

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

"Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.—MAT. x, 15.

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DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

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HISTORICAL EVIDENCES CONSIDERED.

I.

In considering this part of our subject, we shall quote largely from such original Indian historical information as has fortunately survived the wreck of Vandalism, and escaped the destruction of the religious fanaticism of the early Papal clergy; under whose influence and promptings the records of the Indians were piled up by the cord and burned, in the presence of their owners; who wept bitterly at the wanton destruction of books, which had cost them and their forefathers so much time and patience to write and preserve. In quoting from copies and abridgments of original records still remaining, and from the writings of early Spanish historians, we shall endeavor to carefully compare them with facts, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, bearing upon the subject under consideration. In this manner we hope to be able to advance sufficient historical evidence to establish, in the mind of every thoughtful and

unprejudiced reader, the divine origin of the Book of Mormon, which has been preserved, brought forth and translated by the gift and power of God. In treating this subject we hope to be able, also, to throw light upon many important points of interest, which have and do still puzzle the minds of the thoughtful and inquiring of our enlightened age.

From whence came the ancient inhabitants of America? From whom did they descend? Whence their religious knowledge and civilization? These are questions which scientists, as yet, have been utterly unable to solve. Very many conflicting but ingenious theories regarding this interesting and important subject have been advanced. Some of these are attesting monuments of the wonderful imagination with which the writers are gifted; others show remarkable tenacity in following preconceived ideas; others again manifest real bias induced by prejudice against well authenticated facts, in the vain endeavor to refute which some writers have expended

their efforts; while still others are written logically, expressing views strongly supported by judicious citations and well sustained by sound reasoning.

The researches of distinguished antiquarians, while challenging the admiration and receiving the encouragement of the civilized world, have, unfortunately, like the religious teachings of modern divines, only resulted in inducing greater diversity of opinion. Thus the Christian world rivals the antiquarian field of America, as a stage upon which to manufacture doubt, by man made doubly doubtful. In each we find teachers "ever learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

That the Indians, before and at the time of the Spanish conquest, had very clear knowledge as to who they were; and that they came, at a very early date, over the great waters, from a far distant country, wandering many years in the wilderness, suffering deprivations and untold hardships in their migrations, are matters so well established by the early historians that we can rest reasonably satisfied with their testimony, if we had no more, on these points. That they had a knowledge, we shall hereafter see, of the creation, the deluge, the tower of Babel, and of the confusion of the language which was caused there; and of the birth, crucifixion, resurrection and doctrines of Christ, as well as of the war in heaven, is equally clear. We shall hereafter see to what straits the early Catholic clergy and writers were subjected, in trying to account for the possession, by the original inhabitants, of this varied and far reaching knowledge.

Commencing with an account of the creation, as had among them, we will proceed to show the source of their information upon this and other important subjects. The "Popol Vuh," written in the dialect of the Quiches, was translated over two hundred years ago, by Ximinez, into the Spanish language, but was not printed. The Quiches of Guatemala, it is understood, eventually amalgamated with the Nahua nations of Central Mexico, but are believed to have been, originally, a branch of the great Maya family.

In 1860 Brasseur de Bourbourg, considering the translation made by Ximinez very imperfect, translated it into French. Baldwin, in his "Ancient America," published by Harper Brothers, 1871, states that it was written "in 1558 as an abridged reproduction of a very ancient Quiche book which contained an account of their history, traditions, religion and cosmogony. * * *

For those who study the book it is full of interest. It shows us their conception of the Supreme Being and His relation to the world; it enables us to see what they admired in character, as virtue, heroism, nobleness and beauty; it discloses their mythology and their notions of religious worship; in a word, it bears witness to the fact that the various families of mankind are all of 'one blood,' so far, at least, as to be precisely alike in nature." (p. 193.)

