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A Sacred History: External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon, Chapter XIII

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Abstract: Uses historical, linguistic, and archaeological evidence to prove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Basing his facts on research done by noted linguists and archaeologists of the time, the author writes concerning the god Quetzalcoatl, religious customs and ruins of advanced civilizations, comparisons between the Hebrew and Mayan languages, and the Egyptian hieroglyphic writings. Shreeve also tells of similarities in biblical beliefs between early people of both the western and eastern hemispheres and explains why Joseph Smith was incapable of writing the Book of Mormon without divine aid.

A SACRED HISTORY.

External Evidences of the Truth of the Book of Mormon.

BY THOMAS A. SHREEVE.

Chapter XIII.

IN the preceding chapters I have given a review, more or less complete, of the religious and social customs of the ancient peoples of the new world—with the exception of Christianity. The importance of this branch of the subject demands separate treatment.

The research and arguments of Christians, as well as their opposers, in modern times, have shown that the cross, long before the opening of the Christian era, was a sacred symbol. I meet this now freely: but I contend that the veneration shown to the cross previous to the birth of our Savior was due to prophetic knowledge. Indeed, this must be the position taken by the whole Christian world, in order to be consistent. The coming of our Lord must have been known outside of His ancestral line and far distant from the scene of His birth and sufferings; because the wise men of the east even were aware of His advent, and journeyed to greet Him.

In common with other parts of the earth, this land was in possession of prophetic knowledge concerning the birth, life, and crucifixion of Jesus, the anointed. The Book of Mormon details distinctly, the predictions made with regard to Christ and His atoning work. The people in this land, like the people in other lands, knew of Him centuries before He came; and after His labor was ended in the old world, He visited and administered here in this hemisphere. It shall be my purpose now to show not only this prophetic knowledge, but the actual coming to this continent of our Lord in person—and all this from external evidence.

A scholarly exposition of the reverence shown to the cross in all ages appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in July, 1870. I shall quote from it in substantiation of two points.

1. All Christians must admit that the coming of Christ was extensively known in many lands long ages before His advent.

2. Among the lands possessing this prophetic knowledge was the western hemisphere.

From the dawn of organized Paganism in the eastern world to the final establishment of Christianity in the western, the cross was undoubtedly one of the commonest and most sacred of symbolical monuments; and, to a remarkable extent, it is so still in almost every land where that of Calvary is unrecognized or unknown. Apart from any distinctions of social or intellectual superiority, of caste, color, nationality or location in either hemisphere, it appears to have been the aboriginal possession of every people in antiquity—the elastic girdle, so to say, which embraced the most widely separated heathen communities—the most significant token of a universal brotherhood, to which all the families of mankind were severally and irresistibly drawn, and by which their common descent was emphatically expressed, or by means of which each and all preserved, amid every vicissitude of fortune, a knowledge of the primeval happiness and dignity of their species. Where authentic history is silent on the subject, the material relics of past and long forgotten races are not wanting to confirm and strengthen this supposition. Diversified forms of the symbol are delineated more or less artistically, according to the progress achieved in civilization at the period, on the ruined walls of temples and palaces, on natural rocks and sepulchral galleries, on the hoariest monoliths and the rudest statuary; on coins, medals and vases of every description; and, in not a few instances, are preserved in the architectural proportions or sub-

terranean as well as superterranean structures, of Tunuli as well as Fanes. The extraordinary sanctity attaching to the symbol, in every age and under every variety of circumstance, justified any expenditure incurred in its fabrication or embellishment; hence the most persistent labor, the most consummate ingenuity, were lavished upon it. Populations of essentially different culture, tastes and pursuits—the highly-civilized and demi-civilized, the settled and nomadic—vied with each other in their efforts to extend the knowledge of its exceptional import and virtue among their latest posterities. The marvelous rock-hewn caves of Elephanta and Ellora, and the stately temples of Mathura and Terputty, in the east, may be cited as characteristic examples of one laborious method of exhibiting it; and the megalithic structures of Callernish and Newgrange, in the west, of another; while a third may be instanced in the great temple of Mitza, the "City of the Moon" in Ojaca, Central America, also excavated in the living rock, and manifesting the same stupendous labor and ingenuity as are observable in the cognate caverns of Salsette—of endeavors, we repeat, made by people as intellectually, as geographically distinct, and followers withal of independent and unassociated deities, to magnify and perpetuate some grand primeval symbol. * * *

