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The Nephites under the Judges

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Abstract: Reynolds provides a chronological overview of the Nephite Chief Judges, as well as the historians who had custody of the plates. He then begins a summary of Nephite history during this time, beginning with the preaching of Nehor and ending with the rebellion of Amlici.

year 1119 A. D., and during the thirteenth century attained wonderful fame and popularity, enrolling nearly ten thousand students from all parts of Europe. The study of the Roman law was introduced by the celebrated jurist Irnerius, and later, medicine and philosophy were taught. The anatomy of the human body was first taught here in the fourteenth century, and Joseph Galvani discovered galvanism in 1789, while attending the institution.

A remarkable feature in the history of the great college is that women professors have at various times been engaged. Over three hundred years ago, Novella d'Andrea, a lady of great beauty was thus employed, but her personal attractions were so dazzling to the students, that she was obliged to deliver her lectures from behind a screen. At a later period, Laura Bassi was professor of mathematics and physical science, and Madam Manzolina lectured upon anatomy. The library contains a hundred

thousand volumes and many rare manuscripts; among the latter, letters from Voltaire to Frederick the Great. The celebrated linguist, Mezzofanti, born in Bologna, 1776, died 1849, was at one time the librarian. At the age of thirty-six, this wonderful man spoke eighteen languages fluently, and before his death it is said he had acquired not less than forty-two, which he understood and spoke.

The most striking edifices in Bologna are the towers of Asinelli and Garisenda, the former is upwards of two hundred and seventy feet high and leans out from the perpendicular three and a half feet; the latter is but one hundred and forty feet high, but leans in one direction eight and a half, and in another more than three feet. This tower is probably the only one, of the many leaning towers of Italy, that is built so intentionally. It was found, on attaining the present height, that it was impossible to proceed further with the work. *De Vallibus.*

THE NEPHITES UNDER THE JUDGES.

For a period of about one hundred and twenty years succeeding the death of King Mosiah, the Nephite Commonwealth was governed by judges. These were chosen by the united voice of the people, as provided in the constitution framed under Divine inspiration by the last king, and established as the supreme law of the nation, through its unanimous acceptance as such, by the entire people. At the end of this period the republic was overthrown through the great wickedness of all classes of the community, and the people divided themselves into numerous independent tribes. The consideration of a few of the most prominent features of Nephite history during this important era of their national existence will, we trust, be of interest to our readers.

It is not actually certain that the Book of Mormon gives us the names of all the Nephite Chief Judges. In the earlier portion of the annals of these times the

order of succession is plainly stated, but in the record of later years the name of the judge is sometimes only mentioned incidentally in the historic narrative. It is therefore beyond our power to determine if there were, or were not, others whose names have been omitted by the sacred historians. The judges mentioned by name or description, are twelve in number. Of these, five—Pahoran II, Cezoram, Cezoram's son (whose name is not given), Seezoram and Lachoneus II, were assassinated; one—Pacumeni, was slain in battle with the Lamanites; two, Alma and Nephi, were translated or taken by the Lord; three, Nephiah, Pahoran I, and Helaman, died a natural death, whilst of the manner of the decease of one—Lachoneus I—we have no record. They judged the Nephites in the following order: 1 Alma (the younger) from B. C. 91 to B. C. 83; 2 Nephiah, from B. C. 83 to B. C. 68; 3 Pahoran I, from B. C. 68 to B. C. 53; 4 Pahoran

II, from B. C. 52 to B. C. 52*; 5 Pacumeni, from B. C. 52 to B. C. 51; 6 Helaman (the younger), from B. C. 50 to B. C. 39; 7 Nephi, from B. C. 39 to B. C. 30; 8 Cezoram, from B. C. 30 to B. C. 26; 9 Cezoram's son, from B. C. 26 to B. C. 26; 10 Seezoram, B. C. — to B. C. 23; 12 Lachoneus I†, from — to —; 11 Lachoneus II, from — to A. C. 30.

It is possible that some unnamed judge may have ruled the Nephites for a short time after the murder of Cezoram's son, and before Seezoram was chosen, and still more probable that one or more rulers presided over the destinies of the nation, between the death of Seezoram and the election of Lachoneus I, as there was a space of fifty-three years between the murder of Seezoram and that of Lachoneus II, who succeeded his father.

