

P R E F A C E .

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What a wonderful book is the Bible! But what connection has the Bible with American Antiquities? Because of all Antiquities, it is the most valuable and marvellous specimen; because with all antiquities it is associated in the most important and interesting relations; because the most valuable discoveries in antiquity must appeal to the Bible for interpretation; and the registers of long lost events and generations, inscribed upon the rocks and buried in the fossil remains of far distant ages, or scattered far and wide in the ruins of once mighty empires, are so many witnesses, constantly multiplying, to the history contained in the Bible.

As a SPECIMEN of antiquity, what is comparable in point of interest with this Book? Suppose that in searching the *tumuli* that are scattered so widely over this country, the silent, aged, mysterious remembrancers of some populous race, once carrying on all the business of life where now are only the wild forests of many centuries, a race of whom we ask so often, who they were, whence they came, whither they went; suppose that under one of those huge structures of earth which remain of their works, a book were discovered, an *alphabetic* history of that race for a thousand years, containing their written language, and examples of their poetry and other literature, and all undeniably composed many hundreds of years before any of the nations now possessing this continent were here! What a wonder would this be! What intense interest would attach to such a relic! What price would not the learned be willing to give for it! What fragments of Egyptian inscriptions; what unintelligible characters among the ruins of Belus; what remains from the bowels of the earth, telling of some ancient convulsion of its rocks, could be compared in value to such a specimen of the mind, the language, the literature, such a detailed history of the deeds of a nation otherwise unheard of? But much more than this is the Bible. It contains histories, specimens of literature, examples of poetry and eloquence, unquestionably written, some eight hundred years before the writing of the oldest book of any description which the literature of the world has preserved. Greece was a land of barbarians for many centuries after Moses composed his history of the world and of Israel. There is no evidence that alphabetic writing was known when he wrote, except among the nation over which he ruled.

But then, what should we know of the history of the world, and its nations, for three thousand years, if all that has been derived exclusively from the Bible, were obliterated from all memories and all books? Where should we go for knowledge of that