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Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Part X: Viracocha—The "White Bearded God" or Jesus Christ

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Abstract: This series is a comprehensive compilation of archaeological artifacts in Mesoamerica that relate to Book of Mormon places and peoples. It is copiously illustrated with photographs of buildings, pottery, statues, and carvings. The series includes evidences of Christ's appearance to the Americas and reviews ancient Mayan writings, including *Title of the Lords of Totonicapan*, the *Popol Vuh*, the *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, and the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*. The author also discusses white and dark people in ancient America. The tenth part discusses Viracocha and Jesus Christ.



Early Chimu pottery jar of a bearded man, from the Chicama Valley, northern Peru, which would date perhaps in the early Christian centuries. Peruvian tradition speaks of a white race of bearded men who came to Peru to institute culture long before Inca time; and these white people were visited by Viracocha. (Photo: Mus. f. Volkerkunde, Berlin. Courtesy of Rand McNally & Co. Reproduced from Thor Heyerdahl, "American Indians in the Pacific," 1952, Plate XXIV.)

Part X Viracocha—The "White Bearded God" or Jesus Christ

ARCHAEOLOGY and the BOOK OF MORMON

by President Milton R. Hunter
OF THE FIRST COUNCIL OF THE SEVENTY

chiefs of the Ayllus, the leading clans of the kingdom, and among the things he told them is the following:

Many years ago it was revealed to me by our father, the Sun, that after the rule of twelve of his children, an alien people would come which had never been seen

IN 1527, WHEN THE Spanish conquistadores sailed into one of the harbors on the west coast of South America, Pedro de Candia, a lieutenant in the freebooter armada of the mighty Pizarro, stepped from the boat, helmet and breastplate freshly hurnished and glistening, his gun over his shoulder, and a huge double-handed sword in his sword-belt. His gigantic stature, with mighty shoulders, and his complete attire, made of him an impressive figure. He was followed by others from the ship.

As Pedro walked forward, a crowd of dark-skinned natives dropped to their knees and groveled in the dust as though they were paying obeisance before a god come down from heaven. Pedro was puzzled, embarrassed, perplexed.

With head erect and shoulders straight, he walked between a lane of beardless, bowed figures whose foreheads were pressed to the dust on either side of his path. All around him rose the whisper—"Viracocha, Viracocha" (vē' rā kō' chā).

Pedro de Candia had no idea what the natives meant. He felt ill at ease, flustered, and even somewhat irritated. Impulsively and suddenly he

lifted his gun from his shoulder and fired a shot into the air.

The natives became terrified and bowed still lower to the earth, whispering "Illa Tiki, Illa Tiki!" This appellation meant "The god of lightning."¹

Pedro grew more confused. He had no idea that the beardless, brown-skinned natives actually took him for the "White Bearded God," Viracocha or Con (Kon) Tiki, who had been so thoroughly known and so highly revered by the Indians' Andean ancestors. Nor did he know that Huayne Capac the Great, the last Inca to reign prior to the Spanish invasion, had predicted that white, bearded men, similar in appearance to the ancient Peruvian settlers, would soon come and conquer the land. As Huayne Capac lay on his deathbed, the great Inca ruler called to him the

¹Paul Herrmann, *Conquest of Man* (New York, 1954), p. 182.

A stone statue of Viracocha the "White Bearded God" from Tiahuanaco, Bolivia, holding in his hand what appears to be a book or metal plates. This statue would be pre-Inca, dating early, and illustrating the Indian tradition of Viracocha teaching the people from a book. (Photo: Posnansky, 1914, Courtesy of Rand McNally & Co. Reproduced from Heyerdahl, *ibid.*, Plate XLV, No. 2.)



THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

before in these regions and would conquer and subdue this kingdom and many others as well. I am inclined to suppose that this refers to the people recently sighted off our shores. They are said to be a powerful race, superior to us in everything. Now we know that with me the number of twelve Incas has been reached. Therefore, I predict to you that a few more years after I have gone to my ancestors, that strong people will appear and bring fulfillment of the prophecy of my father, the Sun; they will conquer our kingdom and rule over us. I command you to obey and serve them, for they are superior to us in everything, because their laws are better than ours, their weapons more powerful and invincible.

