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Thoughts on the Indian Question

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Abstract: A reprint of an article from the *Young Woman's Journal*. Nicholson writes concerning the Indians, their lands, and Book of Mormon prophecies.

law to the Saints. In this does the principle of charity—the pure love of Christ—receive practical application, and without it, as Paul says, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, we are “as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

Subsequent to the Redeemer's visit to the Nephites, the people continued for many years to enjoy a heavenly peace. The sacred historian relates how “there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.” Marvelous works were wrought by the disciples of the Lord, the sick being healed, the dead raised, and all manner of miracles worked. There were no envyings, or strifes, or tumults among them, because of the love of God which dwelt in their hearts. In recording this glorious state of things, the Prophet, in the fulness of his rejoicing, exclaims, “Surely there could not have been a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God!” This was because they were one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

That which was possible with the Nephites eighteen centuries ago is possible with the Latter-day Saints, upon their conforming to the same principles. Such results are not attained by mortals in an instant, or with a breath, but require earnest effort and steadfast faith. As individuals we are far from being prepared for the condition here spoken of. But we know the means by which it was reached, and have the same gifts, authority and powers of the Gospel that the Nephites possessed. The position which they enjoyed is worth every effort to attain to. A very important step towards it, and one that brings its blessing with it, is that we “cease to find fault one with another,” and devote ourselves more energetically to laboring for the establishment of the love of God and of our neighbors in our hearts, to the exclusion of every opposing influence.

J. H. A.

RELEASES.—Elder Albert S. Reiser is honorably released from his labors as President of the North German Conference of the Swiss and German Mission, to return to his home in Salt Lake City.

Elder Samuel Datwyhler is honorably released from his labors as Traveling Elder in the Swiss and German Mission, to return home.

It is desirable that those who have correspondence with the Liverpool office of the European Mission keep, in their letters, financial matters distinct from doctrinal subjects, items pertaining to missionary work, etc. Every communication relating to business with this office should be directed to the President of the Mission. Presidents of Conferences are requested to call this to the special attention of those laboring under their direction.

THOUGHTS ON THE INDIAN QUESTION.

THE writer has been requested by the editor of the *Journal* to present in its columns some thoughts in relation to the remarkable religious movement among the Indians which has for some time agitated the whole

country. The central incentive of the interrogatory was to ascertain an individual opinion as to whether the manifestations claimed to have been witnessed by certain Indians were real or pretended, and—providing they had a foundation in fact—whether they emanated from a good or an evil source.

There can be little doubt as to the fact of the manifestations. As to their quality it appears to be, aside from a direct spiritual assurance, difficult to formulate a definite opinion.

As evidence favoring the theory that the Indians have seen what they affirm they have witnessed, and heard what they say they have listened to, it may be stated that, after what was asserted to be a thorough investigation, Gen. Brisbin and Gen. Miles both arrived at the conclusion that some of them certainly had seen a personage claiming to be the Savior. Some experienced and intelligent interpreters also stated that there was no room for doubt upon that point. It may be held that the opinion of the two military notables named was shaded by the fact that they also held the view that the personage the Indians imagined to be Christ was a "Mormon" Elder, the latter idea being a manifest absurdity. It should be remembered, however, that this ridiculous opinion was not based on evidence, while that in relation to the Indians having actually seen a being who announced he was Jesus was the result of testimony.

