

## Chapter One

# “THEY ARE OF ANCIENT DATE”

## Jaredite Traditions and the Politics of Gadianton’s Dissent

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One hundred and seven years following the installation of the reign of judges, and sixty-seven years after the foundation of the Gadianton robbers, Lachoneus, the Nephite governor, received a letter from Giddianhi, his supposed counterpart of the Gadianton robbers. Over the sixty years of their existence, the Gadianton robbers had grown in size and popularity to the point that they represented an existential threat to the Nephite state, having become a quasi state of their own. The letter informed Lachoneus of an impending attack by the Gadianton robbers, presumably for political wrongs perpetuated against them. While these perceived wrongs reflected long-standing cultural tensions concerning Nephite identity and leadership, Giddianhi associated his state with an older tradition: “I am the governor of this the secret society of Gadianton; which society and the works thereof I know to be good; and they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us” (3 Nephi 3:9).

While the entire narrative of conflict between Giddianhi and Lachoneus is of great interest, it is Giddianhi's reflection that his society and its works were ancient in origin that may be one of the more intriguing elements. It is certainly possible that Giddianhi may be understanding the sixty-seven years between Gadianton, the eponymous founder of the society, and himself as "ancient," but it appears that the ancient tradition handed down was something much older. In a related but unconnected text, Mormon provides a possible origin for this tradition.

Noting that the society was defined by specific "oaths and covenants," "laws of . . . wickedness," and "secret signs and . . . secret words," Mormon suggests that these things were

put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being . . . who did plot with Cain, that if he would murder his brother Abel it should not be known unto the world. . . . Yea, it is that same being who put it into the heart of Gadianton to still carry on the work of darkness, and of secret murder; . . . and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness. (Helaman 6:22–30)

As this passage indicates, Mormon believed that the society reflected similarities with an earlier organization associated explicitly with Cain. Yet even as he declares the adversary as the source of the Gadianton robbers, Mormon provides another possibility:

And also it is that same being who put it into the hearts of the people to build a tower sufficiently high that they might get to heaven. And it was that same being who led on the people who came from that tower into this land; who spread the works of darkness and abominations over all the face of the land, until he dragged the people down to an entire destruction, and to an everlasting hell. (Helaman 6:28)

The Nephites had been introduced to the people Mormon alluded to—those who "came from that tower into this land"—via the discovery of their texts that described what we can call the Jaredite civilization.

While Mormon ascribes the formation of the secret society among the Jaredites to the adversary, the Jaredites themselves, as we will see, state explicitly that their own textual traditions were the source for their oaths, covenants, and plans—the same ones that, according to Mormon, would later define the organization and structure of the Gadianton robbers. Thus a relationship appears to have existed between the Gadianton robbers and the Jaredite record. While this may seem obvious, Alma 37 and Helaman 6 make clear that restrictions were placed on the transmission and availability of the text’s contents, so how Gadianton learned what he did about founding a secret society is an intriguing question.

Equally intriguing is why some believed an alternative society was necessary in the first place. Again, it appears that the Jaredite record played a role, providing the theological or at least the philosophical underpinnings for forming that society. It did so by setting forth an alternative historiography that could be used to justify attempts at radical social and political change. This study will explore how the Jaredite text (especially its restricted content) and its traditions were appropriated by disaffected segments of the Nephite polity to legitimate that alternative social structure.

## THE TWENTY-FOUR GOLD PLATES

Jaredite artifacts, especially texts, seem to have been of great interest to the Nephites, with their leaders seeing the Jaredite history as a direct warning to the Nephites concerning their own behavior. Yet the Nephites’ direct interaction with Jaredite culture was limited at best and relatively late in Nephite history.<sup>1</sup> As the text of the Book of Mormon now stands, Nephite awareness of the Jaredites corresponds with their interaction with the people of Zarahemla, or the Mulekites, following Mosiah<sub>1</sub>’s departure from the land of Nephi. According to Amaleki, at some indeterminate period of time following Mosiah<sub>1</sub>’s selection as king by the combined populations, “there was a large stone brought unto him with engravings on it,” which he then translated “by the gift and power of God” (Omni 1:20). The monument’s inscription “gave an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people” (v. 21). Amaleki also noted that the inscription contained a brief history “concerning his fathers,” adding that Coriantumr’s ancestors “came out from the tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language

of the people; and the severity of the Lord fell upon them according to his judgments, which are just; and their bones lay scattered in the land northward” (v. 22).<sup>2</sup>

While the stele narrative is intriguing, there is simply not enough information given to know whether this object had any great impact on the Nephite population as a whole, or even if the greater Nephite polity was aware that the stele existed.<sup>3</sup> It would be another two or three generations before the Nephites in Zarahemla would encounter the Jaredites again. In Mosiah 28, Mormon tells the reader that Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, the grandson of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, had translated twenty-four gold plates originally found by Zeniff’s colony. The discovery of the plates was recounted earlier during the meeting of Limhi, Zeniff’s grandson, and Ammon, Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s envoy, who also happened to be a descendant of Zarahemla. The meeting included a public narration of each community’s history since their separation.<sup>4</sup> Following the recital, Limhi invited Ammon to his house and there recounted for him an expedition he had sent to find Zarahemla. The expedition never found Zarahemla, but instead ended up in “a land among many waters, having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men, and of beasts, and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind” (Mosiah 8:8). As proof of their encounter, they brought back large breastplates of brass and copper, as well as sword blades that had rusted (see vv. 10–11). But the *pièce de résistance* was twenty-four gold plates “filled with engravings” (v. 9). Limhi took the record back to Zarahemla, and there Mosiah<sub>2</sub> translated it.

The account of this record’s translation is embedded in a larger narrative concerning Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s handing over of all the metal records to Alma<sub>2</sub> because there was no heir, Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s sons having embarked on a ministering mission to the Lamanites. According to the embedded material, Mosiah<sub>2</sub> had translated and “caused to be written” Limhi’s records (Mosiah 28:11). It is unclear if that last phrase refers to the actual translation process—that is, if Mosiah<sub>2</sub> orally translated while scribes wrote down what was said—or if later copies were made from the first translation. Regardless, the text states that the translation and written version came as a result of “the great anxiety of his people; for they were desirous beyond measure to know concerning those people who had been destroyed” (v. 12). The language is

striking in terms of its intensity and suggests that information concerning the Jaredites was of great interest to the population of Zarahemla.<sup>5</sup>

As for the text itself, Mormon tells us that “these records . . . gave an account of the people who were destroyed, from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam” (Mosiah 28:17). This brief summary suggests that the record included the same basic information as the stele, presumably with even more detail. Moreover, though not mentioned explicitly, it appears that the record was read or made available to the population at large, since we are told that “this account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly, yea, they were filled with sorrow; nevertheless it gave them much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice” (v. 18). Again, the interest ascribed to Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s population is intriguing. While interest in earlier cultures may be expected, it appears that the people of Zarahemla had an emotional investment in this history, mourning “exceedingly” over the demise of the civilization but rejoicing in the knowledge garnered about the culture.

## THE JAREDITE RECORD AND THE REFORMS OF MOSIAH<sub>2</sub>

Yet the text’s overall impact on the population is less clear. It does appear that the record had at least some influence on the biggest political event of the period—the inauguration of the reign of the judges. As noted earlier, the integration between the Nephites and Mulekites may not have been a harmonious, seamless integration, but one marked by internal contentions, dissensions, and rebellions.<sup>6</sup> Questions about what defined a “Nephite” seem to have become a contentious subject in the larger community, with at least one segment of the population having left Zarahemla (perhaps because the integration threatened the traditional understanding of Nephite identity) and a later generation rejecting the traditional Nephite way of life.<sup>7</sup> In Mosiah 27:1–2 the reader is informed that people remained separated into two identities three generations after the supposed integration: the Mulekites, who were the majority population, and

the Nephite minority. The reemergence of the Nephite splinter groups—Limhi’s people and Alma’s people, the latter introducing a “Nephite” religious innovation that was then given monarchical protection (see Mosiah 27:1–2)—would have led to further strains among the community, particularly since it appears that at least one of the splinter groups upon returning opted to found its own city rather than live in Zarahemla proper.<sup>8</sup>

Following the reentry of the Nephite splinter groups, a potential political crisis loomed, namely the lack of a royal successor to the throne. After their spiritual transformation, the sons of Mosiah<sub>2</sub> had requested and received permission to minister to the Lamanites in the land of Nephi (the same Lamanites from whom Alma’s and Limhi’s communities had fled). Yet even as he gave his approval, Mosiah<sub>2</sub> appears to have foreseen challenges if he installed another king. In his speech introducing the judgeship system (Mosiah 29:6–7), Mosiah<sub>2</sub> noted two primary concerns. First, Mosiah<sub>2</sub> appears concerned that installing a king would lead to contentions among the population, suggesting there was enough division within Zarahemla to leave no clear-cut choice besides his son that would be acceptable to all. Second, even if he did appoint a king, it was possible his son Aaron, the rightful heir, would return and not accept the new state of affairs, leading to conflict.

