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Inter-Continental Movements of Book of Mormon People

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CHAPTER XII.

INTER-CONTINENTAL MOVEMENTS OF BOOK OF MORMON PEOPLE.

The inter-continental movements of the Book of Mormon peoples must next be considered.

Of the movements of the Jaredites and the people of Mulek but little can be learned. The center of Jaredite civilization and national power was in that part of the north continent known to the Nephites as the land "Desolation," a country which corresponds, as we have seen, to modern Central America,^a and of which Moron was the capital. From this point the Jaredites evidently colonized in great part the north continent; for it is said in the reign of King Lib that "the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants."^b But this is the widest extent of their colonization, as they confined themselves to occupancy of the north continent, and nothing more than hunting excursions ever carried them into the south continent.

Of the movements of Mulek's colony we have nothing more definite than that having landed first at some point in the south part of the north continent, they afterwards removed into the north part of the south continent—to the valley of the Sidon, and were permanently settled there when they were found by the migrating Nephites under Mosiah I.

As for the movements of the Nephites we have already traced them from Lehi's landing place in thirty degrees south latitude to the valley of the Sidon, where they joined

^aSee p.—And Ether vii; 6, and Dict. B. of M., Art. Desolation.

^bEther x: 21.

the people of Zarahemla, the descendants of Mulek's colony, and formed the Nephite-Zarahemla monarchy under Mosiah I.

Hereafter we shall find their movements tending chiefly in two directions: to the southward, and into the north continent.

NEPHITE MOVEMENTS SOUTHWARD.

The movements of the Nephites southward were prompted by two chief incentives: first, by a desire on the part of some restless, over-zealous spirits, who came with Mosiah to the valley of the Sidon, to regain possession of the Land of Nephi—the land of their forefathers; a choice land in itself, and made dear to some of them, doubtless, by many tender and sacred recollections; second, by a pious desire on the part of zealous missionaries to convert their brethren, the Lamanites, to the truth of their fathers' faith in God, and the truth of their fathers' traditions concerning the future coming of the Christ to bring to pass the redemption of the world.

The first, and perhaps the largest of these movements, having in contemplation the re-occupancy of the land of Nephi, was made under Zeniff, a man who describes himself as "overzealous" to inherit the land of his fathers.^c This expedition was most likely undertaken during the reign of the second king of the Nephite-Zarahemla nation, viz., King Benjamin, who succeeded Mosiah I. In King Benjamin's reign there was a serious war between the Lamanites and the newly formed Nephite-Zarahemla nation. The Lamanites invaded the land of Zarahemla bent on ravaging the country, and the subjugation of the people. They were repulsed and

^cMosiah ix; 1-4.

driven back to their own lands, but not without much bloodshed.^d During the war, but likely after the repulse of the Lamanites, Zeniff, with others, was sent among the Lamanites to locate their forces and ascertain their strength, that the Nephite-Zarahemla army might destroy them. But Zeniff, impressed with the many virtues of the Lamanites, desired that they might not be destroyed, and urged upon the leader on the Nephite expedition to enter into a friendly treaty with them. This, however was so far from the mind of the Nephite leader that he ordered Zeniff to be slain, doubtless upon the charge of treason, or insubordination; whereupon there was a revolt in the expedition. The leader himself was killed; and Zeniff was rescued after much bloodshed. Fifty of the expedition—all that survived the unhappy conflict—returned to Zarahemla to relate the sad event that had befallen them. Zeniff now gathered a company about him who were desirous of repossessing the land of their forefathers, and with them he departed from Zarahemla. On the journey they suffered from famine, which much reduced their numbers; but finally they reached the land of Lehi-Nephi, and of Shilom, which was the place from which the Nephites under Mosiah departed northward in their second great hegira.^e

The Lamanites received the expedition of Zeniff with favor, entered into treaty relations with them, and vacated the land of Lehi-Nephi and Shilon, that Zeniff and his people might possess it. It must not be thought, however, that the action of the king of the Lamanites was altogether disinterested; his ulterior motive was plunder of the Nephites

^dOmni i; 24.