The historians who held the custody of the sacred plates, with the accompanying holy things, and who kept the record of the national life during the days of the judges, were all descendants of the elder Alma. They held this sacred trust as follows: Alma (the younger), B. C. 91 to B. C. 73‡; Heleman (the elder), from B. C. 73 to B. C. 57; Shiblon, from B. C. 57 to B. C. 53; Heleman (the younger), from B. C. 53 to B. C. 39; Nephi, from B. C. 39 to B. C. 1; Nephi (the disciple), from B. C. 1 to A. C. 34.

In the above tables, B. C. must be understood to mean before the birth of Christ, and A. C. after the date of His birth as recorded in the Book of Mormon, not the A. D. accepted by Christians, which is now generally allowed to be from two to four years wrong.

*It is uncertain, from the silence of the Record, whether Pahoran I died at the close of B. C. 53, or the commencement of B. C. 52.

†Possibly only to B. C. 74, the exact date is not quite clear.

‡Lachoneus I is mentioned as being chief judge and governor in the year that Christ was born, and repeatedly afterwards until A. C. 27, but in one place Gidgiddoni, the Commander-in-chief of the military forces, is also called a prophet and chief judge, but evidently from the context, subordinate in the latter position to Lachoneus.

The acts of the Nephites, during the period under consideration, can probably be best studied under two heads: First, their secular; Second, their church history, though the relationship between the two is very intimate; the misfortunes and wars of this people almost always growing out of their unfaithfulness to God, and their apostacies from gospel principles. These marked transitions from righteousness to iniquity, and *vice versa* are amongst the most noticeable features of Nephite character in these days, both from their frequency and the rapidity with which these changes of feeling were brought about. One might almost imagine that the prophetic words of Jacob, upon the head of his first-born, had temporarily descended upon this branch of the house of Joseph, they were conspicuously "unstable as water;" indeed, it is probable that the almost incessant fluctuations in their spiritual health could be better and more quickly understood by the average mind, through a diagram, like unto those used in our day to represent the rise and fall in the price of stocks, or other commodities in the public market, than from any detailed account, which last named would simply be an iteration and reiteration of the same painful story, with slight difference in the minor incidents.

Of the one hundred and twenty years under the judges, nearly one-third (say thirty-seven years), was spent in actual warfare, whilst profound peace did not always characterize the remainder. For though not engaged in open war, the Nephites were troubled with dissensions at home, growing, almost without exception, out of the ambition or iniquity of their own people. Foreign enemies they had none, except their former brethren, the Lamanites, as these two nations ruled the entire western world. But internal foes were numerous. These generally belonged to one of the three following classes: "King-men," who desired to re-establish a monarchy; "Apostates," who strove to overthrow the Church and establish false faiths by the force of arms; "Robber bands"—conspicuously the Gadiantons—who waged repeated

wars to obtain political power and material plunder.

The three most disastrous and longest continued of the Nephite wars were: First—The war commencing with the Zoramite apostacy, followed by Amalekiah's rebellion and elevation to the Lamanite throne. This series of wars may be said to have commenced in the year B. C. 74, and to have continued, with slight intermissions, until B. C. 61 or 60. Second—Internal feuds and Lamanite invasions, lasting from B. C. 38 to B. C. 31. During this struggle, the Nephites were at one period, entirely driven out of the South American continent. Third—A disastrous war with the Gadianton robbers, when the Nephites were forced to abandon all their possessions and gather into one place. By taking with them a reserve of seven years provisions they ultimately exhausted the robbers. This war lasted from A. C. 13 to A. C. 21. The rest of the wars, however severe and bloodthirsty, generally ended within the year they commenced.

In the first year of the reign of the judges, a religious innovator, named Nehor, made himself conspicuous by pertinaciously advocating doctrines foreign to those taught by the Nephite Priesthood. The distinguishing points of his heresy were: That religious teachers ought to be supported by the people, and not be compelled to labor for their living. That all mankind would be saved in the last day, for "the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men, and in the end all men would have eternal life."

This delusion, owing to the zeal and persuasiveness of Nehor, spread so rapidly, that in the same year he was enabled to establish a church after the manner of his preaching, and in after years it was the cause of much dissension, bloodshed and misery amongst the Nephites.

Nehor is described as having been a man large in stature, and noted for his great strength, which, unfortunately for him, he put to a very bad use. Inflated with pride at his success in misleading the people, he was impatient under opposition. On one occasion, as he was on

his way to preach to his followers, he met, in the streets of Zarahemla, a very aged servant of the Lord named Gideon, whom he slew with his sword as he could not convert him with his arguments. For this murder he was arrested, tried before Alma, the judge, condemned to death and executed B. C. 91. His ignominious death, however, did not put an end to the spread of his false doctrines, for many finding that it brought them riches and popularity, made the preaching of his errors the business of their lives.

