

Elder Mark E. Petersen

Of the Council of the Twelve

● In recent months the plight of the American Indians has been brought to public attention in a most impressive manner.

As a result, further steps will be taken to improve the lot of these people, who are among the most neglected of all the minorities on this continent.

Extensive aid for Indians

We are thankful that the Latter-day Saints have taken an active part over the years in providing extensive aid to them. Particularly have we given assistance in the educational field. This year daily seminary classes are being provided for more than 15,000 Indian students, and through the efforts of the Church an additional 5,000 are receiving full-time elementary and high school education at no cost to themselves.

We also provide a college program for many of our Indians, of whom 475 are enrolled this year at Brigham Young University; 426 took college work there last year.

Brigham Young University has conferred B.A. degrees upon 85 Indian students recently, and 20 have received masters or doctors degrees. More than a score are now enrolled in graduate school there.

Brigham Young University also has an Institute of American Indian Research and Services, and through it supervises more than thirty agricultural projects for Indians in the Western America.

Ecclesiastical training is likewise being provided for more than 35,000 Indians who are members of our church.

Pride in ancestral heritage

They are bright and adaptable and are proud of their ancestral heritage, for they know they are descended from a great people.

Recently we attended a gathering of Mexican residents of Salt Lake City

and heard them express great pride in their Indian ancestry, and well they may, for the more we learn about the early inhabitants of Mexico, the more we realize that indeed they were truly a great race.

This conclusion was reached also by Dr. Alfred V. Kidder, one of the leading authorities on Mayan culture. In his book *A Guide to Quirigua*, this eminent scholar said:

"The great cities of the old Mayan Empire were built during the first part of the Christian era. For nearly 600 years these gifted people were leaders in art and architecture, mathematics and astronomy. They evolved a calendar in some ways more accurate than ours. . . . The growth of the Indian civilizations, although differing in detail, was strikingly like that of our own, which originated in Egypt and Mesopotamia. . . . Social and economic systems were organized, cities grew, religion developed, and temples were built for worship."

Civilization of ancient America

Writing in a similar vein, in his book *The Marvels of Copan*, the historian Munoz wrote: "Architecture, astronomy, mathematics, painting, weaving and all the arts that embellish life, once flourished here."

He emphasized that the forefathers of the Indians were not savages in any sense, for no savage, he said, ever conceived of the wonders which were commonly known among the Mayans.

Dr. Wissler, on page 147 of his book on Mayan civilization, explains that the Mayans manufactured paper through a process similar to that of the Egyptians in making writing materials from papyrus.

The American Heritage Book of Indians, on page 19, says:

"The Mayans attained the highest civilization known in ancient America and one of the highest known any place in the early world."

These people had a well-developed irrigation system. They built dams and aqueducts. They terraced hillsides, turning them into productive farm lands by the use of irrigation. These water systems were in general use 2,000 years before the Spaniards came, and some of them still exist.

The early Americans were a numerous people. About the time of the conquest there were 25 million in Central Mexico alone.

Visitation of divine personage

But more impressive than any of these facts about the early Americans is their account of a visitation among their ancestors nearly 2,000 years ago, of a divine personage who remained among them for many days, teaching and blessing them.

These highly intelligent and skillful early Americans affirmed that this personage taught them a divine religion, healed their sick, raised some of the dead, taught new and more productive agricultural methods, and established a government of equity and peace.

Their accounts say that he came among them suddenly and left equally so, in a supernatural manner. The ancients regarded him as the Creator, come to earth in bodily form.

That he was a Christian divinity none can successfully deny.

That his teachings were akin to the Bible is now readily admitted.

And that he promised to return in a second coming is also an acknowledged fact.

Account of appearance preserved

The account of his appearance was preserved through generations of Indians from Chile to Alaska, and interestingly enough, it is likewise well known among the Polynesians from Hawaii to New Zealand, giving one more evidence of the close relationship between the Polynesians and the early inhabitants of the Americas.

In the main all such accounts agree. They differ in name and minor details from island to island and from country to country, but the overall conclusion is the same—there was a visitation by a

heavenly being among those people nearly 2,000 years ago.

