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Alma Speaks to the Twentieth Century

Author(s): John A. Widtsoe

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Abstract: This article states that Alma the Younger taught principles that are relevant in our day. The combined teachings of Alma connect the premortal life, present day, and future life. Alma's teachings deal with such concepts as the Fall and redemption, the nature of the priesthood, the final judgment, humility, faith, and prayer.

Alma Speaks to the Twentieth Century

ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE, OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

HEROIC figures move upon the pages of the Book of Mormon. Lives of mighty leaders connect the records of the centuries. Simply and directly, these characters are pictured as human beings, frail or powerful, faulty or well-nigh perfect. As their labors are recounted, the fascinating story of Book of Mormon times and people is unfolded.

Among Book of Mormon characters, Alma, the son of Alma, stands out with unusual distinctness. More than two-thirds of the Book of Alma (which covers 162 of the 522 pages of the Book of Mormon), are devoted to the life, labors and teachings of Alma. Only a man of unusual importance would justify so much space. Indeed, so universal was Alma's character, that his life story carries over living lessons into our day. He might be an ideal of this modern age.

I

Alma the younger was the son of the first Alma. Of his childhood and early youth nothing is said. We hear of him first in his young manhood, about one hundred years before Christ. He is then thrown abruptly upon the screen of history as "a very wicked and idolatrous man." Apparently, he was not content with quiet unbelief, but went about with a group of likeminded companions, actually "seeking to destroy the Church and to lead astray the people of the Lord." Alma's gifts of leadership and convincing personality were evident from his youth, for "he was a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people; therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities." It is not a pretty picture: a headstrong and rebellious son attempting to destroy that for which a righteous father had labored all his life.

While Alma was engaged in his unholy endeavor, in the heyday of it, the Lord reached out for him. An angel appeared amidst the trembling of the earth and with a voice of thunder bore witness to him and to his associates of the existence, power and authority of God, and of the ultimate triumph of God's holy purposes.

This experience was convincing. At once, Alma turned from wickedness to righteousness. "For," said he, "I have repented of my sins and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born

of the spirit." Never again did he waver in his fidelity to the cause of God; his whole life became dedicated to the furtherance of the plan of salvation. From this time he stands as one of the greatest prophets of Nephite days.

The willingness to accept and obey convincing truth illustrates a fundamental trait of Alma's character. We do not know by what process of living and thinking he gave his early youth to wantonness, but we do know that when his eyes were opened, he repented of his sins and turned to life-long righteousness.

He recalled the days of his wicked youth with intense sorrow. In his old age, speaking to his son Helaman, he recounted the deeds of his early years, and told of his bitter regret that he had ever been in the bondage of Satan. In his own words, when he thought of his sin, "There could be nothing so exquisite as my pains." "Behold, I say unto you, wickedness was never happiness." Down the years comes Alma's warning to keep from sin.

At the same time he described the exceeding great joy that came by his repentance from evil. "There can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy." "My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God."

Full of such faith and repentance, with willingness and in humility, Alma set forth to win souls for God.

II

From the day of his conversion, Alma grew in righteousness. So firm were his convictions and so excellent his labors that positions of trust were conferred upon him. He was made the custodian of the plates upon which the record of Lehi's people was engraved. Then, his father ordained him to the office of chief high priest—apparently equivalent to the presidency of the Church. In his mature manhood he stood as the spiritual leader of his people.

Moreover, civil positions sought him out. King Mosiah, before his death, advised the people to be ruled by judges, rather than by kings, and advanced such cogent reasons that the people were convinced. When the righteous King Mosiah died, the people called Alma, the chief high priest, to become their first judge.

As judge, Alma ruled with wisdom, ever obedient to the whisperings of the Spirit of the Lord. He was a man of peace; but insisted that righteousness must prevail. He was no mollycoddle. When the Amlicites or Lamanites made war upon the Nephites, Alma as chief judge led the armies into battle. When the enemy were defeated, Alma pursued them and made them sue for mercy. He was great as judge, and successful as general. Under his leadership, the Nephites prospered exceedingly.

