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## Archaeology and the Book of Mormon - Part VIII. Quetzalcoatl—The "White Bearded God" or Jesus Christ

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# ARCHAEOLOGY and the BOOK OF MORMON

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

## Part VIII

### Quetzalcoatl—The “White Bearded God” or Jesus Christ

WHEN THE SPANISH conquistadores and Catholic fathers first arrived on the shores of Mexico, Central America, and the various countries of South America, and when the English and French colonizers and missionaries first penetrated the vast wildernesses of Canada and the United States, they received from the Indian tribes scattered over the Western Hemisphere various versions of a tradition of a “White Bearded God” who had in the distant past visited their ancestors, taught them their culture, mysteriously disappeared, but would eventually return to them again. This “Fair God” we shall discuss under the title of Quetzalcoatl, by which he was known to the Aztec Indians of Mexico and their Toltec predecessors; however, he was known by various other names in the traditions of a number of other Indian tribes of North and South America.

Although the traditions from the various Indian groups regarding the “White Bearded God” do not agree in details, there being a variety of versions, yet in the principal points these Indian traditions from Canada in the north to Chile in the south have a close resemblance to each other. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, an American scholar who made an extensive study of this subject during the latter part of the past century, devoted the greater portion of one of his books, *American Hero-Myths*, to this subject. The following is one of his summary statements:

The native tribes of this Continent had many myths, and among them there was one which was so prominent, and recurred

with such strangely similar features in localities widely asunder, that it has for years attracted my attention, and I have been led to present it as it occurs among several nations far apart, both geographically and in point of culture. This myth is that of the national hero, their mythical civilizer and teacher of the tribe, who, at the same time, was often identified with the supreme deity and the creator of the world. It is the fundamental myth of a very large number of American tribes, and on its recognition and interpretation depends the correct understanding of most of their mythology and religious life.

The outlines of this legend are to the effect that in some exceedingly remote time this divinity took an active part in creating the world and in fitting it to be the abode of man, and may himself have formed or called forth the race. At any rate, his interest in its advancement was such that he personally appeared among the ancestors of the nation, and taught them the useful arts, gave them the maize or other food plants, initiated them into the mysteries of their religious rites, framed the laws which governed their social relations, and having thus started them on the road to

self development, he left them, not suffering death, but disappearing in some way from their view. Hence it was nigh universally expected that at some time he would return. . . .

Whenever the personal appearance of this hero-god is described, it is, strangely enough, represented to be that of one of the white race, a man of fair complexion, with long, flowing beard, with abundant hair, and clothed in ample and loose robes. This extraordinary fact naturally suggests the gravest suspicion that these stories were made up after the whites had reached the American shores, and nearly all historians have summarily rejected their authenticity, on this account. But a most careful scrutiny of their source positively refutes this opinion. There is irrefragable evidence that these myths, and this ideal of the hero-god, were intimately and widely current in America long before any one of its millions of inhabitants had ever seen a white man.<sup>1</sup>

During the past century, the famous historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, accomplished a gigantic task by collecting numerous Indian traditions and producing a history of the American Indians according to their traditions. His momentous historical contribution resulted in the publishing of thirty-six massive volumes, entitled *The Native Races*. After carefully collecting and studying the numerous Indian traditions regarding a “White Bearded God,” Bancroft wrote the following conclusion:

Although bearing various names and appearing in different countries, the American culture-heroes all present the same general characteristics. They are all described as

<sup>1</sup>Daniel G. Brinton, *American Hero-Myths* (Philadelphia, 1882), p. 27.

A vase, approximately a foot high and nearly as wide, decorated with a bearded man somewhat Hebraic in appearance, is in the museum at Copán, Honduras. According to Dr. J. Eric S. Thompson, the founding of Copán, an early Maya city of the Old Empire, was approximately 436 A.D.



