must represent a culture as ancient as anything we find in Asia or Egypt.—M. D. CRAWFORD, in *Harper's Magazine* for July.”

The wonderful results so far yielded by scientific research justify us in asserting that the Book of Mormon is as firmly supported by that kind of evidence as is the Bible, and that the further progress of research will bring to light still more evidence from the past. God has endowed His children with intellect and reasoning faculties, and when He requires them to exercise faith, He also furnishes them with the evidence that will satisfy their reason as well as the heart, and there is, therefore, no valid excuse for unbelief.