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The Alma Family (A Book of Mormon Sketch)

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Abstract: This series presents a life sketch of the Alma family, many of whom became prophets. The life of Alma the Younger is compared to the Apostle Paul—both were called upon to repent and became great missionaries for the Lord. The prophecies of Alma are among the most numerous, important, and interesting in the Book of Mormon, and his inspired advice to his sons contains many doctrinal matters. Helaman the son of Helaman, grandson of Alma, carried on the work of righteousness in spite of the Gadianton robbers. His son Nephi was a great prophet who paved the way for the visit of Christ in America. Nephi's brother Lehi and Lehi's son Nephi were also great leaders. The third part continues the discussion of Alma the Younger.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles; these are the beginnings of sorrows."—MARK xiii, 8.

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THE ALMA FAMILY.

(A Book of Mormon Sketch).

BY ELDER GEO. REYNOLDS.

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The first year of Alma's judgeship was troubled by the apostacy of Nehor, a man of many personal attractions and great persuasiveness of manner, who went about amongst the people preaching a kind of universalism—that all men should be saved; he also established priestcraft, making a lucrative business of spreading his pernicious ideas. His success in turning the hearts of the people was unfortunately quite extensive, and the cause of many of the troubles that afterwards afflicted the Nephites. The individual career of Nehor, however, was short; he met an aged servant of the Lord named Gideon, and because the latter would not accept his dogmas, but withstood him with the words of God, Nehor drew his sword and slew the venerable disciple. For this offence he was brought before Alma, and, being tried by the law of the land, was found guilty and condemned to death. When passing sentence, Alma said to

him: "This is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced amongst this people. And behold thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people, it would prove their entire destruction. And thou hast shed the blood of a righteous man, yea, a man who has done much good among this people; and were we to spare thee, his blood would come upon us for vengeance; therefore thou art condemned to die according to the law which has been given us by Mosiah, our last king; and they have been acknowledged by this people; therefore the people must abide by the law."

Notwithstanding the development of those follies, and departures from the strictness of Gospel law apparently incidental to great worldly prosperity, there was continued peace in the land until the fifth year of Alma's judgeship, when a great division took place

amongst the people, owing to the more corrupt portion wishing to restore the monarchy, and make a man after their own heart, named Amlici, king. This movement grew to so much importance that it was referred to the decision of the whole people, who gathered in large bodies all over the land, and expressed their wishes for or against Amlici's elevation to the throne in the way prescribed by the law. The result was that Amlici's ambitious schemes were defeated by the voice of the majority, and the liberties of the republic were preserved. This should have ended the matter, but it did not; the turbulent minority, incited by Amlici, would not accept the constitutional decision. They assembled and crowned their favorite as king of the Nephites, and he at once set about preparing for war, that he might force the rest of the people to accept his government. Nor was Alma idle, he also made ready for the impending contest. He gathered his people and armed them with all the weapons known to Nephite warfare. The two armies of those who so short a time before were brethren, met near a hill called Amnihu, on the east bank of the River Sidon, where a bloody battle followed, in which Amlici's forces were disastrously defeated with a loss of 12,532 men, whilst the victors had to mourn the loss of 6,562 warriors slain.

After pursuing the defeated monarchists as far as he was able, Alma rested his troops in the valley of Gideon (named after the martyr slain by Nehor). Nevertheless, he took the precaution to send out four officers with their companies to watch the movements and learn the intentions of the retreating foe. These officers were named Zeram, Amnor, Manti and Limher. On the morrow these returned in great haste, and reported that the Amlicites had joined a vast host of Lamanites in the land Minon, where unitedly they were slaying the Nephite population and ravaging their possessions, as they pushed rapidly towards the Nephite capital with the intent of capturing it before Alma's army could return. Alma at once headed his army for Zarahemla, and with all haste marched thither-

ward. He reached the crossing of the Sidon without meeting the enemy, but whilst attempting to pass to the western bank he was confronted by the allied armies. A terrible battle ensued; the Nephites were taken somewhat at a disadvantage; but being men of faith, they fervently sought Heaven's aid, and in the increased fervor this faith inspired, they advanced to the combat. With Alma at their head, the advanced guard forded the river and broke upon the enemy who stood awaiting them. By the fury of their charge they drove in the ranks of the enemy, and as they pushed onward they cleared the ground by throwing the bodies of their fallen foes into the Sidon, thus making an opening for the main body to obtain a foothold. In this charge Alma met Amlici face to face, and they fought with all the desperation the circumstances developed. In the midst of this hand to hand combat, Alma lifted his heart on high, and prayed for renewed strength that he might not be overpowered, but live to do more good to his people. His prayers were answered, and thereby he new vigor gained to battle with and eventually slay Amlici. Amlici slain, Alma led the attack to where the king of the Lamanites fought, but that monarch retired before the impetuous valor of the high priest, and commanded his guards to close in upon his assailant. The order was promptly obeyed, but it was ineffectual; Alma and his guards bore down upon them as a whirlwind in its fury, and the few of the monarch's warriors that escaped the shock made a hasty retreat. Pushing steadily on, Alma kept driving the allies before him, until his whole army had crossed the Sidon, when the enemy, no longer able to meet their well ordered advance, broke in all directions, and retreated into the wilderness that lay to the north and west. They were hotly pursued by the Nephites as long as the latter's strength permitted, whilst they were met on all quarters by patriots rallying to the call of the Commonwealth, and slain by thousands. A remnant eventually reached that part of the wilderness known as

Hermounts, where many died of their wounds, and were devoured by the wild beasts and vultures that infested that region. To the Nephites was left the sad task of burying the unnumbered dead, many of whom were women and children who had become victims to the ravaging of the foe.

