

Ancient Texts Support the Book of Mormon

BY Elder Ted E. Brewerton



Elder Ted E. Brewerton was born in Raymond, Alberta, Canada. He graduated in 1949 from the University of Alberta in pharmacology. During World War II, he served in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He served a 33-month LDS mission in Uruguay from 1949 to 1952. He held several Church positions in Canada including bishop and stake president. He was a mission president of the Costa Rica San Jose Mission from 1965 to 1968. He was sustained as a member of the 1st Quorum of Seventy on September 30, 1978. He has served as a Regional Representative in Oregon, Alaska, and Western Canada, as well as Executive Administrator for Brazil and the Mexico North Area. He has been in the area presidencies of the Mexico/Central America, South America South and North America West areas. He was the president of the Mexico City Temple from November 1997 to November 1999. He chaired a committee which created an LDS Church edition of the Spanish Bible. He is married to Dorothy Hall Brewerton of Canada. They have four daughters and two sons.

We are all acquainted with the scripture wherein the Savior said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches. Ye can do nothing without me." We should have that feeling within us all of the time, not just on certain occasions, but every minute of our lives. I believe it would not be improper for one to seek for Mesoamerica in the

Book of Mormon. Now, professional archaeologists with training and experience seek for the Book of Mormon in Mesoamerica, but they are looking for such things – candidates for cities, rivers, mountains – but when you look for Mesoamerica in the Book of Mormon, you are really looking for something more abstract yet real. You are looking for what teachings did they have? What were their beliefs that were dominant? So that is what I would like to portray today, is that in looking for Mesoamerica in the Book of Mormon, because there are more examples than we could ever count. There are three major, and a few minor, books written by indigenous people, mostly in the mid-1550s. In addition to those three major histories written by the indigenous people, there are at least 16 chroniclers who arrived just after the year 1519, which is the time of the conquest by Hernán Cortés. They carefully wrote from indigenous sources what the ancient Americans did and believed before their arrival. The majority of these men were Catholic friars such as Sahagún, Torquemada, Landa, Durán – there are quite a few. There are 18 in all. I have been able to acquire two of the three indigenous texts recorded in their dialect and parts of the third. And fortunately, I acquired all three of them in Spanish and English. Also, I have most of the Spanish texts written in the 1500s by these Catholic priests. It has been a long search, but over a period of about 25 or 30 years, especially in the Porrúa Bookstore in Mexico City, who reprint those ancient texts. They reprint them, and most of these texts were written in the 16th Century Spanish. You can read them. They are a little strange. They write their letters differently, a few expressions are different, but they are very readable. Here are a lot of quotations that I have taken from these books and translated them. I am going to discuss about a dozen. I've got about 40 or 50, and I have just roughly counted that there are hundreds of such quotations that we could extract from these old books. Torquemada wrote three large volumes in the old 16th Century Spanish. Most of those men came not with the intent to find out about the ancient history prior to their arrival. They had written to the king for permission to evangelize the people into Catholicism. Bishop Diego de Landa, who has been spoken of a few times in a derogatory sense – I have his book. He is the one who did all the burnings and the destructions of all the records of the people, but he did do a lot of good things, as well. The question that arises is, was there one major theme that dominated the independent writings of all these men, and, of course, these indigenous people as well? Yes, and that is the arrival out of the air of a god with white skin and a beard, knowing

that these people neither had white skin nor beards. This god had different meaningful names according to how the history was recorded and the dialects spoken in the area. For example, the Aztecs called this white, bearded god Quetzalcoatl, and you have heard several who have mentioned his name here. In Maya, this white bearded god is called Kukulcán. He is called Itzamnah, Igreórgan Amalivacá. There are a lot of names that they give him in different areas, but they all symbolize one important thing. The symbol used for this white bearded god is Quetzalcoatl, or the feathered serpent. Men of nobility and high stature always wanted to be associated with the quetzal bird, as well as the serpent. You see this man right here?



Here is his face, and here is the jaw of a serpent. He has feathers here on his shoulders. Those are quetzal feathers. Here is the quetzal bird with its long

flowing tail. Here is the serpent, starting up here at the tail, and coming down and around here, and there is the head of the serpent. If you could see it more clearly, there is a quetzal bird right on the top of the serpent's head. Men of nobility and high stature always wanted to be associated with it because, to them, Quetzalcoatl was simply God. The **quetzal bird** is a beautiful plumed bird that was the king of the air.



The Resplendent Quetzal

One symbol that this bearded god had to have was that he came out of the heavens. He had to have feathers to be in the air. It is all symbolic. **Coatl** means “serpent”, which is a god of healing.

