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Corianton, Chapter III

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Abstract: A fictional portrayal of events in the life of Corianton, one of the sons of Alma the Younger. Corianton joins the mission to the Zoramites. While he is an effective missionary, he has not been fully converted to all the principles of the gospel, and is beset by pride. In the streets of Antionum, he encounters the crazed Korihor, who is trampled by the horses of the city guardsman before his eyes. Embittered by what he perceives as a lack of mercy on the part of the Lord, he returns to his lodging at the home of one of the chief Zoramites and is confronted by a woman who says she has been looking for him.

All organized existence is in progress, either to an endless advancement, in eternal perfection, or back to dissolution.

* * * There is no period, in all the eternities where an organized existence will become stationary, that it cannot advance in knowledge, wisdom, power, and glory. * * * If the endless

stream of knowledge from the eternal fountain could all be drunk in by organized intelligences, so sure immortality would come to an end, and all eternity be thrown upon the retrograde path.

Follow truth with unfaltering faith and thereby gain immortality.

CORIANTON.

CHAPTER III.

FOR a moment father and son faced each other, but neither spoke. The proud head of Corianton was bowed, his lips quivered with emotion. The father held out his hand, and the young man grasped it. "Father," he said, in humbled tone, "I have sinned against God, and against thee; I pray you pardon me, and ask thy God to pardon me too." "Corianton, thy rebellion against God is in truth a grievous sin. But youth is thoughtless and wayward, impatient of restraint, easily misled, and often, too, by generous impulses. The high sounding phrase, the reckless plea for unbridled license, miscalled liberty, which men of Korihor's type well know the influence of, the mocking jests at sober, righteous lives, the boldness which dares mock at sacred things, and bid defiance e'en to God, hath in it a false daring which captures inconsiderate youth, and works his ruin in things pertaining unto God. I do remember my own youth, Corianton, and how in my mad folly I threw away restraint, consorted with the wicked, mocked the righteous, and impiously blasphemed the name of God, and afflicted my noble father's soul as thou hast mine—but I forgive thee," hastily added the priest, as a great sob escaped his son, "as he did me; and so far as my earnest prayer can pluck down heaven's forgiveness on thy head, be assured, my son, my most dear son, God shall forgive thee too." With these words he fondly embraced Corianton, and a few moments later they left the Hall of Justice together.

At the house of the High Priest they

found Ammon, Aaron, Omner and Himni, and also Helaman and Shiblon, the two elder sons of Alma. The first four persons named were the sons of Mosiah, the last king of the Nephites, and at whose death the reign of the judges began. These men had been the companions of Alma from his boyhood, and together in their youthful days they had been recklessly wicked and sought the destruction of the church; in answer to the prayers of the first Alma, father to the present High Priest, the Lord visited them in his mercy by sending an angel to them, by whose glorious presence and power—for his voice seemed to shake the earth—they were converted to the truth of what the prophets had testified; and after sincere repentance they received a forgiveness of their sins, and then became as zealous advocates of the truth as aforesaid they had been opponents of it. They traveled to and fro through all the land of the Nephites, seeking to undo the mischief they had done; and then performed glorious missions among the Lamanites where the power of God was wondrously manifested to the converting of many to the truth. Often separated by their labors, cast into prisons, surrounded by dangers, threatened by mobs, weary, foot-sore, hungry—now received into palaces and hailed almost as Gods, now outcasts, without a place to lay their heads—they experienced all the changes, the successes, the vicissitudes of missionary life, but through all of it they were faithful to God, and held each other in fondest remembrance.

The present occasion of their meeting

together was to determine what steps should be taken in relation to the Zoramites, a people who had dissented from the Nephites and had established themselves at Antionum, south of the land Gershon, and bordering on the lands occupied by the Lamanites; and it was feared they would become confederate with the Lamanites and create trouble. The meeting held on the subject the day before had been interrupted by the Chief Judge sending for Alma to consult over the case of Korihor. Now they had met to conclude the business thus interrupted.

Alma was warmly greeted by his brethren, who had witnessed the scene in the hall of justice; and all expressed their gratitude to God for the great manifestation of his power, and the vindication of his cause.