"The account of the creation, with everything else in this cosmogony and mythology, is original, like the civilization to which it belongs. According to 'Popol Vuh,' the world had a beginning. There was a time when it did not exist. Only 'Heaven' existed, below which all space was empty, silent, unchanging solitude. Nothing existed there, neither man, nor animal, nor earth nor tree. Then appeared a vast expanse of water on which divine beings moved in brightness. 'They said earth!' and instantly the earth was created. It came into being like a vapor; mountains rose above the waters like lobsters, and were made. Thus was the earth created by the Heart of Heaven. Next came the creation of animals; but the gods were disappointed because the animals could neither tell names, nor worship the Heart of Heaven. Therefore it was resolved that man should be created. First man was made of earth, but his flesh had no cohesion; he was inert, could not turn his head, and had no mind, although he could speak; therefore he was consumed in the water. Next men were made of wood, and these multiplied, but they had neither heart nor intellect, and could not worship, and so they withered up and disappeared in the waters. A third attempt followed.

Man was made of a tree called Tzite, and woman of the pith of a reed; but these failed to think, speak or worship, and were destroyed, all save a remnant, which still exists as a race of small monkeys found in forests. A fourth attempt to create the human race was successful, but the circumstances attending this creation are veiled in mystery. It took place before the beginning of dawn, when neither sun nor moon had risen, and it was a wonder-work of the Heart of Heaven. Four men were created, and they could reason, speak and see in such a manner as to know all things at once. They worshiped the Creator with thanks for existence, but the gods, dismayed and scared, breathed clouds on their eyes to limit their vision, and cause them to be men and not gods. Afterwards, while the four men were asleep, the gods made for them beautiful wives, and from these came all the tribes and families of the earth." (pp. 194-5.)

In "The North Americans of Antiquity," second edition, Harper Brothers, New York, 1880, by John T. Short, the author states, in a note on page 212, as follows: The *copy* is stated ambiguously to have been made to replace the original 'Popol Vuh'—national book—which was lost. How a book that had been lost could be copied literally, the Father (meaning Ximinez) fails to tell us."

Speaking of the Quiches, the same author, referring to Brasseur de Bourbourg's *His. Nat. Civ.*, vol. i, pp. 105-6, and to Bancroft's *Native Races* vol. v. p. 21, both quoting from the Quiche MS., says (p. 212): "With loving and obedient hearts they addressed their prayers to Heaven for the gift of offspring. 'Hail, Creator and Maker! regard us, attend us. Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth, do not forsake us, do not leave us. God of Heaven and Earth, Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth, consider our prosperity always. Accord us repose, peace and prosperity, justice, life and our being. Grant to us, Hurakan, enlightened and fruitful, Thou who comprehendest all things great and small.'" The author, referring (p. 213), for a fuller account of the "strange, wild poetry of the Quiches," to Mr. Bancroft's (vol. iii),

says: "In the order of the Quiche creation, the heavens were first formed and their boundaries fixed by the Creator and Former, by whom all move and breathe, by whom all nations enjoy their wisdom and civilization. At first there was no man, or animal, or bird, or fish, or green herb—nothing but the firmament existed, the face of the earth was not yet to be seen, only a peaceful sea and the whole expanse of heaven. Silence pervaded all; not even the sea murmured; there was nothing but immobility and silence in the darkness—in the night. The Creator, the Former, the Dominator—the feathered Serpent*—those that engender, those that give being, moved upon the water as a glowing light. Their name is Gucumatz the Heart of Heaven, God."

"The persons of the Godhead (see p. 214) having counseled regarding the creation of more perfect man, on the fourth attempt succeeded so that 'Verily, at last, did the gods look upon beings who could see with their eyes and handle with their hands and understand with their hearts; grand of countenance and broad of limb, the four lives of our race stood up under the white rays of the morning star—sole light as yet of the primeval world—stood up and looked. Their great clear eyes swept rapidly over all; they saw the woods and rocks, the lakes and the sea, the mountains and the valleys, and the heavens that were above all; and they comprehended all and admired exceedingly. Then they returned thanks to those who had made the world, and all therein was: we offer up our thanks, twice—yea, verily, thrice; we have received life, we speak, we walk, we taste, we taste and understand, we know both that which is near and that which is far off, we see all things, great and small, in all the heaven and earth.

*The name Quezalcoatl (Nahua), Gucumatz (Quiche), and Cukulcan (Maya), mean, as translated, "feathered" or "plumed" or "winged" Serpent, which indicated not only power, but was "considered an emblem of the vernal showers." "The feathery vapor-clouds of summer are but the plumes or wings of the shower which the serpent symbolizes."—Short's *Antiquities*, pp. 272-3.