^eFor the authority of the foregoing narrative compare Omni i: 26-30, Mosiah ix: 1-6, and "Words of Mormon" between the Books of Omni and Mosiah. Also Mosiah xi; 13.

as soon as their well-known industry should bear fruit. He allowed them to take possession of the cities and lands of their fathers only that he might bring them into bondage, and make their industry a source of revenue to himself and people.

The people of Zeniff rebuilt the walls of the ancient Nephite cities in the land of Nephi, as also the cities themselves, and brought the fruitful lands of their fathers again under cultivation; for under Lamanite occupancy they had been neglected. The cities also had fallen into decay, and the walls thereof had partly crumbled into ruins. As soon, however, as Nephite industry began to redeem the waste places and produce prosperity in the land, the Lamanites attempted their subjugation; but though they suffered some from their conflicts with the Lamanites, the Nephites, so long as Zeniff lived, maintained their independence. So also they did during part of the reign of their second king, Noah, son of Zeniff. During the reign of this second king, though he himself was a dissolute, unrighteous man, he greatly beautified the city of Lehi-Nephi, embellished the temple, and also built for himself a magnificent palace. He also erected many and magnificent buildings in the land of Shilom.^f To carry out these improvements King Noah taxed his people to the extent of one-fifth of all their possessions, and of their income. He surrounded his dissolute court with a corrupt priesthood, and in every way demoralized his people and made his reign infamous. Still he successfully expelled the predatory bands of Lamanites which invaded his territory from the south, and who had for a time preyed upon his people.

About this time God sent a prophet among King Noah's people to warn them of impending calamity. Him they

^fMosiah xi.

burned, not heeding his warning. But the mission of Abinadi, for such was the prophet's name, was not wholly in vain, for the heart of one priest, Alma, was touched; and he, repenting of his own wickedness, brought others to repentance. As might be expected, this course displeased King Noah, and he sought to destroy young Alma and his people. But Alma being warned of God of the king's intentions, fled with his people (numbering about four hundred and fifty souls) into the wilderness, some eight days' journey, where they founded a city which they called Helam.^s Here they dwelt in security for a number of years. Finally, however, they were discovered by the Lamanites, who placed them under bondage, and appointed task masters over them. From this thralldom they were finally released by the interposition of the Lord, who directed Alma to take his flight in the direction of Zarahemla, which is reached in twelve days from Helam, where he was most heartily received by King Mosiah II., who made him High Priest over the Church throughout Zarahemla.

Meantime a large army of Lamanites invaded the land of Lehi-Nephi, before which King Noah and his people fled; but being encumbered with their wives and children they were soon overtaken. Noah ordered an abandonment of the women and children; but this order part of the men of his army refused to obey, choosing rather to die with their wives and children. The remainder followed the king. When the Lamanites saw the helplessness of the Nephites, and being moved with compassion by the pleading of their women, they abandoned the slaughter of them, and permitted them to re-

^sThe city of Helam and the surrounding country which was called "the land of Helam," was doubtless named from Helam, who was the first to receive baptism at the hands of Alma. Mos. xviii.

turn to their cities, under covenant that they would deliver up one-half of their property, and thereafter pay annually one-half of the products of their labors. These hard conditions were accepted; and the people returned to their possessions; one Limhi, son of Noah, was chosen to be their ruler—their king, if such a title, under the circumstances, be not mockery.

The Nephite men who obeyed the orders of King Noah in the matter of abandoning their wives and children soon repented of their cowardice, and resolved to return and share their fate or avenge their death; and when King Noah opposed their manly resolutions they burned him at the stake. On returning to Lehi-Nephi it was to find, of course, that their people had gone into bondage to the Lamanites, under the circumstances already detailed—a bondage these returning fugitives readily shared.

Hard, indeed, was the fate of the Nephites under Lamanite bondage. The treaty stipulation prevented the Lamanites from making open war upon them; but the one-half of the products of their labor due their masters under the treaty they had formed was collected under every circumstance of cruelty and the Lamanites themselves directed the labors of the unfortunate Nephites, placing task masters over them, who in every way insulted and oppressed them, even to the binding of heavy burdens upon their backs, and the application of the lash on the slightest provocation.