LA SERPIENTE ENPLUMADA, SÍMBOLO del
DIOS BLANCO – QUETZALCOATL.



Now, don't associate this with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. I am not going to read all these scriptures, but I will read this one in Numbers; I will read the one in Helaman, and I might touch John. If you read these for yourself, you will get the fuller picture of what's involved here. Serpent Symbolism is ancient and stood as a symbol of God. Numbers 21:6-9 2 Nephi 25:20 John 3:14 1 Nephi 17:41 Alma

33:18-20 Helaman 8:14-15 Numbers 21: “And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” In John, we read, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”



In Helaman, it says, “Yea, did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And as many as should look upon that serpent

should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, regarding the brazen serpent, “To typify Christ and point attention to the salvation (exaltation) which would come because he would be lifted up on the cross” (emphasis added). So this is an expression showing us that we must have faith in him and his healing powers. John Tvedtnes of BYU said, “In recent years, it has become more and more clear that elements of the Book of Mormon account for an ancient precedence. Some of these elements were tested in ancient texts that were unknown in Joseph Smith’s day and could therefore not have been known to him. The Book of Mormon includes many of these elements of these ancient texts. These ancient texts help us to appreciate the antiquity and the historicity of the Book of Mormon.” When we are studying the Book of Mormon, sometimes we should look at it from a little different viewpoint. For example, we should study it as a sacred text in the context of ancient texts. Totoncapán, written in 1554, recorded by native people in the indigenous time of the Quiché Maya in 1554 explains their own history. They didn’t just go by memory. They had written a papyrus. They had writings on stones. They had numerous other things that they took their history from to make it accurate. It then went before all of the chiefs of the tribe for approval. In 1834, the chiefs of the tribes said, now we must translate it into Spanish, and they carefully selected the method of doing so, and they had to check and doublecheck after that. The 1834 Spanish translation of the first [sixteen] pages is omitted because they are on the creation of the world, of Adam, the Earthly Paradise in which Eve was deceived not by a serpent but by Lucifer himself, as an Angel of Light. It deals with the posterity of Adam, following in every respect the same order as Genesis and the sacred books as far as the captivity of Babylonia. The manuscript assumes that the three great Quiché nations with which it particularly deals are descendants of the Ten Tribes of the Kingdom of Israel, who Shalmaneser reduced to perpetual captivity and who, finding themselves in the border of Assyria, resolved to emigrate. Here are three quotes from the book. First of all, from page 12, we read: Our people came from the other side of the ocean, where the sun rises, a place called Pa Tulán, Pa Civán. On page 14, we read: These, then were the three natives of Quichés, and they came from where the sun rises, descendants of Israel, of the same language and the same customs. . . . Our ancestors were the sons of Abraham and Jacob. On page 64, we read: Now on the twenty-eighth of

September of 1554 we sign this attestation of which we have written that which by tradition, our ancestors told us who came from the other side of the sea from Civán-Tulán, bordering on Babylonia. There were sixteen pages omitted that said they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And we discover very clearly that even though that book was published in 1554, one year earlier, in 1553, a Dominican priest named Domingo de Vigo had written all these 16 pages plus others. And so, the critics said, "These indigenous people copied his work that talks about them coming from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so it wasn't the indigenous belief." It was the copying of this, and the reason they said that they copied it was to facilitate the acquiring of deeds to their property. Domingo Vigo, as well as others, like Torquemada in 1557, Diego de Landa 1524, Bartolomé de las Casas 1474. All of them – Durán – those people say that they knew about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before we ever came here. For a little confirmation on that, we have the book written in 1554, and they state that they had copied the writings of a Catholic priest one year earlier in 1553 that they were from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Book of Mormon mentions Abraham 27 times; it mentions Abraham and Isaac 13 times. It mentions all three names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob 13 times, and it mentions Israel 188 times. The Book of Mormon is replete with statements to their origin from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, further to that, to go back to before this Catholic priest wrote this in 1553, in the Church archives, this will tell you how old it is. It goes back to 1524. There is a letter in the archives that is barely legible in old Spanish, and it is difficult to translate, but as best that the translation comes out – now keep in mind when it was. 1553 is when the Dominican priest Diego de Vigo wrote, and this document in the Church archives is 1524. Hernán Cortés started his conquering in 1519 in Mexico. In Guatemala in 1524, about that same time period, this is a quote from the letter that we have in the archives of the Church. It begins with the original title inscription dated 1524 and states: "We, these principals, declare that we claim title to this land because our parents and grandparents came here, that they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and as they were called, we are of Israel. Our parents, grandparents stayed in Quinán. We came from Babylon." Our next quote is from an Aztec prince called Ixtlilxochitl, born 1568: "I affirm that Quetzalcoatl – Huímac was chief of the Toltecs, a just and holy man that preached 'the good' and worshipped the cross." Now, down toward the bottom, he says: For Ramírez, Betancourt, Boturini, Veytia, etc., Quetzalcoatl was

