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## America Testifies of Christ

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**Abstract:** This article is for the general reader, testimonies of Christopher Columbus, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and ancient traditions from Alaska to Chile regarding the Great White God are discussed. There are limited references.

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he might do to further the work.

In response to this the Lord gave to the Prophet a revelation for Joseph Knight, which teaches the great principle of humility:

“Behold, I speak unto you, and also to all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work;

“And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope and charity, being temperate in all things whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care.” (D&C 12:7-8.)

This account indicates the circumstances of humility under which the Book of Mormon was brought forth.

The Prophet and these men had nothing of the world's goods, yet they were pursuing a cause that was to bring to the world a record of the ancient inhabitants of North and South America, which without doubt is a *new witness of Christ*, and of the divine work of God our Eternal and Heavenly Father in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

I bear testimony that the truth has been restored, that man may seek for and find in the restoration the power that can lift him into the light of spiritual understanding and conviction. This I do in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

## America Testifies of Christ

Mark E. Petersen

Of the Council of the Twelve

● In this day when many question the existence of God, a clear voice comes from the western hemisphere testifying in unmistakable terms that he lives!

It is by no means a voice of weakness that may be ignored. It is the collective voice of millions, some speaking from the past, but many speaking now in this atomic age.

All together they exclaim: God lives, and Jesus is his Christ!

Ancient America, and the America of Christopher Columbus, the America of the Revolutionary War, the America of the Civil War, and America of today join in a united testimony of this great and comforting truth: God lives, and Jesus of Nazareth is his Christ.

Let us begin with the testimony of Columbus, who discovered this land. He testified not only of the reality of God in his life, but also declared that he was guided by divine power in his voyage of discovery.

Jacob Wasserman, in his book *Columbus, the Don Quixote of the Seas*, quotes the discoverer as saying: “The Lord was well disposed to my desire and he bestowed upon me courage and understanding; knowledge of seafaring he gave me in abundance, . . . and of geometry and astronomy likewise. . . . The Lord with provident hand unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my enterprise called it foolish, mocked me and laughed. But who can doubt that the Holy Ghost inspired me?” (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1959, pp. 19-20.)

To King Ferdinand Columbus said: “I came to your majesty as the emissary of the Holy Ghost,” upon which Wasserman the author commented:

“In the same way before that pious assemblage in San Esteban he insisted that he must be regarded as one inspired.” (Page 46.)

On page 62 of this book the author says: “His achievement did not seem to him something unimportant and fortuitous: It was in his eyes so tremendous, so inexpressibly great that it could only have been achieved by the direct assistance of God.”

Washington Irving, describing Columbus before Queen Isabella, said that “he unfolded his plans with eloquence and zeal, for he felt himself, as he afterwards declared, kindled as with a fire from on high and considered himself the agent chosen of heaven to accomplish the grand design.” (*Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, p. 712.)

Columbus' own son Fernando, in a biography of his father, quotes the discoverer as saying: “God gave me the faith and afterwards the courage so that I was quite willing to undertake the journey.”

Columbus' last will and testament reads in part: “In the name of the Holy Trinity who inspired me. . . .”

The testimony of the discoverer of America is that God lives, for he inspired him. Shall we not accept his word?

And what of the father of our country, George Washington?

He bore the same kind of testimony.

Washington did not take up the command of his army in the first instance until he had gone to the Almighty in humble prayer. He fought no engagements that were not preceded by appeals to the Deity, and there was never a victory that was not followed by acknowledgment of divine aid.

Characteristic of these expressions is his memorable announcement to the troops following the battle of Yorktown:

"Divine service is to be performed tomorrow in the several brigades and divisions. The Commander-in-Chief earnestly recommends that the troops not on duty should universally attend with that seriousness of deportment and gratitude of heart which the recognition of such reiterated and astonishing interposition of Providence demands of us."

In his farewell orders to the army, dated November 2, 1783, he said: "The singular interpositions of Providence in our feeble condition were such as could scarcely escape the observance of the most unobserving."

To Congress he said on April 30, 1789:

"No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential agency."

Washington knew, and bore testimony, that God lives and that he has his hand over America. Shall we not accept his word?

And what of him who saved our country in times of civil war?

Abraham Lincoln bore testimony like that of Washington, repeatedly.

One of his most impressive statements was this:

"I have had so many evidences of God's direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some power other than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. . . . I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not do a particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it."

As he left for the city of Washington after his election, Lincoln said to his neighbors who had gathered to say farewell:

"Without the assistance of that Divine Being I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in him who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all may yet be well. To his care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

Lincoln had no doubts about the existence of God. He knew God lives, by reason of his almost daily experience. Shall we not accept his word?

One of the most convincing testimonies of the past comes from the aboriginal inhabitants of America.

As careful research puts together facts now being disclosed by students of ancient America, there appears clear and convincing evidence that the ancient Americans actually knew Christ personally, and that he walked and ministered among them.

Probably the most persistent of all the traditions handed down through past generations to our present-day Indians of both North and South America is that of the Great White God. This being came among their forefathers in ancient times, healed their sick, raised some of their dead, and taught them a brotherly way of life. Some traditions say that he told them that when he was born in the flesh, he was the son of a virgin.

This Great White God promised that at some time he would return.

When the Spanish explorers came, as you well know, the Indians believed that their leader was the returning White God. This is what made their conquest so easy, and accounts for the lack of resistance on the part of the natives.

Captain Cook found this same tradition in the South Seas, and like Cortez he took advantage of it.

