

Comments on Mosiah 27

The secular minority among the combined Mulekite and Nephite society persecutes the church considerably, causing serious problems. The sons of the king and high priest are vocal members of the secular minority, but are ultimately converted as a result of divine intervention and humbled hearts.

1 AND now it came to pass that the persecutions which were inflicted on the church by the unbelievers became so great that the church began to murmur, and complain to their leaders concerning the matter; and they did complain to Alma. And Alma laid the case before their king, Mosiah. And Mosiah consulted with his priests. 2 And it came to pass that king Mosiah sent a proclamation throughout the land round about that there should not any unbeliever persecute any of those who belonged to the church of God. 3 And there was a strict command throughout all the churches that there should be no persecutions among them, that there should be an equality among all men; 4 That they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support. 5 Yea, and all their priests and teachers should labor with their own hands for their support, in all cases save it were in sickness, or in much want; and doing these things, they did abound in the grace of God. 6 And there began to be much peace again in the land; and the people began to be very numerous, and began to scatter abroad upon the face of the earth, yea, on the north and on the south, on the east and on the west, building large cities and villages in all quarters of the land. 7 And the Lord did visit them and prosper them, and they became a large and wealthy people.

v1-7 Persecution is heaped on the believers by some of the unbelievers to the point where they complain to high priest Alma and he complains to king Mosiah (v. 1). The result is Mosiah proclaims persecution of believers by nonbelievers is prohibited (v. 2) as is the reverse case (v. 3). There shouldn't be any pride or arrogance among them, and all should labor for their own support (v. 4-5). With this edict peace returns to the land and the people prosper greatly (v. 6-7).

v1 It is likely the persecutions took the form of some kind of physical violence or overt antisocial behavior (e.g., the persecution the younger Alma was subjected to after his conversion in v. 32). Given Mosiah's reticence to get involved in internal church matters, whatever this persecution was, it must have been something that came under the auspices of the government for him to intervene.

v4-5 The explicit prohibitions of priestcraft suggests this may have been a problem, or a perceived problem on the part of the nonbelievers. Given Alma's previous record of enjoining the Law of Consecration (cf. 18:26-29), it seems very unlikely he would have permitted priestcraft. What might have happened is the nonbelievers misunderstood the Law of Consecration, or cynically saw it as a means of priestcraft. So, Mosiah regulated its application such that it would be clear the practice was not priestcraft, but was an act of charity in cases of sickness or poverty.

8 Now the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the sons of Alma was numbered among them, he being called Alma, after his father; nevertheless, he became a very wicked and an idolatrous man. And he was a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people; therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities. 9 And he became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church of God; stealing away the hearts of the people; causing much dissension among the people; giving a chance for the enemy of God to exercise his power over them.

v8-9 Among the nonbelievers are the sons of Mosiah and one of Alma's sons named Alma. The younger Alma is a particularly effective persecutor of the church, being a skilled sophist (v. 8, cp. 26:6). The result is he leads many people away from the church, giving the devil power over the apostates (v. 9).

Alma the younger would have been an effective at dissuading people from the church simply because he was the high priest's son. It is likely Alma senior taught Alma junior concerning religion and the Law, so when the younger Alma chose to attack the church he would be a knowledgeable critic. Add to that a natural gift for public speaking and the result is an effective force against the church.

The text does not directly shed light on to what the motives of these sons was, whether it was political scheming, love of the attention, bitterness against their fathers, or simple self-promotion. It is plain they enjoyed the worldliness of the secular lifestyle, but people usually have some other motive driving them when it comes to taking such aggressive covert actions to undermine the church. If they were morally and ethically bankrupt it seems likely they would not have repented, as had other apostates failed to do (e.g., Sherem,

Nehor, Korihor, Zoram, Amalickiah, etc.), and become such zealous converts.

Rather, there was probably some other ulterior motive that blinded them in their pursuit for what they wanted, and undermining the church was only part of their larger plan. If their aspirations were largely political, or something else along those lines, then their willingness to repent when confronted with the truth makes more sense. After conversion, their complete aversion to political office and some of the comments made by king Mosiah in ch. 29 suggest political self-promotion was their motive. Note in 29:3 all of the sons of Mosiah flatly reject political rulership in favor of the ministry, an interesting dichotomy, perhaps suggestive of what their interests were prior to conversion and with conversion they altogether reject their former interests. Then in 29:7-9 Mosiah warns against appointing another in Aaron's place as that might lead to Aaron returning to his former ways and starting a war to obtain the throne. A rather dire warning if Aaron had not previously been interested in political things.

10 And now it came to pass that while he was going about to destroy the church of God, for he did go about secretly with the sons of Mosiah seeking to destroy the church, and to lead astray the people of the Lord, contrary to the commandments of God, or even the king-- 11 And as I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood; 12 And so great was their astonishment, that they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.

13 Nevertheless he cried again, saying: Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said: This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people. 14 And again, the angel said: Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith.

15 And now behold, can ye dispute the power of God? For behold, doth not my voice shake the earth? And can ye not also behold me before you? And I am sent from God. 16 Now I say unto thee: Go, and remember the captivity of thy fathers in the land of Helam, and in the land of Nephi; and remember how great things he has done for them; for they were in bondage, and he

has delivered them. And now I say unto thee, Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more, that their prayers may be answered, and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off. 17 And now it came to pass that these were the last words which the angel spake unto Alma, and he departed.

v10-17 As Alma junior was going about secretly with the sons of Mosiah to destroy the church (v. 10), an angel of the Lord confronts them in an overwhelming manner (v. 11), so much so they fall to earth senseless (v. 12).

