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The Destiny of the American Nation Declared by Prophecy

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Abstract: A paper that argues that “the commanding position of the United States among the world powers, and the prominent place of the American nation is to maintain as the exponent and champion of human rights were foreseen and predicted centuries before the beginning of the Christian era” by prophets of the Book of Mormon.

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“ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire ” (MATT. 3: 10).

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THE DESTINY OF THE AMERICAN NATION DECLARED
BY PROPHECY.

BY DR. JAMES E. TALMAGE.

THE commanding position of the United States among the world powers, and the prominent place the American nation is to maintain as the exponent and champion of human rights, were foreseen and predicted centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. Such is the Book of Mormon record.

The Prophet Nephi was one of the original company, who, under the leadership of his father Lehi, left Jerusalem in the year 600 B.C., and journeyed to the Arabian shore, thence voyaging to the American continent in a vessel they had constructed, as, centuries earlier, Noah had built an ark, under divine guidance. A few decades after the arrival of the colony on “the promised land,” the people were divided through contention; and opposing factions developed under the leadership of Nephi and his senior brother, Laman. These in time came to be known as Nephites and Lamanites, respectively.

The Nephites followed a progressive life, cultivated the useful arts, and made record of the more important facts of their history. Part of the Nephite record is before the world to-day in modern translation, as the Book of Mormon. The Lamanites followed a nomadic career, and came to depend almost entirely upon war and the chase for subsistence. They degenerated as to the usages of civilization, and, under the specific curse of God, developed a dark, ruddy skin. Their benighted descendants were found by Columbus, and are to-day known as the American Indians.

In the early stages of their exodus, while the travelers were journeying seaward through the deserts of Arabia, the Lord

revealed unto Nephi many things concerning the future of his people. That a part of the posterity of his brethren would be smitten by the righteous wrath of God was specifically shown, as was the fact that the nation, into which the little company was to develop, would be isolated beyond the seas from all other peoples. Thus runs the account of the revelation to Nephi the prophet, the events being chronicled in the past tense as though already accomplished:

“And it came to pass that I looked and beheld many waters; and they divided the Gentiles from the seed of my brethren. And it came to pass that the angel said unto me, Behold the wrath of God is upon the seed of thy brethren. And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land” (I. Nephi 13: 10-12).

Lehi and his people were Jews; all other nations are designated in the Book of Mormon as Gentiles. As later parts of the record make plain, the promised land is the continent of America, and particularly North America. The “man among the Gentiles,” who came across the many waters and found the descendants of Nephi's brethren upon whom the wrath of God had fallen, was Christopher Columbus, whose mission was as surely foreappointed as was that of any prophet.

Then followed the prediction of the migration of the Pilgrim Fathers, who are described as “other Gentiles,” going forth “out of captivity;” while the subsequent occupation of the land by “multitudes of the Gentiles” who would prosper as a nation, and would subjugate the Indians is impressively, yet tersely, stated:

“And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters. And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles, and were smitten. And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles; that they did prosper, and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceeding fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain” (Verses 13-15).

The struggle of the American colonies for independence was foretold, and the assurance that the power of God would be exercised to give them victory over “their mother Gentiles,” or the British nation, was inscribed on enduring metal, before the existence of the Western World had found place even in the dreams of mankind:

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles

who had gone forth out of captivity, did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them; and I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them; and I beheld the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity, were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations" (Verses 16-19).

In the economy of God, America, which is veritably the land of Zion, was aforetime consecrated as the home of a free and independent nation. It is the divinely assured inheritance of the "House of Israel," and people of all nationalities who will abide by the laws of righteousness, which embody the principle of true liberty, shall become by adoption members of the house of Israel. Concerning the Gentiles who shall so conform, the Lord thus spake to Nephi:

"And if they harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land for ever: they shall be no more brought down into captivity" (I. Nephi 14: 2).

