



Type: Magazine Article

Regarding Joseph Smith's Mission

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 29, No. 10 (October 1926), pp. 1163–1167

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

Abstract: The prophet Joseph Smith was the instrument through which the Book of Mormon was produced. The gospel of Jesus Christ was revealed through the mind of Joseph in modern scripture—the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. These scriptures are new witnesses for God.

REGARDING JOSEPH SMITH'S MISSION

BY L. VALESS DEWEY, M. A.

It is quite natural, and at the same time highly commendable, that the M. I. A. should adopt as its slogan for 1926 a thesis standing for an individual testimony of the divine mission of Joseph Smith. It is equally logical, and to the credit of the M. I. A., that this thesis, or slogan, should follow that of the year 1925, in which the divinity of Jesus Christ was emphasized. For, to the mind of a Latter-day Saint, the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith comes second only in importance to, and follows naturally, the divinity of Jesus Christ. It is the purpose of this article, then, to examine, somewhat, this latter thesis, or M. I. A. slogan for the year 1926.

The writer proposes to suggest six studies, or lines of thought, tending to show that the mission of Joseph Smith was divine and has been vindicated as such. Necessarily, these thoughts, or divisions, will have to be brief; for lack of space. As a matter of fact, many volumes could be written, and will be written, without exhausting the subject. For what subject can be exhausted when divinity is connected with it?

Reasonable Claims Presented in the First Vision

These claims were in substance: (1) That God had spoken again from the heavens; and (2) that Jesus Christ promised, or at least suggested, a near future restoration of the fulness of the gospel. Preposterous claims! Not at all. Who shall dare say, as he looks back through the history of the nineteenth century that God did not need to speak from the heavens? Surely there was never a time when religious leaders and followers alike were so hopelessly confused regarding Biblical teaching and Christian doctrine as in the year 1820. To the justification of, "Lo, here is Christ! and lo there!" none could give a satisfactory answer, *God did need to speak*. And, since the religious world was in confusion, how could the truth be established without a restoration from heaven? Granting that the New Testament contains the "word of the gospel"—which is not wholly true—what about the power back of the written word; namely, the Priesthood, or the right to officiate in God's stead? Protestants candidly admitted that it had been lost. Roman Catholics confessed that many of their popes had been wicked men. How could the Priesthood thus have continued through the ages? The true church *did* need to be restored from heaven.

Challenges From the Life of Joseph Smith

To use this latter-day prophet's own language, he was only a "rough stone" when the Lord's "chisel and hammer" began to be

used upon him. He had little or no worldly education. Yet, the Book of Mormon came forth while he was still a very young man; and though the world has tried to prove that a Reverend Spaulding really wrote it, their attempts have come to naught. If the Lord was not his teacher, then who accomplished this thing? Did Joseph turn to the wily and cunning arts of the world that he might accomplish his remarkable and wonderful work? Verily, no; for was he not arrested in New York state, mobbed in Ohio, imprisoned in Missouri, and murdered in Illinois?—yet nowhere and at no time was he found guilty of a crime or misdemeanor which would justify a legal sentence.

Some Outstanding Statements of Belief

When a newspaper man asked Joseph Smith for a statement of the belief of his people, the Prophet offered a very comprehensive summing up of "Mormonism," so-called, in thirteen short articles. Let us consider just a few of them. Article 1 (plus additional comments and teachings of Joseph Smith) clears up one of the most baffling creed-problems of the so-called Christian world. Herein is set forth God, the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son, and God, the Holy Ghost, as separate and distinct personalities working together as one. Article 3 insists that "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel" are entirely necessary to salvation. This insistence on "good work" has since been copied, or made use of, by most of the Christian denominations. Article 6 suggests an elaborate church organization like unto that of the "primitive church," all of which stands as a monument in the Restored Church today, declared by world critics to be a very remarkable system. And this, too, came through the mind of Joseph Smith, revealed by God from heaven. Article 10 gives to the world the most inclusive religious platform that has been heard of since the days of Christ's ministry in the flesh. What a stupendous outline of activity for the true followers of Christ! A "literal gathering of Israel!" A "restoration of the Ten Tribes!" (The lost tribes of Israel.) The building of a Zion, or New Jerusalem, on the American continent. (Along with a similar building of Jerusalem on the eastern continent.) The *personal* reign of Christ upon the earth! And the renewal or celestializing of the earth! Be it remembered that such conceptions came from the mind of Joseph Smith in response to the query of a newspaper man. How, then, can we say that the mission of the "Mormon" Prophet was but that of an uninspired man?

Teachings From Books Through the Mind of Joseph Smith

The Book of Mormon has been called a new witness for God. Joseph Smith also gave to the world two other witnesses in *The Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*. We shall consider a few teachings from these volumes; and let the reader bear in mind as we proceed that Joseph Smith insisted that God gave the contents of these volumes to him; *i. e.*, made it possible for his mind to give them to the world. Lest there should be any doubt concerning the

above statement, let the reader be referred to Section 67 of *The Doctrine and Covenants*. In this section we read the following challenge issued by Joseph Smith—or by the Lord through Joseph Smith, as you will see—in unmistakable terms: “Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you; or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true; but if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true.” It is needless to say that a similar statement would hold for *The Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price* as is given above for the book of commandments or *The Doctrine and Covenants*.