A few days after this decisive battle, another invading Lamanite army was reported. This one advanced along the east bank of the Sidon. It appears to have been the plan of their military commanders to invade the Nephite territory with two separate armies, both traveling northward towards the city of Zarahemla, but on opposite sides of the Sidon. That advancing on the west side moved the most rapidly, and was met, conquered and dispersed by Alma, whilst the other afterwards met the same fate at the hands of one of his lieutenants, Alma himself having been too seriously wounded in one of the preceding battles (most probably in his combat with Amlici,) to permit him to lead his troops in person.

The great losses sustained by the Nephites in this war, not of warriors alone, but of women and children, together with the vast amount of their property destroyed, had the effect of humbling them and softening their wayward hearts, so that many thousands, during the next few years, were added to the Church by baptism. But the recollection of their disasters was gradually worn away by time and prosperity, so that three years after we find great inequality in the Church—some poor and some rich, the more powerful abusing and oppressing their weaker brethren, which reprehensible course proved a great stumbling-block to those who were not numbered with the Church, as well as being the cause of much sorrow and ill-feeling amongst its members. Finding that no one man could properly attend to the duties of his many offices, Alma determined to resign his chief judgeship, and devote his entire time to his duties as the earthly head of the Church, and as a preacher of righteousness. Preparatory to this resignation, he selected one of the leading

elders, named Nephihah, to be his successor as chief magistrate of the Nephites, which choice was confirmed by the voice of the people. (B.C. 83.)

The cares of the State having thus been removed from his shoulders, Alma commenced his ministerial labors at Zarahemla, the chief city of the nation, and from thence proceeded throughout the land. As often happens in other countries, the capital was the centre of pride, vanity, envy, hypocrisy and class distinctions. These evils Alma severely rebuked, at the same time he guided the minds of the people to the contemplation and understanding of the beauties and saving powers of redemption's wondrous plan, whilst he exhorted all to become members of Christ's holy Church by faith, repentance and baptism. His call was heeded by many; the Church was set in order; the unworthy were disfellowshipped; elders, priests and other officers were ordained to preside and watch over the Saints. This being accomplished, Alma took his journey east, across the River Sidon, to the city of Gideon, where he happily found the Church in a prosperous condition. Alma's teachings to this people* are full of prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, which show how clearly he and his faithful fellow-servants understood the details of the advent and life of the yet unborn Redeemer. Having established the Church in Gideon, Alma returned to Zarahemla to rest and recruit for a short time before visiting other portions of the land.

At the commencement of the next year (B. C. 82), Alma turned his face westward. He first visited the land of Melek, where his labors were crowned with abundant blessings. Having satisfied himself with the good that he had accomplished, he "traveled three days' journey on the north of the land of Melek," to a great and corrupt city called Ammonihah. Here he found a godless people, filled with the falsehoods of Nehor, and living in the committal of all manner of abominations without repentance, because they cherished

* Commencing page 252, Book of Mormon, New Edition,

the flattering lie as the foundation of their creed, that all men would be saved. The city was in the hands of a corrupt clique of judges and lawyers, who stirred up sedition, tumult and rioting, that they might make money out of the suits that followed such disturbances. Further than this, they were secretly plotting to overthrow the government, and rob the people of their highly prized liberties. Among such a people Alma labored in vain, no one would listen, none would obey, none offered him rest and food, but scorn and mockery was his reward, and he was spat upon, maltreated and cast out of the city for his pains. Weary in body and sick at heart because of the iniquity of the people, after many fruitless efforts, fervent prayers and long fastings, Alma left the city to seek some other people more worthy of salvation's priceless gifts. He bent his way towards the city of Aaron; but as he journeyed thitherward, an angel of the Lord (that same angel that beforetime had been the agent in his conversion to God,) stood before him and blessed him. He told him to lift up his heart and rejoice, for because of his faithfulness he had great cause to do so. The angel then directed Alma to return to the sin-cursed city he had just left, and proclaim unto its godless citizens the awful message that "Except they repent the Lord will destroy them."

Speedily the prophet obeyed the angel's words. By another road he drew near the doomed city, which he entered by its south gate. As he passed in he was an hungered, and

asked a man whom he met, "Will ye give to an humble servant of God something to eat?" With joy the man (and, strange though it appears, he was a rich man,) took him to his home and fed, clothed and lodged him. Furthermore, Amulek, for such was his name, told Alma that he also had received a visit from a holy angel who had informed him of the high priest's coming, and directed him to receive him into his house. And Alma blessed Amulek and all his household, and tarried and recruited under the generous hospitality which his home afforded. But his rest was not to be a lengthened one; the people waxed stronger in sin; the cup of their iniquity was nearly full. "Go," came the word of the Lord, "Go forth, and take with thee my servant Amulek, and prophecy unto this people, saying, Repent ye, for thus saith the Lord, except ye repent, I will visit this people in mine anger; yea, I will not turn my fierce anger away." Filled with the Holy Ghost, these servants of Israel's God went forth and valiantly delivered their terrible message. From place to place they went, raising their Jonah-like cry, "Forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The heathen Ninevites hearkened and repented; the sin-stained Israelites of Ammonihah laughed, scorned, mocked, and turned contemptuously away. A few indeed received the word, but that only increased the anger of the majority, who, led and egged on by their still more depraved rulers and teachers, persecuted the prophets and martyred the believers.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

AUTHORITY.

BY ELDER MORONI SNOW.

With the transgression of Adam, which brought death into the world and banished man from the presence of his Maker, God, in his mercy, introduced the great plan of redemption and "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel," which is "the power of God unto salvation, to

every one that believeth," and "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" The Gospel was no new plan introduced by Jesus when he was upon the earth, but was revealed to