Peace be with you—I go now to my father, the Sun, who has called me. . . .²

²Cited in Herrmann, *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

This could all sound like myth if it were not for the fact that the Aztec Indians of the valley of Mexico, as well as the Maya Indians of Yucatán, cherished similar prophecies regarding their great empires.³ Those predictions were primarily responsible for the fact that the Inca, Aztec, and Maya rulers all capitulated after offering relatively little resistance; and their empires, composed of millions of inhabitants, came under the control of a mere handful of Spanish conquistadores.

Furthermore, the Spanish soldiers

³*Idem*, pp. 165-172; A Hyatt Verrill, *America's Ancient Civilizations* (New York, 1953), pp. 58-59.

and Catholic padres who first visited Mexico, Central America, and also South America, had been apprised by the Indians that back in the distant past the Americas were inhabited by “. . . a race described as *white and with beards*—. . .”⁴ At that time a “Fair God” had visited the ancient white peoples—ancestors of the American Indians—and had given them their religion and culture.

Also, when the Spaniards entered Peru in 1527, they were greeted by the Peruvian Indians, with the frightened awe, as “Viracocha!” A German scholar, Paul Herrmann, recently concluded:

[The foregoing facts,] . . . as Siegfried Huber has pointed out in his book *In the Kingdom of the Incas*, would be “utterly inexplicable in the absence of some pre-existent tradition, that is, unless white, bearded men had been known in olden times and their return in later ages expected.” It is therefore certain that the Viracocha myth is not an invention of either Indian or Spanish priests; . . .⁵

Faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ read statements made by great scholars, such as the foregoing one made by Paul Herrmann and Siegfried Huber, and with joy in their hearts meditate on the marvelous story so beautifully delineated in the Book of Mormon.

As explained in the ERA articles in January and February, 1956, the peoples of practically all the countries of Mexico and Central America had their traditions of a “Fair God” who had given them their culture.⁶ The same fact holds true with the countries of South America. This article will be confined to the Indian traditions of the Andean region of that country. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, one of the most reliable research scholars of the past century in the field of American Indian traditions, described this “White Bearded God” of South America as follows:

His hair was abundant, his beard fell to his waist, and he dressed in long and flowing robes. He went among the nations of the plateau, addressing each in its own dialect, taught them to live in villages and to observe just laws . . . and then he departed, . . . he rose up to heaven.⁷

(Continued on following page)

⁴Thor Heyerdahl, *American Indians in the Pacific* (Stockholm, Sweden, 1952), pp. 229-345; *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*, cited in Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* (Oakland, 1950), pp. 24-25; 2 Nephi 5:20-24.

⁵Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

⁶Milton R. Hunter, “Quetzalcoatl—the ‘White Bearded God’ or Jesus Christ,” *THE IMPROVEMENT ERA* (Salt Lake City, 1956), Jan. vol. 59, p. 26ff.; Feb. vol. 59, p. 82ff.

⁷Daniel G. Brinton, *American Hero-Myths* (Philadelphia, 1882), p. 220. Italics supplied by writer.



“Bearded men from Chimu area of Pacific, northern Peru. Numbers 1, 2, 3 were modeled during the Early Chimu period, in the first half millennium A.D. or earlier. No. 4 is from the subsequent Late Chimu period.” (Photos: 1 Ethnographical Mus.; 2 Lehmann, 1924; 3 Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.; 4 A. H. Verrill and Brooklyn Mus. N. Y. Courtesy of Rand McNally & Co. Reproduced from Heyerdahl, *ibid.*, Plate XXV. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4.)

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from preceding page)

Viracocha! More than four hundred years have passed since the Spanish conquests, and today the word Viracocha is the form of address meaning simply "lord" in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Also, in practice it is identical with "white man," for today white people are still considered to be the sons and people of Viracocha the Almighty.

Who then, and what, is Viracocha?

In brief, according to Peruvian traditions, he was the God who created the heavens and the earth, placed the human family on the earth, gave them their religion and culture, suddenly came to the ancient Peruvians and lived among them for some time, performed many miraculous deeds, and then disappeared just as suddenly as he had arrived.

Fortunately, the early Spanish conquistadores of the Andean countries and the Catholic padres carefully recorded many of the traditions of the Indians. Their accounts give us much information regarding the "White Bearded God," under the various names applied to him by different Indian tribes. This God constituted the central figure of the Indian traditions of the several Andean countries of South America.

