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The Nephite Pattern of Personality

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Abstract: Analyzes the physical being, the intellectual being, and the emotional being in relation to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. Several Book of Mormon scriptures describe the character of the people, including Alma 7:10-11, 4 Nephi 1:3, and 4 Nephi 1:15.

The Nephite Pattern of Personality

by Leland H. Monson*

The personality of an individual is found in his impact upon the civilization in which he moves. This impact is determined by the three-fold nature of man: his physical being, his intellectual being, and his emotional being.

If the physical body has been properly built, the intellect correctly disciplined, and the emotions fully matured, we get a sturdy and well-rounded person—one of character. With such development, the individual makes a strong impression on the culture of which he is a part. In such cases, he is stamped with greatness.

So it is with civilizations. The cultures which stand out because of achievements in any or all facets of civilizations are considered great. Ancient Egypt is recognized for her engineering ability, as shown in her lofty pyramids. Babylon and Persia are noted for their abilities to organize great armies and to conquer with them. Early Greece has been singled out for her achievements in disciplining the mind and developing the body. Ancient Israel has been acknowledged as having offered her greatest contribution through changing the human heart and giving to the world the Holy Bible. Therefore, we may say that each culture has demonstrated a different pattern of personality.

It is equally true of the Nephite culture. This civilization was the product of great men, many of whom built better than they knew. Its pattern of personality differs radically from that of many civilizations.

Lehi migrated with his family and the family of Ishmael from Jerusalem to the Land of Promise. These families brought with them their social customs.

Their religion also came from the Jews. They offered sacrifices to the God of Israel in the name of Jehovah and lived according to the law and the prophets as recorded in the Old Testament up to the time of their departure in 600 B.C. The words of Isaiah and a host of other earlier prophets shaped their thinking and modified their lives. They built temples to the God of Israel. They sacrificed the firstlings of their flocks and herds as a symbol of the great and last sacrifice. They looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, knowing that He would be the Son of God. Many of their prophets taught them that Jesus was the only name under heaven by which

they could be redeemed and brought back into the presence of their Maker. Alma said to them concerning their future Redeemer:

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sickness of his people. (Alma 7:10, 11.)

As they looked forward to the coming of Jesus, and gave heed to the Ten Commandments, they built a civilization of polish and grandeur. Cities such as Nephi and Zarahemla (which was partly a product of Mulekite culture), were monuments to their greatness.

On the other hand, we must never forget that those people who refused to guide their lives with the principles revealed in the Law and the Prophets became a dark and loathsome people, living in the wilderness, fighting for an existence, and subjecting themselves to the degrading consequences of a life filled with anger, hatred, revenge, and jealousy. With the rise of the Lamanites, another pattern of personality emerged.

Six hundred years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth appeared to the righteous people who had been saved from the earthquakes, whirlwinds, and volcanoes that destroyed much of their civilization.

Jesus labored among them for a few days, serving and instructing them. The culture built after Jesus' ministry among them is an outstanding example of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ can do for people who are full-believers rather than half-believers.

As a result of the teachings of Jesus, much more noble and sublime than the teachings found in the scriptures by which they had formerly lived, the Nephites and Lamanites united together to reach refined heights in civilization.

The Book of Mormon description of their achievements is as follows:

And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift. (4 Nephi 1:3.)

And it came to pass that there was no contention
(Concluded on page 365.)

(For Course 15, lesson of January 13, "Patterns of Personality.")
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◀ Few people, including members of the Church, have an understanding of the magnitude of the genealogical work now being done. In example, there are more than 305,000 rolls of microfilms for genealogical research in the Library.

In the early stages of the Church microfilming program, it was necessary to somewhat *sell* the various countries and nationalities on the necessity of microfilming their records for permanent preservation. At the present time, we are *invited* to additional areas of the world to microfilm records. The extent of our operation is limited only by the amount of funds appropriated and trained manpower available within the Church.

Genealogy is for all ages—teens, young marrieds, and more mature adults. This is why it can be a powerful aid in the proselyting program of the Church. Conversion largely comes from within as we pursue with enthusiasm our own great responsibilities—and friends observe this devotion. As they become more interested in their own ancestry, the way to conversion appears; and thus, step by step, membership in the Church becomes a reality.

Now, genealogy is becoming more popular everywhere. Our progress in the work is attracting the attention of the world. Recent announcements about our new buildings and the development of the unusual storage vaults in Little Cottonwood Canyon, are attracting wide publicity in newspapers and magazine articles, thus offering opportunity to tell of our doctrines.

As Marconi's first wireless message went across the sea and subsequent great advancements have come into being, we can again reflect on the infinite wisdom of an all-wise Heavenly Father and say with our friends of the world, as was said then, "What hath God wrought?"

—Junius M. Jackson.*

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in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. (4 Nephi 1:15.)

At the height of their civilization during the first 2½ centuries after the appearance of Christ on the Western Hemisphere, these people did not measure the greatness of their culture in terms of material values. Rather they used as a yardstick the growth and development of every human soul. Without lust for material wealth and power, and motivated by the love of Christ, they built a civilization that

brought them peace, serenity, and happiness. They were aware that the greatness of a culture is determined not so much by its material strength and power as by its rich sense of social justice.

The personality of the Nephite communal civilization at its height of power has much to offer Communist China and Russia with their denial of God and their scientific materialism, and much to offer the modern Western world with its materialistic concept of success.