—Photos by Otto Done

Stele on which two bearded men are carved who resemble the description given by the Indians of the "White Bearded God." In National Museum, Mexico City.

white, bearded men, generally clad in long robes, appearing suddenly and mysteriously upon the scene of their labors. They at once set about improving the people by instructing them in useful and ornamental arts, giving them laws, exhorting them to practise brotherly love and other Christian virtues, and introducing a milder and better form of religion; having accomplished their mission, they disappear as mysteriously and unexpectedly as they came; and finally, they are apotheosized and held in great reverence by a grateful posterity. In such guise or on such mission did Quetzalcoatl appear in Cholula, Votan in Chiapas, Wixpechocha in Oajaca, Zamná and Cukulcan with his nineteen disciples in Yucatan, Gucumatz in Guatemala, Viracocha in Peru, Sumé and Paye-Tome in Brazil, the mysterious apostle mentioned by Rosales in Chili (sic), and Bochica in Columbia (sic).<sup>2</sup>

In the great central mesa of Mexico, the name by which the "White Bearded God" was usually known was "Quetzalcoatl." Indian writers and Catholic padres who did extensive missionary work among the Indians of Mexico and Central America shortly following the Spanish conquest have left us numerous accounts of the traditions of Quetzalcoatl.

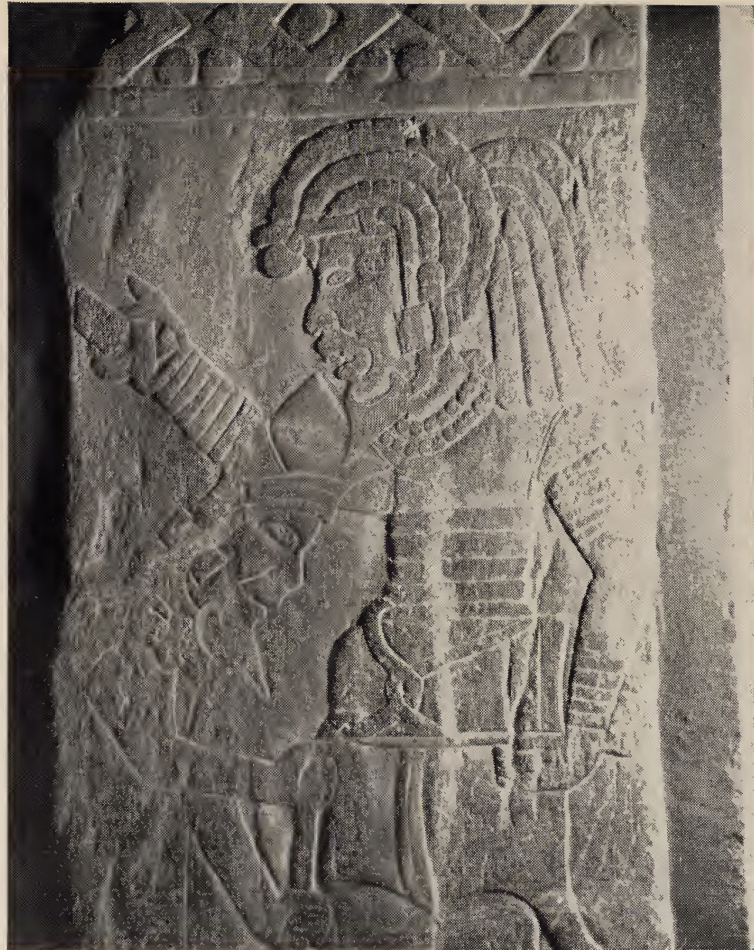
One of the most authentic of the Indian writers was Ixtlilxochitl, a native American prince or chief who lived near the City of Mexico and did his writing at approximately 1600 A.D. He wrote a history of his ancestors—whom the writer believes were the Nephites and Lamanites—and of their descendants, the American Indians. His story began with the colonization of ancient America with three separate groups of people from Babel and western Asia, which claims were identical with those made by the Book of Mormon writers. Ixtlilxochitl continued his story down to the Spanish conquest.

This Indian prince claimed that he produced his history from written documents which had come to him from his ancestors by right of his position as prince or chief in the royal family and also from the traditions he received from the old people.

