



Type: Magazine Article

The Legend of Quetzalcoatl

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Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (4 January 1934)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 7, 11–13

Abstract: This article argues that legends of Quetzalcoatl bear great resemblance to the account of Christ's ministry to the Nephites.

13. *Kidnapped* - - - - - R. L. Stevenson
14. *The Life of the Bee* - - - - - M. Maeterlinck
15. *The Winning of Barbara Worth* - Harold Bell Wright
16. *Little Women* - - - - - Louise M. Allcott
17. *The Way to Perfection* - - Joseph Fielding Smith
18. *Added Upon* - - - - - Nephi Anderson
19. *The Pearl of Great Price* - - Standard Church Works
20. (Three plays selected from the following count as one book)

"Strife," "Escape," "The Silver Box," "The Fugitive," "The Skin Game," John Galsworthy. "St. Joan," "The Apple Cart," "Mrs. Warren's Profession," "The Man of Destiny," "Back to Methuselah," George Bernard Shaw.

You will notice from the list, that there has been provision made for readers of all ages; Bee-Hives, Gleaners, M Men, and adults should spend many happy hours among the varied colourful pages of the M. I. A. Reading Course. Such time, thus spent, is a process that "develops the gifts within us" in unlooked for ways. Let us all have this joy! Go to the nearest library at once, and begin!

THE LEGEND OF QUETZALCOATL

ELDER NORMAN C. PIERCE

[Readers of the "Star" will remember Quetzalcoatl (kate sal qua tl) as one of the deified personages mentioned in "Confirmatory Evidences of 'Mormonism'" in the issue of December 21st. Those whose interest in Quetzalcoatl was aroused, will find the following legend an interesting continuation. The author, a one-time student of the National University at Mexico City, has visited the ancient ruined cities in that locality, and is well qualified to discuss his subject.—THE EDITOR.]

WITHOUT doubt the most beautiful and authentic legend of all Indian folklore is that of "The Great White God With a Beard," the supreme deity of the Mexican Indians, Quetzalcoatl, who is the same deity known by different names among many Indian tribes throughout the continent and the islands.

Quetzalcoatl, according to the legend, visited the early inhabitants of Mexico and Central America. He appeared out of the East and was known as the god of the air and rain, that which made life to all possible. Quetzalcoatl means "Serpent decked with feathers," and this symbol of him is everywhere in evidence in Indian shrines, both ancient and modern. The legend relates that he was a high Priest of Tollan, and that he was a man with a white skin, a high stature, a broad forehead, large eyes, long black hair, and a bushy beard. For propriety's sake he always wore ample garments. A time came in his life when he was crucified and died for his people, his flesh was broken by arrows and spears—but he lived again! He was a god!

As stated, Quetzalcoatl came out of the East, and, although a deity, he dwelt among the common people and taught them the things they should know. He taught them virtue, penitence and fasting, and discouraged animal and human sacrifice; he showed them how to become skilled artisans, teaching them such things as metallurgy and agriculture. He gave freely of wisdom, and to those who had faith he granted immunity from distress and

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they believed that by this ablution they received purer nature, were protected against evil spirits and possible misfortunes. They held, moreover, that an unbaptized person, whether man or woman, could not lead a good life nor do anything well. (*History of America Before Columbus*, vol. 1, p. 467.)

From these various quotations that have come to us through historical research, it is evident that baptism was practised in America by various peoples. It is also evident that they understood baptism to be a "rebirth," cleansing them from sin and making possible a better life and salvation. But the source from whence the knowledge of such an ordinance, and its significance, came to the Indians is still a puzzle to historians.

Once more, however, Scripture holds the key. The Book of Mormon tells us that the meaning and mode of baptism was taught to the ancestors of the Indians by prophets of God (read 2 Nephi 9 : 22-24 ; Moroni 6 and 8), and, indeed, the Saviour during His visit to the Nephites gave the following instructions regarding baptism :

Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them . . . saying : Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And then shall ye immerse them in water, and come forth again out of the water. (3 Nephi 11 : 23-26.)

That baptism was practised in America before the Spaniards arrived there is evidence that the ordinance was given and explained to them at some previous time. Its importance in the religious life of the people is shown by the belief, in Yucatan, that it was necessary for salvation ; by the anxiety of the Cherokees to insure that baptism be performed ; and by the custom of the Mayas—that of waiting, as stated by Thompson, until the children reached an age of relative accountability before baptism. The dilemma in which the Catholic Fathers found themselves in trying to explain such a ritual among "savages" is solved by the Book of Mormon, which tells that the ancestors of the Indians were taught baptism by prophets of God, divinely commissioned to baptize, and also by Christ Himself.

The practice of baptism in America is another very striking evidence of the truth of the claims of the Book of Mormon, and a confirmatory evidence of "Mormonism."—FRANKLIN S. HARRIS, JR.

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cured their ills and afflictions. When he wished to promulgate a law, he sent a hero whose voice could be heard a hundred leagues away, to proclaim it from the summit of Tzatzitepetl ("mountain of clamors"). Even their calendar, that causes modern science to marvel, was attributed to him.