"The most happy fruit of this issue," said Alma, "is that it gives back to the cause of truth my son Corianton; who, at the first, stood with the unbeliever, but now has seen a demonstration of God's power, to the conversion of his soul." At this announcement the brethren gathered about Corianton and warmly embraced him, thanking God for his deliverance from darkness.

It was finally arranged that Alma, Ammon, Aaron, Omner together with Shiblon and Corianton, should go on a mission to the Zoramites; that Himni should remain to preside over the church at Zarahemla, assisted by Helaman.

As the council was breaking up, Alma suggested that he would like to take with him on this mission Amulek and Zeezrom, but they were in the city of Melek west of Zarahemla. Corianton volunteered to go after them, and Shiblon expressed a willingness to accompany him. That afternoon they started. *En route* they passed through several villages, and on such occasions were questioned profusely in relation to the curse which had fallen upon Korihor, of which they had heard conflicting rumors. They gave to those inquiring correct information, though Corianton in testifying to the existence of God, and to the truth of the gospel was not always as humble

or merciful to those who were not yet converted as was conformable to the spirit of the gospel, or consistent with the position which he himself had so lately occupied. It is ever thus with your new convert; by his actions and by his words you would be led to think, if you did not know better, that he was the last sinner God was waiting to bring into his fold before he damned the rest. Shiblon observed these faults in his brother, but knowing his haughty spirit, which could ill brook any restraint, he resolved to remain silent, and let those older correct him.

Finding Amulek and Zeezrom, they delivered their message from the council of the priesthood in Zarahemla, and both these worthy men returned with them to that city, and from thence the party took its journey to Antionum the chief city of the Zoramites.

Of that journey it is necessary to say but little. It occupied eight days, the party going on foot, driving with them but two asses, on which were packed the tents, food and other necessary articles for the comfort of the party. For the sons of Mosiah and Alma, who were all experienced missionaries, and had passed through many trying scenes together, as also, indeed, had Amulek and Zeezrom, it was a glorious reunion; and many and various were the adventures and special manifestations of the power of God related. To the younger men, Shiblon and Corianton, it was a feast of spiritual food,—the conversation of these servants of God.

The sun was slowly sinking in the western sky, as the party of missionaries presented themselves at the main entrance to the city Antionum, the gateway of the north wall. They were permitted to pass in unchallenged, and inquired out a lodging house, where they all stayed together. Uninformed as to the exact nature of the heresy of the Zoramites, they had resolved to avoid proclaiming their mission, until they should become acquainted with the nature of the errors it was their hope to crush.

The day following their entrance into the city was the holy day of the Zoram-

ites, when they repaired to the synagogues, of which there were many, to worship. The interior of their places of worship were gorgeously decorated. Near the centre of each rose a stand, the top of which extended half the height from the floor to the ceiling. The stand proper rested on a sort of frustum of a cone. Up the sides were several flights of steps, and at the top of the frustum was standing room for a number of people; but in the stand proper there was room for but one. Each in his turn ascended the single flight of steps to the top of this holy stand—Rameumptom they called it—and stretching forth his hands towards heaven, exclaimed in solemn tones: “Holy, holy God! We believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit for ever. Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ; but thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and thou hast elected us, that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God. And again: We thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people.—Amen.”

At the conclusion of every distinct thought in the above prayer, the company of worshipers at the top of the frustum would cry aloud—“Amen, amen!” And at the conclusion of the prayer an unseen choir accompanied by instruments, chanted selected and slightly altered passages of the above prayer, such as—“Holy, holy God! Thou art God. Thou art holy. Thou art a spirit, thou ever wast, and ever shall be—Holy

is thy name! Amen!” Such was their form of worship, such their set prayers, as witnessed that day by Alma and his fellow missionaries.

After witnessing this mixture of impiety and hypocrisy, self-glorification and abasement of those not of them, Alma thought it not necessary to wait longer in commencing their work, and hence, that night he laid hands upon the heads of his associates, blessed them and set them apart for the accomplishment of the work in hand. The next morning they separated for the better prosecution of their enterprise. They took no thought of themselves, what they should eat or what they should wear, or where they should be lodged. They preached in the synagogues, in private houses, and even in the streets.