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<sup>2</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Native Races* (San Francisco, 1883), vol. 5, pp. 23-24.

President Hunter observing the carving of a bearded man who in appearance and clothing resembles Quetzalcoatl—the "White Bearded God," as described in Indian traditions. The date of the carving is approximately 731 A.D.; and the stele stands at Old Chichén Itzá, Yucatán, Mexico.



# ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 27)

Ixtlilxochitl's story of the people of ancient America is perhaps the most detailed and accurate of any of the ancient documents with the exception of the Book of Mormon. Of interest to us in discussing this subject is his very pertinent information regarding the appearance of Quetzalcoatl to his ancestors and the marvelous work accomplished by that "White Bearded God." To quote from the *Works of Ixtlilxochitl*:

And when they [the second group of colonizers, the Toltecs] were in the height of their power, there arrived in this land a man whom they called Quetzalcoatl and others Huemac on account of his great virtues, considering him as just, saintly [holy], and good; teaching them by deeds and words the path of virtue and forbidding them their vices and sins, giving laws and good doctrine. And in order to refrain them from their pleasures and dishonesties, he instituted (established) fasting for them and [he was] the first who worshiped and placed the cross which they called Quia-huiteotl-chichahualizteotl and others Tona-caquahuatl, which means: God of rains and of health and tree of sustenance or of life.<sup>3</sup>

Practically every student who has made a study of the traditions of Quetzalcoatl, as well as all of the Spanish Catholic missionaries who gathered these traditions from the Indians during the colonial period, have commented on the numerous similarities between the Indian traditions and the teachings of Christianity. Dr. De Mier, in his discussion of the writings of Father Bernardino de Sahagun, the eminent and scholarly missionary who labored among the Indians of Mexico from 1529 to 1590, concluded:

Not a single American missionary who has, until this day, left any writing has forgotten to notice the evident vestiges of Christianity, which had in former times penetrated even among the most savage tribes.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of coming in contact with numerous teachings so similar to those of Christianity, some of the early Catholic missionaries maintained that some of Jesus' Apostles, perhaps Bartholomew or St. Thomas, had brought Christianity to the Indians; however, although the majority of the early Catholic fathers, such as Garcilasso de la Vega, Solorzano,

Acosta, Las Casas, and others, definitely recognized the similarity between the Christian tenets and practices and those found among the American aborigines, "they deny their introduction by Christian teachers, giving, strange to say, to the devil the honor of spreading the light of Christianity, in spite of his hatred for it."<sup>5</sup>

Bancroft described Quetzalcoatl and his work as follows:

... Quetzalcoatl was a white, bearded man, venerable, just, and holy, who taught by precept and example the paths of virtue in all the Nahua cities, particularly in Cholula. His teachings, according to the traditions, had much in common with those of Christ in the Old World, and most of the Spanish writers firmly believed him to be identical with one of the Christian apostles, probably St. Thomas.<sup>6</sup>

ACCORDING to Bancroft, it was "during the Olmec period, that is, the earliest period of Nahua power, [that] the great Quetzalcoatl appeared."<sup>7</sup> Authorities place the height of the Olmec period approximately at the time that Jesus Christ lived in Palestine, was crucified, and resurrected. In the light of the Book of Mormon's account of the appearance of the resurrected Lord to the ancient Americans, Bancroft's dating of Quetzalcoatl's appearance constitutes a significant fact which will be discussed later. Dr. P. De Roo, a historian who during the past century made an extensive study of Indian traditions, came to the following pertinent conclusion regarding Bancroft's statement:

... If the vestiges of Christianity found in Central America date, as is generally admitted, from Quetzalcoatl, it is evident that this missionary was a person distinct from the apostle St. Thomas.<sup>8</sup>

Certain skeptical writers have maintained that the whole Quetzalcoatl myth was a Spanish invention which they concocted to facilitate the conquest of Mexico and Peru and the victory of Christianity over the American natives. A German scholar, Paul Herrmann, ridicules such a concept. He states:

... how clumsy it all was, how small the propaganda value of this story to the cause of Spain! For if a militarily and culturally superior victor is to impose his gods on a subjugated people, he will naturally depict

these gods as the quintessence of himself. But this is exactly what the Spaniards did not do—if they invented the story. On the contrary, Quetzalcoatl's appearance was so portrayed that the Aztecs could not fail to notice how little like the blond god the dark Spaniards were. The Aztecs were bound to conclude sooner or later that they could not be the sons of the Light God at all.