The second concern of Mosiah<sub>2</sub> is of particular interest here because it resembles events recorded in the Jaredite record. Throughout the record of Ether were descriptions of dynastic overthrows, often by one of the monarch’s sons seeking for the throne and intent on putting his father and remaining family members in captivity. One such narrative in particular closely resembled the political crisis confronting Mosiah<sub>2</sub>. In Ether 10 the king Riplakish was wicked enough that

the people did rise up in rebellion against him . . . insomuch that Riplakish was killed, and his descendants were driven out of the land. And it came to pass after the space of many years, Morianton, (he being a descendant of Riplakish) gathered together an army of outcasts, and went forth and gave battle unto the people; and he gained power over many cities; and the war became exceedingly sore, and did last for the space of many years; and he did gain power

over all the land, and did establish himself king over all the land.  
(vv. 8–9)

While Morianton ends up being a righteous king, the conflict by which he takes his rightful position is described as “exceedingly sore.” Such past violence over kingship may have provided grounding for Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s fears, namely that conflict could erupt if his sons returned and sought the throne they believed was rightfully theirs. That Mosiah<sub>2</sub> knew of this precedent is likely, given that he had recently completed the translation of the Jaredite record, which would have included the account of Morianton. Thus it is not unreasonable to assume that Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s reforms reflected his understanding of the Jaredite record.

Yet even as we are told that the Jaredite record impressed the population and was possibly an impetus for the induction of the reign of the judges, Mormon also makes it clear that the text itself was not made generally available. According to Mosiah 28:20, after Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s translation of the record (and presumably his recitation of the history to the people) he turned over all records, including the Jaredite record and its attendant “interpreters,” to Alma<sub>2</sub>, the high priest of the church who would also be the first chief judge for the first five years of the reign of the judges. Thus the record would be recounted and interpreted through the lens of the church’s theology and controlled by Nephite elite. The importance in managing the Jaredite text is made clear in Alma<sub>2</sub>’s instruction to his son Helaman<sub>1</sub> concerning the selfsame record approximately eighteen years later (see Alma 37).

## THE JAREDITE RECORD AND THE INSTRUCTION OF ALMA<sub>2</sub>

As part of the transfer of authority to his son Helaman<sub>1</sub>, who would become the next high priest, Alma<sub>2</sub> conferred the collection of records given to him by Mosiah<sub>2</sub> along with instructions concerning the Jaredite record, which presumably included both the original plates and Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s translation. The instruction itself begins in the following manner: “Now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates, that ye keep them, that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works . . . may be made manifest unto this people; yea, all their murders, and

robbings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations, may be made manifest unto this people” (Alma 37:21). Notable is Alma’s limitation of the Jaredite record to a single pedagogical function, namely, that it be used *only* to illustrate the consequences of wickedness among the Jaredites (see v. 29). While the book of Ether as composed now includes, even if briefly, righteous individuals and powerful events, including the brother of Jared and the deliverance of the Jaredite forefathers from the ocean, similar to the Nephites’ own history, these were not to be taught to the Nephites. Instead, it is the wrongdoing of the Jaredites that was to be “made manifest.”

Further instruction suggests that Alma<sub>2</sub> also believed the Jaredite record could dovetail with the Nephites’ own prophetic history. Noting to his son one of the primary lessons to be taken from the Jaredite history, Alma<sub>2</sub> stated that “the Lord saw that his people began to work in darkness . . . ; therefore the Lord said, if they did not repent they should be destroyed from off the face of the earth” (Alma 37:22). This warning reflected prophetic utterances by both Alma<sub>2</sub> himself and Abinadi. In Alma 9:24, in his ministry to the Nehorite city of Ammonihah, Alma<sub>2</sub> had declared, “Has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth?” The initial prophecy appears to have come from Abinadi to the estranged Nephites who had returned to reclaim the land of Nephi in the days of King Benjamin. Recounting the people’s iniquity, Abinadi then revealed the Lord’s will: “It shall come to pass that except they repent I will utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth; yet they shall leave a record behind them . . . ; yea, even this will I do that I may discover the abominations of this people to other nations” (Mosiah 12:8).<sup>9</sup> Alma<sub>2</sub>’s presumed understanding of the Jaredite record’s purpose and Abinadi’s prophecy addressing with similar terminology the purpose of the record of Zeniff’s people (i.e., that others may know of their abominations) suggest that Alma<sub>2</sub> envisioned a place for the Jaredite material in Nephite prophetic discourse.

Another intersection Alma<sub>2</sub> seems to establish between the Jaredite record and Nephite prophetic tradition is the Gazelem prophecy:



And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.

And now, my son, these interpreters were prepared that the word of God might be fulfilled, which he spake, saying:

I will bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works and their abominations; and except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.

. . . And thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us. (Alma 37:23–26)

Unfortunately, the original context of the prophecy is not provided, so it is not clear if it is a Nephite prophecy, a Mulekite prophecy, or a Jaredite prophecy. Yet this very lack of background information suggests the prophecy was known, at least to Helaman<sub>1</sub>, since Alma<sub>2</sub> assumes his son’s familiarity with it.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, it appears that the Nephite record keepers (and possibly others, as will be argued later) could find the prophecy in one of the records to which they had access. In Alma 37 both verse 23 and the continuation of the prophecy through verse 25 indicate the prophecy was a direct citation from God himself. Verse 24 introduces the second portion of the prophecy with the clause “which he spake, saying . . .” This clause can be found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon prefacing written prophecy as well as spoken prophecy. In 1 Nephi 22:20, Nephi<sub>1</sub> alludes to Deuteronomy 18:18–19, a prophecy that would have been written on the brass plates, but prefaces his citation with “unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying . . .” Similarly, Jacob prefaces the Zenos allegory, also written on the brass plates, with “Do ye not remember to have read the words of the prophet Zenos, which he spake unto the house of Israel, saying . . .” In both cases the Nephite prophet alluded to written text, even while recognizing the presumed original oral recitation. Following this

citation formula, verses 23 and 25 of Alma 37 appear to be actual citations from a text. While this may seem like nothing but an academic exercise for something that appears obvious, it is an important observation because the citations do not appear to be Nephite prophecy, but a Jaredite one.<sup>11</sup>

Just as the authorship of the prophecy is uncertain, it is also difficult to ascertain its audience. Even so, the present tense of the verbs and the conditional clause “except they repent I will destroy them” (Alma 37:25) suggest that the original setting of the prophecy was to an audience about a subject group that could still repent, while the phrase “that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren” (v. 23) suggests that the audience was contemporary with the subject. The final promise—that the Lord would “bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land”—suggests that the audience existed before a later society. While none of this is conclusive evidence of Jaredite origin, the overall tenor of the text suggests that it should best be understood as divine instruction to a Jaredite prophet concerning the future state of the Jaredite people.<sup>12</sup> What is clear is that Alma<sub>2</sub> understood the prophecy to include the Nephites, identifying them as the referent to the last promise, a nation “that shall hereafter possess the land” (v. 25), and observing to Helaman, “And now, my son, we see that they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed, and thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us” (v. 26). Thus the Jaredite record intersected with Nephite tradition in two ways: (1) by explicitly tying the Jaredite history to the Nephite prophetic warning to repent or be destroyed from the face of the earth, and (2) by suggesting that the Nephites themselves were the fulfillment of Jaredite prophecy, having translated the record that made known the perfidy of the Jaredites.

Yet even as Alma<sub>2</sub> connected the prophetic strands, his instruction made it clear that parts of the text were to be restricted, even banned:

And now, my son, I command you that ye retain all their oaths, and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations; yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not. . . .