It is remarkable that authorities say that the aboriginal inhabitants of America knew more about the Christian religion than did their European conquerors, and that a definite form of Christianity existed in America before Columbus ever came to these shores.

Dr. Daniel H. Brinton, for example, says that the existence of these traditions is irrefutable and that they were intimately and widely current from Chile to Alaska long before the inhabitants of this hemisphere ever saw a white man.

Another scholar of renown, Miles Poindexter, wrote that the tradition of the Incas concerning the White God was a nobler concept of our Creator and was more enlightened than that of the Europeans.

Is it possible that Christ came to ancient America giving this hemisphere a testimony of his existence?

It is not only possible—it is a fact.

The ancient record of his coming, as disclosed in the Book of Mormon, is clear and convincing.

That record shows that following his crucifixion and resurrection in Palestine, the Savior came to his "other sheep" here in America. It tells of a multitude expectantly gathered together and adds:

". . . they heard a voice as if it

came out of heaven; . . .

". . . and it said unto them:

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

"And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; . . .

"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 the bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

"And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

"And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

"Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails 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:

"Hosanna! 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. 11:3, 6-17.)

He blessed their children, healed their sick, even raised their dead, and established his Church among them.

This is the true record of the visit of Christ—the Great White God—to ancient America. This is what gave rise to the traditions that still live in the hearts of American Indians and natives of the South Seas.

So ancient America, both in its written records and in its traditions, declares that God lives and Jesus is his

Christ. Can we doubt testimonies as great as these?

But modern America likewise gives testimony of God and Christ.

The Almighty has raised up a new and modern prophet on the earth as anciently he raised up Moses and others.

And as he appeared to Moses, speaking to him as one man speaks to another, so in this modern day he has appeared personally to an American prophet, and face to face has spoken to that prophet, giving him revelation.

This American prophet was Joseph Smith. His first view of the Almighty came as a young man in answer to a humble prayer.

Of this event Joseph Smith wrote: ". . . I saw a pillar of light, exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun. . . .

". . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith 2:16-17.)

At this time Joseph not only saw the Father and the Son, but also spoke to them, asked their questions, and received answers in return.

Think of it! God and his Christ came to America—in modern times—and spoke to an American youth face to face, and called him to be a prophet!

Later still, in company with his associate, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph again was visited by the Savior. Of this experience, which took place in the temple built by the Mormon people in Kirtland, Ohio, he wrote:

"We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

"I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father." (D&C 110:2-4.)

And again, with Sidney Rigdon, Joseph once again was blessed with a view of the Deity. Of this he wrote:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and

of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." (D&C 76:22-24.)

America is a land chosen of God for a great and divinely appointed work. Essential to the performance of that task is an unerring testimony that God lives.

That testimony is here. It comes from the ancient world; it comes from today. It comes from our national

leaders, and it comes from modern prophets raised up for God's special work in these last days.

The testimony of all, unitedly and together, is that God lives, and Jesus is his Christ. This is the testimony of Latter-day Saints the world around. They know that God lives, for their modern prophets have seen him.

And this is our humble testimony, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

## Gospel Imperatives

Howard W. Hunter

Of the Council of the Twelve

● The greatest search of our time is the search for personal identity and for human dignity. Each of us wants life to be worthwhile and to have real meaning—a personal meaning—in the living we do from day to day. There is a search being made by people everywhere, a search as important as life itself for self-respect, for self-fulfillment, and for emotional maturity. Much of our character and nature, as individuals, depends upon how and to what ends we conduct this search. Too many of us turn the direction of our lives to tragic goals and distorted purposes. The friends we choose, the choices we make, and what we do about these choices are the determining guide lines that form and mold our lives; but choices alone are not enough. The best goals, the best of friends, and the best of opportunities are all meaningless unless they are translated into reality through our daily actions.

Belief must be realized in personal achievement. Real Christians must understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a gospel of belief; it is a plan of action. His gospel is a gospel of imperatives, and the very nature of its substance is a call to action. He did not say "observe" my gospel; he said "live" it! He did not say, "Note its beautiful structure and imagery"; he said, "Go, do, see, feel, give, believe!" The gospel of Jesus Christ is full of imperatives, words that call for personal commitment and action—obligatory, binding, compulsory.

There is never achievement in any field of endeavor unless it is preceded by a strong sense of purpose. There must be reasons for action and guides for action in the form of real goals and objectives. That is why we are

given a plan of salvation and progression. Because the gospel is a long-range—even an eternal—goal, it must be broken up into short-range, immediate objectives that can be achieved today and tomorrow and the next day. The gospel imperatives constitute an immediate challenge to action in our lives right now, today, as well as a plan for action eternally.

Notice the forceful expression Jesus gave to his teachings; he said: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matt. 7:7-8.)

". . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." (Matt. 5:44.)

I believe he would have endorsed the modern addition to an ancient scripture: "And with all thy getting, get going!" His principles are briefly paraphrased. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." "Go the second mile." "If you want to know whether what I say is true, try it out!" This is what we mean by gospel imperatives. They are words that challenge to action—"Go, do, pray, repent, love, find, give, consider, provide," and a host of others.

One of the most dynamic challenges in the scriptures comes at the end of King Benjamin's address to his people as he concludes his ministry and turns the reigns of government over to his son, Mosiah. Standing on the tower he built to address the people, he guides them through the fundamentals of the gospel and commits them to the wisdom, power, and pur-