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Legends Prove Truth of Scripture

Author(s): Walter M. Wolfe

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Abstract: This article focuses on the origin of mankind, history, tradition, legends and mythology, and the manner in which the Book of Mormon proves the common source of religious belief. The world will someday understand “the common origin” theory and will believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

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LEGENDS PROVE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE.

BY ELDER WALTER M. WOLFE, OF THE LONDON CONFERENCE.

THERE is one portion of St. Paul's famous sermon on Mars hill that the scientific world is very reluctant to accept as truth. It is Acts xvii: 26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation." This verse, with the three immediately following, makes no uncertain declaration as to the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man. It is so explicit that it admits of no mysterious, incomprehensible, spiritual kinship. A literal, physical relationship that unites Jew and Greek, bond and free is definitely propounded for our consideration, and the various primary races—Aryan, Semitic, Hamitic, Turanian—have a common origin, common earthly parents, if the matter be plainly stated.

It must be admitted that, from the standpoint of the ethnologist, science has much in its favor. Apparently the Caucasian and the Ethiopian, the North American Indian and the Mongolian have but little in common, and the racial types are, if anything, becoming more pronounced with succeeding generations. If, then, Paul's statement that all the nations of men are of one blood is true, we should find something in the history, the tradition, the mythology of each that connects it with all of the others. Somewhere in the misty past there must be the legends of creation and the ideas of Deity that prove the scriptural statement. These found, they should certainly counter-balance the specious arguments of modern science, which at best are only theoretical.

If any considerable number of peoples in portions of the world remote

from one another had traditions concerning the siege of Troy, we would at once assume two things as facts: first, the oneness of these peoples at the time when the siege was said to have taken place; second, the substantial veracity of the Iliad and Odyssey which gives us a complete account of the event. Now let us use reason, and apply the same test to the Bible and to the Book of Mormon. Let us see if both the eastern and the western continents have had, from pre-historic times, traditions and rites that would go to prove a common source for both. If so, and these rites and traditions are biblical or confirm the account given in the Book of Mormon, we must acknowledge that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are both correct, and equally correct as historical documents; and then it follows, since all the events in these books are connected directly with Deity, or with the mediation and atonement of the Savior, that the theology, the plan of salvation, as laid down in the Bible and Book of Mormon must be correct also. We are fully aware of the light in which the world regards the Book of Mormon, but few of us realize how the so-called religious world views the Bible. Christians have a superstitious reverence for the Bible that amounts almost to awe; they love it with a devotion that almost approaches fanaticism, and yet they neither grasp its historical value, sense its spiritual truths, nor live up to its moral teachings. Men will fight for the Bible, and yet refuse to believe in the deluge. Men will lay down their lives for the Bible, and yet talk of the Mosaic account of "The Creation" and "The Fall" as allegories. The world does not believe the Bible. This seems a rash statement; yet, if the Bible were believed, there would be "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." This certainly is not the case to-day, and it seems to me that we Latter-day Saints should preach implicit faith in the Bible, for which there is to-day as much need as there is of faith in the Book of Mormon.

The great aim of the Book of Mormon is not to give a history of the descendants of Lehi, an account of the wars of the Nephites and Lamanites. It is to prepare the way, in the light of history and prophecy, for the visit of the Son of Man to the American continent, to give an account of His life and Church among the "other sheep" to whom He refers in John x: 16. About this mighty event the whole narrative of the Book of Mormon centers. On the eastern continent His personal work was for the few; the propagation and development of that work was for the many who should believe in His name. A small territory, only one hundred miles in length by twenty-five in width, was the scene of His mission in Palestine. But on the western continent, when nations accepted Him in a day, the case was different. His visit, His teachings were known from the realms of the frozen northland to the sultry forests of the equator. Not that he visited all portions of the continent during His brief stay, but the tribes that migrated northward and southward from the land Bountiful took with them the story of the Christ, and He remains in their traditions until this day. I have already mentioned the belief of the Central American Indians in this wise, good and supernatural Being that visited their forefathers centuries ago. The Aztecs of the central Mexican highland, the most civilized of all the American races at the time of the Spanish discovery, know of Him and once worshipped Him as the god Quetzalcoatl—the reformer, teacher, Divine One incarnated. It is certain that they

were looking forward to His return as a deliverer at the time when Cortez made his famous conquest. Their traditions in this respect were held by their neighbors—the Toltecs and Michoacans. The same idea of a teacher and deliverer was found among the less-highly civilized Pueblo Indians (Moqui and Zuni), and even as far north as the land of the Sioux and Dakotahs, on the Canadian frontier. Southward from the land of the Nephites the knowledge of the Gospel spread, and many of its truths may be found in old Peruvian legends.