Therefore ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people, and only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them; and ye shall teach them to abhor such wickedness and abominations and murders. . . .

And now, my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you; trust not those secret plans unto this people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity. (Alma 37:27, 29, 32)

To reiterate an earlier point, what is striking about the instruction is the utter emphasis on the pedagogical use of the text among the Nephites as a stark warning against wicked behavior. Yet Alma<sub>2</sub>'s injunction indicates that the original text also contained more specific information concerning the formation, organization, and praxis of Jaredite “secret abominations.”<sup>13</sup> Alma<sub>2</sub>'s mention of secret groups is the first time this subject had been discussed since the ministries of Nephi<sub>1</sub> and his brother Jacob, approximately five hundred years earlier.

Jacob and Nephi<sub>1</sub> warned of the adversary, who was the “founder of murder, and works of darkness” and “secret combinations” (2 Nephi 9:9; 26:22), suggesting both prophets appear aware of a biblical tradition acknowledging the existence of secret combinations: “There are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the founder of all these things; yea the founder of murder, and works of darkness” (26:22). Beyond these two references, nothing appears in Nephite history to suggest that such societies were known and practiced before the time of Alma<sub>2</sub>. Yet Alma<sub>2</sub>'s injunction suggests that he saw potential danger if such wicked societies became known, since that knowledge could be used to re-create similar societies among the Nephites themselves. It also indicates that he feared there were factions among the Nephites that could lead to the formation of such societies. Why they would want to do so requires some background on the social and cultural tensions of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s contemporaries.

As noted above, the integration of the Nephites and Mulekites before the discovery of the Jaredite record does not appear to have been a smooth, conflict-free process. Mormon noted that the reign of King Benjamin, the

son of Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and father of Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, experienced “much contention and many dissensions away unto the Lamanites” (Words of Mormon 1:16). Throughout the book of Mosiah are indications that the Nephites and Mulekites remained two separate peoples, and among the Nephites there is evidence of deep disagreements apparently over “Nephite” identity. This state of affairs may be best recognized by the critiques of the “traditions of the fathers” that appeared during the integrated monarchical period but became prevalent with the reign of the judges. The Nephite “tradition of the fathers” was one that emphasized the role of prophetic authority and revelation and the preeminence of scriptural text. The latter is particularly important since the scriptural text was the brass plates, a Nephite artifact.<sup>14</sup> Whether intentional or not, this tradition became the foundation of the church and propagated Nephite authority from the period of integration down through the reign of the judges.<sup>15</sup>

In light of this tradition of prophetic authority, it is not surprising to find those critical of Nephite leadership or the church disassociating themselves from the “traditions of the fathers.”<sup>16</sup> Central to the “Nephite” tradition was the legitimacy bestowed upon the authorities through possession of the physical records brought to Zarahemla by Mosiah<sub>1</sub>. Mormon even suggested that adherence to those records is what defined one as Nephite (see Alma 3:11). Thus, dissenting groups who disassociated themselves from the tradition and from “Nephtiness” lacked a legitimizing symbol—that is, until the Jaredite record was found. That record, with its history of a people independent of Nephite history and authority, had the potential to rival the Nephite record and subsequent tradition and therefore could be used to challenge Nephite hegemony if one claimed the record and its history as one’s own.

## THE JAREDITE RECORD AND ANOTHER CAIN TRADITION

For modern readers, the Jaredite record equates with the book of Ether. This assumption is not without reason since the subtitle to the book, presumably written by Moroni, states that it is “the record of the Jaredites, taken from the twenty-four plates found by the people of Limhi in the days of King Mosiah.” Yet this assumption is problematic. First, it is

unclear whether Moroni meant that he was simply including Mosiah<sub>2</sub>'s translation in Mormon's collection and naming it the book of Ether, or if it was a paraphrase of that translation by Moroni, or if the book of Ether was a new translation by Moroni. The material alluded to by Alma<sub>2</sub> speaks against the first possibility, and in fact Ether 4:1 speaks of Jaredite material that Mosiah<sub>2</sub> did not reveal, namely the prophecies of the brother of Jared. The paraphrase option is a possibility for the same reason, the lack of the objectionable material reflecting Moroni's application of the Alma<sub>2</sub> injunction. Finally, Ether 1:2 may be read as suggesting that Moroni is providing his own, new translation from the plates themselves, a claim strengthened by the Lord's command in Ether 4:2 to reveal the writings of the brother of Jared after Christ had shown himself to his people.

In light of the above analysis, it is likely that the book of Ether represents either one of the last two options, which would mean that the book of Ether is not a complete representation of the Jaredite record translated by Mosiah<sub>2</sub>. Instead, Moroni's version reflects a later Nephite version, meaning that, like Alma<sub>2</sub>, Moroni appears to have written his version to parallel Nephite prophetic tradition, explicitly tying the Jaredite narratives to prophetic themes, such as the promises made to Lehi and the visitation of Christ to the New World, while leaving out material that did not necessarily support said tradition such as the Jaredites' own prophetic tradition (reflected in the Gazelem prophecy and the brother of Jared material) and, most significantly, the restricted material.<sup>17</sup>

If Moroni's version reflects earlier Nephite versions but is not a complete reproduction of Mosiah<sub>2</sub>'s first translation, it can be understood as a representation of the Jaredite record rendered in such a manner as to harmonize and support the Nephite tradition of the fathers rather than as an object or text by which one could justify leaving that tradition. Yet the missing material alluded to elsewhere indicates that the contents of the original Jaredite record were known by the Nephites and therefore that other readings, interpretations, and uses of the Jaredite record were possible. Included in Moroni's version was a narrative that appears to have been amenable to a different interpretation. Although the story of the formation of the Jaredite secret society is framed so as to reflect Nephite prophetic tradition, connecting the origin of such societies to the reprehensible acts

of Cain, the narrative itself contains hints that the Jaredites themselves possessed an alternative version of the Cain narrative, one in which the formation of a secret society was not necessarily a negative.<sup>18</sup>

Both the stele and the book of Ether note that the Jaredites' origin narrative emerges from a tower narrative, with said tower known in the biblical text as the Tower of Babel. Affirming Mosiah<sub>2</sub>'s findings, Moroni records that the Jaredite record appeared to include the narratives "concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam" and, significant to this discussion, "an account from that time even to the great tower" (Ether 1:3). Nothing is said about the Jaredite version, likely owing to Moroni's decision not to include that version presumably because, as he states, "the first part of this record . . . is had among the Jews" (v. 3). But further into the record are hints that the Jaredites had another version of the Cain narrative.

In Ether 8 an individual named Jared attempted to wrest the throne from his father, but after initially placing him into captivity and obtaining the kingdom, Jared was ultimately defeated by his other siblings. Following that defeat the reader is told the following:

And now Jared became exceedingly sorrowful because of the loss of the kingdom, for he had set his heart upon the kingdom and upon the glory of the world.

Now the daughter of Jared being exceedingly expert, and seeing the sorrows of her father, thought to devise a plan whereby she could redeem the kingdom unto her father. . . .

And it came to pass that she did talk with her father, and said unto him: Whereby hath my father so much sorrow? Hath he not read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old, that they by their secret plans did obtain kingdoms and great glory? . . .

And it was the daughter of Jared who put it into his heart to search up these things of old. (Ether 8:7-9, 17)

According to this account, the Jaredites possessed texts of their own, one containing an "account concerning them of old" that included "their

secret plans” whose primary purpose was to “obtain kingdoms and great glory.”<sup>19</sup>

As the narrative develops further, Jared did indeed “search up these things of old” (Ether 8:17), revealing them to his friend Akish, who desired to marry Jared’s daughter. When Akish requested her hand in marriage, Jared made his consent conditional on Akish’s bringing to him “the head of my father, the king” (v. 10). To accomplish this, Akish placed his kin and friends under “the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain. . . . And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old” (vv. 15, 18). Thus the Jaredite narrative does not attribute the invention of secret combinations to the Jaredites themselves, but projects it backward in time as an even older tradition found within their own texts—a tradition dating all the way back to Cain.