According to the information recorded by the early Spanish chroniclers, the ancient Peruvians who predated the Incas made common use of the name of Con Tici, (Con Ticci or Kon Tiki), while the Incas preferred the name of Viracocha for their "Fair God." Dr. Philip Ainsworth Means, an outstanding scholar in the field of Andean traditions, described the "Fair God" of Peru as follows:

The Creator-god most celebrated in the Chronicles of Peru is known under various names. . . . He has generally been referred to as Viracocha or as Pacha-Camac, the former designation being used in the highlands, the latter on the coast. Both of them, however, are Quechua and, consequently, more or less late in date. It seems clear enough that pre-Incaic names for the Creator-god were Con, Con-Tici, Illa-Tici, and sundry approximations thereto, sometimes prefixed to the name Viracocha in later times. . . .⁸

Thor Heyerdahl, author of the famous *Kon Tiki*, adds the following information to that given by Means:

. . . With the prefix *Illa* meaning "light," and *Con*, being an alternative name for

the creator, we know that the early Peruvian culture-hero *Con-Tici* or *Illa-Tici* was venerated as Tici-the-Creator and Tici-the-Light.

Tici is a word of ancient origin, adopted in Quechua mythology from an earlier language, distinct from their own. It is preserved as a live word in Quechua dialects either as *tecsi* or *tisci*, meaning "origin." Thus Markham says, in referring to Blas Valera, the best-informed mestizo chronicler of the sixteenth century, whose major works are unfortunately lost: "The names given for God by Valera, as used by the ancient Peruvians, are also given by some others of the best authorities. They are *Illa Tici Uira Cocha*. The first word means light. *Tici* is the foundation of things, or beginning."⁹

In the words of Heyerdahl:

There is within the borders of the former Inca Empire no prehistoric site with monuments and other architecture of more impressive dimensions, and with evidence of a higher cultural level, than the ancient megalithic ruins of Tiahuanaco in the Bolivian highland plains south of Lake Titicaca.¹⁰

When the Incas first immigrated into Peru and Bolivia, so they reported to the Spanish conquistadores, they obtained traditions from their predecessors that in ancient times a "White Bearded God" had visited a superior white race of people in the Andean region and had assisted them in establishing an unusually high culture and superb civilization.¹¹ This "Fair God" was also accredited with having assisted that bearded race of white people in the construction of the massive archaeological structures of the Andean region, such as those at Tiahuanaco.

The Incas adopted the traditions of the people whom they supplanted and carried those traditions on to the time of the Spanish conquest. Regarding this fact, Paul Herrmann wrote:

. . . It is certain, however, that when the Incas discovered the giant city Tiahuanaco on Lake Titicaca, allegedly built by Viracocha and his followers, and even more when they came upon the grandiose divine city Pachacamac south of Lima, they invoked this strange god by the name of Con Tiki, the Eternal, and that they called him Pachaychachi, Creator and Ruler of the World.¹²

Thor Heyerdahl has made an extensive study of the traditions of the Indians of the Andean countries and the archaeology of that region. He published his findings in an 800

paged volume entitled *American Indians in the Pacific*. Heyerdahl maintains that:

The memory of the hero-god Viracocha was vividly preserved among aborigines in wide regions of the former Inca Empire, even through the last century. [And then, speaking from personal experiences, he states that] in many places Viracocha stories still survive to-day among the elder natives.¹³

Daniel G. Brinton, in his book *American Hero-Myths*, quoted Zegarra, a leading Peruvian scholar of the past century, as having described the "White Bearded God" who visited the people in the Andean region in ancient times as follows:

"The tradition was that Viracocha's face was extremely white and bearded." [Brinton then adds]: There is, indeed, a singular uniformity of statement in the myths. Viracocha, under any and all his surnames, is always described as white and bearded, dressed in flowing robes and of imposing mien.¹⁴

Pascual de Andagoya (1541-1546), the Spaniard whose explorations from Panama led to Pizarro's discovery of Peru, wrote:

The first lord, of whom there was any recollection in Cuzco, was the Inca Viracocha. This was a man who came to that land alone; but there is no record of whence he came, except that Viracocha, in the language of the people, means "Foam of the sea." He was a white and bearded man, like a Spaniard. The natives of Cuzco, seeing his great valour, took it for something divine, and received him as their chief. He ordained many excellent laws and regulations for the government of the land; built the edifices of Cuzco and the fortress, which is made in a wonderful manner.¹⁵