Of the several varieties of the cross still in vogue, as national or ecclesiastical emblems, in this and other European states, and distinguished by the familiar appellations of St. George, St. Andrew, the Maltese, the Greek, the Latin, etc., etc., there is not one among them the existence of which may not be traced to the remotest antiquity. They were the common property of the eastern nations. No revolution or other casualty has wrought any perceptible difference in their several forms or delineations; they have passed from one hemisphere to the other intact; have survived dynasties, empires and races; have been borne on the crest of each successive wave of Aryan population in its course toward the west; and, having been re-consecrated in later times by their lineal descendants are still recognized as military and national badges of distinction.

Among the earliest known types is the *Cruz Ansata*, vulgarly called the "Key of the Nile" because of its being found sculptured or otherwise represented so frequently upon Egyptian and Coptic monuments. It has, however, a very much older and more sacred signification than this. It was the symbol of symbols, the mystical Tau, the "Hidden Wisdom," not only of the ancient Egyptians, but also of the Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Mexicans, Peruvians and of every other ancient people commemorated in history, in either hemisphere, and is formed very similarly to our letter T, with a roundlet or oval placed immediately above it. Thus it was figured on the gigantic emerald, or glass statue of Serapis, which was transported (293 B. C.) by order of Ptolemy Soter from Sinope, on the southern shores of the Black Sea, re-erected within that famous labyrinth which encompassed the banks of Lake Mœris, and destroyed by the victorious army of Theodosius (A. D. 389), despite the earnest entreaties of the Egyptian priesthood to spare it, because it was the emblem of their god and of the "life to come." Sometimes, as may be seen on the breast of an Egyptian mummy in the museum of the London University, the simple T only is planted on the frustum of a cone; and sometimes it is represented as springing from a heart; in the first instance signifying goodness; in the second, hope or expectation of reward. As in the oldest temples and catacombs of Egypt, so this type likewise abounds in the ruined cities of Mexico and Central America, graven as well upon the most ancient cyclopean and polygonal walls as upon the more modern and perfect examples of masonry; and is displayed in an equally conspicuous manner upon the breasts of innumerable bronze statuettes which have been recently disinterred from the cemetery of Juigalpa (of unknown antiquity) in Nicaragua.

Its undoubted antiquity, no less than its extraordinary diffusion, evidences that it must have been, as it may be said to be still in unchristianized lands, emblematical of some fundamental doctrine of mystery. The reader will not have failed to observe that it is most usually associated with *water*; it was the "Key of the Nile," that mystical instrument by means of which, in the popular judgment of his Egyptian devotees, Osiris produced the annual revivifying inundations of the sacred stream; it is discernible in that mysterious pitcher or vase portrayed on the brazen table of Bremlus, before-mentioned,

with its four lips discharging as many streams of water in opposite directions; it was the emblem of the water-deities of the Babylonians in the east and of the Gothic nations in the west, as well as that of the rain-deities respectively of the mixed population in America. We have seen with what peculiar rites the symbol was honored by those widely separated races in the western hemisphere; and the monumental slabs of Nineveh, now in the museums of London and Paris, show us how it was similarly honored by the successors to the Chaldees in the eastern * * *

In Egypt, Assyria and Britain it was emblematic of creative power and eternity; in India, China, and Scandinavia, of heaven and immortality; in the two Americas, of rejuvenescence and freedom from physical suffering; while in both hemispheres it was the common symbol of resurrection, or the "sign of the life to come;" and, finally in all heathen communities, without exception, it was the emphatic type, the sole enduring evidence of the divine unity. This circumstance alone determined its extreme antiquity—an antiquity, in all likelihood, long antecedent to the foundation of either of the three great systems of religion in the east. And, lastly, we have seen how, as a rule it is found in conjunction with a stream or streams of water, with exuberant vegetation, and with a hill or a mountainous region—in a word, with a land of beauty, fertility and joy. Thus it was expressed upon those circular and sacred cakes of the Egyptians, composed of the richest materials—of flour, of honey, of milk—and with which the serpent and bull, as well as other reptiles and beasts consecrated to the service of Isis and their higher divinities were daily fed; and upon certain festivals were eaten with most extraordinary ceremony by the people and their priests. "The cross cake," says Sir Gardner Wilkinson, "was their hieroglyph for civilized land;" obviously a land superior to their own, as it was, indeed, to all other mundane territories: for it was that distant, traditional country of sempiternal contentment and repose, of exquisite delight and serenity, where nature, unassisted by man, produces all that is necessary for his sustentation.