Although the modern biblical version does not appear to associate Cain with secret societies, the Book of Mormon does. Both Nephi<sub>1</sub> and Mormon reference secret societies in association with Cain (see Helaman 6:26–27) or the first murder (see 2 Nephi 26:22). Both texts also make it clear that Cain’s act was reprehensible, bringing into the world greater evil and grief that affected later generations. It may be assumed that the Jaredite version as recorded on the gold plates also depicted the event in the negative. Yet the terminology used by the daughter of Jared to describe the “things of old,” which Moroni then associates with Cain, is not negative. Instead, it suggests a positive view, one in which Cain possessed secrets by which one could “obtain kingdoms and great glory.”<sup>20</sup>

How one could read the Cain narrative in a positive light is hinted at, intriguingly, in the biblical version. First, as many biblical scholars have noted, the inclusion of Cain’s lineage paralleling Adam’s lineage feels out of place and awkward and therefore suggests the joining of two separate narratives.<sup>21</sup> Second, Genesis 4:17 notes that Cain was the founder of the first city, an accomplishment that feels out of order with the overall tenor of the narrative. Finally, the lineage itself includes individuals who were instrumental in the formation and cultivation of musical instruments and the discovery and promulgation of smithery.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in the biblical Cain narrative, Cain and his descendants are directly associated with the concept of

urbanization, sciences, and the arts. This has led some to suggest that Cain may have been viewed at one time as a culture hero.<sup>23</sup>

The Jaredite narrative implies that just such an alternative Cain tradition did exist and was among the “things of old” brought by the Jaredites in their migration. In fact, it allows for the possibility that this particular tradition came from a text authored by Cain himself: “Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain” (Ether 8:15).<sup>24</sup> As for the tradition itself, the text suggests it contained instructions by which “kingdoms and great glory” could be attained via a social, organizational alternative that displaced preexisting political structures.<sup>25</sup> One can see the value of such a narrative to Nephites who felt disenfranchised or marginalized by the greater Nephite community and were chafing under traditional Nephite authority. A narrative that provided a viable alternative to Nephite prophetic tradition in a text that was older than both Nephite prophetic texts and even their own biblical record would feasibly give legitimacy to attempts to leave or even overthrow the status quo. This was Alma<sub>2</sub>'s fear, and as we will see, it was realized a little more than twenty years after his instructions to keep back the secret plans from the people (see Alma 37:27, 29, 32) and after the emergence of the Gadianton robbers.

## THE JAREDITE RECORD AND GADIANTON

Twenty-two years following Alma<sub>2</sub>'s instructions, in the fortieth year of the reign of the judges, a “serious contention” arose following the death of Pahoran<sub>1</sub>, the chief judge (Helaman 1:2). In his absence three of his sons did “contend for the judgment-seat” (v. 3). According to the text, three divisions of supporters arose, one for each brother. In due course Pahoran<sub>2</sub> was “appointed by the voice of the people to be chief judge” (v. 5). While his brother Pacumeni conceded and did “unite with the voice of the people” (v. 6), another brother, “Paanchi, and that part of the people that were desirous that he should be their governor, was exceedingly wroth” (v. 7). Their refusal to accept the political decision led to their attempt to incite rebellion. Before the rebellion took place, Paanchi was taken, “tried according to the voice of the people,” and executed (v. 8). Although the rebellion was cut short, Paanchi's supporters assassinated Pahoran<sub>2</sub>. The



reader is told that the assassin, Kishkumen, belonged to an organization that “entered into a covenant, yea, swearing by their everlasting Maker, that they would tell no man that Kishkumen had murdered Pahoran” (v. 11). This oath was remarkably similar to the Jaredite oath: “They [the household of Jared] all swore unto him [Akish], by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head” (v. 14). As we will see, the similarities between these two organizations do not end here.

Mormon gives more information concerning Kishkumen’s band when describing the assassination attempt on Helaman<sub>2</sub>, who became the chief judge in the forty-second year of the reign of the judges (see Helaman 2:3–9). In this passage the reader is informed that Kishkumen, who would attempt to kill Helaman as well, was “upheld” by the band because of their covenant that “no one should know his wickedness” (v. 3). Mormon then introduces the reader to the leader of the band, Gadianton, in verse 4. Although the verse is ostensibly about Gadianton and his eventual leadership over the band, the first word of verse 4 (the conjunction *for*) suggests a causal relationship between the upholding of the secrecy and Gadianton. This reading allows for the following: “He [Kishkumen] was upheld by his band, . . . for there was one Gadianton, who was exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft, to carry on the secret work of murder and of robbery; therefore he became the leader of the band of Kishkumen” (v. 4). In this case the integrity of the band and its ability to uphold Kishkumen are a direct result of Gadianton and his expertise “in many words” and in “his craft.”

It is unclear exactly what those two qualifications mean. The expertise “in many words” suggests facility in languages and spoken presentation (further indicated in his adeptness at “flattery” mentioned in v. 5). There would have been at least two languages present at the time, the language of the Nephites and the language of the Mulekites. Although it is often assumed that the Nephite language replaced the Mulekite language, since it was taught by Mosiah<sub>1</sub> upon Nephite entry into Zarahemla, there is no reason for the Mulekite language to have died out completely. Demographically, we are told that the Mulekites were the majority of Zarahemla’s

population; this would suggest that their language was still spoken among segments of the overall population (perhaps it was even the lingua franca), the Nephite language being associated with the elite.<sup>26</sup> If this is the case, then Gadianton's skill with "many words" may suggest he was bilingual.

The meaning of Gadianton's "craft" is even less clear. Besides the Helaman 2 reference, the term shows up only one other time—in Alma 35:3, where it is used to describe the livelihood of the Zoramite elite in Alma 35 that was threatened by Alma<sub>2</sub>'s ministry. As in the Helaman 2 reference, the exact nature of the Zoramite "craft" is not clear. It is possible that the Zoramites were metalworkers who specialized in the making of particular luxury items, but nothing in the text actually states this.<sup>27</sup> Some have suggested that *craft* has reference to "priestcraft(s)," but the context of passages using *priestcraft(s)* suggests that Mormon is aware of a difference between the two terms and that therefore they are not interchangeable.<sup>28</sup> Although the exact meaning of the term *craft* is unclear, Mormon associates it with "carry[ing] on the secret work of murder and of robbery" (Helaman 2:4).

In a Book of Mormon context, murder appears to indicate an intentional, premeditated killing of another human being. The term is found some ninety times in the Book of Mormon and in three primary textual settings. The first of these could be described as legalistic contexts in which murder is mentioned in relation to the law (including the Ten Commandments), to legal proceedings, or to monarchical statements of innocence. The second category pertains to general wrongdoing. A number of these instances reflect Lamanite actions, with a significant percentage appearing in the Anti-Nephi-Lehi confessions. In the third category are texts in which murder is associated explicitly with "works of darkness" performed by secret societies.<sup>29</sup>

As to actual commission of murder, while both Nephites and Lamanites during the Amalickiah/Ammoron conflict identified individuals as murderers (e.g., Alma 54:13, 16, 22; 60:7, 17), acts committed and labeled as murders do not appear in the narrative until the assassination of Pahoran<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, the only actual depictions of murder, aside from three murders described in Ether and one in Moroni 9, are all associated with secret societies. As to motivations to murder, only a handful of

references are given. Alma 17:14, for instance, states that the Lamanites murdered Nephites so “that they [the Lamanites] might not labor with their own hands.” More germane to this study, two references describe the motivation behind secret combinations’ commission of murder. In Helaman 2:8 the “object” of Kishkumen’s band is reportedly “to murder, and to rob, and to gain power,” while Helaman 6:17 states that committing secret murders was done “that they might get gain” and “be lifted up one above another.” Thus, at least in the context of secret societies, murder in the Book of Mormon had the express purpose of elevating one’s social position and increasing one’s political power.<sup>30</sup>

The second kind of “craft” associated with Gadianton is robbery. John W. Welch has demonstrated that the concept of robbery, in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, was associated with violent behavior enacted by those considered to be outsiders by the mainstream community.<sup>31</sup> Welch also associated robbery with militarily organized bands. With this in mind, if robbery in the Book of Mormon is similar to that understood in the Hebrew Bible, the Gadianton robbers represented an outside group noted for its reliance on violence to achieve its goals. Thus Gadianton’s craft of robbery implies that he was knowledgeable in military matters and possessed organizational capability.

