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External Evidences of the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Thomas quotes contemporary historians and ancient authors whose writings confirm or support historical elements of the Book of Mormon. Among these are Lord Kingsborough who was impressed by the knowledge of Genesis possessed by the American Indians; Rosales who relates a Chilean tradition of a visitation by a wonderful personage who taught them of the creator; Prescott who tells of astonished Catholics who found the sign of the cross and a ceremony of partaking of the body and blood of deity.

President Adams spoke on the new birth, and referred to the Savior's sermon on the mount, showing the nature of the character one must establish in order to obtain eternal life.

During the day several anthems were rendered by the Middlesboro choir, under the direction of Elder Robert Hazen, Jr. Sister Alice Bird sang two sacred solos.

On Saturday evening the Elders met in council meeting and gave in their reports.

J. MARLOW TAYLOR, Clerk of Conference.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

BY ELDER ALBERT H. THOMAS, OF THE LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE.

THE Latter-day Saints claim for the Book of Mormon, that it is a record of the hand-dealings of God with the ancient inhabitants of the American continent, the same as the Bible is a record of God's dealings with the ancient people of the Eastern hemisphere; that America was once peopled by a colony who left Asia at the time of the confusion of tongues, when the building of the Tower of Babel was undertaken; that these people were civilized and flourished for about seventeen centuries, then became extinct; that America was again peopled by a colony of Hebrews that left Jerusalem 600 years B.C.; that these were civilized, and built great cities; and that they had a record of the creation and of the flood, and observed the laws of Moses.

When America was discovered in the 15th century, the country was thickly populated with roving bands of Indians or "Red men." Scientific men have made it their study to find out this people's history. The Indian traditions are not sufficient, but they give a valuable clue, as they furnish some of the evidence of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

Lord Kingsborough, in his "Mexican Antiquities," vol 6, page 401, says, "I cannot fail to remark that one of the arguments which persuades me to believe that this nation descends from the Hebrews is to see the knowledge they have of the book of Genesis. It is impossible on reading what Mexican mythology records of the war in heaven, of the creation of light, and the division of waters, and the sin of Adam and Eve, not to recognize Scriptural analogies; but the Mexican tradition of the deluge is that which bears the most unequivocal marks of having been derived from a Hebrew source. This tradition records that a few persons escaped in an ark when the earth was swallowed up by the deluge; that the chief of whom invented the art of making wine; that Kelua, one of his descendants, was present at the building of a high tower, which the succeeding generation constructed with a view of escaping from the deluge should it occur again; that God, incensed by their presumption, destroyed the tower by lightning, confounded their language and dispersed them, and that Kelua led a colony to the New World."

Boturni, on page 6, of his works says, "There is no Gentile nation that refers to primitive events with such certainty as the Indians do. They give us an account of the creation of the world, of the deluge, of the confusion of

languages at the time of the Tower of Babel, and of all other periods and ages of the world."

Rosales, in his history of Chili, affirms a tradition among the Chilians to the effect "that their forefathers were visited by a wonderful personage, full of grace and power, who wrought many miracles among them, and taught them of the Creator who dwelt in heaven in the midst of glorified hosts."

Prescott, in his "Conquest of Mexico," page 465, refers to the symbol of the cross which was found by the Catholics who accompanied Cortez, as common among the natives of Mexico and Central America. "In addition to this sign of a belief in Christ," he says, "a ceremony akin to that of the Lord's Supper was witnessed with astonishment by the invaders. The Aztec priests were seen to prepare a cake of flour, mixed with blood, which they consecrated and distributed among the people, who, as they ate, showed signs of humiliation and sorrow, declaring it was the flesh of Deity."

The origin of these traditions that exist among the American Indians may be a source of wonderment to the scientist, explorer, or historian, but to the Latter-day Saint they are perfectly clear, for the Book of Mormon teaches that Christ visited ancient America, after His resurrection, and organized the Church the same as it was in Palestine.

The knowledge that these Indians have to-day of the creation, of the flood, and of the Savior, has been handed down from father to son throughout the past centuries. To-day the Indians do not worship idols, but what they call the "Great Spirit," and they believe in a hereafter.

The Book of Mormon also claims that the aborigines of America were once a highly civilized people; that they built beautiful cities, and understood the use of metals; that they were an agricultural people; that they understood the art of glass and brick making.

Baldwin in his "Ancient America" incorporates the conclusions of Mr. Bradford regarding the ancient occupants of North America, and says:

"They were all of the same origin, branches of the same race, and possessed of similar customs and institutions.

"They were populous, and occupied a great extent of territory.