Pachacuti-Yanqui Salcamayhua (1620), himself a beardless Quechua Indian writer, in his book, *An Account of the Antiquities of Peru*, specifically pointed out that

. . . an immigrant creator with a beard had been active among his forefathers before the advent of the Spaniards. He relates that at a very remote period shortly after Peru had been populated, there came from Titicaca Island to the tribes of the mainland an old man with a beard, dressed in a long robe. He went about in the highlands preaching his religious beliefs to the Indians.¹⁶

Another early Spanish conquistadore, Cieza de Leon (1553-1560), collected the Peruvian traditions which

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¹³Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

¹⁴Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

¹⁵Pascual de Andagoya, *Narrative of the Proceedings of Pedrarias Davila* . . . (Hakluyt Soc., London, 1865), vol. 34, ch. 97.

¹⁶Pachacuti-Yanqui Salcamayhua, cited in Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁹Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 229ff.; Note: Recall the Book of Mormon account of Jesus Christ visiting the Nephites.

¹²Herrmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.

⁸P. A. Means, *Ancient Civilizations of the Andes* (New York, 1931), p. 422.

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(Continued from page 170)

affirmed that long before the reign of the first Inca, men, "white and bearded like the Spaniards," had lived in Vinaque and on Titicaca Island. Cieza was also highly impressed by the Incas' memory of Viracocha, who they reported had visited these ancient Peruvians and accomplished mighty works among them. To quote:

The natives had heard from their forefathers that Viracocha was much beloved, because he was humane and benevolent to all, and because he cured sick people, . . .¹⁷

Another Indian account states that the "White Bearded God"

. . . healed the sick and restored sight to the blind. Everywhere, at his approach, the demons took to flight.¹⁸

Cieza de Leon also recorded in his journal that

. . . before the rule of the Incas in these realms, and even before they were known, these Indians relate other things much older than all that has been told. . . .

. . . they tell that from the south [of Cuzco] there came and stayed a white man of tall stature, who, in his appearance and person showed great authority and veneration, and that as they saw he had great power, turning hills into plains and plains into hills, making fountains in the solid rocks, they recognized such power in him that they called him Creator of all made things, Beginning thereof, Father of the Sun, because, besides this they say that he made greater things, as he is said to have given men and animals their existence, and finally that wonderful benefits came from his hands.

And the Indians who told me this had heard from their forebears, who had also heard it from the songs which these had had since very ancient times, that he went off northwards along the Sierras while accomplishing these wonders, and that they never saw him again.

In many places they tell how he gave rules to men how they should live, and that he spoke lovingly to them with much kindness, admonishing them they should be good to each other and not do any harm or injury, but that instead they should love each other and show charity.

In most places they generally call him Tici Viracocha, . . .

In many parts temples were built to him, in which they placed stone statues in his likeness, in front of which they made sacrifices. The large stone statues which are at the site of Tiahuanaco must be from those times. And although they relate of his former fame this which I tell of Tici Viracocha, they cannot tell more of him, neither

that he returned to any part of his kingdom.¹⁹

When the early Spaniards first arrived at the site of Tiahuanaco, they found a considerable number of anthropomorphic monoliths, or stone statues of men, which had been carved at an early date. Many of these were bearded figures representing the "Fair God." One in particular was a stone statue erected by the Indians of Cacha south of Cuzco and on the main Inca road from Titicaca. According to Garcilasso de la Vega (1609), it had been erected in honor of Tici Viracocha. He informs us that this statue was placed on the great pedestal inside an Inca temple built of cut stone. To quote Garcilasso:

The image represented a man of good stature, with a long beard measuring more than a palmo [one palmo is about nine inches], in a wide loose robe like a cassock, reaching to the feet.²⁰

¹⁹Pedro de Cieza de Leon, *Parte primera de la Cronica del Peru* (Sevilla, Spain, 1553), cited in Heyerdahl, *idem*, p. 253.

²⁰Inca Garcilasso de la Vega, *Primera Parte de los Comentarios Reales, que tratan del origen de los Incas* (Madrid, 1722), p. 71.



A close-up view of Viracocha from Tiahuanaco, Bolivia, with what appears to be a book or metal plates in his hand. Early Chimu period. (Photo: Toucan Press—Wegeesch. Rand McNally & Co. Reproduced from Heyerdahl, *ibid.*, Plate XLI, No. 2.)