none other than Thomas the apostle; for Brinton he was a national hero, mythic civilizer, master of social groups, which at the same time he was identified with the supreme deity and with the creator of the world, he was white, bearded with abundant hair . . . his hair and beard nearly red with characteristics of the gods of the morning, and rays of light that come forth from his body. We see from historical sources that he goes back to the time of the creation We take our next man. This is a quote from Friar Jerónimo de Mendieta. Notice when he was born, from around 1525 to 1528. I have a lot of his quotes. He is equally important but not as well known as some of these other historians. He said, on page 92 of his text – and I try to do these translations the way that the Church says to do them. In other words, the Church has one full page of explanation of how you translate a document. It should be literal. There is more detail than that, but I try to do it this way. The god or idol of Cholula (called Quetzalcoatl) was the most celebrated and considered to be the best and most worthy above all other gods. . . . He was white, well built, broad forehead, large eyes, long black hair, full round beard: he was canonized as the supreme god, for whom they felt great love, reverence and devotion, they offered him sacrifices for three reasons. He was chaste, totally honest and moderate. . . . he was revered . . . and called lord of excellence . . . when they said lord, one took this to be Quetzalcoatl and none other” [emphasis added]. Some say in the literature that they had a multitude of gods – the god of rain, of fire, lots of them – but if you read the literature carefully in these old books, you will find that they say they have only one principle god. The others are nothing compared to this one god who had the white skin who came to visit us. Now, our next friar was Diego Durán. He was born 1537. This man was a Jew, and he loved the Lord and became converted to Catholicism. He became a priest and then a Catholic friar. When he came across the ocean to come here and ascertain and record the ancient legends of the people, he said, “I’m stunned! I find that they know so much about Christianity but we the Christians have just arrived! They teach us a lot about things like the Creation, the Tower of Babel, the confusion of the tongues . . .” and he lists all the things off. He says, “My church teaches not to talk about this, but,” he says, “I’ve got to. There had to be a special man come to this land. I dare affirm it may have been one of the holy apostles.” So one of his quotes is this: “That venerable man whom we call Topiltzin, Huímac or father, was, according to indigenous traditions, a chaste and penitent priest who had periods of miracles . . . we can probably consider him

a holy man, an apostle that God sent to earth . . ." And to further quote him, on page 13 – he has two volumes – "the Indians knew about the creation of the world in Genesis 2 before these conquerors arrived. They knew about the tower in Babylonia. They knew all these things and others through their ancestors and their families before them. I believe these native people are of the chosen line of God, by whom God did mighty works . . ." There were so many good things that man wrote. He was just unafraid, and he expressed himself beautifully. You may have heard about this Juan Torquemada in 1557. I have all three of his volumes written in the old century Spanish. He said, "Their God Quetzalcohuatl which these people call the 'God of Air' had many good things attributed to him.

Quetzalcohuatl means FEATHERED SERPENT, or serpent who had plumage. This feathered serpent whose name was given to him by the Indians, was their god. This god was very celebrated or honored by those in the city of Chollula and according to their history he was the priest in the city of Tula . . . they say he was a white man, large of body, a beautiful wide forehead, large eyes, long black hair, a great round beard. These 'naturals' (indigenous Indians) say that he was the Great Artisan . . . they esteemed him highly. They revered him as the King. He governed as the Lord, called Huímac; on the spiritual and ecclesiastical side he was supreme. Many regarded him as God. His was a voice that exceeded all terms and human limits . . . Yes, in truth this voice was heard from a distance, it could not be a human voice". Now, a man, a friar, named Francisco López de Gomora, was born in 1511. On page 93, he says: Quetzalcoatl was a male virgin, penitent, honest, temperate or self-restrained, religious and holy, he preached the natural law and supported it with his example. The Indians believed him to be god; he disappeared at the edge of the sea, ignoring or concealing the truth of his death and considering it to be god of the wind. We had the honor of opening Venezuela to the world as a mission president long ago. We had Central America, and in the middle of our mission, President Romney of the First Presidency said, "Come join me. I will dedicate the country and turn it over to you." As we moved with him first, and then on later occasions, there was a young man who came up to us in the city of Maracaibo who said, "Elder, I am studying about your church and I am liking it." And he said, "I see that you have a love for our indigenous people, where we came from. So I would like to give you this book written by a local Venezuelan archaeologist, who went to the southern part of Venezuela and wrote down the history according to those people." So Arturo Tello is the man who

