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The Gospel to the Lamanites IX–XII

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Abstract: This series traces the origin, Book of Mormon prophecies regarding, subsequent conditions of, and ultimate destiny of the Lamanites. The ninth through twelfth parts cover the current disposition of the Lamanites.

The Gospel to the Lamanites

BY REY L. PRATT, PRESIDENT OF THE MEXICAN MISSION

IX—Hope for the Lamanites Almost Gone

The Spanish conquerors, in their conquests, went forth with the sword in one hand and the cross in the other, and they considered that they were doing God's will by waging a holy war, as well as a war of conquest. They were as zealous to convert the subjects of the empires they encountered to the Catholic church as they were to make them political subjects of their king. Their right to conquest might be said to have been granted to them by the Holy See, and with it came the obligation, in their minds, to save the souls of those conquered from eternal perdition, by bringing them into the church, whether by fair means or foul.

The Inquisition, the abominable scheme that has done more to retard human progress than any other ever inspired by the devil and put into practice by his agents here on earth, was brought to bear in all its horrors to force the conversion of the conquered race. Thousands of those of spirit met with the most horrible deaths, at the hands of their cruel torturers, rather than renounce their own religion and accept that of their hated conquerors. But the pressure brought to bear was too great for the nation in general, and resulted in their conversion, which, though compulsory, has been none the less lasting, for even to this day the power of the Catholic church is almost supreme in the hearts of the people that received it under the iron pressure of the Spanish conquerors.

With their lands in the hands of the rich, privileged class, descendants of the adventurous Spanish conquerors, and their souls and consciences in the hands and at the mercy of that great and abominable church, the whore of the whole earth, seen and spoken of by Nephi, the Lamanites of today are indeed in a pitiable condition. Robbed and exploited and made slaves of, by the former, they are none the less robbed and exploited by the latter. Not an ordinance nor a rite of their religion is administered unto them without they pay the officiating priest for the performance of it. The priest will hold over them the horrors of the awful hell into which their children will be hurled unless they are baptized, but will persistently refuse to perform the ordinance unless the baptismal fee is forthcoming, even from the poorest and most

humble. The same may be said of marriage, and of the performance of the last, sad rites for their dead. I have known priests to refuse a resting place in the burying grounds of the church, outside of which no true Catholic would think of burying his dead, to those whose relatives could not raise the money necessary to pay the priest for performing the rites of the burial. The people are taught to be doubly sinners by being made to believe that if they can only get the necessary money together to pay the priest, there is no sin for which they cannot obtain forgiveness, and that, too, no matter how many times it may be repeated. They are taught to make great pilgrimages to little chapels and churches, away off in remote parts of the country, where some saint is supposed to have performed some miracle, or where the Savior is supposed to be buried, and that by so doing they gain divine favor, and get absolution from all their sins, past, present, and future; provided, they take enough money and candles along with them as offerings to the saint or Savior. I have seen whole families go hundreds of miles, bare-footed and in rags, carrying costly wax candles, sometimes weighing eight or ten pounds, and which, in many cases, represent the value of all their earthly belongings that were sold before they left home to buy these same candles to burn at the shrine of the saints in whose honor they are making the pilgrimage. The candles are lighted at the shrines, all right, but trust to the priest in charge of the church to see to it that they are not burned up there, because wax is costly and valuable, and these candles may be sold to other pilgrims who may want divine favor, and the coffers of the priests may be the fuller because of the oft-repeated selling of the same candle. All of these are only means by which the church drags out of the poor victims what the landholders have not been able to squeeze out of them; and, as a result, they are a people so bowed down, so trodden upon, and so *smitten* by the Gentiles, that they have almost ceased to hope.

This brief description of conditions that have existed and that do now exist, in Mexico, may be said to describe very well conditions throughout all Latin America.

X—Scattered and Smitten by the Gentiles

History records that at the beginning of the conquest of the proud Incas of Peru, by the Spaniards, under Pizarro, they numbered six millions, and that fifty years after the conquest there had perished, according to a canon gotten up by the order of Philip II, in the year 1580, more than two millions of the Indians of that empire. "When Peru gained her independence," says a reliable historian, "she had lost nine-tenths of her inhabitants. Of the six millions that she had at the coming of the Spaniards,

according to a census taken at the order of Viceroy Gil y Lemos, in the year 1795, there only remained six hundred and eight thousand, eight hundred and ninety-nine."

The kingdoms of Guatemala, comprising most of what is now known as Central America, had a population, at the coming of the Spaniards, of over three millions of people, and, according to a census taken in the year 1810, there only remained, of the native population, six hundred and forty-six thousand seventy-six souls. It is said by good authority (Antonio Batares Jauregui, Autor de *Los Indios, Su Historia y Su Civilizacion*) that at the end of the eighteenth century, the native people, of the countries of America that had been conquered by Spain, had been reduced to one-tenth their number at the coming of the Spanish conquerors.