Finally, the phrase “exceedingly expert” is also intriguing. Besides Helaman 2:4, the phrase is found two other times in the Book of Mormon. In Helaman 3:7 it is used to describe a particular skillset possessed by those who traveled into the land northward. The lack of usable timber meant they had to use “cement” in their building projects, a craft in which they had become “exceedingly expert.” In this instance the phrase indicates expertise in an uncommon skill. The third reference, though, appears in a context that suggests a relationship with Gadianton. In Ether 8:8 the daughter of Jared is introduced as “exceedingly expert” as well. Although the text does not explicitly state what her expertise consisted in, the narrative that follows suggests it is her awareness and comprehension of the ancient records, which she used to introduce the alternative Cain narrative and to implement a society based on that narrative.<sup>32</sup> Although Gadianton’s expertise is not explicitly defined in Helaman 2, the mention of “many words” (v. 4) may include written text as well as oration. If this is the

case, then it is possible that Gadianton's expertise included facility in the Jaredite language, which would mean he could read the pertinent records. In any case, the similarity between Gadianton and the daughter of Jared means that either Mormon noted this and sought to make that connection explicit or that Moroni decided to describe the daughter of Jared narrative in Ether 8 through the lens of Gadianton. Either way, two founders of this ancient alternative social model were described as "exceedingly expert."

Given the Book of Mormon's clear verbal connection between the daughter of Jared and Gadianton, and given the possibility that Gadianton's expertise in "many words" may include fluency with ancient texts, it is at least possible that Gadianton had somehow acquired familiarity with censored Jaredite material. If this reading is correct, it may be that the Jaredite record was the origin of the secret combination model that Gadianton introduces into Nephite civic life in Helaman 2. Indeed, this reading seems to be borne out by Helaman 6, where the reader is told that the signs, passwords, laws, oaths, and covenants that governed his and Kishkumen's society were the selfsame "secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world" (Helaman 6:25). This, in turn, would imply that at some point Alma's injunction had lapsed, allowing for at least one individual, Gadianton, access to the restricted material.

Yet this logical assumption is problematic because control over the Jaredite record following Alma<sub>2</sub> was held by Helaman<sub>1</sub>, Shiblon, and Helaman<sub>2</sub> respectively, the Nephite religious authorities and direct descendants of Alma<sub>2</sub>. If a failure to heed the injunction took place, it must have happened during the stewardships of one or more of these individuals. Yet this does not appear to have taken place, because Mormon states, "Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman" (Helaman 6:26). Instead, Mormon attributes the similarity between the praxis and language of Gadianton's band and the Jaredite society to a shared supernatural influence: "They were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents . . . —yea, that same being who did plot with Cain . . . and his followers. . . . It was that same being who led on

the people who came from that tower into this land; who spread the works of darkness and abominations over all the face of the land” (vv. 26–28).<sup>33</sup>

Yet even as he suggests that that the source of Gadianton’s access was satanic influence independent of the Jaredite record, it appears that Mormon understood this influence to be an ultimate or foundational source, not necessarily the immediate source. This means that while the formation of secret societies was the result of satanic influence from the beginning, the manner by which a given community came to know of these societies could have been through other means. Mormon’s description of the Jaredite experience demonstrates his emphasis on the one over the other. As noted above, Mormon ascribes to Satan the spreading of the “works of darkness and abominations” in the Jaredite period, though Moroni’s text makes clear that it was done by the Jaredites themselves via texts that contained the “things of old.” In similar manner, it appears that Mormon may have been emphasizing the original source for Gadianton’s knowledge rather than the immediate source, thereby avoiding an accusation of lapses in guardianship by the material’s prophetic stewards.

Mormon’s explanation contains language suggesting he recognized that Gadianton’s immediate source, however inconvenient, was in fact the Jaredite record, or at least a version of it. In Helaman 6:29 Mormon attributes to satanic influence Gadianton’s desire to “still carry on the work of darkness, and of secret murder.” The adverb *still* emphasizes an ongoing action. In the preceding verse, Mormon explicitly associates the phrase “works of darkness” with the Jaredites, while murder is associated with Cain two verses earlier. Thus the use of the adverb *still* suggests those evil deeds as the immediate precedents for the ongoing action.<sup>34</sup> This would imply that Gadianton was aware of the continuity from Cain to the Jaredites and actively sought to continue the tradition provided in the Jaredite records. If one is to accept both Mormon’s insistence that the stewards did not have lapses in guardianship and that Gadianton had possible access to the restricted material, then the question becomes how that access could have happened. Unfortunately, this is not addressed by Mormon, presumably because it would implicate the stewards in some fashion. Yet there are hints throughout Mormon’s record that suggest there were times when the Jaredite material could have been accessed by others. The first such hint is

in Alma 63:12–13, which describes the events of the thirty-ninth year of the reign of the judges. According to Mormon, in that year Shiblon (who had stewardship of the records originally given to Helaman<sub>1</sub> by Alma<sub>2</sub>, their father) conferred “those sacred things” to Helaman<sub>2</sub>, Helaman<sub>1</sub>’s son (v. 11). Mormon uses this occasion to note that “all those engravings which were in the possession of Helaman were written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land, save it were those parts which had been commanded by Alma should not go forth” (v. 12). Thus the year was characterized at least in part by the copying and distribution of Helaman’s collection, which included the Jaredite record. So it appears that at least one other Nephite copy of the Jaredite material besides Mosiah<sub>2</sub>’s original translation now existed, albeit sans the restricted material. Finally, the statement that it was made available “among the children of men throughout all the land” suggests multiple copies.

The second hint is in Helaman 3:13, 15, where Mormon himself notes that “there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of this people, which are particular and very large, concerning them. . . . Behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites.” While the modern reader is accustomed to thinking of the Book of Mormon as a single record and Nephites as the sole authors, it is telling that its primary editor is aware of numerous texts not used or addressed in the extant record and that there were non-Nephite authors, scribes, and record keepers.

The value of the two passages discussed above is that they demonstrate how sole control of the text could have been lost.<sup>35</sup> Making copies of the records may have increased access to the original material. Moreover, any non-Nephite authors and scribes would have had motives for reading, copying, and writing that likely would not have aligned with Nephite interests. All of this is to say that by the time the Gadianton band was founded, it is possible that multiple versions of the Jaredite record, including at least one with the restricted material, existed and could have been accessed by those who were not the prophetic stewards, thus allowing for Gadianton’s acquisition of the Jaredite record. Why he may have desired to “still carry on” the tradition of “works of darkness” is another question entirely.

## THE JAREDITE RECORD AND THE GADIANTON ROBBERS

While the Book of Mormon is explicit in its denouncement of secret combinations, and Mormon goes to great lengths to describe Gadianton as wicked, it is reasonable to assume that Gadianton and the other members of his band did not hold that view. There is no question that the Gadianton robbers' methods and activities reflected a subculture that had as its primary effect the erosion of institutions such as the church and the judgeship system.<sup>36</sup> Yet the overt indictments make it difficult to understand the motives of those involved in the subculture beyond stereotypical generalizations of their presumed greed, predation, and evil. In fact, the appeal of the Gadianton robbers appears to have reflected the long-standing cultural and sociological divides among the Nephite populace described earlier in this study.