Of such veracity is the information now available concerning him that Paul Herrmann was induced to say in his book *The Conquest of Man*:

"Carefully considered this leaves no conclusion open than that the Light God Quetzalcoatl was a real person, that he was neither the invention of Spanish propaganda nor a legendary figment of Indian imagination." (Page 72.)

Keep in mind that this comes from the highly intelligent early Americans who knew astronomy, mathematics, irrigation, and architecture. It was not the dream of an ignorant or superstitious people. It was history from one of the highest civilizations known among ancient men.

Names of great being

This great being was known as Quetzalcoatl in parts of Mexico, primarily in the Cholula area. He was Votan in Chiapas and Wixpechocha in Oaxaca; Gucumatz in Guatemala; Virachocha and Hyustus in Peru; Sume in Brazil, and Bochica in Colombia.

To the Peruvians he was also known as Con-tici or Illa-tici, *tici* meaning both creator and light. To the Mayans he was principally known as Kukulcan.

In the Polynesian islands he was known as Lono, Kana, Kane, or Kon, and sometimes as Kanaloa, meaning the great light or great brightness. He was also known among some Polynesians as Kane-Akea, the great progenitor, or as Tonga-roa, the god of the ocean sun.

Description of personage

What did he look like, this divine personage?

He was described by the ancients as a tall white man, bearded, and having blue eyes. He wore loose, flowing robes. He seemed to be a person of great authority and unmeasured kindness. He had power to make hills into plains and plains into high mountains. He could bring fountains of water from the solid rock.

One of the remarkable things about his coming was that he appeared after several days of dense darkness during which the people had prayed constantly for a return of the sun. While the darkness yet prevailed—and I refer to the book *The Incas*, by Pedro de Leon—the people suffered great hardships and offered earnest prayers to God, seeking a return of the light that had failed.

When at last the sun did shine, this divinity appeared. Says Pedro de Leon: He was a "white man of large stature whose air and Person aroused great respect and veneration. . . . And when they saw his power they called him the Maker of all things; their Beginner; the Father of the sun." (*The Incas*.)

Promise of return

This personage, as he taught his religion, urged the people to build temples for worship, and his followers became very devout. (Pierre Honore, *In Quest of the White God*.) As he left them, he promised to come again, which caused the natives for many generations to look for his return even as the Jews look for their promised Messiah.

This faith led to disaster on two occasions, however, when the Spaniards came to America and when Captain Cook sailed to the Hawaiian Islands. But these tragedies served only to reinforce the truth of the tradition.

When Cortez came to Mexico and the coastal natives saw him, they observed that he was a large white man. They hurried to their king, Montezuma, and announced that the Great White God had finally returned.

This had a striking effect upon Montezuma. He remembered that when he was crowned as emperor, the priests of the native religion reminded him: "This is not your throne; it is only lent to you and will one day be returned to the Great One to whom it is due." (Honore, p. 66.)

The Spanish author Duran, in his book *The Aztecs*, says that when Montezuma sent his faithful servant to greet Cortez and lead him to the palace,

the servant addressed Cortez as "O Lord and True God," and added, "welcome to this your country and kingdom." Duran further says that the Indians considered Cortez' companions as divine beings also.

This Spanish author then continues: "There is no doubt that Montezuma was greatly preoccupied with the return of Quetzalcoatl who had left the Vera Cruz coast and had promised to return.

"Montezuma and the other dignitaries of his kingdom were totally convinced that Cortez and Quetzalcoatl were one and the same, as can be seen in the chronicles. . . .

"As late as 1864 when the blond bearded Emperor Maximilian arrived in Vera Cruz, reminiscences lingered in the minds of the Indians which reminded them of the promise of the return of Quetzalcoatl."

Montezuma accepted Cortez as though he were Deity, but the treachery of the Spaniards and his men soon changed that, and warfare resulted. Poor, trusting Montezuma lost both his throne and his life, but the tradition remained.

A similar situation occurred when Captain James Cook, the British explorer, came to Hawaii. Peculiarly enough, he landed there when the natives were celebrating their Makahiki Festival, which kept alive the tradition of the White God among the Polynesians. Cook also was received as Deity and taken to the sacred temple of Lono. But his men were far less than angelic, and their depredations brought down the wrath of the natives upon the entire landing party. In the battle which ensued, Cook lost his life.