In Quetzalcoatl's time, according to the legend, maize attained such enormous dimensions that a single ear was all a man could carry. Gourds and melons measured not less than four feet, and it was no longer necessary to dye cotton, because all colours

were produced by nature. Indian corn, singing birds and birds of brilliant plumage abounded. All men were then rich. In a word, the general belief of all tribes is that the time of Quetzalcoatl's appearance was the Golden Age of their country. And while the country was at the height of its prosperity, he disappeared by way of the ocean, saying that it was the will of higher gods that he should betake himself to another kingdom. However, he charged his followers to tell the people that he would return some day with white men, bearded like himself, and rule the people in wisdom forever.

Through the ages they waited patiently and watched carefully for his coming while priests and soothsayers prophesied the event. Finally the prophecy was thought to be fulfilled when the Europeans first touched the shores of America and the Islands. The Indians of San Salvador saw the return of this Great White God With a Beard in the coming of Columbus, the Mexicans saw him in Cortez, the Hawaiians saw him in Cook, those of the Mississippi saw him in De Soto, while the Incas saw him in Pizarro—and all were sadly, grievously disappointed, as history clearly reveals.

IT is interesting to note how memory of Quetzalcoatl has been kept alive, even to this day. Everywhere beautiful temples were erected to this God, where, on periodic occasions, they would gather and have great feast in his honor. On the steps of the temple they would perform a colorful pageant depicting deaf, lame, blind and paralyzed people. These were prayed for before his image, whereupon they would enact a miracle. The dumb at once began to speak, the lame performed acrobatic feats, and the blind opened their eyes. Even effigies of him were crucified anew.

There was also a special religious order in which the individual who entered was dedicated to this God. In early infancy they were consecrated to Quetzalcoatl by being presented to the superior priest and receiving an incision in the breast. At the age of seven they entered a seminary, where, after first listening to a long moral discourse, they were exhorted to conduct themselves carefully, and to pray for the people and the nation.

Even to-day there are so many Mexicans who still believe in Quetzalcoatl, that he will even yet return and fulfill his promises, that the Mexican government declared that Quetzalcoatl must supplant the Anglicized Santa Clans as the Spirit of Christmas. And so, he it is, instead of Santa, who brings gifts to Mexican children, and reminds them that their forefathers had a white God whom they called Quetzalcoatl.

These legendary facts I gather from standard encyclopedia and the elaborate work of the eminent French archaeologist, Lucien Biart, in his book entitled, *The Aztecs*. Mr. Biart clinches his story by saying: "It is an incontestable fact that Quetzalcoatl created a new religion, based on fasting, penitence, and virtue; and certainly, he belonged to a race other than the one he civilized." The actual existence of this crucified God is further strengthened by the many stone crosses that have been found throughout Mexico and Peru. In fact, the presence of the cross, in the proportions of the Christian symbol, on so many Mexican monuments led early Catholic missionaries to believe that Christi-

anity had already been preached to the Indians, and St. Thomas was given the credit of having discovered America before Columbus.

A large stone cross was first noted at Vera Cruz (True Cross) where the Spaniards first settled, and from which they found immediate inspiration for a name, calling it "La Ciudad de la Vera Cruz (The City of the true cross)." Many more crosses were found throughout the land that gave strength to the St. Thomas belief until leading Catholic priests took it upon themselves to discourage the idea and to destroy all available evidences in support thereof.

Yet the beautiful legend of Quetzalcoatl still lives on, and the world at large is still in darkness regarding its true significance!

QUETZALCOATL IN THE SCRIPTURES

A Feathered Serpent idea: ". . . be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." (Matt. 10: 16.)

High priest of Tollan: ". . . the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." (Heb. 3: 1.)

A voice heard over a hundred leagues away from Tzatzitepetl (the mountain of clamors): ". . . they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven—it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice . . ." (3 Nephi 11: 3.)

Golden Age: ". . . And they had all things in common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor . . . And the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land." (4 Nephi 1: 3-7.)

He healed: ". . . Bring them hither, and I will heal them." (3 Nephi 17: 7.)

He left saying that it was the will of higher gods that he should betake himself to another kingdom: ". . . But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel." (3 Nephi 17: 4.)

He would return at a later day at the head of white bearded men like himself to dwell with them forever; ". . . I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven." (3 Nephi 28: 7.)

—*Improvement Era*, December, 1933.

MANCHESTER DISTRICT CONFERENCE

"TRUTH WILL PREVAIL" was the theme of the annual Fall Conference of the Manchester District held at the Co-operative Hall, Manchester, on December 3rd. The large, attentive audience of members and friends was gratifying to the District missionaries who had spent considerable time and effort preparing for the event. A beautiful spirit was manifest throughout the conference, and many were the expressions of appreciation at its close.

An interesting feature of the morning programme was the presentation of a lovely spray of flowers to Sister Rintha Pratt Douglas by the Sunday Schools of the District. Also several ten-minute talks were given by the traveling elders and by members of the local Church Auxiliaries, during which some interesting facts regarding the several departments of Church work were intelligently discussed.

The congregation was divided at the close of the morning session; the ladies, meeting under the direction of Sister Douglas, gave to her the semi-annual report of the District Relief Societies;