Under these circumstances it can be easily understood that the Nephites were restive and anxious for deliverance. Naturally their eyes and hearts turned to Zarahemla, where the great body of their brethren dwelt in security. Once King Limhi fitted out a small expedition of forty-three men and sent them to find Zarahemla, and bring deliverance. The expedition was a failure as far as its immediate object was

concerned. It was lost in the wilderness, passed by the land of Zarahemla—evidently on the west of it, and went into the land northward, where it found the ruins of the Jaredite race—destroyed cities, ruined temples, fallen walls, a land covered with the bones of men and beasts. They also found breast-plates of brass and copper; swords, the hilts of which had perished; and the blades of which were cankered with rust. But what was of more importance they found what afterwards proved to be the record of Ether, consisting of twenty-four plates of gold, on which the last prophet of the Jaredite race had engraved an outline history of his people, and which subsequently King Mosiah, by use of the Urim and Thummim, translated into the Nephite language; so that the Nephites at Zarahemla were acquainted with the history of the people who had preceded them in the occupancy of the western hemisphere.^h

It would naturally be expected that the people of Zarahemla would feel an interest in their brethren who went up to re-occupy the land of Nephi; and when, year after year passed away and no word came of their fate or fortunes, there were those who petitioned the king of Zarahemla to send an expedition in search of them. The repeated petitions at last met with favorable action, and one Ammon, a descendant of Zarahemla, with fifteen others started for the land of Nephi. After forty days' journey they reached Shilom, at which place King Limhi was sojourning at the time of their arrival. The joy of the meeting was mutual. Ammon and his associates rejoiced that their mission had such a happy termination; Limhi and his people, that they could now hope for deliverance from Lamanite bondage; and also they had joy in the proof which Ammon brought them that the Nephites of Zarahemla were not destroyed;

^hCompare Mosiah viii, with Mosiah xxi; and Mosiah xxviii.

for when Limhi's expedition returned from the land northward, where they found the ruins and bones of an extinct people, they supposed they had found Zarahemla, but that the Lamanites had destroyed that people.

Soon after the arrival of Ammon in the land of Nephi the people of Limhi devised plans for their escape from their Lamanite oppressors. The plans were successfully carried into effect, and Limhi and his people were welcomed to Zarahemla by King Mosiah II. Thus ended the most notable effort of the Nephites to repossess the land of their fathers' first inheritance, the land of Nephi. The occupancy of that land by Zeniff's people extended over a period of about eighty years.

Of the missionary expeditions that ventured into the land of Nephi for the conversion of the Lamanites, one of the most notable, as also one of the most successful, was begun and carried to its successful termination under the leadership of the four sons of King Mosiah II, named respectively, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni. These young men, and Alma, son of the High Priest of the same name, in their youthful days were unbelievers in the traditions of their fathers; and they sought to destroy the Church of God which the elder Alma with so much toil had established through a faithful ministry. No parental authority, no persuasion of preaching prevailed against the pride and scepticism of these young princes and the younger Alma. Gifted with eloquence, politic, large-minded, generous in word and deed, gracious and condescending to the people, Absalom-like he was rapidly stealing the hearts of the Nephites, threatening the very existence of the Church of God. At this juncture, out of respect for the prayers of the elder Alma, God visited these young men by sending an angel to reprove them, and warn them of impending calamities. The

manifestation of God's power in this visitation was such that the young men were overwhelmed. Their conviction of sin was such that they repented thoroughly; and, Paul-like, from being persecutors of those who served God, they became zealous teachers of the truth, and sought with all their power to undo the wretched mischief they had done in seeking the destruction of the Church. This accomplished, so far as was possible, in the land of Zarahemla, their thoughts turned to the hosts of unbelieving Lamanites in the land of Nephi, more numerous than the Nephites and the people of Zarahemla combined. A holy desire took possession of them to preach salvation through the Gospel to those hosts of Lamanites. Renouncing, therefore, all their claims as princes, and abdicating all rights of succession to the throne of their father, Mosiah II, these princes headed the aforesaid missionary expedition to the Lamanites. In the midst of many afflictions, attended with much persecution, the sons of Mosiah and their companions preached the gospel extensively throughout Lamanite lands, and had a rich harvest of souls for their hire. They established a church among the Lamanites; but such was the oppression practiced by the unconverted Lamanites upon those who accepted the teachings of the Nephites, that, under divine direction and to preserve their people from destruction, the young princes conducted an exodus of the Church from the land of Nephi, then in possession of the Lamanites, to Zarahemla, where they were welcomed by the Nephites, especially by Alma the High Priest; and a land—the land of Jershon, north of Zarahemla—was set apart for the homeⁱ of this body of Lamanite converts.