"They had arrived at a considerable degree of civilization, were associated in large communities, and lived in extensive cities.

"They possessed the use of many of the metals, such as lead, copper, gold, and silver.

"They sculptured in stone, and sometimes used that material in the construction of their edifices.

"They had a knowledge of the art of pottery, producing urns and utensils formed with taste, and constructed upon the principles of chemical composition.

"They worked the salt springs and manufactured salt.

"They were an agricultural people, living under the influence and protection of regular forms of governments.

"They possessed a decided system of religion, and a mythology connected with astronomy, which, with its sister science, geometry, was in the hands of the priesthood.

"They were skilled in the art of fortification.

"The epoch of their original settlement in the United States is of great

antiquity; and the only indications of their origin to be gathered from the locality of their ruined monuments, points toward Mexico."

Harper's Weekly for October, 1897, contains the following by Henry C. Walsh: "Much has been done in recent years to throw light upon the history of the ancient races of the East, but comparatively little interest has been taken, even by American archæologists and scientists, in the ancient and marvelous civilization whose traces are to be found scattered over our continent, particularly in Central America and Mexico. That a civilization once flourished in these regions, much higher than any the Spanish conquerors found upon their arrival, there can be no doubt. By far the most important work that has been done among the remains of the old Maya civilization has been carried on by the Peabody Museum of Harvard College, through a series of expeditions it has sent to the buried city, now called Copan, in Spanish Honduras. In a beautiful valley near the borderland of Guatemala, surrounded by steep mountains and watered by a winding river, the hoary city lies wrapped in the sleep of ages. The ruins of Copan, although in a more advanced state of destruction than those of the Maya cities of Yucatan, have a general similarity to the latter in the design of their buildings and in the sculptures, while the characters in the inscriptions are essentially the same. It would seem, therefore, that Copan was a city of the Mayas; but if so, it must have been one of their most ancient settlements, fallen into decay long before the cities in Yucatan reached their prime. The Maya civilization was totally distinct from the Aztec or Mexican; it was an older and also a much higher civilization.

"So far the Peabody expeditions have confined their attention to the temples and palaces, and though for several seasons quite a little army of natives has been engaged in excavating, yet the work that has been accomplished amounts to little in comparison with that which remains to be done. To clear the main structure alone will be the work of years. Could the vast structures be restored, our present buildings would seem as pigmies in comparison; and certainly no city of the modern world could boast such a profusion and richness of carved and sculptured ornamentations."

These quotations will suffice to prove that what the Book of Mormon says regarding the ancients of America is true, as the proof comes from recognized authority.

We read in the Book of Mormon, I Nephi xviii: 25, that there were horses and domestic animals on the American continent in the possession of this people. When Columbus discovered America there were no horses there, and seeing this apparent contradiction to early discoveries many pronounced the book to be false. But in recent years the explorers and scientists have found evidences of the horse and other domestic animals in these ancient cities and in such places as to prove beyond doubt that they existed pre-historically.

New evidences are being found at the present time to show to the world that a prehistoric people did live upon the American continent, and all evidences in favor of this are in favor of the Book of Mormon, which adds just that much more to the external evidences of its authenticity.

The following is a clipping from the *Liverpool Post and Mercury*, under date of December 26th, 1904:

"In the canyons of Arizona and New Mexico some explorers are hard at work unearthing the houses of a strange people which dwelt there centuries ago. Before the pyramids of Egypt were built—we are quoting a Chicago newspaper—the cliff dwellings in Arizona were in full swing. The pottery which has been discovered in the subterranean houses bears a striking likeness to Egyptian ware, and an authority has declared that the inscriptions on the walls of the houses are exactly the same as the inscriptions which have recently been unearthed in Egypt. Mummies in dozens have been dug out of the cliffs, and learned men have decided to form a society to study out the details in comparison with the discoveries in Egypt."

AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

"Silver and gold have I none,
Nor scrip in my purse I bear;
The simple crust and the proffered cup
And the borrowed bed my share.
No wealth of the world is given
By Him Who sendeth me,
For my treasure safe in the vaults of heaven
Is held in fee.

"But such as I have, I give;
By the word of my will I bring
Strength to the helpless in his need,
Joy to the sorrowing:
The dead are claimed from death,
The deaf and the silent talk:—
In the name of Christ of Nazareth,
Rise up and walk!"

And lo! the miracle wrought,
In the breath of a moment made
The change of a lifetime's hopelessness,
And a lifetimes pain allayed!
He who had followed creeping
Where his fellow beings trod,
Behold him, upright, walking, leaping
And praising God!

SELECTED.

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