If the Spanish conquistadores did not portray the White Savior of the Indians after their own image, however, then he cannot be a Spanish invention and the myth must be Indian in origin. . . .

Carefully considered this leaves no other conclusion open than that the Light God Quetzalcoatl was a real person, that he was neither an invention of Spanish propaganda nor a legendary figment of Indian imagination. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Dr. De Roo made this significant statement: ". . . Quetzalcoatl is often confounded with his Divine Master, whose doctrine and precepts he published and observed."<sup>10</sup>

A very vital question is, Who was Quetzalcoatl, the "White Bearded God" of Mexico, and the "Fair God" as he appears under a variety of names in Indian traditions?

In 1882 President John Taylor answered the foregoing question, giving the viewpoint of the Latter-day Saints which they have held throughout the history of the Church. In the words of President Taylor:

Modern revelation has restored another most important key to unlock the mystery of the almost universal knowledge of the Redeemer and of the plan of the atonement. It is found in the statement that Jesus, after his resurrection, visited at least the inhabitants of two distinct portions of the earth, which could not have been reached through the ministry of his Jewish Apostles. These two peoples were the Nephites on this land, and the Ten Tribes in their distant northern home. The knowledge that the Mexicans, and other aboriginal races of America had, at the time of their discovery by the Spaniards, of the life of the Savior, was so exact, that the Catholics suggested two theories (both incorrect, however) to solve the mystery. One was that the devil had invented an imitation gospel to delude the Indians; the other, that the Apostle Thomas had visited America and taught its people the plan of salvation.

The story of the life of the Mexican divinity, Quetzalcoatl, closely resembles that of the Savior; so closely, indeed, that we can come to no other conclusion than that Quetzalcoatl and Christ are the same being. But the history of the former has been handed down to us through an impure Lamanitish source, which has sadly disfigured and perverted the original incidents and teachings of the Savior's life and ministry. . . .

. . . in the traditions with regard to this especial God, we have an almost complete life of the Savior, from the announcement

(Continued on page 44)

<sup>3</sup>*Works of Ixtlilxochitl*, cited in Milton R. Hunter and Thomas Stuart Ferguson, *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* (Oakland, 1950), p. 203.

<sup>4</sup>De Mier, cited in P. De Roo, *History of America Before Columbus* (Philadelphia, 1900), vol. 1, p. 229.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>6</sup>Bancroft, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 201.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>8</sup>De Roo, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Herrmann, *Conquest of Man* (New York, 1954), pp. 171-172.

<sup>10</sup>De Roo, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

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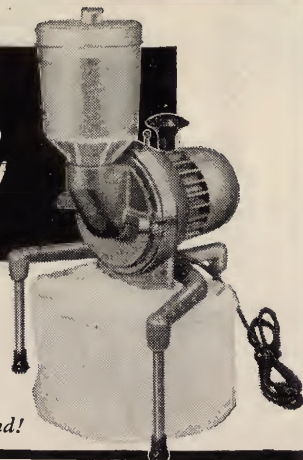
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**ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON**

(Continued from page 42)

of his birth to his virgin mother, by an angel, to his resurrection from the grave. . . . The Book of Mormon alone explains the mystery. The account there given of Christ's ministrations amongst the forefathers of these peoples makes the whole thing plain. We understand, through that record, how and by what means they obtained this great knowledge, and can also readily perceive how the unworthy descendants of those whom the Savior visited, gradually added much childish rubbish to the original facts; making their story, like almost all other mythology, an unseemly compound of heavenly truth and puerile fable. But, in view of these facts, when all things are considered, it is almost a wonder that so much of the truth was retained to the days when America became known to Europeans.<sup>11</sup>

