



Type: Magazine Article

Indian Traditions

Author(s): R.H. Smith

Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (15 February 1879), pp. 46–47

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

Abstract: Recounts missionary labors among the Pueblo and Zuni Indians, who recognized the message in the Book of Mormon as belonging to their ancestors.

INDIAN TRADITIONS.

BY R. H. SMITH.

WHILE many of the young readers of the JUVENILE INSTRUCTOR may be conversant with the articles of our faith, and also many of the principles contained in the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and other Church works, they may not realize, to the extent that the older members do, the information there is to be found in the Book of Mormon, and the living proofs we have of its authenticity.

My young friends, among those poor, untutored Indians that come around your pleasant homes to ask you for something to eat, you will find a living testimony of the Book of Mormon. Among them, like all other tribes of the original inhabitants of this continent, you will find traditions of a period in their history when they were a white and enlightened people, understanding many of the arts and sciences of the present age.

While traveling among the different tribes and nations of Indians, or, as we call them, *Lamanites*, in Arizona and New Mexico, I and my fellow-laborers did not find a tribe, where we could get access to them and learn of their ancestry, but what would cite us back to the time when they were more enlightened and farther advanced in civilization than they are at present. And then they would invariably tell us that they were looking forward to the time when they would again attain to this standard of life. Often, too, the aged would regret that they were so old, fearing they would pass away before this time arrived, which they looked forward to with such great anxiety, and hoped to live to see.

Now, the Roman Catholic church holds almost unbounded sway over these tribes of Indians, having sent their priests in among them upwards of two hundred years ago. Most of them are bound by covenants which fetter them as with an iron band, and yet, although they bow down before the images in the Catholic sanctuaries and go through the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic religion, they hold tribal meetings; and when from under the ruling of the priests they will talk with each other upon and teach their children to look forward to the time when they shall be redeemed from such tyranny. They repeat the tradition and indulge in the hope that in the future good men, possessing the influence of the Great Spirit, will come among them and bring them the history of their forefathers, and be instruments in redeeming them from the curse that they understand full well is upon them.

When we would read the Book of Mormon to them and tell them that it was a history of their ancestors, they would listen to it and then compare it with the sayings of their aged people to see if it was really what they expected would come to them, and in no instance did we fail to convince them of the truth of it. In many, very many cases they would stand up and testify to us that they knew it was true, as it agreed with the traditions handed down to them by their fathers.

I will give you an example of how much they are interested in it, and to what extent they will go to find out if it is true.

In New Mexico there is a nation of Indians called the *Pueblos*, composed of some nineteen villages, or tribes, known as the *Ysletas*, *Lagunas*, etc. Well, these nineteen tribes have a form of government in each village, yet they all look to the *Ysleta* village as the head of the whole nation, and in cases of importance they always ask counsel of the authorities there before deciding upon any question that will affect them as a people.

Now, a few of these Indians had branched off and removed some three hundred and fifty miles down the Rio Grande, and established themselves in the western part of Texas. While in our missionary labors we came across these and presented to them the principles of the gospel. We also told them that we had the history of their fathers. They listened to us attentively, in private (for the priest would not allow them to go to our meetings), and told us that they believed what we said was true, and as for the Book of Mormon, they said they knew it was true. But we could not prevail on them to partake of the blessings promised them by the gospel until they could get word from the "heads" of the nation, as they called them, meaning the *Ysleta* Indians some three hundred and fifty miles up the river. As Brother A. M. Tenney and I were appointed to go among the *Pueblos* up the river, these Indians said they would send a delegate from their tribe with us, to introduce us to them, and that if they sanctioned it, they would then listen to us.

Now mark their way of evading the priest. When we were ready to start the delegate came and informed us he could not go; so we started out alone. Imagine our surprise, several nights after we had left their little village, at being awakened by some one, and, on his entering camp, recognizing our intended delegate. He had remained behind some two days to throw the priest off his guard, and then left in the night and rode almost night and day until he overtook us, and this to find out if the gospel was true.

He then traveled with us to the village of *Ysleta*, and there introduced us to one of the leading men of the nation by the name of *Juan Rey Lucero*, the ex-chief of the nation. We were kindly received and treated by him and many others, and our principles were being investigated by them with good results until the priest found out we were there. Then he called all the people together and warned them not to harbor or feed us, on penalty of being dealt with in a church capacity. He also sent word to our friend *Lucero* to drive us out, but, as he was interested in the Book of Mormon, which he was reading (for he was educated in the Spanish language), he paid no attention to the command of the priest, or even his threats, until he had sent some six times for him to go to *Albuquerque* to be tried before a Catholic tribunal at that place. Still he did not go, but would testify to us day after day of the things he read, and say he knew that they were true, and that the book was a true history of his fathers.

Finally the Catholic priest threatened to take him if he would not go of his own will. When he told us this, we said we thought it would be better for us to go. He replied that for our safety he thought we had better, but requested us to remember him and his people, and to go among the *Zunis*, where he thought the priests would not have so much influence against us. This we did, and were blessed in our labors, as we baptized one hundred and eleven of the *Zunis*, and we have their testimony to the Book of Mormon.

Now, my young readers, though these poor, ignorant *Lamanites* are thought by some to be hardly worthy of our notice, they should have our deepest sympathy, and we should do all in our power to have the gospel carried to them, as also the Book of Mormon, which contains a record as dear to them as the history of our fathers would be to us; and they are ready and willing to receive it.