III

The prosperity of the Nephites led to worldly pride. Wickedness began to creep in among the people. The rich began to look down upon the poor. Inequalities were established among the members of the Church. These conditions which are contrary to the spirit of the gospel, grieved Alma and led him to lay down the office of chief judge, so that he might devote himself more fully to his duties as chief high priest. After eight years of service, Alma delivered up the judgment seat to Nephihah and confined himself wholly to "the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to the testimony of the word according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy."

Thenceforth, until his old age, Alma gave himself wholly to the upbuilding of the Church. During his judgeship he had supervised the Church with care, and had organized it everywhere with "teachers, priests and elders." Now he went personally in a mighty missionary campaign from city to village, from village to city, throughout the whole extent of the land, "delivering the word of God unto the people," and setting the Church in order. Since the work was great, others were sent into other parts of the land, so that all might have the truth taught unto them. The story of this reform movement forms perhaps the most interesting part of the Book of Alma. In some places he won great success, as in the land of Melek; in other places he was cast out, as in Ammonihah. Nothing daunted he met success or temporary failure with faith and courage. He was on the Lord's errand. "For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the holy order of God, which is the Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come." Marvelous spiritual demonstrations came to him during his long ministry. Angels waited upon him. Foes were often made his friends. He walked unscathed among his enemies. By the power of the Priesthood he compelled obedience from the wicked. His fame went abroad; the faithful loved him even as the wicked feared him. In all this he was assisted by the preparatory Spirit of the Lord. "And there was no inequality among them; the Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which should be taught among them at the time of his coming—"

His whole being was immersed in his mission. In his own words, "O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every peo-

ple! Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth." And his joy in the saving of souls was great! "And we have suffered all manner of afflictions, and all this, that perhaps we might be the means of saving some soul; and we supposed that our joy would be full if perhaps we could be the means of saving some."

IV

The error of priestcraft was one of the first that Alma had to combat. Self-seeking men had taught the people that a special paid priesthood class should be maintained. Those who continued to "impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price" were subjected to much persecution from these imposters. An easy religion was offered the people. The promise was made that all would be saved irrespective of their deeds. It was an alluring doctrine. All manner of other false doctrine was also taught. When these exponents of priestcraft were rebuked they claimed exemption under the law of religious freedom which prevailed among the Nephites. They pretended to preach only "according to their belief."

These false teachers often denied the existence of God, or so defined God as to make him incomprehensible to the human mind. To the correction of this grievous error, Alma addressed himself with all his might. Wherever he went he taught the existence of God, and his true relationship to man. At one time, one Korihor, known as anti-Christ, a persuasive speaker, began to preach atheism to the people, and made many doubt the existence of a supreme Being. When Alma undertook to turn him from this evil work, Korihor demanded evidence of God's existence in the form of a sign. It was then that Alma declared, "Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator." When Korihor still demanded a sign, he was struck dumb and remained without power of speech until his death. Such demonstrations of divine power accompanied Alma in his ministry.

The doctrine of the preexistence of man was clearly taught by Alma. "And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding

faith and good words; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such." He set forth the truths relative to God and the origin of man which give comfort to human hearts.

V

Alma rose to the height of fervor whenever he testified of the mission of the Christ who was to come. From the time of his conversion he bore powerful witness to the place of Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation. With prophetic vision he foretold the coming of the Savior. "I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name."

Likewise, he taught clearly that faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to his law are indispensable to salvation. The Nephites lived at that time under the law of Moses, and he clearly differentiated between this law and the law of Christ. "Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses; for it was expedient that they should keep the law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. But notwithstanding the law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them."

Then in clear and eloquent language he explained the effect of the atonement upon mankind:

"For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement

which it is expedient should be made. For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice."

Thus, Alma taught Jesus Christ from place to place, even as is needed in our day.

VI

Much of Alma's preaching was devoted to the plan of redemption, "prepared from the foundation of the world," by which hu-

manity may win happiness on earth and salvation in the hereafter. Especially did he dwell upon the conditions of salvation: Faith, repentance, baptism and obedience to all the requirements of the gospel. Listen to his teachings:

"I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins."

"Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins. Yea, thus saith

the Spirit: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Spirit saith: Behold the glory of the King of all the earth; and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men. I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life."