wrote the book. He quotes the indigenous legends of the lower Orinoco. That is the river in Southern Venezuela. This white god had a face, the color of the fluffy clouds of the morning, and white, long hair. He said, "I am Amalivacá and come in the name of my father, INA-UIKI." Amalivacá said, "This is the generation tree; this is the tree of the resurrection; this is the tree of good and evil." He continues by saying, Perhaps Amalivacá was not a god, but a man with divine wisdom, but his actions among the inhabitants of this earth were so exemplary, that he who would imitate it would scale to the peaks of eternity. This is the legend of Tamanacos! Dorothy and I lived in Mexico on more than one occasion. There is a very prestigious magazine called Maya Mundo, and in 1999, there was this little quote about the feathered serpent. Finally there is Kukulcán, the feathered serpent; a dual god representing both the Earth and wishing to ascend to the skies: and the skies themselves descending to Earth. Chaos becomes order through Kukulcán, as he represents the merging of opposites. Another quote. A man by the name of Martín de Angleria, born 1459. The Spaniards saw in the Yucatán (and this would have been in the early 1500s) that they had crosses, and upon questioning them as their origin, several answered by saying – when a certain man, a great hero, passed by this area, he left as a remembrance this sign. Others said, "On it, there died the man more resplendent or radiant than the sun". Sahagún, born 1499, is probably the best known and most quoted. Some of these quotes differ a little from what we believe from 3 Nephi. With all these quotes that we are seeing, we are just seeing Mesoamerica in 3 Nephi. Quetzalcoatl was esteemed and considered to be god, he was worshipped in older times in TOLLAN, and he had a tall temple with many narrow steps, which were too small for a man's foot: the straw was covered with blankets, his face was ugly, his face, long and bearded The next quote is again by a friar, Bartolomé de las Casas, born in 1474. He has a lot of quotes, and I am going to read just this one page only (pp. 55 - 56). I, Bartolomé de las Casas, went to an area (Campeche, Mexico) and found there a Catholic cleric, Francisco Hernández, who was a good man of mature age and honorable; he knew the language of the Indians because he had lived there many years. He walked continuously with the Indians. This cleric told me the following as to what he had discovered that the Indians believed before the coming of the Spaniards. They knew and believed in a God that was in heaven. God was called the father; there was also a son and a Holy Spirit. The father's name was Izona; he created all men and all things. The

son's name was Bacab. He was born of a maiden always a virgin named Chibirias. The Holy Spirit's name was Echuac. Izona meant the great father. The son was whipped, they placed a crown of thorns on his head, they stretched his arms on a stick, etc., where he finally died; he was dead three days, and on the third he returned to live and descended into heaven, and he lived there with his father. After this, Echuac (the Holy Spirit) came. Arguably, the most well-known archaeologists out of Mexico in this century would be a man named Roman Pinachón. He did considerable exploration all of his life in the professional style, but he was overtaken, during all of his studies over the years, by the fact that something was overshadowing, something was more important than anything else to the people. He said that he noticed what it was. Then, I quote from his text, page 126. "It was necessary to develop an official ideology in order to achieve social cohesion." Let me read that again. This is the famous archaeologist of Mexico. "It was necessary to develop an official ideology in order to achieve social cohesion." That ideology was religion, which assured them of economic, political, and psychological dominion. Not too long ago, there was an archaeologist with a French name, Laurette Sejourné. She wrote a book in 1957. She was highly recognized. She is a nationally recognized archaeologist in the National Institute of Anthropology and History in Mexico and has made many, many important archaeological discoveries. She wrote and said, "I have to write the book . . . something seems to me to be more important than all this archaeological work that I have done. Something precedes it that is far more overwhelming than anything I have ever done." This text is not an account of her discoveries, but an interpretation of the religion that inspired her work. It presents a total picture of a passionate and profound belief. It convinced everyone of the Náhuatl philosophy, which is clear and rich, concerning the Mexican gods of old times. Sejourné wrote the text in 1957. It was so popular that they had 11 reprints of it. It last reprinted in the year 1994. It so happened in 1994 that when Dorothy and I were serving a mission in Mexico, that an archaeologist from Mexico came up to me. He said, "I understand that you have a sincere, great interest in my ancestry." He said, "This is a book that I treasure highly as an archaeologist." And it was this book of Laurette Sejourné. So he said, "I want to give you my own copy." It was a soft-cover back in Spanish. He said, "I just think so much of it, I would like you to have it because of your love for our people." It is thoughts on religion in ancient Mexico. Her dominant thought,