For instance, in Helaman 2:8 Mormon assigns Gadianton's desire to “still carry on the work of darkness” to the following motives: “It was the object of all those who belonged to his band to murder, and to rob, and to gain power, (and this was their secret plan, and their combination).” It appears that the first two motives are really just further means oriented toward the single *true* motive: to gain power. The specific reason why Gadianton and his followers wanted to gain power is left unsaid, leaving readers to assume they did so simply because they were wicked people with evil ambition. Yet Mormon notes just a few chapters later that at least a majority of the righteous population was convinced of the Gadianton robbers' claims: “The Nephites did build them up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they . . . had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations. And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government” (Helaman 6:38–39). As the verses suggest, whatever the exact claim of the Gadianton robbers was, it was morally persuasive enough that even the majority of the righteous were convinced and joined. Simply ascribing a wicked disposition to Gadianton's followers does not appear to grasp the complexity of the group, its popularity, or its connection to the Jaredite record.<sup>37</sup>

This complexity becomes more noticeable when one considers the demographic and cultural makeup of the Gadianton robbers. According to Helaman 6, the Gadianton robbers increased following the several years of war that ended in the sixty-second year of the reign of the judges, with many of the new members being “the more wicked part of the Lamanites. . . . And it was they who did murder the chief judge Cezoram” (vv. 18–19). This observation suggests that the traditional Lamanite-Nephite animosity, while officially concluded following the war, may have simply continued in the form of the Gadianton robbers.<sup>38</sup> Approximately twenty years later, the same demographic makeup defines the second iteration of the Gadianton robbers:

There were a certain number of the dissenters from the people of Nephi, who had some years before gone over unto the Lamanites, and taken upon themselves the name of Lamanites, and also a certain number who were real descendants of the Lamanites, . . . receiving daily an addition to their numbers, inasmuch as there were dissenters that went forth unto them. (Helaman 11:24–25)

Mormon again provides information concerning the demographics of the Gadianton robbers ten years later: “In the ninety and fourth year they began to increase in a great degree, because there were many dissenters of the Nephites who did flee unto them, . . . and there was also a cause of much sorrow among the Lamanites; for behold, they had many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves, and were led away by some who were Zoramites . . . to join those Gadianton robbers” (3 Nephi 1:28–29). These references suggest that the makeup of the Gadianton robbers consisted of disaffected Nephites, Lamanites, and, at least in the last iteration, Zoramites. Not surprisingly, these three categories are found elsewhere associated with their animosity or critical views concerning the greater Nephite identity.<sup>39</sup>

As noted earlier, the introduction of the judgeship into Nephite politics appears to have also allowed for the legitimation of the political voice of marginalized or minority communities among the Nephites proper. This often resulted in critiques against Nephite power bases or the Nephite “tradition(s) of the fathers” or in physical disaffection from the greater



Nephite polity. The Lamanite critique concerning the Nephites is explicitly recorded in Mosiah 10, which notes the Lamanite “traditions.” Although not a result of the institution of the judgeship system, these descriptions also introduce the Lamanite perspective that would appear again later during the reign of the judges (see, e.g., Alma 20:13). At the center of these traditions is a series of “wrongs,” presumably perpetuated by Nephi<sub>1</sub> (see Mosiah 10:12–16). According to Zeniff, the Lamanites believed they were wronged in the wilderness, while on the sea, and then in the promised land—all being occasions when Nephi “had taken the ruling of the people out of their hands” (v. 15). A bit further, Zeniff also informs his audience that the Lamanites were “wroth” with the Nephites because of their belief that Nephi had “robbed them” of the items associated with leadership, namely the brass plates. Because of these perceived slights, the Lamanites “taught their children that they should hate [the Nephites], and that they should murder them, and that they should rob and plunder them, and do all they could to destroy them; therefore they have an eternal hatred towards the children of Nephi” (vv. 15–17).<sup>40</sup> The similarities between this description of Lamanite behavior and that of the Gadianton robbers are striking.

As for the Zoramites, while Zoram himself appears to have no ill-will following his semiforced departure from Jerusalem, Ammoron’s letter to Captain Moroni suggests that at least some of Zoram’s descendants did: “I am Ammoron, and a descendant of Zoram, whom your fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem. And behold now, I am a bold Lamanite; behold, this war hath been waged to avenge their wrongs, and to maintain and to obtain their rights to the government” (Alma 54:23–24).<sup>41</sup> Even though they had been associated with Nephi’s descendants (see 2 Nephi 1:30–32), it is clear that at least some of a later generation empathized and affiliated with the Lamanites. The Gadianton robbers themselves used language similar to that of Ammoron and the Lamanite traditions provided in Mosiah 10. In the second iteration of the Gadianton robbers, Giddianhi, the “governor” of the band, wrote in his epistle of the “everlasting hatred towards” the Nephites “because of the many wrongs” they were perceived to have committed against the Lamanites (3 Nephi 3:4). Near the end of the letter, Giddianhi declared, “I hope that ye will deliver up your lands

and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs” (v. 10). From the Gadianton robbers’ official perspective, they perceived themselves to be restoring justice and righting wrongs perpetuated by an unfair system against already-marginalized social groups.

It is in this context, then, that we can situate the Jaredite record within the societal tradition of the Gadianton robbers. As noted at the beginning of this study, Giddianhi declared that this “secret society” was “of an ancient date” and had been “handed down unto us” and that both it and its works were “good” (3 Nephi 3:9). While Giddianhi does not explicitly state that the antiquity of the society is directly descended from the Jaredite record, twice in his letter he notes the secret nature of the society and its works: “become acquainted with our secret works, . . . the secret society of Gadianton” (vv. 7, 9). Giddianhi’s use of the phrase “secret works” in particular suggests he is alluding to the Jaredite record.

The phrase “secret works” is found eight times in the Book of Mormon, with each instance describing the acts of organizations such as the Gadianton robbers. Jacob uses the phrase twice in his speech in 2 Nephi 6–10 to allude to Satan’s role in the formation of secret societies (see 2 Nephi 9:9; 10:15), while in Helaman 8:4 Mormon uses the phrase to describe the behavior of the Gadianton robbers and of the Nephites in general (see Helaman 10:3). But the most significant references are the four in Alma<sub>2</sub>’s instructions on the Jaredite record, where the phrase is used to describe the acts of the Jaredites themselves. While the term’s presence in Alma<sub>2</sub>’s instructions may not be surprising, it may be significant that at least two of the citations appear in what may have been Jaredite text, more specifically the Gazelem prophecy: “I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me . . . the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness. . . . I will bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works” (Alma 37:23, 25).

In all of these citations, “secret works” has a negative connotation suggesting prophetic indictment, and yet Giddianhi’s usage may indicate that

“secret works” was also a proper phrase used by these societies to describe their actions and that the descriptor *secret* was not necessarily pejorative (thus the later appendages such as “of darkness” to clearly denote their negative status under the prophetic viewpoint). In any case, the exact same usage of the phrase “secret works” by Giddianhi and Alma<sub>2</sub>, the former to describe the acts performed by the Gadianton robbers and the latter to describe the acts of the Jaredites, strongly suggests that the original material alluded to by Giddianhi (and hence the source for the antiquity of their society and the works of that society) was in fact the Jaredite record, specifically the restricted material.<sup>42</sup>

The text is silent as to why the Gadianton robbers wished to suggest a relationship between themselves and the organization provided by the Jaredite record, but a newer community using the material remains or ideology of an older culture to establish legitimacy is not unique. One biblical example may suffice to ground this claim. Following the death of Solomon, the united kingdom was divided, with Solomon’s son Rehoboam reigning over the southern portion, Judah, and Jeroboam reigning over the northern portion, Israel (see 1 Kings 12:1–20). Fearing that Judah would regain control through Israel’s dependence on the temple in Jerusalem (see vv. 26–27), Jeroboam instituted a number of older religious traditions, such as the golden calf idols, a “house of high places,” and non-Levite priests (see vv. 28–31). While the biblical redactors made clear that these innovations were wrong and sinful (see, e.g., 1 Kings 12:30; 15:30, 34; 16:19), the innovations invoked earlier religious practices associated with Israel’s Sinai experience.<sup>43</sup>

As with Jeroboam’s religious institutions, the earlier Sinaitic versions were understood by the later compilers as inappropriate behavior. But Jeroboam’s willingness to engage with them suggests that at some point they were viewed, at least by some in Jeroboam’s time, as valid expressions of one’s faith. As noted earlier, Jeroboam established them to solidify Israel’s separation from the temple in Jerusalem and Davidic influence. Yet it is also possible that Jeroboam sincerely believed that his innovations reflected a return to a simpler, truer version of Jahwism before the corrupting influence of the Davidic line. Whether or not he was correct doesn’t matter here. What does is that he attempted to legitimate his newly

acquired political leadership and the new state of Israel by using older, preexisting traditions that contrasted with those of the Davidic state of Judah.

Like Jeroboam's adoption of the older Sinai practices, the letter of Giddianhi suggests that the Gadianton robbers used the Jaredite texts to legitimate their current existence and emulated a subculture depicted in the Cain narrative as found in those texts in order to counter the hegemonic influence of mainstream Nephite culture and their subsequent perceived loss of rights. The fact that Giddianhi's letter repeats the traditional Lamanite complaint (even referring to the loss of governance as a wrong) highlights this perspective. Yet the group's *raison d'être* was more than just a reiteration of the Lamanite complaints. With Nephite/Lamanite conflict effectively ended, those complaints became associated with the wrongs supposedly endured by other disaffected groups, such as Nephite dissenters and Zoramites. This new group, to legitimate their existence and purpose, associated themselves with an even older culture and its text, both of which existed before the perceived corrupting influence of Nephite culture and contained elements of an even older tradition that allowed for an alternative historiography that overruled the Nephite prophetic tradition. In doing so, they could claim that they were "truer" and more legitimate than the Nephites, righting wrongs that the Nephites had committed and perpetuated.

