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## Thoughts on the Indian Question

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**Abstract:** Writes concerning the Native Americans, their lands, and Book of Mormon prophecies.

## CURRENT ISSUES.\*

## THOUGHTS ON THE INDIAN QUESTION.

JOHN NICHOLSON.

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. Brisbane 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 made his appearance who 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

\*In this department will be contributions from our leading men.

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 effects 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 professed 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 fulfillment 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 the 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 fulfillment 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 pre-ceptorial. 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 fullness 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.

## ◁ THE WORLD ▷

### AS SEEN THROUGH A WOMAN'S EYES.

A SUCCESSFUL WOMAN'S CLUB—FOREIGN—INDUSTRIAL—LITERARY—A HINDOO LADY PHYSICIAN—THE SOCIETY FOR POLITICAL STUDY—CHARITABLE—MISS DREXEL'S GREAT WORK—CO-OPERATIVE.

LUCY PAGE STELLE.

#### A Successful Woman's Club.—

THE honor of being the oldest literary society for women in America is claimed by the Ladies' Library Association of Kalamazoo, Michigan. It was founded in 1852, when the state was young and the town in its infancy, when men were clearing lands and building homes for their families, then a band of earnest women met and discussed the question, "How can we furnish intellectual food for ourselves and our children in this new land?" Being from homes where these tastes were inculcated, they wanted books and lectures; but books were scarce, lectures scarcer, and money, alas! scarcest of all. It was necessary therefore for united and organized effort to secure results, and these earnest women were

working for themselves and their children.

The prompt organization of a society whose objects were the establishment and maintenance of a circulating library and for the promotion of literary taste in the town, began from that day, and for a period of nearly forty years the association has been in active operation.

Political and sectional questions have not disturbed it. Moral and social reforms and associated charities have grown up around them, and found adherents among its members; but the association has held aloof, having only its own aims and purposes in view. And it numbers to-day 180 members, in its own beautiful home, surrounded by books, pictures and statuary; a verification of the power of organized effort and the excellence of a single aim.

Let us see how these women began. The first imperative need was for books. A modest, little collection of about fifty volumes, most of them presented