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WAS THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE A HEAVENLY INSPIRATION?

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From a "Mormon" standpoint, we answer most emphatically in the affirmative.

In arriving at this conclusion, we have gone back to the very earliest history of the land of America, and considered the purposes of our Father concerning this land, and also traced his peculiar providence in relation thereto.

It is with reluctance that the historian of our day goes back only as far as the year 986 A. D., and gives a somewhat doubtful credit to Herjulfson as being the first to discern, by accident, Newfoundland or Labrador. Fourteen years later, it is said that Leif Erickson, a noted Icelandic sailor, in order to learn the truth of Herjulfson's report, sailed westward and landed at Labrador. He continued his explorations along the Atlantic coast until he reached the present New York harbor.

Thorvald and Thorstein, brothers of Leif, also Thorfinn, a noted mariner, and others, made occasional voyages up to as late a period as the fourteenth century, and explored the Atlantic coast, some of them going as far south as the capes of Virginia.

Nothing of importance, however, seems to have resulted from their discoveries. It remained for Christopher Columbus to startle all Europe by the discovery of the New World. For the time had not arrived until then, 1492 A. D., according to the purposes of the Almighty, and, I may add, the decree of heaven, that the Western Continent should be opened up to the white races of the earth, and its limitless advantages attract the attention of the whole civilized world. Although the most diligent search has been made for the history of this western world, as also its strange people, yet no reliable history could be found. We are led to ask, Is it possible that a people, in almost every part of whose land have been discovered the surest evidences of a past civilization and refinement, exceeding in some respects the attainments of the white races of mankind today, should be without a written history? Every person of enlightenment would give but one answer to the question: It seems incredible.

Like Columbus' discovery, it remained for the prophet of the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith, under the direction of heaven, to dig from the earth that history; for it had been hidden therein, in a chosen spot, by the direct command of God; and by his appointed agents had been preserved, until the Lord's time for its coming forth had fully arrived. It is not at all strange that the latter-day prophet, in translating this sacred record dug from the hill Cumorah, should discover many things which Judah's record (the Bible) intimates, but leaves somewhat in obscurity, especially those passages which relate to this continent. It is not strange, either, that he should make diligent enquiry from that source of true information, to which he had unlimited access, as to the missing links, in order to make the historical chain of this choice land complete. Nor is it any wonder that upon receiving answer thereto that he should make the astounding statement, and that, too, without any qualification whatever, that here, upon the continent of America, was the first home of man. That the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve communed freely with the Holy One, was here. That here Adam fell. That Enoch's Zion was here. That here Noah built the ark. That with Noah began the peopling of other lands.

We will quote now from the sacred record as translated by

Joseph Smith. About two thousand years B. C., at the time of the confusion of tongues and the scattering of the people, a man by the name of Jared, his brother, and their families, under the direction and guidance of heaven, migrated to man's primitive home—America. They dwelt here for many centuries; but, in consequence of their continued wickedness, they were finally exterminated. Their records were found by the Nephites, whose forefather, Lehi, about six hundred years B. C., was commanded by God to leave Jerusalem, with his family and others, and take up their line of March to the promised land. This colony landed on the western coast of South America. The American Indian of today is a small remnant of this Lehi family, who, at one time, numbered millions of people, as did the people of Jared.

The decree of heaven concerning this land from the beginning was, that whatsoever nation or people should possess it, they should serve God, or they would be swept off, when they were "ripened in iniquity."

How literally was this accomplished in Noah's day! Also in the utter extinction of the people of Jared; as well as fulfilled in the destruction of the Nephites and Lamanites. That decree is not abrogated in the least degree, but shall remain in force, and will continue until the end of time.

Further, the Lord said to the brother of Jared: Whatsoever nation shall possess this land shall be free from bondage and captivity, and from all other nations under heaven. Fifteen hundred years later, when speaking to Nephi of the Gentiles occupying this land, he says: And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, for I will fortify it against all other nations. (See II Nephi 10: 11, 12.)

From the above quotation, and others of a similar character, which might be given, we conclude that North and South America has a manifest destiny, requiring a peculiar fitness on the part of those who inhabit it, and that a special providence has hitherto guarded with a jealous care, and will continue so to do, every purpose of the Almighty concerning this land.