ⁱElder Reynolds suggests that this land north of Zarahemla was set apart to them because it would place Zarahemla between them and the Lamanites who might attempt pursuit.—Dict. Book of Mormon, p. 172.

NEPHITE MOVEMENT NORTHWARD.

The Nephites in the land of Zarahemla early appreciated the strategic importance of holding possession of the narrow neck of land—the isthmus which connected the southland with the northland. They perceived that if hard-pressed by their Lamanite enemies, who out-numbered them to the extent of two for one,^j the narrow neck of land afforded them a means of escape into the great land northward, while by fortifying the narrow passage their enemies, however numerous, could be held in check, while they themselves would have a whole continent behind them in which to expand. The Lamanites also saw the strategic importance of this isthmus, and in some of the great wars in the last half of the century immediately preceding the coming of the Messiah, they sought to possess it, and the Nephites as strenuously sought to prevent them from taking possession of it.^k

The first extensive migration of Nephites into the north continent occurred in the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth year of the reign of the Nephite judges, a period which corresponds to fifty-five B. C. That year five thousand four hundred men, together with their wives and children, left the land of Zarahemla for the northland. That same year one Hagoth, spoken of in Nephite annals as a “curious man,” established ship-building yards on the borders of the land Bountiful, on the west side of the isthmus connecting the two continents. Here he constructed a number of large vessels, in which great bodies of immigrants were carried northward, to found new homes. Two of Hagoth’s vessels that started northward never returned, nor was any-

^jMosiah xxv: 2, 3.

^kAlma li, lii. Helaman i.

thing ever afterwards heard of them. The Nephites believed them to have been wrecked at sea. It is supposed by some that these Nephite vessels may have drifted westward and that their occupants may have peopled some of the islands of the Pacific.

About ten years after this first great migration northward the movement of population in that direction received a fresh impetus; for great numbers went from Zarahemla and extended their journey farther northward than heretofore. Contentions in the land of Zarahemla—contentions born of pride, seem to have been responsible in some way for this movement. Doubtless in the old centres of Nephite civilization the possession of large wealth led to class distinctions, and inequalities, most distasteful to a people who from the first arrival of their fathers on the promised land had been taught to look upon each other as equals. Migration from the land where distinctions based upon the possession of wealth, and the pride it fosters, presented itself perhaps as the easiest solution of the difficulty, and hence the impetus to the northward movement in this year 46 B. C.

The Nephite historian, Mormon, in speaking of conditions that obtained about this time, gives one of those rare glimpses of Nephite civilization that I consider of sufficient importance to quote at length:

And it came to pass in the forty and sixth year,¹ * * there was much contention, and many dissensions; in the which there were an exceeding great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward, to inherit the land; and they did travel to an exceeding great distance,

¹Forty and sixth year of the reign of the judges; corresponding to the year forty-six B. C. (Reynolds' B. of M. Chronology, Richards' Compendium, p. 195.)

insomuch that they came to large bodies of water, and many rivers; yea, and even they did spread forth unto all parts of the land, into whatever parts it had been rendered desolate and without timber, because of the many inhabitants who had before inherited the land. And now no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber, &c.; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate. And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth, became exceedingly expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell. And it came to pass that there were many of the people of Ammon, from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east. And the people who were in the land northward, did dwell in tents, and the houses of cement, and they did suffer whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land, that it should grow up, that in time they might have timber to build houses, yea, their cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sactuaries and all manner of their buildings. And it came to pass as timber was exceedingly scarce in the land northward, they did send forth much by the way of shipping; and thus they did enable the people in the land Northward, that they might build many cities, both of wood and of cement. And it came to pass that there were many of the people of Ammon who were Lamanites by birth, did also go forth into this land. And now there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of this people, which are particular and very large, concerning them; but behold a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites, and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and the building of temples, and of synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robberings and their plunderings, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.^m

^mBook of Helaman, Chap. iii:1-15.