The increase of these false teachers rapidly developed class distinctions and social divisions, their adherents being generally gathered from amongst those "who loved the vain things of the world." Naturally they became proud, ostentatious, overhearing and bitter in their feelings towards the members of the true Church of Christ. Many of the latter received severe persecution at the hands of the dissenters, and bore it without retaliation, whilst others returned insult for insult, and gave blow for blow.

The example of these self-appointed teachers in drawing their support from their following, produced a like spirit throughout their churches, and their members became idle and full of devices to enable them to live without honest toil. They gave way to sorcery and idolatry, to robbery and murder, and to all manner of wickedness, for which offences, it is proper to remark, they were duly punished according to the law, whenever conviction could be obtained, and when the intent of the law was not thwarted by their unholy combinations. This development of priestcraft also gave rise to another evil. Many belonging to the apostate churches, though not willing to openly plunder or murder for gain, were anxious for a monarchy to be established, that thereby they might become the recipients of sinecures, be appointed office holders, etc., and fatten at the public crib. Their hope and intention was to destroy the Church of God, and, undoubtedly, to despoil and, possibly, to disfranchise its members.

In the fifth year of the judges, a willing instrument arose to effect their pur-

pose. His name was Amlici, a follower of Nehor, corrupt and ambitious, but cunning in the wisdom of the world. He was chosen by the enemies of the commonwealth to be the king of the Nephites. The whole question was brought before the people at a general election, as provided by the code of Mosiah. The monarchists were outvoted; the republic and the church was saved. This should have ended the matter, but unfortunately it did not. The Amlicites flew to arms, a bloody battle ensued on the banks of the Sidon, which ended in the total defeat of the Royalists; their loss was twelve thousand five hundred and thirty-two

men; that of the Republicans, six thousand five hundred and sixty-two.

The Amlicites (doubtless by pre-arrangement) soon joined an invading host of Lamanites, and the united forces made the attempt to surprise and capture the Nephite capital. In this movement they were interrupted by Alma, another terrible battle ensued, Amlici was slain, the allies defeated, and the greater portion of their forces scattered, and their warriors slain. Those of the Royalists who escaped the slaughter joined the Lamanites, and by their new habits and sympathies, virtually became a portion of that race.

George Reynolds.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DESERET.

v.

THE preceding article was devoted to showing that knowledge is power, that it is intelligence, and that intelligence is the spirit of God. The foundation for this knowledge, after leaving the maternal breast, is laid in the school room; and a large portion of the superstructure is built in the academy and college. It is in these conservatories that the delicious and fragrant flower of intelligence is nurtured; and its growth and ability to understand the elements of adversity, will depend upon the treatment received while in these conservatories. Not all plants that receive proper care live and prosper; but few ever thrive unless they are given intelligent attention. If we would fill this Territory with bright, good, noble, free, kind, generous and intelligent beings, we must do it through the instrumentality of schools. The better the education the better is any person fitted for any pursuit under the high heavens. The old and threadbare argument that the tendency of a college education is to unfit its possessor for manual work, and that rather than do what is erroneously termed common labor, when intelligent pursuits cannot be obtained, these college bred young men employ their talents and knowledge to evil, is absurd.

It is possible that a system of education inclining in that direction, may be taught somewhere, perhaps in many places; but such is the result of the system and is not, in any way, inseparable from education. It is no more the fault of education that a person steals and refuses hard labor, because he has been educated, than it is the fault of language that a person lies, swears and blasphemes, because he has learned to speak. Both education and language are given for one purpose—for good; and it is no more ridiculous to rail against and object to education because learned men are, at times, corrupt, than it is to rail against and object to the use of language, for the reason that there are beings who will employ it to express ideas that are profane and vulgar. The error is always with the person, never with the principle. The genius of education is always for good; and its influence is at once the most potent yet imperceptible of any. It pervades all classes, just as the fragrance of the flower pervades the air, delighting the senses, often when we least expect it, at all times, in all places, and as the presence of the flower, though felt, is unseen; so unseen and imperceptibly does education elevate the mind, release the chains of care, move to nobler aspirations and breathe of a fairer and a better