He urged humility upon the people and warned them against disobedience. Obedience he declared will bring blessings, "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land;" but disobedience will canker the soul, especially of a people who "have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God" for when they fall away "they become more hardened," and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known such things. "O remember, O remember—how strict are the commandments of God." Yet how easy is obedience. "For behold, it is easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land."

As for himself, he rejoiced in obedience. "I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy."

The false doctrine had gone abroad that the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, was not a part of the plan of redemption. This he corrected, and explained the fall with great clearness. "For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of

God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated."

So, step by step he explained the principles and ordinances of the gospel. No wonder, with such a spirit and with true doctrines, he worked a marvelous reformation among the people.

Acceptance of the gospel must be made, however, without compulsion. Conversion must come from within. "Therefore, blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God, and is baptized without stubbornness of heart."

VII

Great teacher as he was, Alma focused his teachings upon the duties and opportunities of daily life. Our conduct he declared depends on our understanding of the purpose of life. Therefore, frequent references to the meaning of life are found in the Book of Alma. Upon one occasion he said, "Now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you." "For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors."

He taught an every-day religion. That is, there was no attempt to put off the day of salvation to some future time. Every day may contribute to our preparation for our high destiny. How greatly that message is needed in our day!

In his earnest attempts to improve the lives of the people, he urged upon them the necessity of faith, the higher and surer knowledge. Such faith may be won by prayer and obedience. Prayer especially did he urge upon his hearers as a protection against sin. He, himself, "wrestled with God in mighty prayer," and he admonished all:

"But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submis-

sive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering; having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest." Alma 13:

A person who is in touch with God will not be easily misled for he knows that "whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil." The Holy Spirit will teach him since "a portion of that spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power according to my faith and desires which are in God." A man who is thus guided by the Holy Spirit

is not deceived by the devil, who often appears to the unwary in the form of an angel. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit comes to men, women and children. Under its influence even children are given words that "confound the wise and the learned."

The little things of life often lead to great results. "Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in men; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise." Alma warned against following false traditions; he urged independent and full acceptance of truth; he called attention to the danger of careless speech, "For our words will condemn us;" and pleaded with the people to meet often together in "fasting and mighty prayer." Honesty, charity, and all the simple virtues were enjoined upon the Church. Of charity he said, "If ye do not remember to be charitable ye are as dross, which the refiners cast out." He warned against sloth and indifference to the needs of life.

To his sons he gave advice that summarized his life's teachings. Among the sublime words spoken to his son Helaman are the following:

"O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."—Alma 37:35-37.

To all did he hold out the hope of conquest in the midst of temptation and trial. "And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day."

A nation hearkening to such teachings must of necessity grow in spiritual and temporal power, even as the Nephites did in the days of Alma.

VIII

Alma had been ordained to the priesthood of God. As chief high priest he presided over the Church. The authority and power of the priesthood he conferred in turn upon others. The Church of Alma's day possessed the priesthood in its several degrees. The importance, holiness and eternal nature of the priesthood were taught in unexcelled plainness.

Alma always spoke of the priesthood that he held as "of the holy order of God." It was not man-made authority. "This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—

"Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without be-

ginning or end—Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth."—Alma 13:7-9.

Those who chose good and exercised great faith, who were exceedingly repentant and worked righteousness, were called to the holy calling of the priesthood. The members of the priesthood of Alma's day were of great purity and holiness. They "could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God."

The purpose of the priesthood has been from the beginning to expound the law of God, faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, and obedience to the requirements of the gospel. This is illustrated in the case of Melchizedek who "was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

"But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the

prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention."—Alma 13:17-19.

Those who receive the priesthood may by righteous living receive an abundant knowledge of the will of God—the so-called mysteries:

"And now Alma began to expound these things unto him saying: Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God;

yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance."—Alma 26:22.

By the power of the priesthood many great miracles were wrought in Alma's day; the sick were healed; the captive set free, and angels often waited upon the faithful.

The teachings of Alma were many. Only a few can be sketched in this writing.

IX

While Alma sought the temporal welfare of the people, and indeed made them very prosperous, he never failed to point out the eternal nature of man, and the necessity of preparing properly for the life beyond the grave. The reality of the resurrection, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, was unquestioned by him. "Now there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death."

"I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits

uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption." (Alma 11:42-45.)

