



Type: Magazine Article

The Nephites under the Judges, II

Author(s): George Reynolds

Source: *The Contributor*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (March 1881)

Published by: The Contributor Company

Page(s): 171–174

Abstract: Reynolds continues his summary of Nephite history under the reign of the Judges. He discusses the wickedness of the city of Ammonihah under the influence of Nehor's philosophy, as well as the short-lived career of Korihor. The long war caused by Amalickiah and his brother Ammoron is discussed, as well as the remarkable Nephites who rose up to combat their wickedness. The quick downfall in public virtue among the Nephites, leading to the rise of bands of the Gadianton Robbers, concludes the article.

half a mile long, and is, at no point of the entire distance, lacking some artistic decoration.

The Pitti Palace is a striking structure conspicuously situated on an eminence. It is a massive building of cut blocks of stone, left rough, except at the edges. It is partly surrounded by the Boboli garden, which is a marvel of horticultural skill. It has been the residence of the reigning monarch since the sixteenth century, and is now the home of King Humbert when he visits Florence. The picture gallery is situated in one of the wings, on an upper floor, and is one of the most select and valuable in Europe. It is arranged in saloons named as follows: The Iliad, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, Venus, Ulysses, Prometheus, Justice, Flora, etc. Each of these contains upon its walls the choicest paintings of the best painters of the middle ages and modern times; there being none of subordinate merit admitted. There are also in each room fine mosaic and onyx tables, with many of oriental woods petrifications and porphery. Some bronze sculptures also are seen, among them a very fine one representing Cain and Abel. In the Flora saloon is the celebrated statue of Venus, by Canova.

Of all the five hundred paintings in this famous gallery, perhaps none is more universally admired than that well preserved group of the holy family, by Raphael, called the "Madonna della Sedia," or Madonna of the chair. It represents the mother of the Savior sitting with the infant in her lap, and John the Baptist, as a child, standing at her knee. The perfect, motherly expression of the Virgin, and the vivacity of the round healthy child win all hearts, and cause the multitude, who pass through the saloon daily, to stop and admire. There is always a crowd before it.

The Palazzo Vecchio, the ancient seat of the Signoria, the government of the Florentine republic, and afterwards the home of Cosmo I, one of the Medicis, is now used as a town hall. It is a fine building, possessing within and about its walls, many interesting relics of the palmy days of Tuscany. In the square before it, in which has always centred the principal business of the city, the renowned Savonarola, and two other monks of his order, were burned at the stake, in 1498, for propagating advanced doctrines, which living after them, culminated in the great Reformation of 1520.

De Vallibus.

THE NEPHITES UNDER THE JUDGES.

II.

THE heresy of Nehors took deep root in a large western city called Ammonihah. Its chief rulers, judges and other leading men were strong in that faith; so strong that they lived entirely according to the lust of their eyes and the corruptions of their hearts, in the Satanic belief that all would be saved through the illimitable mercy of God—good and bad, saint and sinner. They swept away all incentives to lives of righteousness and sinned, apparently, that grace might abound. Through Alma's preaching some few were converted to the truth, but these were either driven from their homes or martyred by fire through the devilish malignity of the ruling classes.

Alma and his companion, Amulek, were first thrust into prison and then cast out of the city, after which the whole population gave themselves up to their pet iniquities. Next year, as Alma had foretold, the city was captured by the Lamanites and burned and its inhabitants utterly destroyed. For all this the pleasing errors of Nehor were not eradicated, but still found place in the hearts of many who loved sin and had no pleasure in righteousness.

The increasing indifference of the people to the law of heaven caused Alma to resign the judgment seat, so that he might devote his entire time and energies to the preaching of God's holy word. He held the office of Chief Judge eight

years, and when he resigned he selected a prominent elder of the Church, named Nephiah, for his successor. This choice was confirmed by the united voice of the people. It was during Nephiah's rule that the destruction of Ammonihah by the Lamanites, above referred to, took place.

