

Comments on Mosiah 26

While king Mosiah and the high priest Alma seek to organize the church widely among the combined Mulekite and Nephite society (cf. ch. 25), a secular minority arises and causes problems for the church.

1 NOW it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers. 2 They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ. 3 And now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened. 4 And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God.

v1-4 There are many among the Nephites who are younger and therefore did not have the conversion experience their parents did at king Benjamin's farewell speech (v. 1, cp. 6:2). The result is they don't believe or perceive religious things (v. 3-4) and refuse to be involved with the church, turning instead to carnal and sinful things (v. 4)

v2 The rising generation has apparently secularized as opposed to forming some other religious beliefs (cp. Alma 1), as they generally reject things they cannot see (e.g., the resurrection, the Messiah). It is likely there was some portion of the population of the Mulekites that were still secularized and atheistic (cf. Omni 1:17), even after the mass conversion of ch. 2-5. The children of the rising generation probably were persuaded by the persistent secular portion of the society, those who would have been adamant against the religious revivals sponsored by the government. This would explain the prominence of Alma and the sons of Mosiah in such anti-church activities, given their fathers are prominent leaders of both the church and the government. The setting would be a secular backlash instigated by Mulekite atheists against the ruling Nephite minority who are trying to institute religion.

5 And now in the reign of Mosiah they were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren they became more numerous. 6 For it came to pass that they did deceive many with their flattering words, who were in the church, and did cause them to commit many sins; therefore it became expedient that those who committed sin, that were in the church, should be admonished by the church. 7 And it came to pass that they were brought before the priests, and delivered up unto the priests by the teachers; and the priests

brought them before Alma, who was the high priest. 8 Now king Mosiah had given Alma the authority over the church. 9 And it came to pass that Alma did not know concerning them; but there were many witnesses against them; yea, the people stood and testified of their iniquity in abundance. 10 Now there had not any such thing happened before in the church; therefore Alma was troubled in his spirit, and he caused that they should be brought before the king. 11 And he said unto the king: Behold, here are many whom we have brought before thee, who are accused of their brethren; yea, and they have been taken in divers iniquities. And they do not repent of their iniquities; therefore we have brought them before thee, that thou mayest judge them according to their crimes. 12 But king Mosiah said unto Alma: Behold, I judge them not; therefore I deliver them into thy hands to be judged.

v5-12 The irreligious people are in the minority (v. 5), but their sophistry and deceptions cause many in the religious majority to fall away, necessitating some regulation within the church to deal with the apostates (v. 6).

The teachers turn the apostates over the priests, and the priests turn them over (v. 7) to the high priest (v. 8), but Alma is very disturbed over the matter and doesn't know what to do about them (v. 9) because nothing like this has happened before (v. 10). So, Alma tries to get king Mosiah to deal with them (v. 11), but Mosiah says its Alma's responsibility to judge them (v. 12).

v12 In 27:1-7 it is plain Mosiah is perfectly willing to step into matters that deal with laws of the land such as harassment and persecution, so Mosiah's position here is probably one of church versus state. The "crimes" that Alma wants Mosiah to deal with (v. 11) are probably ones that are not violating any law of the land, so Mosiah indicates he cannot do anything about it. If people leave the church, that is not illegal so he cannot do anything about it.

13 And now the spirit of Alma was again troubled; and he went and inquired of the Lord what he should do concerning this matter, for he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God. 14 And it came to pass that after he had poured out his whole soul to God, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying:

15 Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi. 16 And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them. 17 And blessed art thou because thou hast established a church among this people; and they shall be established, and they shall be my people. 18 Yea, blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name; for in my name shall they be called; and they are mine. 19 And because thou hast inquired of me concerning the transgressor, thou art blessed. 20 Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life; and thou shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and shalt gather together my sheep.

21 And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church, and him will I also receive. 22 For behold, this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive. 23 For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath created them; and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand. 24 For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand. 25 And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me. 26 And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed. 27 And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them; and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 28 Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day. 29 Therefore I say unto you, Go; and whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also. 30 Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me. 31 And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation. 32 Now I say unto you, Go; and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people; and this shall be observed from this time forward.

33 And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down that he might have them, and that he might judge the people of that church according to the commandments of God.

v13-33 Alma is quite disturbed about what should be done concerning the apostates, fearing he will make mistakes and offend God (v. 13). The result is he turns to God and pleads with Him, pouring out his soul to Him (v. 14).