The abundance of historical evidence available thoroughly demonstrates the fact that the "Fair God" was a real historical person who visited the inhabitants of ancient America; and this evidence is so completely in harmony with the beautiful story told in the Book of Mormon of Christ's appearance to the inhabitants of this land following his resurrection that, it seems to the writer, it leaves no room for doubt in the minds of those who unbiasedly and thoroughly study this subject as to the identity of the "White Bearded God."<sup>12</sup> Quetzalcoatl, under a variety of names as presented in the traditions of the Indians of North, Central, and South America, is none other than Jesus Christ, the resurrected Lord, as was maintained by President John Taylor.

Von Humboldt, an explorer, author, and collector of Indian traditions and old manuscripts, maintains that the Indians believed that Quetzalcoatl was originally a God and the creator of all things before his sojourn in mortality and his appearance to the inhabitants of ancient America. Humboldt wrote:

. . . authors might be adduced to show that the Mexicans believe that this Quetzalcoatl, who was both God and man; that he had previously to his incarnation existed from eternity, and that he had been the Creator both of the world and man; and that he had descended to reform the world by endurance. . . .<sup>13</sup>

The following is quoted from the Nephites' records to aid the readers

in observing how accurately the Indians preserved in their traditions the story of Christ's position as a God, the Lord, and the divine Son, and of his crucifixion and resurrection, which events were followed by his descent from heaven to proclaim the gospel to the inhabitants of ancient America:

. . . 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; . . .

. . . he . . . 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 of that 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. . . .

. . . 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.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. De Roo summarized the work accomplished by the "White Bearded God," according to the traditions of the Indians of Mexico, as follows:

. . . They say it was Quetzalcoatl who effected the reformation of the world by penance. His father had created the world, but men had given themselves up to vice, on which account it had been frequently destroyed, but now had Tonacatecotl sent his son into the world to reform it.

Quetzalcoatl undertook the reformation of the sinful world through preaching, by word and example, the virtues of self-denial and fasting, of chastity and piety, of charity towards men, and of a pure religion towards the one true God. For a time he succeeded in Tula, where, according to some reports, his virgin-mother, Chimalma, lived; but in spite of all the wondrous good he did in that province, like Christ, he was persecuted, and finally driven out by the majority of the people. Carrying a cross, he came to the valley of the Zapotecs. . . .<sup>15</sup>

The early Spanish missionaries who labored in Middle America were greatly surprised to find that the Indians had an extensive knowledge of the Godhead or Holy Trinity. The natives made the claim that their knowledge had been given to them originally by Quetzalcoatl, which would be in complete harmony with the claims made by the Book of

<sup>11</sup>John Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City, 1882), pp. 201-203.  
<sup>12</sup>Note: In connection with this conclusion, study Moroni's promise—Moroni 10:1-5.  
<sup>13</sup>Von Humboldt, cited in Taylor, *ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup>3 Nephi 11:8-11, 13-14.  
<sup>15</sup>De Roo, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-431.

Mormon that Jesus Christ appeared to the inhabitants of ancient America and taught them his gospel in its fulness. In regard to this subject, and relying on the famous Catholic missionary, Padre Sahagun, for his information, Dr. De Roo wrote:

The natives of Campeche assured the Spanish missionaries that their religious teacher, Quetzalcoatl, had given them images to explain his doctrine, and, in particular, a triangular stone, as an illustration of the Blessed Trinity, with which mystery they were well-acquainted, says Sahagun, and in whose name they were baptized.<sup>16</sup>

Hubert Howe Bancroft informs us that the Quiché Maya Indians in Guatemala also held in their traditions a belief in a Godhead, composed of three divine personages. The names by which they were known were Tohil, Awilix, and Gucumatz.<sup>17</sup>

