

ALMA'S PEOPLE PROSPER

(Mosiah 11:150-158)

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. 150-151). The result is that Mosiah proclaims persecution of believers by nonbelievers is prohibited (v. 152) as is the reverse case (v. 153). There shouldn't be any pride or arrogance among them, and all should labor for their own support (v. 154-155). With this, peace returns to the land and the people prosper greatly (v. 156-158).

It is likely the persecutions took the form of some kind of physical violence or overt antisocial behavior (the persecution the younger Alma was subjected to after his conversion). Given Mosiah's resistance 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.

The explicit prohibitions of priest craft suggest 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 (see Mosiah 9:59-64), it seems very unlikely that he would have permitted priest craft. What might have happened is the nonbelievers misunderstood the Law of Consecration, or cynically saw it as a means of priest craft. So, Mosiah regulated its application such that it would be clear the practice was not priest craft, but was an act of charity in cases of sickness and poverty.

Verse 153, "equality among all men", can be read in the modern sense of equality among men. There is no reason to believe that it could not have had our very modern understanding of equality before the law. However, it is also possible that Mosiah is describing the unity of the people rather than their legal rights. Given the social disruptions, and the inheritance of Benjamin's attempt to unify the people, we would expect that Mosiah would similarly attempt to unify his people. "Equality" is not political or legal equality, but an equality of social dimensions.

Verse 158 mentions that the people credit the Lord with the prosperity of the Zarahemla kingdom.

The danger of wealth comes not in the wealth itself, but in the uneven distribution of wealth within the same culture/community. When this occurs, rather than become a means of integration, it is a sign of disintegration and stratification. That was the particular problem that Benjamin fought when he proposed his social reforms.