The early Spaniards marveled at the close resemblance of this image, found among beardless Indians, to their Old World saints and apostles. According to Cieza de Leon (1553-60), several of the early Spanish writers came to the conclusion that the Viracocha statue represented not a heathen god but one of the apostles who must have come to Peru before the days of Columbus.²¹

In order to protect the statue of Viracocha, some of the Indians hid it near Cuzco; but, according to R. Karsten, it was re-discovered by a pious Spaniard and destroyed.²²

Daniel G. Brinton, quoting from *Religion Anonyma*, written in 1615, described a marble statue of Illa Tici Viracocha which stood in the great Cuzco Temple. This statue was claimed to have been ". . . both as to hair, complexion, features, raiment and sandals, just as paintings represent the apostle, St. Bartholomew. . . ." ²³ This statue was destroyed as was the other one of Viracocha.

Thor Heyerdahl quotes Francisco de Avila (1608) as stating that

. . . in Peru an idol called Coniraya Viracocha was invoked and worshipped almost down to the coming of the Spaniards. . . . "This invocation and custom of calling the idol by the name of Viracocha certainly prevailed long before there were any tidings of Spaniards in the country."²⁴

Fortunately some of these statues of Viracocha, the "White Bearded God," survived to the present time. A photo of one of them is reproduced in this article.

When the Inca Empire was first discovered and conquered, Juan de Betanzos came from Spain to Peru, married an Indian girl, and lived among the natives the remainder of his life. This gave him an unusually good opportunity to collect and preserve the aboriginal Peruvian beliefs and traditions. Like nearly all early chroniclers, he paid much attention to Peruvian accounts of the pre-Inca "White Bearded God," Viracocha, or Con Tici Viracocha. Betanzos wrote his account in 1551, and it was published in Madrid in 1881 under the title, *Suma y narracion de los Incas*. Since this book is not available to me,

²¹Leon, cited in Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303.

²²R. Karsten, *The Civilization of the South American Indians* (London, 1938), p. 200.

²³Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁴Francisco de Avila, cited in Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

¹⁷Cieza de Leon, cited in *idem*, p. 253.

¹⁸Adolf Bastian, *Die Culturländer des Alten Amerika* (Berlin, 1878), p. 56, cited in De Roo, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

I shall have to depend on the information presented by Thor Heyerdahl.

Betanzos claimed that the Indians had told him that Con Tici or Viracocha

... made the sun and day, and ordered the sun to move in the course it now moves and afterwards, they say, he made the stars and the moon.²⁵

Then Betanzos gives an elaborate story of God coming down to earth and creating the human family on the shores of Lake Titicaca. As part of that story, he explained the Indian tradition of the origin of the massive buildings and the huge stone statues of human beings found there by the Spaniards, the credit for their construction being given to Viracocha. After the work of creating the human family was completed, this "Fair God" left the earth but returned many, many years later to live among the people a certain length of time. Regarding this event, Thor Heyerdahl makes the following significant comment:

... We learn through Betanzos that Viracocha only "returned" to earth when he moved with his followers from the shores of Titicaca to the nearby site of Tiahuanaco. Long before this appearance he had, according to Betanzos' informants, created heaven and earth and the original population of the country who dwelt in darkness until he came and established himself in human shape at Tiahuanaco.²⁶

Betanzos gave the following interesting description of the "Fair God" of Peru:

... when I asked the Indians what shape this Viracocha had when their ancestors had thus seen him, they said that according to the information they possessed, he was a tall man with a white vestment that reached to his feet, and that this vestment had a girdle; ... and that he carried in his hands a certain thing which today seems to remind them of the breviary [book] that the priests carry in their hands. ... And when I asked them what this person called himself ... they told me that his name was Con Tici Viracocha Pachayachachic, which in their language means God, Maker of the World.²⁷

Sarmiento de Gamboa (1572), another Spanish chronicler of the colonial period, recorded the traditions of the ancient Peruvians of pre-Incan

(Continued on following page)

²⁵Juan de Betanzos, *Suma y narracion de los Incas* (Madrid, Spain, 1881), cited in Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

²⁶*Idem.*

²⁷Betanzos, cited in *idem*.