The Lord responds telling him he and the body of believers are blessed (v. 15-20). Those who will hear the Lord's voice are those who will be redeemed from their sins by Him (v. 21-24). But, those who reject Him and do not know Him are those who have chosen not to be redeemed, so the Lord will not accept them (v. 25-28). Therefore, those who will not repent of their sins when confronted with them will not be numbered among the believers (v. V. 29). But, those who do repent will be forgiven by the Lord and the church (v. 30-31). This is how the unrepentant are to be dealt with from this point onward, they will not be numbered among the Lord's people (v. 32).

When Alma understands the Lord's will concerning how to deal with the apostates he writes the words down so he can judge them according to His words (v. 32).

v15-31 This section of text is a quotation of the Lord which

Alma documents per v. 33. The Lord's statement can be arranged as follows:

A - 15 Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi. 16 And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them. 17 And blessed art thou because thou hast established a church among this people; and they shall be established, and they shall be my people. 18 Yea, blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name; for in my name shall they be called; and they are mine. 19 And because thou hast inquired of me concerning the transgressor, thou art blessed. 20 Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life; and thou shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and shalt gather together my sheep.

B - 21 And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church, and him will I also receive.

C - 22 For behold, this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive.

D - 23 For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath created them; and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand.

E - 24 For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand.

E - 25 And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me.

D - 26 And then shall they know that I am

the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed.

C - 27 And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them; and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

B - 28 Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day.

A - 29 Therefore I say unto you, Go; and whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also. 30 Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me. 31 And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation. 32 Now I say unto you, Go; and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people; and this shall be observed from this time forward.

Verses 20 and 29 might also be taken as complimentary as well with v. 20 presenting Alma as a shepherd of the faithful and v. 29 as the shepherd who separates the goats from the sheep.

The two outermost A blocks deal with the temporal church, how the Lord feels about the faithful (v. 15-20) and the unfaithful (v. 29-32). Note these blocks cast Alma as the intercessor between the Lord and the Church, with him regulating the church's affairs and being the Lord's spokesman.

The center portion (v. 21-28) deals with the eternal aspects of these two groups. The faithful will be accepted by the Lord on the Day of Judgement and the Atonement will cover their sins, they will therefore be found on His right hand (v. 21-24). But, those who will not hear His voice choose to not be redeemed, and the Lord will confess He never knew them so they go with the devil (v. 25-28).

Note the rhetoric of v21-28 changes to a one on one with the Lord and the individual, Alma is no longer directly involved in this context as he was in the A's so he drops out of the

scene.

v20 "I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life", this can be interpreted to mean the Lord has made Alma's calling and election sure. Alma is to the point in his life where he has completely reconciled himself to the will of the Lord and will no longer do anything contrary to it.

v22 "this is my church", while Christians would consider such a statement to be a NT theme, it is common to the OT as well, compare: these are my chosen (cf. Isa. 43:20, Moses 1:26), these are mine elect (cf. Isa. 45:4, D&C 29:7, Moses 7:62), these are my people (v. 17, 32, Exod. 3:7, Isa. 51:16).

34 And it came to pass that Alma went and judged those that had been taken in iniquity, according to the word of the Lord. 35 And whosoever repented of their sins and did confess them, them he did number among the people of the church; 36 And those that would not confess their sins and repent of their iniquity, the same were not numbered among the people of the church, and their names were blotted out.

v34-36 Alma takes what the Lord has told him and does it (v. 34). Whoever confesses and repents of their sins are numbered among the church (v. 35), and those who don't aren't (v. 36).

37 And it came to pass that Alma did regulate all the affairs of the church; and they began again to have peace and to prosper exceedingly in the affairs of the church, walking circumspectly before God, receiving many, and baptizing many. 38 And now all these things did Alma and his fellow laborers do who were over the church, walking in all diligence, teaching the word of God in all things, suffering all manner of afflictions, being persecuted by all those who did not belong to the church of God. 39 And they did admonish their brethren; and they were also admonished, every one by the word of God, according to his sins, or to the sins which he had committed, being commanded of God to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all things.

v37-39 The result is the affairs of the church are properly dealt with and the church prospers, receiving and baptizing many (v. 37). Alma and the others who labor in the church do so diligently, and are persecuted by the nonbelievers (v. 38). All are admonished by the word of God, priests, teachers, and members alike. None being above the Law, all were admonished to pray, be thankful, and repent of their sins (v. 39).

v38 As occurs today, when people are held accountable for their actions (v. 36) it tends to sharpen the distinction between the parties and polarize people around them. The following chapter

gives greater detail on the nature of the persecution.

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