What some of the aborigines really claimed to have seen and heard must be fished out of an immense mass of rubbish, to which the public has been treated through the newspapers. The following seems to be the essence of it:

A personage who made his appearance professed to be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He had a father and mother in heaven, where he himself dwelt. He had been on the earth nearly nineteen hundred years ago and lived among the cousins of the Indians, across the great waters. He came at that time to save the white people, but instead of receiving him they abused and finally murdered him by hanging him upon a cross, to which he was fastened by driving spikes through his hands and feet. The soldiers who did this also thrust a spear into his side, and he still retained in his body, which was brought to life again, the evidences of this treatment. In proof of this he showed the marks left by the spikes in his palms, and to some he also exhibited similar scars on his wrists. He informed those whom he addressed that he had a special solicitude for the red men, who were his children. They had been oppressed and abused by the whites until their extinction was threatened, and he would in time rescue them from this fate by personal intervention. They would be restored to the ownership of the land, and their white enemies should be destroyed. He also informed his hearers that in due time their fathers, who had been long dead and buried, should be brought to life again and mingle with them, when all would be peace and prosperity. He taught them some of the leading precepts of Christianity, such as, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not bear false witness," etc. Although this personage addressed representatives of many tribes speaking different tongues, all understood him perfectly. When information

on this last point reached General Miles, it was announced that he expressed the opinion that there were more than one "Mormon" Elder engaged in personating the Savior; also that they had mutilated their bodies for the purpose of exhibiting the marks of the nails and of the spear wound.

Besides what is related above, many absurd things of a sensational character are claimed to have been witnessed by Indians. Any thing of that nature would not, however, affect the quality of the good and true they may have experienced. It has been demonstrated in connection with the dealings of God with mankind that a special exhibition of divine power superinduces a manifestation of the energies of evil. From this standpoint the opposition and ridicule hurled against the Indians because of the existence of what has been called the "Messiah craze" are by no means an argument against the possibility of the position of the Indians being correct.

The quality of the teachings involved and their effect upon those who accepted them as correct ought to be considered in this question. The instructions were moral, and even scriptural, enjoining a reformation of conduct. They included a conception, to some extent, of the resurrection and millennium, together with the advent of Christ. These points are in unison with the orthodox Christian belief. These instructions have produced what has the appearance of a wide-spread and deep-seated belief in the true Christ—He who was crucified at Calvary nearly nineteen hundred years ago. So strong is this trust in the Redeemer that some of those who imbibed it asserted that if they received a message to the effect that they were to go to any designated spot to see him, even if the distance to be traveled should be hundreds of miles, they would cheerfully undertake the journey without preparation for it. They felt confident that Christ would provide for all their wants in the time of need.

The late Sitting Bull, whose sad fate shocked all sympathetic people, was evidently strongly imbued with faith in the Savior. This was evinced by his offer to agent McLaughlin. He said in substance: "If you will go with me to all the points where this belief in Messiah exists and trace it to its source, and if those who claim to have seen Christ do not produce the proper proofs to sustain their statements, I will agree to give the matter up." In place of accepting this very reasonable proposition, the agent sent police and soldiery to arrest the noted Indian, and the balance is known—the chief was assassinated. He comes very near, if not quite, being a Christian martyr.

Without expressing any opinion as to whether or not the Indians, in the first place, actually saw and heard what they say they did, it may be said with safety that Satan is not engaged in working up a belief in the only true Redeemer. His chief business seems always to have been to harden the hearts of men against a faith of that character.

An investigation of the Book of Mormon and other revelations leads to the conclusion that they contain no direct statement to the effect that the remnants would receive the personal ministrations of the Savior until after they should be gathered to the place of the New Jerusalem. The

Savior, speaking to the Nephites in relation to that time, said: "And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst." (Book of Mormon, page 529.) There is, however, nothing in what has been revealed and published that the writer has discovered that would conflict with a previous personal ministration of the Savior, who made the most extraordinary promises to the Nephite fathers concerning the degenerate remnants of the latter times.

It would be safe to regard, in these times, any special religious phenomenon among the Indians as a part of the preparation of the Lord for the fulfilment of the covenant of God with ancient Israel—to gather all the remnants in from their long dispersion. In His personal ministry among the Nephites the Savior named a sign that would indicate the operation of preparatory work of the Father—when the Gospel should be declared among the remnants on this land, and they should begin to believe in Jesus Christ. (See Book of Mormon, pages 122 and 527 to 529, inclusive.)