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times. His account confirms Betanzos'. Sarmiento informs us that the Incas believed that after the creation "... Ticci Viracocha sent a great flood to punish the sins of the first men, but the ancestors of the Cuzcos ... were saved and so left some descendants."²⁸ Later "... Viracocha suddenly appeared on the Titicaca plateau with his servants, to help restore mankind and give them light."²⁹

Sarmiento's description of Viracocha, as he appeared at the time of his preaching among the ancestors of the Peruvian Indians, is much the same as was Bentanzos'. Referring to the Indians from whom he had received reports, Sarmiento wrote:

... all agree that Viracocha was the creator of these people. They have the tradition that he was a man of medium height, white and dressed in a white robe like an alb secured around the waist, and that he carried a staff and a book in his hands.³⁰

Several different Catholic padres and Spanish chroniclers of the colonial period reported that Indians of the Andean region had told them that Viracocha, or the "White Bearded God," taught their ancestors from a book. Also, Spanish conquistadores and Catholic priests reported that they had actually seen statues representing the "Fair God" with a book in hand, hands, or under his arm. Most of these statues were destroyed; however, at least one survived, and a photograph of it is reproduced in connection with this article. Thor Heyerdahl made a very important observation regarding the representation of the book on this statue. To quote:

... Regular books, as known from pre-Columbian Mexico, have never been discovered in Peru, yet an unidentifiable object, the memory of which the sight of a "book" or a "breviary" might well recall to a native mind, appears carved in the hands of the pre-Incan Tiahuanaco stone statue. ...³¹

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ, and others who have studied the history and religion of this people, are cognizant of the fact that the inhabitants of ancient America, particularly the Nephites, possessed

many books written on metal plates,³² and perhaps they used other types of writing materials and were acquainted with methods of writing which would be much more rapid than could be applied in engraving on gold plates. To illustrate this point, the readers are referred to King Benjamin's sermon. His congregation was so large that he had a tower erected on which to stand; and even then

... they could not all hear his words because of the greatness of the multitude; therefore he caused that the words that he spoke should be written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also receive his words.³³

Further evidence of books and methods of writing among the Nephites is clearly given in connection with the account of Christ's appearance to the people on the Western Hemisphere shortly after his resurrection. He taught them his gospel; and in doing so he read to them from a book. He also made reference to the various books and records which they possessed, giving instructions regarding the continuance of keeping records. The resurrected Lord declared:

Therefore give heed to my words; write the things which I have told you; and according to the time and the will of the father they shall come forth to the Gentiles. ...

... after he [Jesus] had expounded all of the scriptures unto them which they had received, he said unto them: Behold, other scriptures I would that ye shall write, that ye have not.

And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept. And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said: ...

And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it [Samuel's prophecy] should be written; therefore, it was written according as he commanded.³⁴

The principal purpose the Nephite prophets had in writing their records was to preserve all available information and revelations from heaven which maintained that Jesus was the Christ, the Savior of the world, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father in the flesh.³⁵ One of the Lord's avowed purposes in having these Nephite records preserved was

to bring them forth in the latter days "... to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."³⁶

Since these sacred records were regarded so highly and used so extensively throughout the entire course of Nephite history and their contents taught to the people by the resurrected Christ, he being the central figure in them and the principal purpose for which they were written, is it not possible that such a profound impression would have been made on the inhabitants of ancient America that they would preserve—not only in their traditions but also in stone—a definite remembrance of their "Holy Book" and its connection with the "White Bearded God"? Indian traditions have supplied an abundance of evidence to the effect that such was the case.

Perhaps by now the readers have arrived at a conclusion regarding the question asked earlier in the article, namely: "Who, then, and what is Viracocha?"

An analysis of the numerous Indian traditions regarding the "White Bearded God," who played such a prominent role in the traditions of the aborigines of South America, has supplied ample evidence to convince the writer that these traditions are survivals in distorted forms of the true knowledge of Jesus Christ held by the inhabitants of ancient America in Book of Mormon days. In other words, the writer maintains that Viracocha, or the "White Bearded God" under whatever name he may have been known by any of the Indian tribes, could have been none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the Only Begotten Son, the Savior of mankind, who, after his resurrection, visited the ancestors of the Indians here on the Western Hemisphere, taught them the gospel, and then ascended into heaven to dwell with the Eternal Father.

To assist in sustaining and clarifying the foregoing conclusion and to provide a basis for comparisons, short quotations from Indian traditions from the preceding material discussed in this article are listed in one column and quotations from the Book of Mormon are listed in a parallel column.

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²⁸Sarmiento de Gamboa, *History of the Incas*, cited in *idem*, pp. 247-248.