Here it will be proper to dispel what I regard as a misapprehension of the extent of Nephite occupancy of the north continent, at this period of Nephite history. From the fact that in the foregoing quotation it is said that the Nephites removing from Zarahemla traveled "to an exceeding great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water, and many rivers," some have supposed that the Nephites at this time extended their colonization movements as far north as the great lakes in the eastern part of North America ;ⁿ and from the fact that it is also said that "they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south, to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east," it has been supposed that these expressions meant to convey the idea that the Nephites at this time had extended their settlements over both continents ; and that "from the sea south of the sea north" meant from the sea at the southern extremity of South America (south of Cape Horn), to the Arctic Ocean, north of North America.^o There is no evidence, however, in the Book of Mormon that warrants such a conclusion as to the extent of Nephite occupancy of the western hemisphere in 46 B. C. Allowance for hyperbole must be made in the expression, "They began to cover the face of the whole earth," since the facts set forth in the whole history of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon are against the reasonableness of such an expression if taken literally. From the landing of Lehi's colony early in the sixth century B. C., to the date corresponding to the year 55 B.C., when the first considerable migration into the north land took place, Nephite occupancy of the promised land was confined to portions of the west and the extreme north part of what is now the south continent of America ; and as compared with the rest of South America, as now known to us, the extent of country occu-

ⁿTo Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, Ontario.

^oSee Orson Pratt's notes "i" and "j" Helaman iii.

plied was but a very small part of the continent. The migrations from Zarahemla, from the year 55 B. C., to 46 B. C., though considerable, are not sufficient to warrant the belief that the Nephites spread over and occupied the whole face of the north continent. By reference to the map the reader, if he will consider the parts of the country now known as the south part of Mexico and Central America, will there find all the conditions that answer to the terms of the description in the passage quoted complied with as to "the sea south, and the sea north; the sea east and the sea west;" while the physical character of the same land, even now, will answer the requirements of the description of its being a land of "large bodies of water and many rivers;"^p and more abundantly may have been so before the convulsions of nature which took place in Nephite lands at Messiah's crucifixion.

I conclude, therefore, that this migration of Nephites at this time extended no further northward than southern parts of Mexico, say about the twenty-second degree north latitude; in other words, the Nephites were occupying the old seat of Jaredite empire and civilization, and the land of Moron which the Nephites called "desolate," not because of its barrenness—save for the absence of forests of timber—"but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land;" that is, the Jaredites.

The next important event affecting the movement of population and the possession of the land north and south was a war between the Nephites and Lamanites, that began with the invasion of Nephite lands by the Lamanites in 35 B. C. Owing to dissensions among the Nephites, many of that people had deserted to the Lamanites. It is quite pos-

^pThe land visited by Limhi's expeditions in search of Zarahemla, and who went to the land desolation, on their return described that as a land "among many waters," Mosiah viii:8.

sible that this was owing to the resentment felt by the dissenting Nephites because of the class distinctions which arose on account of wealth and pride; and instead of the dissatisfied joining in the movement northward, as many did, some of them went southward, joined their fortunes with the barbarous Lamanites, and fomented the spirit of war against their brethren. In this war the Nephites were destined to meet with a new experience. Hitherto in their wars with the Lamanites, since uniting with the people of Zarahemla, at least, the Nephites had been able to hold their lands against the Lamanite invasion; and though they had lost here and there a battle, they were uniformly successful in their wars. In the year of 35-32 B. C., however, the Lamanites drove the Nephites from all their lands in the south continent. Even Zarahemla was taken, and the cities in the land Bountiful, extending, be it remembered, northward from the land of Zarahemla to the isthmus connecting the two continents. The Nephites were thrown wholly on the defensive. They then concentrated their forces at the narrow neck of land; hastily fortified it, and by that means prevented the invasion of the north continent.⁹