The sign of the preparatory work of the Father exists. Some of the remnants on this land have begun to believe. Note also the work accomplished among people of the same race on the Sandwich Islands, the Samoan group and New Zealand. In connection with the work of preparation instituted among all nations, looking to the fulfilment of the covenant with ancient Israel, it is a significant fact that a resting-place for the millions of Jews who are soon to be driven out of Russia will before long be a question demanding solution. No nation desires them, and the probability is that Palestine will be fixed upon as the latter-day rendezvous for the descendants of the holy people.

There is one peculiarity which has been a notable feature of the claims of certain Indians to having been the recipients of what may be termed supernatural ministrations. There has been no assertion of authority to perform any of the ordinances belonging to the true Christian Church. The teachings appear to have been exclusively preceptorial. Had there been any attempt of that character it would have been a strong indication that these poor people were being subjected to a Satanic delusion. If by the phenomenal movement which has for some time been operating amongst them they are in a better condition than previously, to subsequently receive and act upon the fulness of the Gospel, it may be reasonably regarded as a part of the Father's preparation for that which is to come.

Among the blessings yet to be conferred upon the remnants of Jacob is "one" to be raised up to them of their own number. (See Book of Mormon, page 67.) He will be mighty and powerful, and will accomplish much connected with the restoration of the remnants.

The idea imbibed by the Indians, through their late religious movement, in relation to their future ownership of the soil, is in unison with the record of their forefathers. (See page 514.) The Savior, speaking to the ancients on this topic, said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus hath the Father commanded me, that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance."

It may be justly stated that the main object of the editor of the *Journal* in submitting the question which led to the penning of this article has not been attained. What appeared to be desired was a definite expression of a specific individual opinion as to the merits of the supernatural ministrations a number of Indians recently claimed they had received. The reason for this omission is that an opinion upon an important subject should be formed with great care, and even after it is entertained it is not always proper to give it expression.—*John Nicholson, in Young Woman's Journal.*

FLOGGING A WOMAN TO DEATH.

AMONG the numerous "secret combinations" that exist in the United States, and with which the officers of the law seem averse to dealing, is an organization known as the "White Caps." This title arose from the fact that at the outset the members of the band were masked with white caps drawn over the features when they were out on their depredatory excursions. They began ostensibly to "regulate" those cases which should have received the attention of the officers of the law. Then they went farther, and applied their brutal mob rule to whoever was known to be adverse to their unlawful course. Residents in different parts of the States have been severely whipped and tortured, and in several instances death has followed. They spared neither sex nor condition in their fiendish work. So strong have they become in some sections of the States, that the people seem to be terrorized, and dare not take an active part in suppressing them, for fear their lives will be endangered.

Indiana is where this unlawful band does most of its work. This State, by the way, is the home of Mr. Harrison, President of the United States, who in his late message to Congress advised the further deprivation of the Latter-day Saints of political rights, because of their religious belief. But he had not a word to say against the Indiana White Caps, a sample of whose work is related in a dispatch from New Albany, Indiana, dated, Feb. 1, as follows: "One of the most horrible outrages that has been committed by the infamous White Caps of Harrison and Crawford counties occurred last night about thirty miles southwest of this city. Jacob Perew, a poor but laborious and upright farmer, had gone to Leavenworth, the county seat of Crawford county, to visit his aged father, who was ill, leaving his wife and four small children at their humble home, and intending to remain away all night.

"This was on the morning of the 30th. At midnight of that date a gang of twenty masked men rode up to the rude dwelling, and dismounting, marched into the yard and up to the door, and demanded admission. Mrs. Perew had retired and refused to open the door. Then the White Caps, after firing several shots from their revolvers, procured a rail and with it battered down the door and entered the house.

"Mrs. Perew had left her bed, as had her four little children, and when the savage brutes entered the children were clinging in terror to their mother, weeping and begging piteously that the men would not hurt