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Skepticism and the Book of Mormon

Author(s): G. F. Phillips

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Abstract: Phillips cites as evidence of the Book of Mormon a story by Montessini who visited America in the fifteenth century and discovered some Indians who “pronounced the words of Deuteronomy: Schemah Israel Adonai Elohenu Adoni Ehad (Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord).” Furthermore, he cites “Basnage’s *Histoire des Juifs* written in 1694,” where Basnage writes that “Tis sufficiently certain that a vessel driven thither [Americas] by a tempest landed some Jews.”

 THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

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 SCEPTICISM AND THE BOOK OF MORMON.

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THE scepticism and unbelief, that are so manifest among those who delight to call themselves Christians, and who deny the power of Christianity, was never so flagrantly apparent in the history of the world, as it is to-day, and nowhere is it so obvious, as in the rejection of the Book of Mormon. A more remarkable book than is the Book of Mormon, was never written, and if those who affect belief in Christ, would for a brief space of time discard prejudice, and bring the light of common sense to bear on the subject, there would be brought home to their minds overwhelming evidence, corroborating the principal facts contained in that book.

Briefly speaking, the Book of Mormon contains an account of the ancient inhabitants of America, and of Christ's visit to them. Although much has been written and spoken on the subject, much more has been left unwritten and unspoken. It is needless here to recount what everybody knows, that archæological discoveries, made before and since the first publication of the Book of Mormon, have all been of a confirmatory nature—in no single case has any of these discoveries conflicted with the Book of Mormon. This is a very remarkable fact and establishes a strong presumption in favor of the book.

Not less remarkable, nor less presumptive, is the evidence furnished by history. Montessini, writing an account of his visit to America in the fifteenth century, states, "Traveling in the province of Quif with an Indian, I was overtaken with a violent storm, which occasioned the Indian to exclaim against the Spaniards, whose cruelty and sins drew down these marks of divine vengeance." He then he goes on to state, "I found this Indian to be of presumably Jewish extraction, that his God was ADONAI, and that he acknowledged Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for his ancestors. . . . Curiosity engaging me to pursue my voyage with the Indian, we arrived at the banks of a river, and, upon giving a signal, people appeared, who pronounced the words of Deuteronomy : SCHEMAH ISRAEL ADONAI ELOHENU ADONAI EHAD : Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. They told me how Providence had placed them there by incredible miracles."

We do not think that our Christian friends will question the authenticity

of Montessini. We have, therefore, good grounds for presuming that the American Indian is of Jewish extraction, and indeed, this fact is generally admitted by contemporary genealogists. In Zarat's History of the discovery of Peru, book 1, chap. 10 we have the record of a tradition among the Indians—and they spoke freely of it—about a man having descended from heaven. This tradition is a well-known one and corroborates the Book of Mormon.

From Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* written in 1694—a most reliable source we translate the following: "Though manifest tracks of *Christianity*, and Judaism, could be found among the Indians, yet, we cannot reasonably conclude that the Gospel was brought thither by the Apostles; neither could the first inhabitants of the country be the posterity of the ten tribes. . . . 'Tis sufficiently certain, that a vessel driven thither by a tempest landed some Jews." This is the most remarkable corroboration of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi, chap. 18).

When Latter-day Saints assert, that they know Joseph Smith to have been inspired of God, the world contents itself with laughing them to scorn, but if we examine Joseph Smith's work and compare it with any work of a similar nature extant, we are forced irresistably to the conclusion that he must have been an inspired man. Now it so happens that such a work as we require, is in existence, although it is but little known. We refer to the Book of Chronicles of the land of Ecnarf, a translation of which appeared in the year 1851.

The Rev. Professor Aristarchus Newlight, Ph.D., of Leipsic, fellow of numerous learned societies, and who attempts the translation, confesses to the strangeness of some of the hieroglyphics used, and strange to say, refers to the similarity of the letters in the Book of Mormon. The learned doctor invites inspection of the originals of his manuscript, and offers to prove that they are of great antiquity and of American origin. The result of this translation is the production of sixteen pages of closely printed matter, yet in this small space, the learned doctor makes his history contradict itself diametrically, in almost every sentence, and so ludicrous did the learned doctor's "Chronicle" read that it was laughed out of existence. If a learned philologist of Dr. Newlight's capacity failed as above, is it consistent with common intelligence to suppose, that a "poor ignorant boy," as Joseph Smith is frequently called, could translate a book like the Book of Mormon, consisting not of 16 but 600 closely printed pages, and in which not a single contradiction appears from beginning to end?—A book in which is written the simplest and most sublime philosophy the world has ever had produced! Verily "the wisdom of the wise shall perish!" The Book of Mormon is proved daily by archæological discoveries; it is proved by science; it is corroborated by history; it is demonstrated by reliable tradition; but above all it is the literal fulfillment of prophecy; a standing testimony in these last days that God still is. The time is near at hand when millions of the human family will blame themselves for rejecting God's word as revealed through Joseph the Seer.

G. F. P.

MANCHESTER CONFERENCE.—Meetings of the Manchester Conference will be held at Professor Fowlks' Hall, near the Co-operative Store, Pendleton, on Sunday, February 23, 1890. Meetings to commence at 11 a.m., and 2 and 6 p.m. President Teasdale is expected to attend.