## CONCLUSION

While the Nephites never interacted directly with the Jaredites, the Jaredite records piqued the Nephite imagination. Although translated under the prophetic authority of a Nephite monarch, the Jaredite record may have been a source of friction among the two demographic population bases of Zarahemla: the preexisting Mulekites and the immigrating Nephites. Certainly by the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges, Alma<sub>2</sub> recognized the threat the Jaredite record could have on the Nephite population, thus leading to his injunctions on portions of the text, namely those elements that detailed the formation of an alternative social structure—the so-called secret society. Yet even with the precautions in place, by the fortieth year of the reign of the judges, it appears that the information

was available outside Helaman’s stewardship and was utilized by those who were resentful of the current political climate. Approximately twenty years later, the Nephite dissenters’ version of the secret society (named the Gadianton robbers by Mormon) and its purported function as a corrective to the political system with its overt Nephite leadership was particularly attractive to population segments who felt disenfranchised or wronged, such as Lamanites following the cessation of general conflict. Moreover, their claims appear to have had appeal beyond the disenfranchised, as even the majority of the righteous came to embrace the claims and the works of the Gadianton robbers. Approximately sixty years later, the Gadianton robbers had grown to the point where they considered themselves an alternative state in contrast to the established “Nephite” confederacy.

Through all of this, the Jaredite record was the foundational text used to legitimate the alternative Nephite society. With its Cain tradition, the Jaredite text allowed for the creation of a complex social system that provided solidarity, brotherhood, and identity to those who did not or would not accept traditional Nephite leadership. The last aspect, identity, included a continuity between the Gadianton robbers and the Jaredites themselves. Although never stated explicitly, both Mormon’s mention that Gadianton sought to “still carry on” the society and Giddianhi’s letter noting the ancientness, and therefore goodness, of the society suggest that, at least by Giddianhi’s time if not earlier, the Gadianton robbers had claimed affinity with the Jaredites themselves, not just their text.

Like Jeroboam, who hearkened to an older Israelite model, the Gadianton robbers, by claiming the Jaredites as their ideological forebears, could claim an older legitimacy. Associating the Jaredite heritage and the Lamanite claims of wrongs enabled the Gadianton robbers to markedly distinguish themselves from the Nephites. Perhaps not surprisingly, the presence of the Gadianton robbers emerged only during the reign of the judges. The new political system allowed for the place of marginalized voices within the community; the “democratization” of Nephite political institutions necessarily meant that new, contrasting voices could arise. In this new order, the Jaredite record gave legitimacy and historical precedent to a few such voices. In any case, without having ever interacted directly, the Nephites and Jaredites became intertwined with each other, the latter,

though long gone, influencing Nephite history, governance, and ideology throughout the second half of the Nephites' existence.

## NOTES

1. The most recent work done on the interaction between the Nephites and the Jaredites is Frederick W. Axelgard, "More Than Meets the Eye: How Nephites Managed the Jaredite Legacy," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017): 135–64.
2. Amaleki glosses over a number of issues with the stele narrative, such as the language in which the monument was inscribed, its authorship, the purpose of revealing it to Mosiah<sub>1</sub> by bringing it to him instead of the other way around, its undisclosed location in the first place, and so on. That such questions exist suggests that the purpose of presenting the stele to Mosiah<sub>1</sub> may have been one of political significance, not necessarily literacy ignorance, as some have suggested. See Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 3:64. If this event can be seen as a political one, then it may imply that initially the people of Zarahemla and the people of Mosiah did not integrate as quickly or painlessly as is often assumed and that the event represents a test to the legitimacy of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>'s kingship/seership.
3. The only individuals associated with the stele narrative are Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and those who bring the stele to him. If the narrative reflects a political text, as suggested in the above note, then it is quite possible that the Nephite population as a whole never knew the stele existed, much less what was written on it.
4. Interestingly, mention of this meeting appears to allude to a ritual of induction found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. See Daniel L. Belnap, "The Abinadi Narrative, Redemption, and the Struggle for Nephite Identity," in *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise*, ed. Shon D. Hopkin (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), 27–66, 65n40.
5. As with the stele, a number of questions arise from Mormon's observation. Was it the entire population of Zarahemla, which included the Nephites, that was "desirous beyond measure," or was it a specific element of the population, namely the Mulekites? Were these the only Jaredite artifacts, or were there other material remains scattered throughout the region that would have been

encountered by the Mulekites as they migrated south and west or by the Nephites as they moved north and east? The relationship between the Mulekites and the Jaredites is particularly intriguing. In Alma 22, describing the local geography, Mormon notes that the land Bountiful was bordered on the north by a land “called Desolation, it being so far northward that it came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, . . . which was discovered by the people of Zarahemla, it being the place of their first landing. And they came from there up into the south wilderness” (vv. 30–31). If Mormon’s statement is true, then the Mulekites had arrived in the New World near Jaredite territory. Many have suggested that the Mulekites were culturally related to the Jaredites. See John L. Sorenson, “The ‘Mulekites,’” *BYU Studies* 30, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 6–22, specifically 13–14. In *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 220–24, Brant A. Gardner suggests the relationship via integration with preexisting native cultures—the Jaredites with the Olmecs and their Mixe-Zoque language and the Mulekites via their Zoque language. Intriguingly, a later descendant of Zarahemla, the last Mulekite king, was named Coriantumr (see Helaman 1:15), the same name of the last Jaredite king and the subject of the stele brought to Mosiah<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, it is simply undeterminable from the record whether Helaman’s Coriantumr reflects a connection between Jaredite and Mulekite royal lineages. What we can say is that there was an intense interest in the civilization reflected in the texts brought back by Limhi.

6. See Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers*, 223; and Belnap, “And It Came to Pass . . . : The Sociopolitical Events in the Book of Mormon Leading to the Eighteenth Year of the Reign of the Judges,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 23 (2014): 101–40, specifically 117–27.
7. See Belnap, “Abinadi Narrative,” 28–35; John L. Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 12; and Dan Belnap, “‘And Now My Son, I Have Something More to Say’: Corianton’s Concerns, Alma’s Theology, and Nephite Tradition,” in *Give Ear to My Words: Text and Context of Alma 36–42*, ed. Kerry M. Hull, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Hank R. Smith (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 203–33.
8. If following the naming tradition noted elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, the city of Gideon, settled on the other side of the river from Zarahemla, was named after Gideon, the military and then religious leader from the Zeniff

- expedition. If so, then Limhi's people did not settle in Zarahemla upon their return but founded their own "Nephite" settlement. Intriguingly, if this was a "pure" Nephite community, it may explain why Pahoran<sub>1</sub> escaped there following the king-men's wresting of Zarahemla around the thirtieth year of the reign of the judges.
9. The phrase "destroy(ed) from off the face of the earth" shows up only eight times in the Book of Mormon. Of those eight instances, the phrase is mentioned twice in Alma 9 (vv. 12 and 24) and twice in Alma 37 (vv. 22 and 25). As noted above, it is also found in Mosiah 12:8. The other three instances appear in Alma 54:12 (Captain Moroni's letter to Ammoron), Helaman 7:28 (Nephi<sub>3</sub>'s speech against the Gadianton robbers), and Ether 11:12 (a general prophecy spoken by "many prophets"). Thus of all eight, three have a direct connection to Jaredite prophecy (Alma 37:22, 25; Ether 11:12), while three of them (Alma 9:12, 24; Helaman 7:28) tie the prophecy to secret combinations. As we will see, the Nephite and Jaredite histories are connected in other ways as well. Both the Nephite prophetic usage and the Jaredite prophetic usage include the conditional promise of destruction if the given audience does not repent. In the case of Alma 9:24, it is unclear whether Alma<sub>2</sub> is alluding to Abinadi's prophecy or to the Jaredite record. It is possible to read Alma 37:22 as a Jaredite prophecy originally recorded on the twenty-four gold plates. If so, then Alma<sub>2</sub> is quoting the actual Jaredite text (as he will do in verses 23 and 25) in his instructions. Alma 9:12 also alludes to the "fierce anger" of the Lord, a divine aspect that Abinadi also mentions explicitly, suggesting that it is Abinadi's prophecy to which Alma<sub>2</sub> is alluding.
  10. The exact nature and meaning of the Gazelem prophecy have been of great interest. While the context suggests an internal fulfillment (i.e., one that had taken place by the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges and Alma<sub>2</sub>'s turning stewardship over to Helaman), in Latter-day Saint history the prophecy was associated with Joseph Smith and the brown seer stone used in translating the Book of Mormon. See Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick, *Joseph Smith's Seer Stones* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016), 102–7. While one can see how such an association could take place, the internal fulfillment reflects more closely the context of the text itself. Elliot Jolley suggests that Gazelem was a Jaredite during the time of Akish and Omer. See his article "Gazelem the Jaredite," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Literature* 27 (2017): 85–105.



