

Alma 21:2

1 *Amalekites, People of Amulon, City of Zarahemla*

Amalekites] A sect of Nephite apostates, the greater part of whom were after the order of Nehor (see verse 4:24:28-29; also see commentary on Alma 14:16). They affiliated themselves with the Lamanites and aided in the building of the Lamanite city Jerusalem. As is so often the case with apostates, they possessed an unmeasured hatred for that which they had betrayed. Again and again, we see that those who leave the faith can never really leave the faith alone. The Lamanite generals placed those of their number in command positions in their armies because of their intense hatred of their former brethren and because of their more wicked and murderous dispositions (see Alma 43:6).

The people of Amulon] Amulon was one of the most prominent and degraded priests of King Noah. He undoubtedly aided in the martyrdom of Abinadi. When King Noah was burned to death by his enraged subjects, Amulon with his fellow priests, fled into the wilderness. There they hid themselves for an extended period, eventually capturing some Lamanite maidens and taking them to wife. The children they had deserted, displeased with their fathers' conduct, later renounced that parentage and "took upon themselves the name of Nephi" (see Mosiah 25:12).

Meanwhile the former priests commenced to cultivate what they called the land of Amulon. When discovered by the Lamanites, with the wives they had kidnapped, they pleaded for mercy and were spared. Amulon and his group then joined the Lamanites, and soon after that the Lamanite king made Amulon the ruler of the lands of Amulon and Helam. It was by virtue of this appointment that Amulon and his group became the overseers of the people of Alma, who were eventually freed from their brutality by the providence of God. These former priests instructed the Lamanites in the learning of the Nephites.

Thus the Amulonites were Nephites on their fathers' side and Lamanites on the Mothers'. Their education was that of the Nephites, and many of them became followers of Nehor. Scattered throughout the lands of Amulon, Helam, and Jerusalem, they assumed a leading role as opponents of Ammon and his missionary brethren. None of their number repented and accepted the gospel. Rather, they became leaders in the persecutions carried on against the suffering people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi and, with the Amalekites, made martyrs of many of those Saints.

A great city, which was called Jerusalem] This was a Lamanite city, built within the borders of the land of Nephi. Nephite apostates—the Amulonites and Amalekites—aided in its construction. Its inhabitants always warred against those sent to it with the message of salvation. It is listed among those cities destroyed at the time of Christ's death. "Waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof," the Lord said, "to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them" (3 Nephi 9:7).

Millett and McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol 3, pp. 151-152

Alma 21:1-3

2 "The Amalekites were a sect of Nephite apostates whose origin is not given. Very early in the days of the Republic they had affiliated with the Lamanites, and with them, as we have noted, built a large city which they called *Jerusalem*. They were exceedingly crafty and hard-hearted. They, a short time afterward, led in the massacres of the Christian Lamanites, or people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. In later years, the Lamanite commanders were in the habit of placing them in high positions in their armies, evidently because of their greater force of character, their intense hatred of their former brethren, and also their more wicked and murderous disposition. In the Sacred Record they are generally associated with the Zoramites and Amulonites.

"The Amulonites were the descendants of Amulon and his associate wicked priests of King Noah. They were Nephites on their father's side, and Lamanites on their mother's, but by association and education, were of the latter race.

"Many of them, however, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers and took upon themselves the name of Nephites, and were considered among that people ever after. Of those who remained Amulonites, many became followers of Nehor and were scattered in the Lands of Amulon, Helam, and Jerusalem, all of which appear to have been districts in the same region of country. It is recorded of them that not one repented and received the Gospel Message that was preached by the sons of King Mosiah; on the contrary, they became leaders in the persecution carried on against the suffering people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and were those who, with the Amalekites, slew the greater number of that unoffending people who thus suffered martyrdom."

Reynolds and Sjodahl, *Commentary*, 3:290

Alma 21:3

- 3 "When the Prophet [Joseph Smith] had ended telling how he had been treated [by apostates], Brother Behunnin remarked: 'If I should leave this Church I would not do as those men have done: I would go to some remote place where Mormonism had never been heard of [,] settle down, and no one would ever learn that I knew anything about it.' The great Seer immediately replied: 'Brother Behunnin, you don't know what you would do. No doubt these men once thought as you do. Before you joined this Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did that you left the neutral ground, and you never can get back on to it. Should you forsake the Master you enlisted to serve it will be by the instigation of the evil one, and you will follow his dictation and be his servant.' He [further] emphasized the fact that a man or woman who had not taken sides either with Christ or Belial could maintain a neutral position, but when they enlisted under either the one or the other they left the neutral ground forever."

Daniel Tyler, *Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Juvenile Instructor*, Aug. 15, 1892, p. 492

Alma 21:4

- 4 The "order of the Nehors" began with the anti-Christ named Nehor (Alma 1:1-16). The Book of Mormon outlines their false beliefs.
1. They thought that simply meeting together constituted worship (Alma 21:6).
 2. They believed that God would save all men (vs. 6).
 3. They denied Christ, saying that no man could know of things to come (vs. 7, 8).

Alma 21:8

- 5 **We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come]** As we shall soon see with Korihor the anti-Christ, those who oppose the truth and fight the Lord and his servants often falsely and absurdly generalize beyond their own experience: because they do not know, they assume that no one else does. Because they are past feeling, they presume that no one else can and does feel. It is thus characteristic for them to refuse to see, hear, feel, or taste the things of the Spirit—they are aptly described as being spiritually dead.

Millet and McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol 3, p 153.

Alma 21:10-11

- 6 *Contention*

President Joseph F. Smith warned that "the spirit of contention" is found 'only among apostates and those who have denied the faith.'" "We do not contend," he said. "We are not contentious, for if we were we would grieve the Spirit of the Lord from us, just as apostates do and have always done." (GD, 372)

The Prophet Joseph Smith similarly admonished Church members to "avoid contentions and vain disputes with men of corrupt minds, who do not desire to know the truth" (TPJS, 43). More recently, Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: "Contention builds walls and puts up barriers. Love opens doors. . . . Ours is not only to avoid contention, but to see that such things are done away. . . . How important it is to know how to disagree without being disagreeable."

Ensign, May 1978, p. 8

7 Marvin J. Ashton said, "We have no time for contention. We only have time to be about our Father's business."

8 "As we dread any disease that undermines the health of the body, so should we deplore contention, which is a corroding canker of the spirit. I appreciate the counsel of Abraham Lincoln, who said: 'Quarrel not at all. No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare the time for personal contention.... Better give your path to a dog than be bitten by him.' (Letter to J. M. Cutts, 26 October 1863, in *Concise Lincoln Dictionary of Thoughts and Statements, comp. and arr. Ralph B. Winn, New York: New York Philosophical Library, 1959, p. 107.*)' Russell M. Nelson, "The Canker of Contention," *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 68.

Alma 21:12

9 *Hard Hearts*

When people harden their hearts they "shut their ears,... close their eyes, and are determined to hear nothing that is true"

Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:371.

Alma 21:21-22

10 *Freedom of worship*

"Freedom of conscience, the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience, is the greatest of all freedoms"

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 299.

Alma 21:23

11 *Daily*

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "When I was a boy, I used to ride my bicycle home from basketball practice at night. I would connect a small pear-shaped generator to my bicycle tire. Then as I pedaled, the tire would turn a tiny rotor, which produced electricity and emitted a single, welcome beam of light. It was a simple but effective mechanism. But I had to pedal to make it work! . . .

"The generation of spiritual light comes from daily spiritual pedaling. It comes from praying, studying the scriptures, fasting, and serving—from living the gospel. . .

"Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light," *Ensign*, May 2002, p. 71