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A Fascinating Story

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Abstract: The Book of Mormon gives the world new light on ancient history, and archaeology confirms its truth. Quetzalcoatl stems from Christ's visit. Hagoth's expeditions possibly settled South Pacific islands. Politics and war are highly developed in the Book of Mormon, which is a divine record.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS'
MILLENNIAL STAR

· ESTABLISHED IN 1840

“For more than forty years I have considered the case of “Mormonism,” in the light of the rules laid down by the great jurists for the discovery of truth and the detection of error. From my considerations I can truly say I have gained a conviction of the moral certainty of its claims.”—CHARLES H. HART.

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A FASCINATING STORY

BISHOP JAMES H. WALLIS

ACCORDING to the Book of Mormon, the continent of America was peopled as early as 1800 B. C., shortly after the “confusion of tongues” at the Tower of Babel. From then on several groups of people migrated from Asia to America to develop civilizations which, though destroyed, have left their traces to the present day.

Early American history is not recorded in the libraries of the world. Much of it is still enshrouded in mystery even to this day and age. Certainly Columbus knew nothing about it. When he touched American soil he found a remnant of what was once a fair and delightful people, a rapidly degenerating race, whose ancestors had apparently enjoyed a far superior culture.

From that day to the present there has been much speculation as to the origin of this race, which became known as the American Indians. The ruins of cities, temples, buildings, and homes, discovered especially in Mexico and Central and South America, were found to be of exquisite workmanship; many walls and monuments were engraved with hieroglyphics which in many respects resembled the Egyptian. To date no one has been able to translate them. The story they have to tell still remains a mystery.

Early in the year 1830, the world was given a history in a printed record called the Book of Mormon, which has already gone through numerous editions and has been printed in many languages; millions of people have read it. It purports to be a history of groups of people who migrated to America from the Valley of the Euphrates and from Palestine to settle in different parts

of America, where they developed their civilization, grew into mighty peoples, but finally, through constant contention which took much of their best blood, degenerated into a nomadic remnant which was only a miserable vestige of the life which had existed when the culture of these peoples was at its height.

The history of these peoples was translated into the English language from metallic plates, found hidden in a hill in the western part of the State of New York, U.S.A., where they had lain for more than one thousand years. "Mormon" was the name of the historian who had compiled the history from a collection of metallic records which had been kept by these early Americans through many centuries. Named after him, this history is to-day known as the Book of Mormon. It is a Bible of the Western or American continent in somewhat the same manner as the Jewish record is the Bible of the Eastern Continent, for it, too, records the dealings of God with a people. It carries a strong Eastern influence, because the ancestry of its writers dates back to the Valley of the Euphrates and to Palestine.

Because of the unusual manner in which the Book of Mormon appeared, its authenticity has often been questioned. The story is most fascinating. No single human being could have concocted it. Modern archæological discoveries are constantly demonstrating that the life and culture depicted in the Book of Mormon really existed upon the American Continent. A prophetic vein flows through the entire record; many of the prophecies made by these ancients have been fulfilled; others pertain to times reaching into our own period.

The book, in its simple manner, depicts numerous "modern" inventions, claimed to have been first introduced into society in our age, but already known to these people many hundreds of years ago. Not until recent excavations of ancient ruins in America could the truth of these assertions be demonstrated. The Book of Mormon speaks of the use of cement in building. It records a knowledge of the workmanship of metals, the weaving of fine cloth, a highly developed system of agriculture, as well as industry and seamanship.

Among other things the book records the use of the compass, in a somewhat different form from ours, 2,500 years ago. It tells of the construction of vessels nearly 4,000 years ago resembling the submarine, whereby a group of people travelled from the Eastern continent to America in 344 days. In eight of these barges they brought with them flocks and herds, fowls of the air, seeds and grains, hives of honey bees, and many other things which might become necessary in the development of a new civilization in a strange land.

Almost 1300 years after this colony, which the Book of Mormon records as the first to have come to America, had settled somewhere in Central or South America and had become extinct

through internecine wars, another company of men, women, and children left Jerusalem (600 B. C.) and sailed to America in a large ship, which the record reports as having been built according to a pattern given of the Lord, as He had done for Noah. This colony, which was in transit for eight years between the time it left Jerusalem and reached America, also brought with it seeds and grains, fruit, meat, honey, and other materials in abundance. On their arrival the people found many beasts of different kinds, including the ox, horse and the goat. They discovered gold, silver, and copper, also many evidences of a prior well-developed civilization.

Later a third group found its way to the shores of America. It was led by Mulek, a son of King Zedekiah. This group later intermingled with the second group, and spread over a great part of North and South America.

The colony which came to America from Jerusalem by ship about 600 B.C., known in the Book of Mormon as the Nephites, brought with it a record engraved on brass plates, containing the five books of Moses, including the account of the creation from the days of Adam and Eve, and a history of the Jews to the commencement of the reign of King Zedekiah, and also many of the prophecies of the prophets of old. Their records also contained a genealogy of the leader of their colony, a certain Lehi, which showed that he was a descendant of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt. These records were of great assistance in maintaining the culture of the people and giving them a foundation for their records so that they could be continued through many centuries. The major part of the Book of Mormon deals with these Nephites and their brother tribe, the Lamanites.