For a wise purpose this promised land, the American continent, was long kept from the knowledge of men; and the hand of the Lord has been potent in directing its discovery, and in the establishment of the nation of promise and destiny thereon. So did Lehi prophesy after he and his people had been brought to this hemisphere:

"Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land, save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord. Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound, cursed shall be the land for their sakes; but unto the righteous it shall be blessed for ever. And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance" (II. Nephi 1: 6-8).

Other prophets reiterate the solemn assurance, and proclaim as the will and purpose of God that the government of the land should be of the people, and not the tyranny of kings. Jacob, who was Nephi's younger brother, uttered this portentous prediction:

"But behold, this land, saith God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land. And this land 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: and I will fortify this land against all other nations: and he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God: for he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them for ever, that hear my words" (II. Nephi 10: 10-14).

Though the divine fiat had been written that no Gentile king should hold sway in the land, the Nephites for a season, and the Lamanites throughout the period of their history recorded in the Book of Mormon, subjected themselves to kings of their own choosing. The establishment of an enduring republic was to be a feature of the later Gentile occupancy. The last of the Nephite kings was Mosiah; and he, in the early part of the last century B.C., urged upon the people to abolish the monarchy and to found instead a government according to "the voice of the people." In a stirring proclamation he set forth the potential dangers of kingly rule, and admonished the nation to guard its liberty as a sacred possession, and to delegate its inherent powers to judges, who should be duly elected by popular vote, and who could be impeached if charged with iniquitous exercise of power, and be removed if found unworthy. King Mosiah summarized, in a masterly way, the fundamentals of true democracy. After reciting the wrongs the people had suffered under monarchical oppression, he continued in this wise:

"And now behold I say unto you, it is not expedient that such abominations should come upon you; therefore choose you by the voice of this people, judges, that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord. Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe, and make it your law to do your business by the voice of the people. And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you, yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land. And now if ye have judges, and they do not judge you according to the law which has been given, ye can cause that they may be judged of a higher judge: If your higher judges do not judge righteous judgments, ye shall cause that a small number of your lower judges should be gathered together, and they shall judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people. And I command you to do these things in the fear of the Lord: and I command you to do these things, and that ye have no king: that if these people commit sins and iniquities, they shall be answered upon their own heads. For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been caused by the iniquities of their

kings; therefore their iniquities are answered upon the heads of their kings. And now I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike, so long as the Lord sees fit, that we may live and inherit the land; yea, even as long as any of our posterity remains upon the face of the land" (Mosiah 29: 24-32).

The affairs of government were to be the concern of the whole commonwealth: for, as the king proclaimed with convincing plainness, "the burden should come upon all the people, that every man might bear his part." It is gratifying to know that the Nephite people sustained the royal proposition, and straightway they set about creating election districts, and at the appointed time chose, by vote, the first elective rulers of the new republic.

The Latter-day Saints hold that the American government is a divinely established institution, and that the men who framed the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States were moved upon to act in accordance with the purposes of God, as were all who have striven to establish, and as are all who strive to maintain, the righteous supremacy of the Republic of the United States.

SUFFERINGS OF THE JEWS IN THE WAR.

THE *American Hebrew* some time ago called attention to the prominent part the Jews are taking in this world-conflict.

"Close to three-quarters of a million Jews," says this paper, "practically all the young and able-bodied Jews of Europe, the bread-winners of all European Jewry, are in the war, on both sides of the conflict. Though Israel's mission is peace, the irony of Israel's fate has never manifested itself so pathetically as through his distinction for valor, and heroism, and self-sacrifice upon the fields of battle in all the areas of the present war. Even now millions of Jews in Austria, in Galicia, in Russia and in the Polish provinces now occupied by the German and Austrian forces are starving, dying of hunger and of cold, not knowing whither to turn for aid."

The Jews of Russia have bled themselves for their brethren. They have organized relief work upon a scale unknown before in Jewish life. But the great Jewish centers have broken down, the great Jewish communities have been uprooted, and the Jews of Russia, the Jews of Galicia, the Jews of Poland, the Jews of Germany are turning to America for salvation. In many cases, in Russia, the Jewish community, driven out by the war, have gone to another Jewish community, there to find shelter, good friends to console them, a relief committee to look after their needs; but