In the seventeenth year of the Judges an Anti-Christ, named Korehor, disturbed the peace of the people. He was a vile impostor, who, inspired of Satan, knowingly deluded those who listened to him. It may be truthfully said that he denied everything of eternal value—he denied the existence of God, the coming of Christ, the necessity of an atonement and immortality of man. "Let us follow the desires of our own hearts, let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die and that is the end of us," was the burden of his doctrine. Numbers believed in his words and were thereby led into all manner of lasciviousness and folly. His end was a terrible one. Being brought before Alma and Nephiah, he blasphemously and vauntingly demanded a sign. Ultimately, when patience had ceased to be a virtue, a sign was given to him. He was struck dumb by the power of God, through Alma, and from thenceforth he wandered from door to door begging his bread. A few days, or at most, a few weeks afterwards, he was run down and killed by a crowd in a city of the Lamanites, a sect of Nephite dissenters who luxuriated in another pernicious form of false doctrine. Their heresy consisted in denying the Christ and esteeming themselves as the special favorites of heaven, created to be saved while the rest of mankind were born to be damned. Nor could the preaching of Alma and other leading authorities and High Priests of the Church, move the majority from their egotistical errors. Those who repented at the sound of the Gospel proclamation, were expatriated by their more sin hardened fellows, and had to flee to the land of Jershon, whose citizens kindly provided them with homes and the necessaries of life. The unrepentant portion of the Lamanites turned traitors to their country, joined the La-

manites and invaded Jershon, but they were disastrously defeated by Moroni in a fierce battle, and the remnants that remained (like the followers of Amlici) were absorbed into the Lamanitish race, the common grave of all Nephite traitors and apostates.

One of the vilest, most treacherous and ambitious characters that ever cursed Ancient America, next stands forth as the enemy of the Nephites, through whose treason and apostasy thousands on thousands of the house of Israel met violent deaths and premature graves. His name was Amalickiah, a descendent of Zoram, the servant of Laban. Originally a member of Christ's holy Church, his corrupt heart and ambitious spirit would not brook the restraints that Gospel law imposed. He apostatized from the church, raised the standard of revolt against the Nephite Commonwealth, and rapidly gathered to his aid the ambitious, the dissatisfied and the corrupt who like himself hoped for fame and wealth by the overthrow of the republic. Moroni, the Nephite commander, rose to greatness with the peril of the hour. He sounded the cry of liberty far and wide through the Nephite lands, and thousands inflamed with his spirit, followed his example and swore by Him that sitteth upon the throne and liveth for ever and ever, that they would protect with all their powers their nation's freedom and liberty of conscience, and never desert the cause that in years previous had been sustained by their labors and cemented with their blood. Inspired with this holy zeal they met, fought and routed the traitor's hosts. He fled to the Lamanites, and by repeated acts of cunning and treachery, rose step by step, until he was acknowledged king of that people. His vaulting ambition was yet unsatisfied, his hope, his aim was to reign supreme over all America, and to accomplish this he plunged into one of the most bloody and hotly contested wars that history records, carrying havoc and woe to the homes of the Nephites, for he captured, or destroyed many of their most important cities, both on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

This devastating war makes a new era in the military development of the Nephites. A number of great commanders arose to meet the exigences of the hour, foremost among whom stood Moroni, one of the most remarkable characters of any age or race. He remodelled the Nephite army and greatly raised the standard of discipline amongst its forces; he introduced and carried out a more scientific system of fortification and built an impregnable line of defence across the South American continent, to protect the Nephites from the incursions of their southern foes. He was as wise in council as he was brave in battle, as humane to his fallen foes as he was devoted to truth and righteousness, not only an unconquerable warrior, but a powerful orator, indeed in him, as much as in any man that ever lived, could be found all the noblest virtues of mankind entabernacled. For a time he acted as a military dictator, the people placing almost unlimited powers in his hands to enable him to overthrow the Lamanite invaders from without, and sedition and treason at home. Ultimately he was successful in all these perilous duties; treason at home was annihilated, the Lamanites were driven back to their own lands. As his lieutenants he had men almost as great in virtue and valor as himself, amongst them Lehi, Teancum, Heleman and Antipus are the most conspicuous. In this war Amalickiah was slain, as was also his brother and successor, Ammoron, Jacob and other Lamanite leaders. This war is also made memorable and glorious by the faith and courage of the youthful two thousand Ammonite warriors, whose heroic deeds and devotion to the cause of freedom are household words in every home where the Book of Mormon is treasured and studied.