Bishop Bartholome de las Casas, a famous Spanish Catholic priest who did extensive missionary work among the Indians of Chiapas, Mexico, and recorded their traditions, reported that Francis Hernandez, a priest laboring under his direction, wrote him a letter in which he claimed that the Indians had a tradition of a Godhead, composed of three members, similar to the Holy Trinity worshiped by the Christians. I have found no statement among the Indian traditions which more clearly expresses this doctrine than the following which Bishop las Casas attributed to Hernandez:

... I found a good secular priest [Francis Hernandez], of mature age and honorable, who knew the language of the Indians, having lived among them several years; and because I was obliged to travel on to the chief town of my diocese, I appointed him my vicar, asking him and giving him charge to visit the tribes of the inland, and to preach to them in the manner that I gave him.

The same priest, after some months, or even a year, as I think, wrote to me that he had met with a chief from whom he had made inquiries in regard to his ancient belief and religion, which they were used to follow in that country. The Indian answered him that they knew and believed in God who dwells in the heavens, and that that God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father's name was Icona, and he had created man and all things; the Son had for name Bacab, and he was born from a maiden always virgin, called Chibirias, that lives in the heavens with God. The Holy Ghost they called Echuac. They say that Icona means the Great Father of Bacab, who is the Son. . . .

When the Indian was asked the meaning of Bacab or Bacabab, he said that it meant

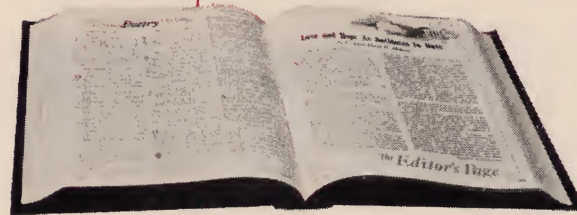
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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>17</sup>Bancroft, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 648.

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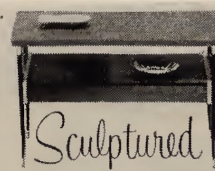
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# ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from preceding page)

Son of the Great Father, and that the name Echuac signified Merchant. And, in fact, the Holy Ghost brought good merchandises to earth, since he satiated the world, that is, the people of the world, with his abundant divine gifts and graces.<sup>18</sup>

Hernandez also informed Bishop las Casas that he had received the foregoing tradition from one of the old chiefs who claimed that that tradition had come to him from his ancient ancestors. He told the famous bishop that after Bacab had been hanged on a cross, the following occurred:

... There he finally died and remained dead three days, and the third day he came to life again and ascended to heaven, where he is now with his Father. Immediately after came Echuac, who is the Holy Ghost and who supplied the earth with all that was needed.<sup>19</sup>

The foregoing tradition of the Chiapan Indians gives a clear statement regarding the aborigines' knowledge of the Godhead, which doctrine was so thoroughly known by the inhabitants of ancient America, as is attested in the Book of Mormon. It seems evident that the basic ideas in the Godhead doctrine as proclaimed anciently by the Nephite prophets came down among the various Indian tribes from age to age to the time of the Spanish conquest.

Also, another significant historical event, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, was thoroughly known by the inhabitants of ancient America, as is evidenced in the plain teachings found in the Book of Mormon. A few examples of Nephite teachings will be quoted. Nephi saw in vision the following:

... in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. . . .

And he [the angel] said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.<sup>20</sup>

It is also written in the Book of Mormon:

... Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.<sup>21</sup>

Alma informed the Nephites that it had been revealed to him that

<sup>18</sup>Las Casas, cited in De Roo, *op. cit.*, pp. 373-374.

<sup>19</sup>*Idem*, p. 373.

<sup>20</sup>1 Nephi 11:13, 18.

<sup>21</sup>2 Nephi 17:14.

... the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth.