The angel calls to them again, commands them to stand before him, and tells them they will not be permitted to overthrow the church of the Lord (v. 13). The angel informs them the Lord has heard the prayers of those in the church which have been requesting Him to manifest His power to them (v. 14).

The angel then asks them if they can dispute the power and reality of God, with him standing before them shaking the ground beneath them (v. 15). He then commands them to remember all the things the Lord has done for their fathers, the benefits they themselves now enjoy. If they will themselves be cast off from God, then so be it, but they are commanded to stop persecuting the church (v. 16). The angel then leaves them (v. 17).

v16 "remember the captivity of thy fathers", Alma junior does ultimately bring this into his heart, cf. Alma 5:3-5.

v17 "these were the last words which the angel spoke to Alma", the angel apparently spoke more to the sons of Mosiah (cf. Alma 36:11), but at this point Alma was apparently incoherent over what he was being faced with.

18 And now Alma and those that were with him fell again to the earth, for great was their astonishment; for with their own eyes they had beheld an angel of the Lord; and his voice was as thunder, which shook the earth; and they knew that there was nothing save the power of God that could shake the earth and cause it to tremble as though it would part asunder. 19 And now the astonishment of Alma was so great that he became dumb, that he could not open his mouth; yea, and he became weak, even that he could not move his hands;

therefore he was taken by those that were with him, and carried helpless, even until he was laid before his father. 20 And they rehearsed unto his father all that had happened unto them; and his father rejoiced, for he knew that it was the power of God. 21 And he caused that a multitude should be gathered together that they might witness what the Lord had done for his son, and also for those that were with him. 22 And he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they

began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength--that the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God.

v18-22 After the angel departs they again collapse to the ground out of astonishment at the evidence just presented them (v. 18). Alma's amazement is so great he is utterly overpowered, and cannot talk or move afterwards. The sons of Mosiah have to carry him back to his family (v. 19).

They then tell his father what happened, and his father rejoices because he knows the younger Alma has been overcome by the power of the Lord (v. 20). The elder Alma has people come and see firsthand what has happened to the younger Alma (v. 21).

He then summons his fellow priests to fast and pray for the younger Alma that he might recover from his present physical shock (v. 22).

23 And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

24 For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit. 25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; 26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. 27 I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.

28 Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting night unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God. 29 My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.

30 I rejected my Redeemer, and denied that which had been spoken of by our fathers; but now that they may foresee that he will come, and that he remembereth every creature of his creating, he will make himself manifest unto all. 31 Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an

everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye.

v23-31 After two days and nights of the priests fasting, Alma revives and relates his conversion to them (v. 23).

Alma junior tells them he has repented of his sins and has been spiritually born again (v. 24). He relates to them that the Lord told him that all people must change from their carnal ways to become spiritual and the children of God (v. 25). Unless they are spiritually born again they cannot obtain the kingdom of God (v. 26), so they will be cast off, even as he was destined to be cast off (v. 27).

However, he was not cast off, because he repented, and the Lord in His mercy chose to forgive him (v. 28). He has been redeemed from the terrible misery he faced, so he is no longer in pain over his sins (v. 29).

He confesses he had reject the Lord as his Redeemer, but he sees plainly now the day will come when the Lord will manifest Himself to all people (v. 30). Then all will bow before Him and confess He is Lord, and will be in fear of His judgement (v. 31, cp. Isa. 45:23).

v25 "born again", while the concept of being "born again" is commonly equated with the NT, it has its source in the OT, cf. Deut. 10:16, Deut. 30:6, Isa. 1:11-18, Jer. 4:4, Jer. 24:7, Ezek. 18:31, Ezek. 36:26. The phrase "born again" is actually only used in two instances in the NT, cf. John 3:3-7, 1 Peter 1:23. It is used more often in the BofM than the NT.

32 And now it came to pass that Alma began from this time forward to teach the people, and those who were with Alma at the time the angel appeared unto them, traveling round about through all the land, publishing to all the people the things which they had heard and seen, and preaching the word of God in much tribulation, being greatly persecuted by those who were unbelievers, being smitten by many of them. 33 But notwithstanding all this, they did impart much consolation to the church, confirming their faith, and exhorting them with long-suffering and much travail to keep the commandments of God. 34 And four of them were the sons of Mosiah; and their names were Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and Himni; these were the names of the sons of Mosiah. 35 And they traveled throughout all the land of Zarahemla, and among all the people who were under the reign of king Mosiah, zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen, and explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired

to hear them. 36 And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer. 37 And how blessed are they! For they did publish peace; they did publish good tidings of good; and they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth.

v32-37 From this time onward the younger Alma and the sons of Mosiah (v. 34) preach and teach to the all the Nephite people in order to make up for their previous persecution of the church (v. 35), even suffering great persecutions as they do so (v. 32). This strengthens the church greatly (v. 33) as they are acting as instruments in the hands of God (v. 36), and they are greatly blessed for it (v. 37).

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