Now as to a few of the teachings of these volumes. In *The Pearl of Great Price* we have suggestions of a philosophy of life, the like of which the world had never heard; namely, that spirits (the spirits of men) “notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal.” (“Book of Abraham,” Ch. 3:18.) Likewise, we read in the *Doctrine and Covenants*: “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.” (Sec. 93:29.) More than this, we have the purpose of man’s existence defined; for in *The Book of Mormon* we read: “And men are, that they might have joy.” (II Nephi 2:25.) What philosopher or theologian, I ask, has ever advanced a philosophy of life so definite and beautiful? Now, let us add to the above another system of thought from the same volumes: “The glory of God is intelligence,” says Joseph Smith. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 93:36.) And again, “It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.” (Sec. 131:6.) In other words, man is saved as he gains knowledge. But, according to translation by Joseph Smith, this gaining of knowledge continues throughout eternity. “And they who keep their first estate (pre-existent life) shall be added upon; * * * and they who keep their second estate (earth life) shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever.” (*Pearl of Great Price*, “Book of Abraham,” Ch. 3:26.) Truly, then, there is no end to advancement and glory in the eternal worlds! What think you of Joseph Smith? May we not say with the critics of old—*What manner of man is this?*

But the foregoing are only a few hints of philosophy. Now a few words regarding Joseph Smith as scientist. In 1833, this remarkable teacher announced from the Lord that “the elements are eternal.” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 93:33.) This has been, in recent years, recognized as a scientific truth. In 1831, the “Mormon” Prophet published to the world a statement that the earth was “organized” and “formed.” (Not created in the sense of making something out of nothing.) (*Pearl of Great Price*, “Book of Abraham,” Ch. 4:1.) This is also established as a scientific fact today. As for the heavens,

we read from Joseph Smith: "And there is no space in which there is no kingdom." Also: "And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets." Again: "And the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God." All this was given to the world in 1832, (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 88) and is accepted as scientific belief today, though it was not at that time. Finally, on the side of the more practical and useful science, we read an announcement from Joseph Smith, dated 1833, in which he declares that alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea, coffee, and hot-drinks are not good for man. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 89.) Again the "Mormon" prophet is many years in advance of his time. How shall we explain these things? Did they just happen to come true? *What think ye of Joseph Smith? Whose prophet is he?*

Prophecies Which Might Have Failed

The attention of the reader is called to five predictions from Joseph Smith which might well have failed. There are many others. 1. In the year 1832, with a "verily, thus saith the Lord," Joseph Smith made clear and definite predictions concerning the American Civil War, and the World War of 1914. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 87.) These predictions have been fulfilled to the letter. 2. A prophecy from the Book of Mormon: "And this land (America) shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles." (II Nephi 10:11.) The announcement was given to the world in the year 1830, and has been fulfilled to date. 3. In the year 1842, Joseph Smith prophesied that the Latter-day Saints would go to the Rocky Mountains and become a mighty people. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 85.) Four years later the first part of this prediction was fulfilled; and the second part is still in the course of fulfilment. 4. The "Mormon" Prophet tells us that in 1823 (when he was but seventeen years of age) a heavenly messenger announced that his (Joseph Smith's) name should be had for "good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues." This prophecy (*Pearl of Great Price*, "Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith," par. 33), has already been very largely fulfilled. 5. A few years before his death, Joseph Smith declared: "It shall yet be said of me—He was murdered in cold blood." (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 135:4.) Such an attitude toward the martyrdom of the "Mormon" Prophet is growing rapidly today. Think for a moment! *Any one of the above prophecies might have failed.* Certainly the probabilities were very strong that they would fail. Yet they did not. And how shall we account for the fact?

"Mormonism" Vindicates Joseph Smith

The writer desires, in closing, to mention a few points of

vindication by "Mormonism" itself of this modern prophet. When, in 1837, it was made known by Joseph Smith to his followers that a "Mormon" mission was to be opened in England, the plan seemed, to the casual observer, to be a preposterous one. Yet the missionaries whom the Prophet sent "across the great waters" hesitated not a moment, went "without purse and scrip," and accomplished a mighty work—converting their thousands in a few short years. Again, of the eleven men whose names appear on the fly leaf of *The Book of Mormon*, testifying to the divinity of that record, though several of them later became out of harmony with Joseph Smith, and though some of them actually left the Church, *yet not one ever denied his testimony that The Book of Mormon was divinely inspired, and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God.* Yet again, that modern Moses, Brigham Young, who did such a remarkable work as a pioneer leader of the Latter-day Saints in the Rocky Mountains, always insisted that he was but a follower of Joseph Smith, the humble instrument in the hands of Almighty God, and the first great prophet of the latter days. Finally, what is that spirit which burns in the heart and life of every devout Latter-day Saint today—that desire to proclaim and to carry the Restored Gospel to the world, to build up Zion, yea, even to have part in the building up of the great center stake of Zion in Jackson county, Missouri? It is a testimony of the divinity of the latter-day work, known to the world as "Mormonism." But particularly it is more than that: It is a vindication of the divine and prophetic mission of Joseph Smith.

Provo, Utah.

The Tempest

The clouds hung low in the western sky,
 The wind blew a furious gale
 That tore the branches of the trees,
 And the leaves fell thick with the hail.

Those clouds were a tumbling, twisting mass,
 As nearer and nearer they came;
 The earth grew dark, and the lightning flashed,
 And there was a torrent of rain.

Uprooted trees, and barns turned o'er,
 Electric wires were down;
 Destruction wrought on every hand
 Throughout that country town,

Where, but an hour ago, peace reigned,
 All seemed secure from harm;
 Our trust must rest in God alone,
 Who ruleth o'er the storm.

Mesa, Arizona.

IDA R. ALLDREDGE.