The Great White God

But in reality, who was the Great White God? It was not Captain Cook, and certainly it was not Cortez. Who was he?

When Jesus Christ ministered in Palestine, he told the people there, as is recorded in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John, that he had other sheep, not of the fold of Palestine, but

elsewhere. “. . . them also I must bring,” he said, “and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” (John 10:16.)

Jesus of Nazareth was this White God! After his resurrection in the Holy Land he did in reality visit the early Americans. How do we know?

Record of events

In the western hemisphere, as in ancient Palestine, prophets ministered among the people, giving them inspired direction. As did the prophets in the Holy Land, they also compiled records of all important events.

They had predicted the coming of Christ among them, and the people fully expected him.

After the three days of darkness which had afflicted them, the people were gathered about their temple when they heard a voice from heaven which said:

“Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”

This caused them to look into the skies, and there they saw, descending to the earth, a glorious Personage who came and stood before them. And as the ancient volume records it:

“. . . he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another. . . .

“And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

“And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world. . . .”

Then the Savior said to them:

“Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God

of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

“And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

“Hosannah! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.” (3 Ne. 11:7-11, 14-17.)

He taught them his true religion, healed their sick, blessed their children, and organized his church on the western hemisphere as he had done in Palestine.

This is what gave rise to the tradition of the Indians and Polynesians. And it has lived until now, being transmitted from generation to generation.

But how may we be sure that it was the Christ?

The Book of Mormon

As we mention, the many prophets who lived in ancient America wrote their histories and revelations as did the prophets in Palestine. They made many volumes. Finally these records were abridged and compiled into one by a prophet named Mormon, who lived about 400 years after Christ, here in America.

Because he was the compiler, the book was called after him—the Book of Mormon. It was brought forth in a miraculous manner in our day and identifies the Christ as the White God of ancient times. That book is a volume of scripture as is the Bible. In the twenty-ninth chapter of his writings, Isaiah predicted that in the latter days this new volume of scripture would appear, and he describes its coming forth in the manner in which the

Book of Mormon actually was given to the world. This is not mere coincidence. It is a modern fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

Fulfillment of prophecy

Isaiah said it would be a sealed book, and it was.

He said the words of the book would be delivered to a learned man who would reject the record, and this was true. Peculiarly enough, and this most certainly helps to identify the book, he said it would pass through the hands of an unlearned man as it came to world attention, and this is exactly what happened.

By way of pointing to the time of its publication, he said the book would appear in the latter days as Palestine became a fruitful field, and this was so.

He predicted that even the deaf would hear the words of the book, and that through it the blind would see out of darkness and the meek among men would increase their joy in the Lord. All of this came to pass.

And while this was taking place he

said the Almighty would perform a marvelous work and a wonder during a period of unbelief in the world, and this too has been accomplished.

The Book of Mormon is the volume to which Isaiah refers. It is scripture, the holy writ of ancient America, published now for the enlightenment of modern men.

It is a new witness to the divinity of Christ and bears testimony that he is truly and in fact the Son of God, the Savior of the Christians, the Messiah of the Jews, the White God of ancient America, and the Redeemer of all mankind. And this too is our own testimony, and we bear it to you in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Harold B. Lee

Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Elder Bernard P. Brockbank, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us.

Elder Bernard P. Brockbank

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● My dear brethren and sisters: As I have reflected on many of the profound messages given at this conference, a passage of scripture kept reflecting in my mind. The Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith, ". . . the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion; And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon . . . the world." (D&C 1:35-36.) We may be in that time. It's a great day to be a saint, with the Lord at the head. There seems to be room on this earth for both saints and for those who choose another course.

When the Savior closed his ministry

on this earth, he left a message in closing that it would be unto the ends of the earth: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15.)

We have just returned from Japan, a marvelous experience there, helping supervise and direct the work of the Mormon Pavilion at the World's Fair. We have a great body of Japanese people here at this conference. They are an interesting people. They are a great people. Many of them are going to have patriarchal blessings while they are here. Those who have had patriarchal blessings that I have spoken with come from the tribe of Joseph, a fruitful bough.