



Alma 31.²⁴⁻²⁸— meditation

²⁴Now when Alma saw this his heart was grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people; yea, he saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods. ²⁵Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride. ²⁶And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and cried, saying:

“O, how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men? ²⁷Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world. ²⁸Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish.”

After observing Zoramite society and witnessing their form of worship, Alma was deeply saddened to conclude that the Zoramites “were a wicked and a perverse people.” Yes their worship of God was arrogant and narcissistic. Yes, their attitude toward others was belittling and despicable. Yes, their doctrine was heretical. Yes, their rejection of Christ was tragic. Alma could have latched onto any one of these perversions in his prayerful complaint to God.

But, what stood out most to Alma, and what he lamented most bitterly to God was the materialism that had captured the hearts of the people. He not only saw their materialism as wicked and perverted, but described it in pained prayer to God as “gross wickedness.” Now, I guess there’s wickedness, and then there’s “gross wickedness”—wickedness on steroids. Materialism is wickedness on steroids. Materialism is a rejection of God and of Christ and all that he stands for. Materialism is idolatrous. Materialism is, as Jesus, himself, taught the Nephites, is a sign of perdition.¹

Alma sees numerous indications of Zoramite materialism. He finds it in their gold and silver. He finds it in their “fine goods.” He finds it in “their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with.” This latter, this indication of materialism that takes the form of fashion in dress, is a dead giveaway that the perdition of materialism has set in and begun its rot. It is like a flashing warning sign in the Book of Mormon.

In the very first year of his judgeship, Alma sees the flashing warning sign of materialism’s perdition in the anti-Christ, Nehor’s wearing of “very costly apparel.”² Less than a decade later this form of perdition had made its way into the church of God. He saw their “fine silks” and “fine-twined linen.” He saw that

¹ See 3 Nephi 27.³²

² Alma 1.⁶

“they began to wear very costly apparel.”³ Centuries later, inspired observers of society saw the materialistic perdition of which Jesus had so accurately predicted. “There began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world.”⁴

Yes, the Zoramites fashion sense was anything but camouflage. Their “costly apparel” was a flagrant and flaunting sign of their perdition. It was a clearer sign than their not knowing how or where or when to pray. It was a clearer sign than their false and narcissistic sense of exceptionalism. It was clearer, even, than their rejection of Christ. There is simply no need for subtle or difficult discernment of obscure thoughts. The perdition of materialism is obvious to anyone who has heard and believed the word of God. Too bad it is so often seen as a sign of success, and sometimes, inexplicably, as a sign of righteousness under the influence of false prosperity gospels. Too bad those called to shepherd God’s children so often, if at all, treat it with kid gloves, as if it were merely evidence of poor judgment rather than a sign of perdition.

“Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

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³ Alma 4.⁶⁻⁷

⁴ 4 Nephi 1.²⁴