In the year 32-31 B. C. the fortunes of war changed somewhat and the invading hosts of Lamanites were forced out of the most northern cities of the Nephites in the land Bountiful and Zarahemla; but the city Zarahemla, so long the capital of the Nephite-Zarahemla nation, remained in possession of the Lamanites; nor could the Nephites further prevail by force of arms than to win back and hold about one-half of their possessions in the south. At this point still another event important in Nephite history occurred. The Chief Judge of the land, whose name was Nephi, resigned his office in order to join his younger brother, Lehi, in the

⁹Helaman iv.

work of preaching the gospel. Unrighteousness is assigned as the cause of Nephite failure in the war of 35-32 B. C.; wealth, love of luxury, pride, injustice to the poor, internal dissensions, manifold treasons, and civil strife are enumerated as among Nephite sins and afflictions. If unrighteousness was the cause of Nephite weakness and failure—and it was—then clearly the logical thing to do was to bring the people to repentance, re-establish them in righteousness, and by these steps restore them to the favor of God. Evidently so reasoned these two priests and prophets of God, Nephi and Lehi; and to the achievement of this end they bent their energies. They were successful; but successful in a direction least to be expected, viz., successful in converting the Lamanites. Partially successful in converting the Nephites, in the northern cities of the southland, they went into the land of Zarahemla, still held by the Lamanites, and so far convinced the Lamanites of the error and wickedness of the traditions of their fathers that eight thousand were baptized in the land of Zarahemla and the regions round about. Thence the two prophets went further southward into the land of Nephi; and though they met with some persecutions, such was the marvelous display of God's power in their deliverance, that the greater part of the Lamanites were converted; and restored to the Nephites the cities and lands they had taken in the recent war. Many of the Lamanites themselves engaged in the work of the ministry, and preached to the Nephites both in Zarahemla and in the north continent. Nephi and Lehi also preached in the northland, but with no great success. Still peace prevailed; and for the first time since the separation of the Nephites from the Lamanites, in the first half of the sixth century B. C., there was unrestricted intercourse between the two peoples:

And behold, there was peace in all the land, insomuch that the Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites or the Lamanites. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether they were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites, and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and sell, and to get gain, according to their desire. And it came to pass that they became exceedingly rich, both the Lamanites and the Nephites; and they did have an exceeding plenty of gold and of all manner of precious metals, both in the land south, and in the land north. Now the land south was called Lehi, and the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah; for the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south. And behold, there was all manner of gold in both these lands, and of silver; and of precious ore of every kind: and there were also curious workmen, who did work all kinds of ore, and did refine it; and thus they did become rich. They did raise grain in abundance, both in the north and in the south; and they did flourish exceedingly, both in the north and in the south. And they did multiply and wax exceeding strong in the land. And they did raise many flocks and herds, yea, many fatlings. Behold their women did toil and spin, and did make all manner of cloth, of fine twined linen, and cloth of every kind, to clothe their nakedness.

The next event which affected Nephite occupancy of the north and south continent was one of their many robber wars. By the sixteenth year from the time the sign^p of the

^pA Lamanite prophet five years B. C., declared that a sign of Messiah's birth would be given to the people of the western hemisphere, which he described as follows: "This will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his (Messiah's) coming; for behold there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh, there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto men as if it was day. Therefore there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day, and there were no night; and this shall be unto you a sign. * * And behold there shall a new star arise, such a one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you" (of Messiah's birth). All of which came to pass as predicted. (See Helaman xiv: 1-6; also III. Nephi i:15-21.)