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, . . . she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.<sup>22</sup>

With such doctrine being thoroughly dissiminated among the inhabitants of ancient America, it is natural that those teachings would carry forward from age to age as part of the traditions of the "White Bearded God." History affirms that such was the case; for example, President John Taylor quoted Humboldt's statement regarding the tradition of the virgin birth of Quetzalcoatl as follows:

How truly surprising is it to find that the Mexicans, who seem to have been unacquainted with the doctrine of the migration of the soul and the Metempsychosis should have believed in the incarnation of the only Son of the supreme God, *Tomacateuctli*. For Mexican mythology, speaking of no other Chimelman, the virgin of Tula (without man), by his breath alone, by which may be signified his work or will, when it was announced to Chimelman, by the celestial messenger, whom he dispatched to inform her that she should conceive a son, it must be presumed this was Quetzalcoatl, who was the only son.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. P. De Roo described Quetzalcoatl's virgin birth thus:

Both the mode and the object of our Lord's incarnation are represented in the rare and valuable Mexican codices, if we can believe the learned interpreters of their paintings. Quetzalcoatl is he who was born of the virgin, called Chalchihuitzli, which means the precious stone of penance, says the author of the "Explanation of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis." Tonacatecotl, the Mexican supreme deity, begot Quetzalcoatl, not by connection with woman, but by his breath alone, when he sent his ambassador to the virgin of Tula.<sup>24</sup>

Dr. De Roo also discussed the Indian traditions of the virgin birth of the "White Bearded God," as reported by the early Spanish missionaries who worked among the American aborigines. It is quite evident that the traditions are merely adulterated forms of the true story of Christ's birth. To quote De Roo:

... Mendieta states that according to other traditions no mention is made of his father, but only of his mother, Chimalma, who, as she was sweeping the temple one day, found a small green stone, named

<sup>22</sup>Alma 7:9-10.

<sup>23</sup>Von Humboldt, cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>24</sup>De Roo, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

chalchiuite, which she picked up; and through the virtue of this emerald she became miraculously pregnant.

Torquemada, relating still another version of the same original tradition, says, "The Mexicans knew of the visitation of the angel to Our Lady, but expressed it by a metaphor,—namely that something very white, similar to a bird's feather, fell from heaven, and a virgin bent down, picked it up, and hid it below her cincture, and she became pregnant of 'Huitzilopochtli,' or better 'Teo-Huitzilopochtli,' which name Borunda explains as meaning the Lord of the thorn or wound in the left side. It is always the same, . . . God the virgin's son."<sup>25</sup>

De Roo adds the following pertinent information:

... We have mentioned already the belief of the Chiapans, according to which the god Bacab was born of a virgin, Chibirias, who is now in heaven with him.

Sahagun relates that the Tlascaltecs designated one of their principal gods by the name of "Camaxtle," which means the Naked Lord. He was to them what Christ represents on the cross is to us, for they asserted that he was endowed with both the divine and the human natures and was born from a devout and holy virgin named "Coatlucue," who brought him forth without lesion of her virginity, on the mount Coatepeo de Tula. All this information, says Sahagun, was first given to the Toltecs by Quetzalcoatl.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to know that Tula means Bountiful;<sup>27</sup> and that the Book of Mormon tells of Christ's appearance to the inhabitants of ancient America in the land of Bountiful where he taught them all things pertaining to his gospel plan of salvation,<sup>28</sup> which fact agrees with Sahagun's statement regarding Quetzalcoatl.

Paul Gaffarel claimed that the Manica Indians of Brazil reported to the Catholic padres the following virgin-birth tradition of their "Fair God":

... a woman of accomplished beauty, who had never been wedded to man, gave birth to a most lovely child. This child, after growing up to man's estate, worked many wonders, raised the dead to life again, made the lame walk and the blind see. Finally having one day called together a great number of people, he ascended into the air and was transformed into the sun who enlightens this earth.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, it should be remembered that the central theme of the Book of Mormon is that Jesus Christ is the author of the plan of salvation

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 427-428.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>27</sup>Hunter and Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73, 58, 68, 122, 142, 188.

<sup>28</sup>1 Nephi 11:1-12.