Donnelly says that when the first Spanish missionaries set foot upon the soil of America, immediately after the discovery of Columbus, they were amazed to find the cross was as devoutly worshipped by the red Indians as by themselves, and were in doubt whether to ascribe the fact to the pious labors of St. Thomas or to the cunning device of the Evil One. The hallowed symbol challenged their attention on every hand and in almost every variety of form. It appeared on the bass-reliefs of ruined and deserted monuments as well as on those of inhabited palaces, and was the most conspicuous ornament in the great temple of Gozumel, off the coast of Yucatan. According to the particular locality, and the purpose which it served, it was formed of various materials—of marble and gypsum in the open spaces of cities and by the way-side; of wood in the teocallis or chapels on pyramidal summits and in subterranean sanctuaries; and of emerald or jasper in the palaces of kings and nobles.

According to the author last quoted, the ancient Mexicans had a religion possessed of so many features similar to those of the old world, that the Spanish priests declared that the Devil had given them a bogus imitation of Christianity to destroy their souls. The Devil, said they, stole all he could.

WE are surrounded by motives to piety and devotion, if we would but mind them. The poor are designed to excite our liberality; the miserable, our pity; the sick, our assistance; the ignorant, our instruction; those that are fallen, our helping hand. In those who are vain, we see the vanity of the world; in those who are wicked, our own frailty. When we see good men rewarded, it confirms our hope; and when evil men are punished it excites our fear.

TWO PICTURES OF WOMAN.

BY BURDETTE.

THROUGH all the oratorio of history we hear the voices of women, whom no man could compel to silence. We hear the sorrowful notes of the song of Jephthah's daughter, mingling with the voice of Ruth, "standing breast high amid the Summer eorn"—tremulous with a woman's fear, but resolute with sublime purpose comes the voice of Esther, carrying her life before the golden scepter for her people's sake; we hear Elizabeth speak with a loud voice and no man can silence her; women bring their little ones to the Savior, in the face of his disciples' rebuke, and He does not censure them for "usurping authority over a man;" a woman washes His feet with her tears, Joanna, Mary, Susanna and many others "minister to Him out of their substance," woman lingered near the cross when all men forsook him. Why then be proud that you are a woman.

True, she cannot sharpen a pencil, and, outside of commercial circles she cannot tie a package to make it look like anything save a crooked cross section of chaos; but, land of miracles! see what she can do with a pin! She cannot walk so many miles around a billiard table with nothing to eat, and nothing (to speak of) to drink, but she can walk the floor all night with a fretful baby. She can ride five hundred miles without going into the smoking car to rest (and get away from the children). She can go to town and do a wearisome day's shopping and have a good time with three or four friends without drinking a keg of beer. She can enjoy an evening visit without smoking half a dozen cigars. She can endure the distraction of a houseful of children all day, while her husband sends them all to bed before he has been home an hour. Every day she endures the torture of a dress that would make an athlete swoon. She possibly cannot walk five hundred miles around a tan bark track in six days for five thousand dollars, but she can walk two hundred miles in ten hours up and down the crowded aisles of a dry goods store when there is a reduction sale on. A boy with a sister is fortunate, a fellow with a cousin is to be envied, a young man with a sweetheart is happy, and a man with a good wife is thrice blessed more than they all.

LUCK OR PLUCK.—Of what is called "luck" in this world a great deal is only the result of patient industry. A rich merchant of Liverpool, Sir Joseph Walmsley, began life as a clerk on about a hundred dollars a year. His employers were grain merchants, and the young man determined to learn all there was to know about grain. The man who had charge of the warehouse, "Old Peter," as he was called, saw the boy was anxious to learn; so twice a week, in the morning before breakfast, the two would go together to the stores and ships, examining the different kinds of grain. Old Peter would take a handful of all sorts, English, Irish, Scotch, American, European, and spreading them on the table, would ask the boy to tell the characteristics of each sample. The pupil was bewildered at first, but he persevered until he became an expert in the business. Very likely the people who knew nothing of those early morning lessons called the youth "lucky," as he began to amass wealth; but it is a kind of "luck" within the reach of every young person who is willing to work for it.