Two thousand years before Columbus made his discovery, the Prophet Nephi says that he saw "a man among the Gentiles who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters;"

that the Spirit of God came down and wrought upon this man, "and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land." This evidently was Columbus; although he did not recognize, much less acknowledge, any divine inspiration. He only desired to demonstrate his pet theory, that of circumnavigation. But, nevertheless, he was God's chosen servant to accomplish a certain defined purpose, which he did, though unknown to himself. Nephi also saw that "the Spirit of God wrought upon other Gentiles," they following to this promised land. He further says that the Spirit of the Lord was upon these Gentiles, that they prospered upon the land, that they were "white and exceeding fair." This also was literally fulfilled.

He beheld that their mother Gentiles came against them to battle; but they were delivered by the power of God out of the hand of all other nations. This evidently refers to Great Britain in the onslaught she made upon the American colonies, for England was certainly their mother.

We have now come to the memorable 1776, the very time when should be put to the test the prophetic utterances of Nephi, more than two thousand years ago, as to the intervention of heaven in behalf of the people (Gentiles) who were oppressed beyond further endurance, and that, too, by a kingly power, which heaven had decreed should not rule upon this land. We confidently assert that under the inspiration of heaven, at this supreme moment, was formulated that immortal instrument, the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming to the entire world, but England more particularly, that the United Colonies had absolved themselves from all allegiance to the British crown, and that henceforth they were free and independent states.

I presume that Thomas Jefferson, who penned (with the exception of a few interlinings by Franklin and Adams) the memorable document, would claim no special heavenly inspiration in its preparation, although, as stated in the document itself, heaven was relied upon to support them in the accomplishment of this noble resolve. Nor would the signers of the Declaration acknowledge that they were influenced by any particular heavenly inspiration, but rather that the twenty-seven valid reasons contained in the document was the

only incentive which called forth their action. Neither did King Nebuchadnezzar know, as nation after nation yielded to his military prowess, that God had declared by the voice of the Prophet Jeremiah that all nations should serve this wicked king, whom God called his "servant," when at the zenith of his greatness as the world's conqueror, God compelled him, because of his boastful arrogance, to dwell for a long time with the beasts of the field. It was only after this humiliation that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged and honored the King of heaven. Many others, and even wicked men, all unconscious to themselves, have been employed as agents to accomplish certain purposes of our Father.

But to return to our subject proper. By this Declaration of Independence a conflict was invoked that must terminate in liberty, or bondage worse than death. That heavenly agents watched carefully every move during that memorable conflict, need not be questioned; and that although more than one defeat was met with by the gallant men who composed the American army; and although disasters many were added to defeats. Also, in addition, the credit of Congress gone, the national treasury bankrupt, the army ill-fed, ill-clad and unpaid. And while pitted against millions of money, and more than a quarter million of well-disciplined marines and troops; yet victory came at last, after six years of the most desperate struggle. A victory of far greater value, and more highly prized (because so dearly bought) than it would have been if without a struggle the goal had been reached. All was controlled, suffered and consummated by the unseen hand of a divine Providence.

Will the people of America—Gentiles as we are named in the text quoted—serve the God of this land, in order that they may continue to possess it? or will they jeopardize their national existence, as well as their individual existence, by iniquitous practices?

These are questions pertinent to the subject before us. I make bold to assert that no outside nation, nor combination of nations, will ever achieve a national conquest on this soil. If disruption and disintegration should ever occur, they will come from internal sources, and not from a foreign foe. And if that comes—which heaven forbid—one cause, and one cause only will produce the wreck.

It was God who established this nation by divine inspiration.

He it was who defended it against a powerful foe. It is he who has sustained it up to the present. Let us see to it that we offend him not by a "ripened iniquity."

A DREAM.

(*For the Improvement Era.*)

I dreamed I saw two fair young lives
Come from the throne of Grace;
They took upon them mortal mould,
Each fair of form and face.

One winged its flight to stately halls;
One, to a lowly cot.
One chose the joys and wealth of earth,
And one the pauper's lot.

I saw the two walk side by side,
Through childhood's flowery gate;
I saw the two emerge at last
To manhood's fair estate.

And he who sought the stately halls
A life of pleasure led;
But he who chose the lonely cot,
Toiled for his daily bread.

Unfair, I thought, that one should have
All wealth and power by birth:
Forgetting there are greater things,
Than powers and pelf of earth.

The scene changed to a justice court:
The judge, the pauper mild;
But he who stood to answer guilt,
Was fortune's pampered child.

And then I saw that God was just,
That all his deeds are right;
That oftentimes the brightest day,
Succeeds the darkest night.—*W. S. Phillips.*

Weston, Idaho.