<sup>29</sup>Paul Gaffarel, *Histoire de la Decouverte de P Amerique* (Paris, 1892), cited in De Roo, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-427.

and the Savior of the world, crucified and resurrected for the salvation of mankind; and the principal purpose in preserving the Nephites' ancient records was that they might come forth in the latter days "... to the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile that *Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations*—"<sup>30</sup> It should be recalled also that in all their teachings the holy prophets and teachers of righteousness in ancient America proclaimed a similar central theme to that recorded in the Book of Mormon. Effectively they proclaimed Jesus Christ, the "White Bearded God"—he who provided the gospel with its promised rewards for all mortals who will obey; and he who was crucified and broke the bands of death for every member of the human family.

All the Indian traditions presented in this article regarding Quetzalcoatl, the "Fair God," and many others not mentioned, some of which will be presented in later articles, show how effectively Jesus Christ was proclaimed to the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere in ancient times. Although an apostasy from the true gospel occurred, Indians in all parts of the Americas retained the basic doctrines pertaining to the life and mission of Jesus Christ—the "White Bearded God," generally known to the Indians in Meso-America as Quetzalcoatl.

(To be continued)

<sup>30</sup>"Preface," Book of Mormon.

#### A PRAYER FOR PEACE

By Gene Romolo

DEAR LORD, through whom alone comes brotherhood,  
Give stronger spiritual light to minds of men;  
That fighting irons be into plowshares wrought—  
That lusting greed for power be swept away.  
And in their place be that which has been sought  
By wisdom since there dawned the hours of day.

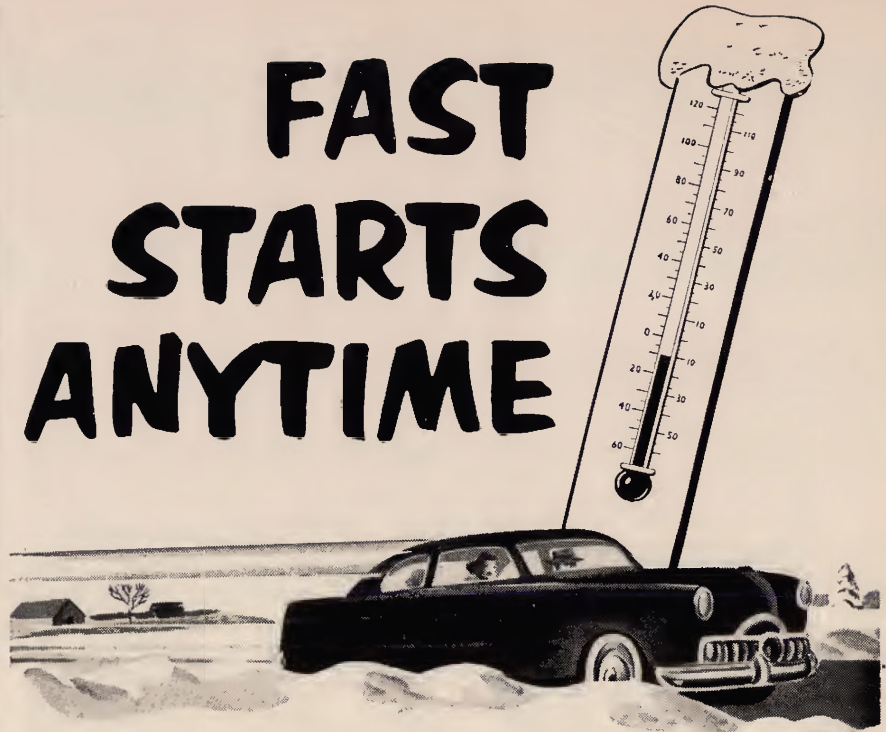
Not for peace at any price we plead!  
But peace that knows no aftermath of fear—

The perfect peace that only you bestow  
Who give of love to all life far and near.  
You who know, so well, our urgency—  
The need of all who share man's conflicts here,

Oh, help us quell base anarchy's increase,  
That once again our hearts may cradle peace!

—Amen.

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