As one pages through the Book of Mormon, many interesting accounts will be revealed. The Book of Mormon foretells the discovery of America by Columbus; the coming of the Pilgrim Fathers; the American War for Independence with Great Britain. It predicts that no monarch shall ever rule any part of the American continent.

Until the year 1847 it was not known that the vast continent of America was entirely surrounded by water. But the fact that it was an immense island was already given to the world by the Book of Mormon in 1830. According to the Book of Mormon, people knew this fact nearly 2000 years before.

Many localities in Mexico and Central America, which are now occupied by apparently virgin forests, are shown by archæological research to be regions of reforestation. In some sections the strata as well as the uncovered ruins demonstrate that ancient peoples occupied successively the same areas which are now being cleared anew by the coffee planters for the first time. Joseph Smith translated interesting information about such a proceeding in the third chapter of Helaman. Joseph Smith never saw Central

or South America ; one hundred years ago he had no human means of finding out what has been uncovered to-day. Through the translation of this ancient record he gave the world many facts which science only recently discovered and gave to the world.

In 3rd Nephi a record is published that Christ appeared to the people on the American continent in His resurrected body, and that He instituted His Church among them, after the pattern given in Jerusalem, with apostles, prophets, etc. He instituted the sacrament and performed mighty miracles among them. This organization was retained for a number of centuries until most of the inhabitants following its principles were destroyed by their unbelieving brothers. It is claimed the remnants of such an organization are still maintained among the Indians in Peru, and many see a record of Christ's visit to the American people in the interesting legends told about the great God Quetzalcoatl. In a recent article, the writer, Henry Smith, reports an interview with Russell Hastings Millward, F.R.G.S., about which he writes: "Where did the little black image of Christ come from? How did the natives of Yucatan get their present knowledge of Christianity and from where did they learn of the star of Bethlehem and of the crucifixion? They are very puzzling questions. . . . According to Russell Hastings Millward, famous explorer, who has spent more time combing the jungles of Yucatan and Colombia, including Guatemala, than probably any other man living, these are important problems." Mr. Smith further states: "Firmly entrenched in the pagan worship of the Mayan natives is the unmistakable knowledge of Christ, bearing strong resemblance to the belief of the white man. Every Indian village throughout that vast stretch of jungle territory has its little black image of Christ. The image is regarded as the most sacred treasure of the Mayas, and as such is safe." (*Deseret News*, 1931.) Scientists seem to agree on the fact that the black image dates back much further than the coming of Columbus or the Spaniards. Thus explorer Millward presents his problems, but offers no solution. The records given to the world in the Book of Mormon throw light upon Millward's problems. To the interested investigator who has read the Book of Mormon, such writers as Lord Kingsborough in his *Antiquities of Mexico*, Bancroft in his *Native Races*, Prescott in his *Conquest of Mexico*, or A. Hyatt Verrill in his *Under Peruvian Skies*, make some interesting corroborations.

From the Book of Mormon we learn that shipbuilding yards were established on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and that vessels carried many people to unsettled parts of North America. Some of these ships never reached their destinations. Carried out to sea by storms, they may have become wrecked on the islands of the Pacific. Some writers claim that the Hawaiian, Samoan and other South Sea Isles were peopled in this manner.

A recently discovered record on the Hawaiian Islands claims to link up the people of Hawaii with earlier American peoples; some interpret it to contain genealogical references which dates back to Book of Mormon history.

The art of war was highly developed among the people, whose history is recorded in the Book of Mormon, and great generals led immense armies to battle, with wonderful skill and valor. They used the sword, cimeter, spear, javelin, dart, bow, arrow, sling and stone. They wore defensive plate armour for their heads, bodies and thighs; they also carried shields. They developed a system of fortification, built towns and citadels, remnants of which stand to-day. Rarely in history have deeds of greater valour been recorded than those given in the Book of Mormon.

During the final series of their wars, these people descended so far into savagery that they offered human sacrifice. Women and children taken as hostages became the victims. The people degraded to the eating of human flesh. Never was there such wickedness as among these people. The Book of Mormon also deals with the dark side of their history. But it also records beautiful, faith-promoting incidents, which will warm the heart of the reader and give him courage to live a clean, upright life.

The political organization of the people was first patriarchal; then monarchical, when they were governed by kings; then a republic, when they were ruled by judges and governors. This was followed by anarchy and civil wars which finally resulted in the extinction of their culture.

The history of these peoples reveals the ever-returning cycle of prosperity and depression, much as we experience it to-day. These early American historians found the causes in a decline in spirituality and morality, and were continually trying to protect their peoples from these evils. They failed; their civilization vanished.

Such in brief are some of the interesting contents of this wonderful record of the early inhabitants of America. One must read it with understanding to appreciate its true value. It is an inspired record, and its translator, Joseph Smith, once declared that "A man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."

The Book of Mormon appears as added testimony for the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and supplements and helps to explain the "Plan of Salvation" which He gave to the world. It contains His Gospel.

A promise is made in the closing chapter of the record that anyone desirous of knowing of its divine origin, who will read the Book of Mormon "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ," will have manifested unto him the truth of the record, "by the power of the Holy Ghost." Many thousands of people have done so and have profited by its teachings.