It is not strange that the native tribes of America should have lost even the traditional knowledge of the creation, and that each nation should have its individual ideas upon the subject. And yet many tribes that live thousands of miles apart and that apparently have no common ground in feature, language, customs and religion, have a story of the long ocean voyage that brought them from a more civilized and highly favored land to the new world. In traveling southward the student first hears this story in the land of the Moqui, in the south-western United States, but to get it in its fulness he should hear the legends of the so-called "white Indians" of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In fact I believe that every statement of the Book of Mormon will be proved from the history, the legends, the ruins and hieroglyphics of the new world.

In like manner the old world is constantly giving us proofs of the authenticity of the much-questioned and much abused book of Genesis. Ancient Greece, Assyria, India, China and Egypt have preserved for us in their various mythologies the story of the Noachian deluge. Under the veil of Greek legend we see the first human pair as the handiwork of the Almighty and it takes no flight of the imagination to see in the first man a god made flesh; for it was not until the fifth century before the Christian era that the false idea of God as an essence without body, parts and passions commenced to permeate the ancient and more rational Greek philosophy and theology,

The story of the temptation and fall of our first parents is common, in one form or another, to the civilized nations of antiquity. It is also one of the stories that has crossed the ocean and become incorporated with the traditions of the Aztecs and Mayas. One of the most ancient picture writings of Mexico shows a beautiful fruit-laden tree. Beneath its shade stands a woman, clothed only in the drapery of her luxuriant hair. Coiled around the trunk of the tree, with eyes looking into the eyes of the woman, and forked tongue almost kissing her lips, is a serpent—the serpent that since the days of Mother Eve has been Evil personified. Older than the temples of the Aztecs, older than the pyramids of the Toltecs, whence did pre-historic Mexico get this idea? Is the picture of itself not enough to give credence to the theory of a common origin of the Hebrew on the one continent and of the Indian on the other?

Some modern students and explorers have been so much impressed with the ruins of ancient America and with the traditions of its inhabitants that they have regarded the peninsula of Yucatan as the giver of civilization to Egypt and hence to Asia and Europe. In the light of revelation we know that this could not have been the case. It is however an evidence that the scales are falling from men's eyes. The "common origin" theory is considered more plausible than was the case a score of years ago, and little by little the world

is becoming prepared reasonably to accept both the Bible and Book of Mormon, because, harmonizing with, and explaining that which man by his own investigating can find out, they supply missing links, show causes and effects, and ultimately lead to a knowledge of the divine plan which has been slowly working out its destiny since the dawn of time.

“AS THY DAYS MAY DEMAND.”

BY MYRA L. LONGHURST, IN THE “JUVENILE INSTRUCTOR.”

NEVER shall I forget that Sabbath morning!* The sun rose bright and clear over the broad expanse of ocean waves that rolled in ever restless fashion and flung their snowy crests to catch a glimpse of the warm sunlight, then joined in the mad race to the black rocks ahead, there to beat in fretful murmur against their slimy sides.

All nature seemed under a spell: so calm and serene with only a gentle breeze to rustle the lofty palms o'er head—an ominous silence it seemed to me, causing a feeling of loneliness to creep over my soul and a vague unrest.

“Come, dear,” said my husband, taking my hand, for he was quick to note the first appearance of sadness on my face, “Let us take a walk upon the beach until meeting time.”

Ever eager for a stroll I gladly consented, and together we walked to the edge of the bluff upon which our house was situated. We loved the grand old ocean, and many an hour had we spent in the shadow of the palms, struggling with a foreign tongue, where the lashing of the waves upon the beach seemed to bring a peace and joy to our souls. And often on moonlit nights we sat inhaling the warm, tropical breezes, while our thoughts returned to our mountain home and friends so far away.

Turning and surveying our little village, I said, “How strange it all seems, our being here in Samoa so far away from home, surrounded by a strange people and trying to teach them the Gospel in their native tongue.” “Yes,” observed my husband, “but we cannot now appreciate this lovely land or the privilege we enjoy. When we return home then we shall think of how pleasant it all was. See the Saints and school children sitting in their little huts, so quiet and devotional, waiting for the hour of meeting.”

“Yes,” said I, “our people at home can learn a lesson of reverence for the Lord's day, from these humble Saints.”

Four houses composed our little village. The one nearest the beach, made of bamboo, was our meeting house and dwelling house combined, divided by a thin partition; the three remaining houses were occupied by Saints and our school children, all were surrounded by a rude, rock wall some three feet high. This was the extent of our vision as a dense forest surrounded us on three sides, our only view being over the broad ocean on the east.

Through the bush some distance to the south lived Elder David Kinison, one of our white Saints, with his family, in a frame house, while a little farther was the native village of Fogapoa.

We were now joined by some of our little dusky school children; but our thoughts were soon interrupted by “Oi, oi, vaai, o se manua Peritania!” (O, see

* April 2, 1899.