The resurrection, however, was not begun until after the coming of Christ.

"Behold, I say unto you, that there is no resurrection—or, I would say, in other words, that this mortal does not put on immortality, this corruption does not put on incorruption—until after the coming of Christ."

"Behold, there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. Now when this time cometh no one knows; but God knoweth the time which is appointed.

"Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case—that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead."

"And when the time cometh when all shall rise, then shall they know that God knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man."—Alma 40:2-10.

In that coming life, the condition of men will be in accordance with their works. A just judgment will be passed upon all.

"Therefore, prepare ye the way of the Lord, for the time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works, according to that which they have been—if they have been righteous they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ; and if they have been evil they shall reap the damnation of their souls, according to the power and captivation of the devil. And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day be restored unto that which is good. The one raised to happiness according

to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh. And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness.

"These are they that are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness; and thus they stand or fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil."

The destiny of the righteous will be glorious; but fearful will be the fate of the wicked.

Alma warned against the abominable sins:

“For behold, if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable; yea, and whosoever murdereth against the light and knowledge of God, it is not easy for him to obtain forgiveness; yea, I say unto you my son, that it is not easy for him to obtain a forgiveness.” (Alma 39:6.)

Sexual sin was placed as the “most abominable above all sins, save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost.”

Thus Alma connected the preexistent state of man with his present day and his coming existence, and showed that they are as one life under the gospel of Jesus Christ. What was done yesterday will affect today; and today’s events will determine tomorrow’s life.

X

The recorded history of Alma’s life covers only about twenty-seven years. How old he was at the time of his conversion is not known, but the context would indicate that he was a mature man, already widely known among the people. About nine years after his conversion, he was made chief high priest, and a little later the first chief Nephite judge. He remained as chief judge eight years. The following ten years were devoted to unceasing missionary labors.

The story of this decade of missionary work includes the powerful discourses of Alma and his fellow workers, the sons of Mosiah and others; the journeyings to and fro of these valiant servants of the Lord; the successes and the failures of their call to repentance; and the accounts of the constant warfare between the Nephites and the Lamanites. It was a restless period. The spirit of evil, as well as of good, was among the people. The Book of Alma is an interesting and a stirring book.

In the year 73 B. C. Alma prepared for the end of his earth-mission. The holy records, placed in his hands by his father, he entrusted to his son Helaman. He gave commandments to his sons Helaman, Shiblon and Corianton, which were indeed farewell messages to the whole church. He assured his sons that “whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials and their troubles and their affliction, and shall be lifted up at the last day.” He declared that, “Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” The fight that he had made against wickedness had

not depressed him. He knew that the purposes of the Almighty can not be frustrated. "And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory; yea, and I will praise him forever."

Then, having set his house in order, he blessed his sons, "also the earth for the righteous' sake" and "he blessed the Church, yea, all those who should stand fast in the faith from that time henceforth."

"And when Alma had done this he departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to go into the land of Melek. And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of. Behold, this we know, that he was a righteous man; and the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up

by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. But behold, the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial."—Alma 46:18, 19.

Thus passed out of human knowledge one of the greatest of the prophets.

XI

As one reads the Book of Alma and ponders upon its lesson, there comes the feeling that this present day, with its immeasurably changed material conditions has need of Alma's teachings. All that he taught may be applied to our day.

It is always so with spiritual truth. It is universal. The principles of the gospel are as useful behind an oxteam as upon a steamer deck. It is well to remember that material achievements do not change spiritual needs.

This is a Book of Mormon year. One hundred years have passed since the Prophet received the plates from which the Book was translated. Let us read and enjoy the Nephite record; it is filled with stirring history and eternal truth.

The Observant Man

He has just learned to live when in old age
 He turns the leaf beyond ten and three score,
 And makes his record on another page,
 And sees the future that lies just before.
 Complacency brings now the greater cheer;
 Serenity, the calm of love and peace;
 And charity, for all mankind held dear,
 Brings tenure of life's solace to release
 The action of a well-spring of good-will—
 The urge to labor in the holy cause
 Of aiding all mankind—and thus fulfil
 The noble altruism of all just laws.
 And for life's lessons he has cause to bless
 The Giver of all good in righteousness.