The long continued war had produced the usual train of moral evils. There had been murders, contentions, dissension and all manner of iniquity among the people of Nephi, but for the sake of the righteous the nation was spared. When the war had been fully brought to an end (B. C. 60), the priesthood went forth and again established the Church of God

throughout the land, fresh regulations were made regarding the law and new judges and chief judges (local) were chosen. This reorganization of society was followed by abundant prosperity, the people grew exceedingly rich in material wealth and rapidly multiplied in numbers. This marked prosperity and rapid increase gave rise to numerous enterprises, ship building was developed and traffic by sea grew to unexpected proportions. A constant flow of emigration to the Northern continent, both by sea and land, became a distinguishing feature of this era, some of the colonies numbering many thousands, and resembling more the migration of a nation than the outflowing of individual citizens in search of new homes. One company, it is stated, that left Zarahemla (B. C. 55) numbered five thousand four hundred men, with their wives and children, which would make the whole company, at a low estimate, number thirty thousand souls. In this way the northern land was rapidly filled, the majority of the immigrants apparently, from the descriptions in the sacred record, as well as from the relics of their being, occasionally brought to light, filling up the land of Mexico, then travelling up the valleys of the Mississippi and the Ohio, until they reached the neighborhood of the great lakes.

The gradual decay of public virtue amongst the Nephites made possible the existence of Gadianton bands, whose organization and development are among the saddest phases of Nephite history. Amongst a truly virtuous and God-fearing people these bands never could have had a beginning, or, if a very few vicious malcontents had succeeded in effecting such an organization they would have obtained no protection or encouraging sympathy from the masses and would have been quickly rooted out by the officers of the law. Their long continued existence, great numbers and powerful influence in the affairs of state, show how corrupt and depraved the character of the average Nephite had become. We think it is evident, that though there were seasons of partial repentance from

the time of the appearance of these robber bands to the date of the crucifixion of our Lord, yet the general prevailing character of the Nephites shows gradual decadence, an increased lack of virtuous energy and a great preponderance of the manifestations of evil. As a river in its course from the springs in the mountains to the great ocean may pursue a devious and meandering route, often almost turn-

ing back on itself and yet have one general distinguishing course in one particular point of the compass, so, notwithstanding all the brief seasons of godliness enjoyed by the Nephites, their general course was downward to destruction, in each decade the standard of morality was lowered and the strength of innate iniquity more plainly manifested.

George Reynolds.

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE.

IN this age of dissensions and contentions, bitter, strong, and continued, the question might be asked, is this a Christian era? Do we live among Christians? Are we ourselves Christians? It might require a degree of courage which is rare, to give an honest, candid and intelligent answer.

Nearly nineteen hundred years ago, the Savior of mankind, the Son of the Eternal Father, came into this world on His mission of love, mercy, and forgiveness. For hundreds of years, as He is now, He has been the acknowledged personification of all good; the Being we profess to emulate; and whose disciples nearly the whole civilized world claim to be. He taught us to do unto others as we would have others do unto us; to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. To-day, the world is full of persons calling themselves Christians, who are the professed disciples of that paragon of all that was good, gentle, merciful and forgiving in man, and whose doctrine is peace and love. Ask any of this multitudinous host of self-styled disciples of the Savior, if their fellows—who are the children of the same Great Father as themselves—who happen to be of a different belief, are the true followers of the Christ we all claim to love? If they are in the right path? if God will accept their offerings? and you are almost certain to have a negative response. The stock in trade of these persons (who make a business of preaching the law of eternal salvation, and who dwell with such glowing ardor on the examples of

Christ, just as any other person does of merchandising, of carpentering, or of anything else which brings in wealth, influence and position), is vituperation, scandal, abuse, vengeance, and all that most resembles the elements which are farthest from the things they preach. To hold each other up to the perfection of scorn and contumely, to make light of things sacred to others, and to invite and encourage the persecution of a people whose only offense is to worship God in a different manner—perhaps the difference consists only in worshiping God instead of professing to—seems to be the great ambition of these men.

There is something wrong in this. Is it in Christianity? The answer must unhesitatingly be, No. Where then? You may search and ponder till the grave closes over you, and if you ever come to a conclusion it must be that the wrong is in man himself. Therefore, men must be unlike the Christian paragon—the Savior—they are not perfection. The question is, whose is the better example, that of the Savior, or that of His pretended disciples of to-day? All these men feel, feel strongly, they *believe*, they know; but they cannot, dare not claim more. They do not *know*. What, then, should be their deduction? That all should be charitable; that all should study forbearance, that all should admit, however firmly we believe, and however content we may be in that belief, it is still possible we may be in error. Were all like Christ, then all might know; but they are not. This is Christianity; this