²⁹*Idem*, p. 247.

³⁰*Idem*.

³¹Heyerdahl, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

³²1 Nephi 1:16-17; 6:1-6; 9:1-5; 19:1-6; Helaman 3:13-15; Omni 1:18; 3 Nephi 8-11; Mosiah 21:25-28; 8:6-19.

³³Mosiah 2:6-8.

³⁴3 Nephi 23:4, 6-8, 13.

³⁵2 Nephi 26:12; Mormon 5:9-14; Jacob 1:4.

³⁶"Preface," Book of Mormon.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 174)

QUOTATIONS FROM INDIAN TRADITIONS REGARDING VIRACOCOA, THE "WHITE BEARDED GOD":

[Viracocha was the] Creator of all things, Beginning thereof, Father . . .

[He was the] foundation of all things or the beginning . . .

[Viracocha] called himself . . . God, Maker of the world.

He made the sun and the day . . .
He made the stars and the moon. . . .

[Viracocha] created heaven and earth and the original population . . .

[He] placed the human family on the earth.

[The "White Bearded God"] had great concern over it [the human family].

[Viracocha] was venerated as Tici-the-Creator and Tici-the-Light.

[He was the] God of Light.

[Viracocha controlled the forces of nature, being] the giver of rain.

[Viracocha was the] giver of culture, industries, and religion to mortals.

[In ancient times Viracocha] sent a flood to punish the sins of . . . men.

[Viracocha] suddenly appeared [to the ancient Americans.]

He came [to earth] . . . in human shape. He was a tall man with a white vestment . . . [which] had a girdle.

[The "Fair God" wore a] long robe [or was] dressed in a white robe.

[Viracocha was] extremely white, bearded, and beautiful.

[Viracocha's] face was extremely white and bearded.

[Viracocha appeared to a] white race of people.

[Viracocha possessed] both divine and miraculous powers.

[He] healed the sick and restored sight to the blind. Everywhere, at his approach the demons took to flight.

. . . Viracocha was much beloved, because he was humane and benevolent to all, and because he cured sick people, . . .

QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MORMON REGARDING JESUS CHRIST:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. . . .—3 Nephi 9:15.

. . . I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.—*Ibid.*, 9:18.

[Jesus is] . . . the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth . . . Jacob 2:5.

[Jesus is] . . . a God of miracles, . . . that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.—Mormon 9:11.

. . . I [Jesus] the Lord your God, have created all men, . . .—2 Nephi 29:7; 1 Nephi 17:36.

. . . man have I [Jesus Christ] created after the body of my spirit; . . . —Ether 3:16.

Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it.—1 Nephi 17:36.

. . . it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, . . .—2 Nephi 9:5.

Behold I am Jesus Christ, . . .

I am the light and the life of the world; . . .—3 Nephi 11:10-11; 9:18; Alma 38:9.

He [Jesus] is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; . . .—Mosiah 16:9.

[Christ declared:] . . . the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains and the floods have I sent forth.—Ether 2:24.

[Jesus Christ] . . . the Lord . . . caused that rain should fall upon the earth, . . .—Helaman 11:17.

Entire Book of Mormon confirms that statement.

. . . if it were not for the prayers of the righteous, who are now in this land, that ye would even now be visited with utter destruction; yet it would not be by flood, as were the people in the days of Noah, . . .—Alma 10; 22.

And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself unto them.—1 Nephi 12:6.

. . . they [the ancient Americans] cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he [Jesus] was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; . . .—3 Nephi 11:8.

. . . the light of his [Christ's] countenance did shine upon them, and behold they [the twelve disciples] were white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.—*Ibid.*, 19:25.

Some of the [Book of Mormon peoples] were white, and exceedingly fair and delightful, . . .—2 Nephi 5:21.

. . . Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites; . . . and their skin became white like unto the Nephites; . . .—*Ibid.*, 2:14-15.

[Jesus asked the multitude] Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. . . . all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.—*Ibid.*, 17:7-9.