birth of Christ^q had been given (therefore 16 A. D.) wickedness had so far increased among the people of the western world, and there had been so many dissensions from those who once had favored law and order, that the robber bands which infested the country considered themselves so powerful that they called upon the Chief Judge of the land to abdicate government and accept the order of things that obtained in their societies. This demand led to a serious war between the supporters of the government on the one hand, and the outlaws on the other. The Nephite leaders gathered their people both from the north and the south into the central part of their country—into the land Bountiful, and the land Zarahemla; and the cities of these lands the Nephites and the Lamanites standing for law, order, and the maintenance of government, fortified and stocked with an abundance of provisions against the opening of the impending war. The war began in the year 18 A.D., and lasted for more than two years. In it the robber bands were not only defeated, but annihilated, by being destroyed in battle, executed under the provisions of the law, or by being compelled to enter into covenant to abandon their robberies and murders. This war, in some respects the most terrible in Nephite history, was followed by an era of prosperity. In the course of a few years the Nephites had moved back upon their lands whence they had been called by the exigencies of the recent war. “And it came to pass that there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired; and there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land.”^r

No sooner were the terrors of war removed, however,

^qThe Nephites began to reckon their time from the sign of Messiah's birth in the ninth year from that event. See III. Nephi ii. Compare verses 3-7 with verses 8-10.

^rIII. Nephi vi.

than the people who had been so marvelously delivered from their enemies lapsed again into unrighteousness.

For there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. And the people began to be distinguished by ranks; according to their riches, and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches; some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceeding humble; some did return railing for railing, while others would receive railing and persecution, and all manner of afflictions, and would not turn and revile again, but were humble and penitent before God; and thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up; yea, insomuch that in the thirtieth year the church was broken up in all the land, save it were among a few of the Lamanites, who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord. Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this, satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world. * * * Now they did not sin ignorantly, for they knew the will of God concerning them, for it had been taught unto them; therefore they did willfully rebel against God.^s

The people of the western world, in brief, had entered upon that final stage of their wickedness which was to terminate in those awful convulsions of nature that should make their lands desolate, and well-nigh destroy the inhabitants thereof. The government itself had become corrupt; so, too, had the priesthood, save a few faithful ones—men of God, who testified that the Messiah had come, and that the time of his passion and resurrection approached. These were

^sIII. Nephi vi: 11-15, 18.

secretly haled before the judges, and both priests and lawyers leagued against them for their destruction. When it was feared that the Chief Judge would not sign their death warrants—a thing needful under the Nephite law to make executions legal—they privily put them to death, and thus were guilty of judicial murders. An attempt to overthrow the commonwealth, now perpetuated through more than a hundred and twenty years, ended in anarchy; and thence to the establishment of a sort of tribal government, which maintained an uncertain peace by means of mutual fears rather than by any inherent strength in the system—if system, indeed, it could be called. Such were the conditions that obtained among the people of the western world when those mighty cataclysms occurred which destroyed so many Nephite cities, effaced so much of Nephite civilization, and so greatly changed in some places the physical character of the continents of the western hemisphere, of which the Book of Mormon account has been already given.

Shortly after these great cataclysms the Savior made his appearance among the Nephites and established his Church, which event was followed by a long period of righteousness and the loss of all race and party distinction, such as “Nephite” and “Lamanite,” etc.; and the people occupied the lands north and south without restraint according to their good pleasure. True, in the year 350, A. D., when wickedness had again made its appearance among the people, and old distinctions were revived, a treaty was made in which it was stipulated that those calling themselves Lamanites and Gadianton robbers would possess the south continent. The treaty, however, was not long respected by the Lamanites, for at the end of ten years they violated it by attempting to invade the north continent and war was renewed. Back and forth surged the tide of armed conflict, but raged

chiefly in what was known to the Nephites as the land of Desolation, the old seat of Jaredite empire and civilization. The Nephites at last having been driven from their southern strongholds in the north continent, proposed through their leader, Mormon,^y that they be permitted to gather their people at Cumorah—the Ramah of the Jaredites—that they might trust their fate to the dreadful arbitrament of one great battle. The request was granted; the hosts were gathered, the armies which fought under the Nephite name were destroyed, save such as were mingled with the Lamanites. Anarchy followed, and then savagery for ages claimed the western hemisphere as its own.

^yMormon was born in the north continent, about 311 A. D. To him was entrusted the Nephite records by one Ammaron; and while they were in his possession he made the abridgment which bears his name, "The Book of Mormon." All the sacred Nephite records he hid away except his abridgment of those records; and that he delivered to his son Moroni.