No one in the beginning of this work was more zealous, or more successful than Corianton. Indeed it was his success that began to work a great mischief; for it filled him with pride and boasting in his own strength. By sheer force of character, a better informed mind, a kind of genius for controversy, he discomfited the Zoramites, and exposed the shallowness of their principles, to the great delight of the multitude who began to believe in Christ. But at the bottom there were fundamental truths of the gospel to which he was not converted; the atonement of Christ, the resurrection, the justice of God in punishing the wicked being among them. He found, as many since his day have found, that seeing a single manifestation of the power of God—a miracle—had not removed all the difficulties in the way of a sound faith in the gospel; and in his own mind he began to find ways of accounting for the destruction of Korihor’s speech—his own excitement, the mysterious magnetism of his father which swayed men’s minds, a power which he flattered himself he had inherited, notwithstanding his unbelief.

One day about sunset, while in this frame of mind, as he was passing down one of the main thoroughfares of Antionum, he saw a poor, wretched object begging of those who passed him on the

street. He was miserably clad and filthy, his form emaciated and trembling with weakness, but there was something in the profile of the face, a resemblance to a countenance which lived in Corianton's recollection, that attracted his attention. As he approached nearer he observed a wildness about the man, occasioned by desperate efforts at speech, resulting only in harsh, disconnected and unintelligible mumbling. To his astonishment, it was Korihor. The form was wasted, the features shrunken almost past recognition, and insanity glared from his wild eyes. Corianton gazed in pity upon him, and Korihor returned that look with one of puzzled wonder. Then as the mists and confusion of his mind cleared up for a moment, he recognized his former, and what he accounted his false friend, and with a wild shriek fled out into the street, looking back at Corianton as he ran with an air expressive of horror. At that moment a troop of horsemen were passing down the street, and so sudden had been the poor half maniac's flight from the presence of Corianton, that he threw himself in front of the horsemen, and before they could check their speed or change their course, he was knocked down and trampled upon.

A crowd quickly gathered around the bruised and bleeding form. His case was notorious in Antionum, and it was generally believed that his dumbness was brought upon him through sorcery; hence, even while he was shunned by the people, there were many who sympathized with him, so far, at least, as execrating those who had been the means of bringing the evil upon him. Corianton ran to the man and raised him to a sitting posture, but he never regained consciousness; a few painful gasps, and the body sank back into the arms of the young man, limp and lifeless. One of the guards of the city came up to the crowd, and, recognizing the body as that of the dumb, half-crazed beggar, he took charge of it, and finally interred it.

As Corianton walked away with the mangled form of the once bold anti-Christ vividly pictured in his mind, he

muttered half aloud—"This is one of the judgments of God—cruel, infinitely cruel! He above all others could have been generous and have pardoned him before his justice," and he fairly hissed the word, "had turned to cruelty!"

By this time he had reached his lodgings, one of the finest palaces in all that city, and strange enough, it was the home of one of the chief Zoramites who had been especially pleased, or at least feigned to be especially pleased with Corianton, and had invited him to make his house his home. At the entrance to the walk leading up to the house, he was met by a woman, who asked if he was one of the Nephite prophets that had come to preach the doctrines of the Nephites to the Zoramites. Corianton answered that he was of that party. "And is your name Corianton?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"Then, at last, I have found you!"

[To be continued.]

THE LIBRARIES OF EUROPE.—The European country which possesses the largest number of public libraries is Austria. In Austria there are no fewer than five hundred and seventy-seven public libraries, containing five million four hundred and seventy-five thousand volumes, without reckoning maps and manuscripts—a total which comes out at twenty-six volumes per one hundred of the population. France possesses five hundred public libraries, containing four million five hundred and ninety-eight thousand volumes and one hundred and thirty-five thousand manuscripts, or twelve volumes per one hundred of the inhabitants; Italy ranking next with four hundred and ninety-three libraries, four million three hundred and forty-nine thousand volumes, and three hundred and thirty thousand manuscripts, or sixteen volumes per one hundred. In Germany the public libraries number three hundred and ninety-eight, containing two million six hundred and forty thousand volumes and fifty eight thousand manuscripts, or eleven volumes per one hundred of the population. Great Britain possesses only two hundred public