The Lamanites were the kings and rulers of the whole of the Americas, but oh, how literally have they been "scattered and smitten by the Gentiles!" Today they are a smitten and an orphan people "counted as nought" by the Gentiles; brought so low that they have even forgotten their past glories. A race without spirit, because they have lost all hope; yes, you might say, even their desires for liberty! Utterly crushed and broken in spirit, in utter abandon, they have given themselves up to die rather than live, if they only could, but alas, death, it seems, could not come to relieve them of their terrible afflictions, so they have carried them with them through near four long centuries of agonies.

It is said of the Arab that when he discovers that his faithful camel, that has carried him across the desert, has lost its strength and that its last hour has come, he draws from his belt his long dagger and drives it into the heart of his faithful beast as a reward for its faithful services. But in America there is another custom: When the tired horse cannot take another step over the parched and sandy desert, he is left behind, abandoned in that horrible solitude, to die of hunger and thirst, with the hungry vultures swishing over his head, scarce waiting till life is extinct to begin their horrid repast.

Such has been the fate of the Indian. As a race, he has had no dagger-thrust to end his suffering and misery, but instead four long centuries of heartless persecution and degradation at the hands of his enemies, until now, reduced to one-tenth of what he was at the coming of the Gentiles to smite him, he is abandoned by them, as it were, to die of hunger and thirst and be devoured by vultures.

Could we wish for a more literal fulfilment of prophecy? Are there any yet who could wish to see this people brought to a lower level; or see them reduced to a smaller remnant of the great people they once were; or see them more hated, stripped, and peeled, and crushed by the Gentiles, than they have been, and in reality are, even till this day?

As for me, I answer, no; but my constant prayer to the Lord is, that he will hasten the day when these conditions shall cease, and when the glorious restoration and redemption promised this people shall come.

XI—Redemption Foretold

From a natural point of view, it would seem that it is the fate of the Indian, as a race, to be wiped out, and become extinct; and such would be the case should conditions continue with them much longer as they have existed since the coming of the Gentiles among them. With nine-tenths of them gone in less than four centuries, it is easy to see that it would not take long for the other one-tenth to go at the same ratio.

But hope for them lies in the fact that the same God who, through his prophets, foretold these very conditions, has also foretold, through them, that he would not permit the utter destruction of his people upon this continent, at the hands of the Gentiles.

Nephi speaks as follows (I Nephi 13:30-31):

“Nevertheless thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all the face of the land, which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father, that his seed should have it for the land of their inheritance, wherefore thou seest that *the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren;*

“Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren.”

XII—Redemption through the Gospel

What joy must have filled the heart of Nephi, as he beheld through the prophetic visions of his mind, after having seen in vision all that was to befall his seed and the seed of his brethren, that the Lord would in time be merciful to the remnant of his seed and that of his brethren, and that, notwithstanding all that he would permit to come upon them, he would not permit their total destruction at the hands of their oppressors. And O, how his heart must have swelled with joy and thanksgiving when he beheld that not only would they not be destroyed, but that the glorious gospel would in time be brought unto them in its fulness, and that, of the scant remnant that would be left, many would accept the truth and be redeemed from their fallen condition by it; after centuries of spiritual darkness among them, to see that the light of the true gospel was again to shine in their lives and guide them, through paths of truth, to life eternal; to behold the grafting

in, through the fulness of the Gentiles, of the natural branches of the olive tree that should be broken off, as so beautifully spoken of by him in I Nephi 15:

“Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive-tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our fathers; and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel? and are we not a branch of the house of Israel?”

“And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fulness of the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed:

“And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that we are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to a knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved.

“And then, at that day, will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation? Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the true vine? Yea, will they not come unto the true fold of God?”

“Behold, I say unto you, Yea; they shall be remembered again among the house of Israel; they shall be grafted in, being a natural branch of the olive tree, into the true olive tree;

“And this is what our father meaneth; and he meaneth that it will not come to pass until after they are scattered by the Gentiles; and he meaneth that it shall come by way of the Gentiles, that the Lord may show his power unto the Gentiles. * * * * *”

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

[“The Double Mission of the Gentiles” will be treated in the next number.]

Once upon a time a child who was asked upon an examination paper to define a mountain range, wrote, “A large-sized cook stove.” The same method of reasoning seems to go with older growth. A recent examination paper at the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale contained the question, “What is the office of the gastric juice?” And the answer on one paper said, “The stomach.”—*Current Opinion*.