(Continued on page 178)
THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

"Success is never final" . . . nor is failure

Richard L. Evans

THERE IS THIS sobering thought which the new year suggests: In a sense, "success is never final." The moment we close the books on one year, we open them on another, and compare our performance with the past. In business we shall look back month by month, and compare costs and production and prices and profits. And no matter how good last year was, there is this year now to consider. We have to keep at it, for life is a process, and not a finished product, and there is no moment at which we can say that the picture is completed. And there is no age at which a man can safely relax his standards or be careless of his conduct. It isn't enough to do something well once. We have to repeat our performance. In a sense, "success is never final." This may seem discouraging at first, but actually it is the evidence of eternal continuance. And there is this further comforting fact also to consider: In the same sense in which success is never final, neither need failure be final. Failure need never be final so long as a person can improve his performance. Failure need never be final so long as a person has the spirit of repentance. Some things pertaining to people can't be so easily seen on charts and graphs and books and balance sheets. But there is a kind of sense inside that tells us whether we're going forward or

back, or behaving better or worse, in the things that really make a man—in the qualities of kindliness and understanding, of learning and personal improvement, and of honor and honest effort. And one great measure of a man is the measure that compares what he is with what he was. And one great kind of achievement is the kind in which we exceed ourselves. Now in this new year, God gave us the faith to carry us through, to do the best we can and place our trust in him who gave us life, who gave us time, and who made us in his image. Neither failure nor success is final so long as we are trying, so long as we have the spirit of improvement and repentance—and if we keep moving, keep working, keep improving upon the past we can hardly help finding the happiness that we so much wish for one another—which is what the Lord God wants for all his children—as we want it for our own. May peace and every needed blessing be with all of you, and with your loved ones, at this good time of year, and for all the years to come.

"The Spoken Word" FROM TEMPLE SQUARE
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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 176)

He carried . . . a book in his hands.
[Viracocha] read and taught the people
[from a book.

[Viracocha taught] his religious beliefs
to the Indians.

He taught the people to observe just
laws.

He gave rules to men how they should
live.

[Viracocha] taught with love and kind-
ness.

He spoke lovingly to them with much
kindness, admonishing them that they
should be good to each other and not do
any harm or injury, but instead they
should love each other and show charity.

Disappearing suddenly, . . . [the "White
Bearded God"] rose up to heaven.

. . . [After Jesus] had expounded all the scriptures unto them which they had
received, he said unto them: Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write,
that ye have not.—*Ibid.*, 23:6-7, 14.

And he [Jesus] did expound all things, even from the beginning until the
time that he should come in his glory— . . .

And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the
things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people; . . . —*Ibid.*, 26:3, 6.

Behold, I [Christ] am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with
my people Israel; . . . —*Ibid.*, 15:5.

Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my command-
ments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.—*Ibid.*,
15:5, 9-10.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round
about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, . . .

And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards
you.—*Ibid.*, 17:5-6.

But behold I [Jesus] say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse
you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you
and persecute you;—*Ibid.*, 12:44.

. . . he [Jesus] departed from them, and ascended into heaven. And the
disciples saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven.—*Ibid.*, 18:39.

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

A comparison of the foregoing quotations shows that a surprisingly large amount of the divine truths contained in the Book of Mormon was preserved in Indian traditions in an adulterated form. Furthermore, it is evident from the quotations that both sources—Indian traditions and the Book of Mormon—sustain each other in bearing witness to the fact that Viracocha—the “White Bearded God” and Jesus Christ are the same individual.

(To be continued)

The Place of Repentance in the Plan of Redemption

(Continued from page 144)

for their own sins but as a consequence of the fall of Adam. Therefore, it was but justice to them that their bodies should be raised from the grave.

Since by the fall of Adam came death—that is, mortal death, death of the body—so by the atonement of Christ comes the resurrection. One is as wide in its scope as the other. The resurrection is universal and unconditional as a matter of justice to the beneficiaries thereof.

As has already been said, the second aspect of Christ's atonement was the putting into effect of the law of mercy, the plan of redemption whereby men may be cleansed from the stain of their own sins and thereby freed from spiritual death. With respect to this aspect of the atonement, the circumstances differ from those attending the first. The difference arises in the origin of spiritual death.

As we have seen, spiritual death is the penalty for men's own sins and not for the transgression of Adam, as was the case in temporal death. Men, in the exercise of their own free agency, voluntarily break the laws of righteousness, the penalty for which is spiritual death. They therefore have no such claim upon justice for relief from spiritual death as they have for relief from temporal death. So far as men are concerned, Christ's atonement for their individual sins was entirely beyond the scope of justice: It was an act of pure mercy. It seems to me that, if possible (particularly since it was an act beyond the power of men to do for them-

(Continued on following page)

MARCH 1956

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