permeating every chapter, is the transcendence and greatness of the god with white skin and a beard that visited the indigenous people long before the arrival of the Spanish conquerors in 1519. Her work mainly was done at Teotihuacán. Those are the two large pyramids and the pyramid of Quetzalcoatl just about 30 miles outside of Mexico City. Diane Wirth from her book on page 32 notes, The role of Quetzalcoatl in the founding of the Náhuatl culture was never doubted by any of the historians of the 16th and 17th centuries. Just as our era started with Christ, that of the Aztecs opened at the same time with Quetzalcoatl. His image is the FEATHERED SERPENT, and it (he) caused or evoked the same sensation, as did the crucifixion for the Christians. In the city of TENOCHTITLÁN, he was the object of profound veneration or worship. Besides that, he was considered to be the creator of man, and his works. The celebrity of QUETZALCOATL surpassed or exceeded all the images of the ancient capital (Tenochtitlán; Mexico City). In fact, he constituted the CENTRAL PERSONAGE in all Ancient Texts. No other name, even the most powerful emperors, can even remotely compare himself to Quetzalcoatl. As indicated by an eminent Americanist, Quetzalcoatl is “the greatest figure in the ancient history of the new world, with a code of ethics and love for all sciences and arts. On page 79 of her text – I think without even exaggerating, I could get 150 to 200 quotes like this throughout her book. It is a book of 300-400 pages, all about this white bearded god. Page 79 reads: “. . . in many centers, the representations of death and of destructive deities were replaced by symbols of the resurrection, which ought not surprise anyone, as the transcendence of QUETZALCOATL originates or comes from his role of the REDEEMER. This role is confirmed in all documents” Look at the Book of Mormon in there. I think I like this next quotation as well as any she has quoted. She quotes from a text called the Annals of Cuauhtitlan, and I can’t get a hold of the book. I go to the Porrúa Bookstore in Mexico City, where they have reprints of all these old texts, and they haven’t had it and don’t have it. But she quotes from the book as follows: . . . they say that when Quetzalcoatl died he was not seen for four days, because then he went to dwell among the dead; and that also in four days he was furnished with arrows; so that in eight days there appeared the great star called Quetzalcoatl. Now, she explains what the Annals of Cuauhtitlan meant. Now, look at the pure Mormon doctrine that she quotes, and she doesn’t know anything about the Church. Quetzalcoatl emerges with arrows that allow him, transformed now into the Lord of the dawn (because he was resurrected) to

shoot his thunderbolts. They will reveal to humankind the salvation that each individual can try to achieve for himself. Pure doctrine found down in Mesoamerica. Of course, it is found all through 3 Nephi. At the bottom of the quote, I read: There appeared a great star called Quetzalcoatl. The period during which Venus, vanishing out of the western sky and remaining invisible until it appears again in the east. There are several scriptures in Mosiah and Helaman regarding Venus and the morning star. I will just read you this one. I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. (Revelation 22:16.) In all these old books I have you would see that Venus is Quetzalcoatl. The Savior says, he is Venus, and so you recognize what it means. You have all seen the Nauvoo Temple, or you have seen pictures of it. You notice that there are 30 pilasters, 30 feet high. The bottom is the moon stone, about two tons. The top is the sunstone, about two tons. What is directly above that sunstone? **Venus**, and it's got an **elongated ray at the bottom** pointing down to the sunstone. Is Venus a planet or a star? It is a planet, so it lives on borrowed light. When it comes up and shows itself in the morning, and at night, the sun, which is a celestial figure, representing the Master, because all things testify of him, is lighting that star of the morning. So he said, "I am the morning star." It is his celestial light that lights Venus. My wife's great-great-grandmother Hanna Tadfield King, was one of the 70,000 or so Saints to cross the ocean and across the plains. About 6,000 of them died. She arrived after the prophet was killed, but she knew the prophet's mother well. She knew Brigham Young very well, so much so that she was sealed to him; and she knew very well the president of the church, John Taylor. John Taylor, in the year 1882, sent her a text that he had just finished, the text is called The Mediation and Atonement. On pp. 201-202 of that book, two full pages, wherein the president of the Church talks about Quetzalcoatl. The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcoatl, closely resembles that of the Savior, so closely, indeed, that we can come to no other conclusion than that Quetzalcoatl and Christ are the same being.