I have received a letter from Brother A. M. Tenney, who has recently visited the *Zunis*, and in it he states that they sought private interviews and meetings whenever they could get them, and in every instance would give a hearty welcome, with

these words: "We believe you to be the servants of God, and that you are our friends, and wish to do us good."

Such is the feeling of many of the Lamanites at the present time in regard to the gospel, and their traditions are among the many evidences we have of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Curiosities in Human Food.

AMONG THE HOTTENTOTS.

IN our last number we gave an account of the style of living that prevails among the Abyssinians. The food of the Hottentots, another race inhabiting Africa, as described by the same author, affords an interesting study:

The Hottentot is noted for his excellence as a hunter, in which pursuit he is especially persevering, differing strongly in this respect from some of the other races of that wonderful country. And it is said that when he has succeeded in killing his game his voracity is seen to equal his patience. Hunger he can endure with wonderful indifference, tightening his belt day by day, and contriving to support existence on an almost inappreciable quantity of food. But, when he can only procure meat, he eats with a continued and sustained voracity that is almost incredible. For quality he cares but little, and so that he can obtain unlimited supplies of meat, he does not trouble himself whether it be tough or tender. Whenever one of a horde of Hottentots succeeds in killing a large animal, such as an elephant or hippopotamus, and it happens to be at a distance from the kraal, the inhabitants prefer to strike their tent-like houses and to remove them to the animal rather than trouble themselves by making repeated journeys to and fro. The chief reason for this strange conduct is, that if they took the latter alternative, they would deprive themselves of one of the greatest luxuries which a Hottentot can enjoy. Seldom tasting meat, they become semi-intoxicated under its influence, and will gorge themselves to the utmost limit of endurance, sleeping after the fashion of a boa-constrictor that has swallowed a goat, and then awaking only to gorge themselves afresh, and fall asleep again.

There is an excuse for this extraordinary exhibition of gluttony, namely, that the hot climate causes meat to putrefy so rapidly that it must be eaten at once if it is eaten at all. Even as it is, the Hottentots are often obliged to eat meat that is more than tainted, and from which even the greatest admirer of high game would recoil with horror. They do not, however, seem to trouble themselves about such trifles, and devour the tainted meat as eagerly as if it were perfectly fresh. Whatever may be the original quality of the meat, it owes nothing to the mode in which it is dressed, for the Hottentots are perhaps the very worst cooks in the world. They take an earthen pot, nearly fill it with water, put it on the fire, and allow it to boil. They then cut up their meat into lumps as large as a man's fist, throw them into the pot, and permit them to remain there until they are wanted. Sometimes, when the feasters are asleep themselves, they allow the meat to remain in the pot for half a day or so, during which time the women are obliged to keep the water continually boiling, and it may be imagined the ultimate result of their cooking is not particularly palatable.

It has already been mentioned that the Hottentot tribes are remarkable for their appetites. They are no less notable for

their power of sleep. A thorough-bred Hottentot can sleep at any time, and it is almost impossible to place him under conditions in which he will not sleep. If he be pinched with hunger, and can see no means of obtaining food either by hunting or from the ground, he lies down, rolls himself up in his kaross, and in a few moments is wrapped in slumber. Sleep to him almost answers the purpose of food, and he can often say with truth that "he who sleeps dines." When he sleeps his slumber is truly remarkable, as it appears more like a lethargy than sleep, as we understand the word. A gun may be fired close to the ear of a sleeping Hottentot and he will not notice it, or, at all events, will merely turn himself and sink again to repose. Even in sleep there is a distinction between the Kaffir and the Hottentot. The former lies at full length on his mat, while the other coils himself up like a human hedgehog. In spite of the evil atmosphere of their huts, the Hottentots are companionable even in their sleep, and at night the floor of a hut will be covered with a number of Hottentots, all lying fast asleep, and so mixed up together that it is scarcely possible to distinguish the various bodies to which the limbs belong.

THREE LITTLE BOYS.

BY YAM.

ONE day I overheard three little boys talking about what they would do if they had a hundred pounds (about five hundred dollars).

The first one who spoke said: "If I had that much money I'd buy lots of cakes and candy, and have a good feast."

The next one said: "If I had a hundred pounds I'd buy a buggy and horse, and ride all over the country."

The third one remarked: "I wouldn't do that; I'd buy a piece of land, and build a nice house for my father and mother to live in; I would."

These ideas led me to pen the following:

THE BOY'S THE FATHER OF THE MAN.

There's a subject I will mention, which we'd all do well to scan,
And which no one with good reason can deny;
It is worthy our attention, as a part of nature's plan,
And to every one on earth will well apply:

CHORUS.

In every age and state, with all men, both small and great,
(Let any one deny it, now, who can,
It comes as sure as fate—unerring, soon or late,
That "the child is the father of the man."

If the child be cross and wayward, and is ever hard to please,
And his playmates very apt to scratch and cuff;
In his manhood he'll be froward, he'll not study others' ease,
But, most likely will be churlish, hard and gruff.

'Mong the rising generation an observer oft will trace
In a generous and noble girl or boy,
In the movements of the body, and the contour of the face,
That the future of their actions will bring joy.

The greedy and the selfish among the infant throng
How apt in all their phases may be found;
Of a hatred for the noble, and a liking for what's wrong,
In their childish freaks and fancies will abound.

The drunkard and the glutton, the unstable, weak and frail,
And the avaricious miser and the mean,
The patient and forbearing, who are never known to fail,
With the noblest of the noble may be seen