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## Who Was the Great White God?

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**Abstract:** This article discusses various native traditions of the Western Hemisphere and Pacific region that refer to a “Great White God.” Several sources are cited and their common points are discussed and compared to 3 Nephi 11. Jesus Christ was the Great White God referred to in all instances.

cern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. . . ." (Matt. 16:1-4.)

Perhaps it was with them, as with many today, truth is not recognized as truth unless accompanied by the sensational. What would have been accomplished had the Lord called down thunder and lightning, or plucked a star from the sky, or divided the water to satisfy the curiosity of men? They would probably have said it was the work of the devil, or their eyes deceived them.

Signs are evident to the faithful. Sick persons are healed; prayers are answered; changes are wrought in the lives of those who believe, accept, and live the commandments. We prove Christ by living the principles of his gospel. He made great promises of blessings to those who live the commandments: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." (D&C 82:10.) Many of the commandments are restrictive, but reason dictates they are for man's good. In addition to the restrictive commandments are the positive admonitions. The two great imperatives are to love God and love one's fellowmen.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:37-40.)

What greater laws could be given to bring peace, prosperity, and progress to man if he will faithfully live the commandments to love?

In this time of rapid change, we can maintain an equilibrium if we preserve a belief in God and a love for him, but we cannot love God unless we love his children also. These are our neighbors, and true love of them knows no class or culture, race, color, or creed.

The members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints open their arms to neighbors everywhere. The restored Church of Christ assumes its charge and responsibility to take the gospel of Jesus Christ in love to its neighbors over the world and endeavors to help those who receive the gospel to live the teachings of the Master.

In this world of confusion and rushing, temporal progress, we need to return to the simplicity of Christ. We need to love, honor, and worship him. To acquire spirituality and have its influence in our lives, we cannot become confused and misdirected by the twisted teachings of the modernist. We need to study the simple fundamentals of the truths taught by the Master and eliminate the controversial. Our faith in God needs to be real and not specu-

lative. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ can be a dynamic, moving influence, and true acceptance gives us a meaningful, religious experience. One of the great strengths of the Mormon religion is this translation of belief into daily thinking and conduct. This replaces turmoil and confusion with peace and tranquility.

The Church stands firmly against relaxation or change in moral issues and opposes the so-called new morality. Spiritual values cannot be set aside, notwithstanding modernists who would tear them down. We can be modern without giving way to the influence of the modernist. If it is old-fashioned to believe in the Bible, we should thank God for the privilege of being old-fashioned.

Permit me to conclude with my personal conviction and testimony. I know God lives, the same God described in the Old and the New Testaments. I know Jesus Christ is his Son. He gave his life in the great atoning sacrifice whereby he became my Savior, your Savior, and the Savior of all mankind. I also know there is a prophet of God on the earth today who speaks the mind and will of the Lord to his children in the same manner that prophets have spoken to God's children in all ages of the past. May the Lord give us the capacity to understand his teachings and the strength to follow with conviction and steadfastness, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

*Sunday afternoon session, October 4, 1970*

## *Who Was the Great White God?*

*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 ne-

glected of all the minorities on this continent.

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.

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."

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.

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.

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.

This great being was known as Quetzalcoatl in parts of Mexico, primarily in the Cholula area. He was Votan in Chiapas and Wixepechocha 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.

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*.)

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 digni-

taries 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.

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?

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

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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?

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.

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. ○

## *The Mormon Pavilion at Expo '70*

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.

Expo '70 was the first world's fair to be staged in Asia and has been acclaimed by many to be the most successful world's fair ever to be held.

Seventy-seven countries and 42 domestic organizations sponsored pavilions at the fair. There were only two

religious pavilions represented—the Christian ecumenical pavilion, sponsored by the Catholic and Protestant churches of Japan, and the Mormon Pavilion, representing The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormon Pavilion was very popular and crowded each day from the time the fair was opened until it closed.

During the six months that the fair was running, almost 65 million people attended the fair, and over ten percent of that 65 million visited the Mormon Pavilion. Our attendance was 6,658,532—almost a miracle for the small pavilion we had to even come close to accommodating them.

Many of this number were not able to see all of the exhibits because of the crowds or to hear the dialogue and testimonies of the missionaries. But out of those who were able to follow the