11. Brant Gardner surmises, “Here is a second quotation whose source has not survived. Again, Alma is probably quoting Ether’s record, but Moroni omitted the quotation in editing the Book of Ether.” Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:513. See Jolley, “Gazelem,” 95–96.
12. Interestingly, the same verb used to describe the revealing of the secret works to a later audience, *discover*, is also used in Abinadi’s prophecy concerning Zeniff’s record (see Mosiah 12:8).
13. The presence of this information in the Jaredite record is intriguing in a couple of ways. First, the information is not found in Moroni’s version, though this mostly likely reflects Moroni’s adherence to Nephite protocols concerning the text, namely the integrity of Alma<sub>2</sub>’s injunction (see below). Second, the presence of material demonstrates that either the Jaredites had different approaches as to what should or should not be present within a text or that by the time of Alma<sub>2</sub> the Nephites had more Jaredite texts. In any case, the injunction suggests that the material was already potentially available, since Alma<sub>2</sub>’s concern was that the information be kept from the people, not that it shouldn’t be translated. This distinction implies that even if the newly translated record was not circulating publicly and available only to the record keepers, the Jaredite material was now, nevertheless, in some readable form that could be comprehended by the Nephites; if this was not the case, then the injunction itself is moot. The fact that Alma<sub>2</sub> is concerned that the information could become public knowledge suggests either that there is a translation of the restricted material (presumably based on the translation performed by Mosiah<sub>2</sub>) or that by the eighteenth year of reign of the judges the Jaredite language could now be translated without the interpreters. Some have assumed that the injunction preceded Alma<sub>2</sub>, having been established by Mosiah<sub>2</sub> in his translation of the text. See John W. Welch, “Preliminary Comments on the Sources behind the Book of Ether,” FARMS Preliminary Report (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies), 1986, 13–14; and Axelgard, “More Than Meets the Eye,” 144. The challenge is that this assumption does not reflect the text itself. Alma<sub>2</sub> does not allude to any earlier injunction, but instead quotes from portions of a Jaredite text that we do not currently have, suggesting that he has a more complete version of the record. Moreover, even if Mosiah<sub>2</sub> did translate everything in the Jaredite plates, that does not necessarily mean that it was shared in the public arena. While it is possible that all of the record was read to the people, it is more likely that Mosiah<sub>2</sub> censored the restricted portions in the reading. Thus, while there was a

- Nephite text that contained the information, it was not widely known (probably only among the elite), suggesting the need for Alma<sub>2</sub>'s injunction.
14. Gardner, in *Second Witness*, 3:63, suggests that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> was selected as king because he possessed the large plates, demonstrating a closeness to the Nephite royal line; the plates themselves seem to have become a symbol of ancestral right of rulership. Brett L. Holbrook and Gordon C. Thomasson both argue that the plates were part of the sacred relics (other elements were the sword of Laban and the Liahona) or national treasures that often accompanied kingship. The plates in particular, according to Holbrook and Thomasson, contained a written genealogy of the king, which was often a necessary component establishing a king's legitimacy. See Brett L. Holbrook, "The Sword of Laban as a Symbol of Divine Authority and Kingship," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 39–72, specifically 54–55; and Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mosiah: The Complex Symbolism and Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 21–28, specifically 26.
  15. See Belnap, "And Now, My Son," 207–8.
  16. See Mosiah 26:1–2 (disaffected Zarahemla generation); Alma 8:11 (Ammonihahites/Nehorites); Alma 21:8 (Amalekites/Lamanites); Alma 30:16, 23, 27 (Korihor); Alma 31:22 (Zoramites). The first group is particularly intriguing because it may represent a Nephite/Mulekite third generation that included both Alma<sub>2</sub> and Mosiah<sub>2</sub>'s four sons, who may have returned from the land of Nephi and, to Mosiah<sub>2</sub>'s great concern, engaged in political behavior similar to that found in the Jaredite record. Although it is never mentioned explicitly, one can read Alma<sub>2</sub>'s discourse to his son Corianton (Alma 39–42) as an apologia for the Nephite tradition of the fathers. Critiquing the system and splintering from the greater Nephite polity was easier to do following the institution of the judgeship system because the new system appears to have given legitimate political power to marginalized minority groups. See Belnap, "And Now My Son," 206–9.
  17. See Ether 2:9–12; 3:17–18; 4:1–19; 8:20–26; 12:6–41; 13:5–13; title page of the Book of Mormon. See also Ryan Sharp, "Of Captivity and Kingdoms: Helping Students Find a Place in the Book of Ether," in this volume.
  18. Another option is, of course, that there was more than one Jaredite text. But the Book of Mormon makes no mention of another text, and therefore this idea, though it is a possibility, can only remain as such and cannot be seriously entertained.

19. “Jared’s daughter refers to a text that crossed the ocean with them [Ether 8:9], the source of ‘secret plans’ that would assure the possession of ‘kingdoms and great glory’ and that figured so large among the Jaredites and then, in Mormon’s record, among the Nephites. The content of this text was certainly influential in the way Mormon understood the history of his people, being here described as the ultimate source of all secret combinations. What that document might have been is not as clear as its impact.” Gardner, *Second Witness*, 6:248. Interestingly, Gardner does not discuss the role of this text in other commentary concerning Nephite secret societies.
20. Although there is no direct connection, the objective of this Cain narrative is eerily similar to what one could righteously obtain through the priesthood according to Doctrine and Covenants section 76, a text that recounts Joseph Smith’s vision concerning the degrees of glory in the hereafter and describes those who became and who would become kings of the greatest glory.
21. J. Maxwell Miller, in “The Descendants of Cain: Notes on Genesis 4,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86, no. 2 (1974): 164–74, makes this observation: “The evidence seems to indicate . . . that Palestinian folklore knew of two different Cains who represented radically different styles of life. . . . The possibility cannot be ignored, of course, that the Cain and Abel story is the composition of two originally independent narratives” (pp. 169–70). The similarity between Seth’s lineage and Cain’s lineage, found in Genesis 4–5, has led some to suggest that Noah was in fact a descendant of Cain. See Chaim Cohen, Avi Hurvitz, and Shalom M. Paul, eds., *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, Qumran, and Post-Biblical Judaism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 63–67. Israel Knohl contends that one lineage (“P”) posits Seth as Adam’s firstborn and thus Noah as Seth’s descendant, while the other lineage (“J”) has Cain as the firstborn of Adam and thus Noah as a descendant of Cain. He concludes: “The final redactors of the Pentateuch, who had to put together diverse ancient traditions, found a way to resolve the disagreement between the two traditions. Since they belonged to the priestly school, they adopted the priestly view that Noah was a descendant of Seth. In order to sever the genealogical connection between Cain and Noah, they transferred the description of Noah’s birth and naming from the original ending of J’s Cainite dynasty to P’s Sethite genealogy (Gen. 5:28).” Knohl, “Cain: The Forefather of Humanity,” in Cohen, Hurvitz, and Paul, *Sefer Moshe*, 66.
22. See Paula M. McNutt, “In the Shadow of Cain,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 45–64.

23. According to McNutt (“In the Shadow of Cain,” 45, 56), “Genesis 4 is a traditional story in which Cain, the ‘culture hero’ and eponymous ancestor of tent dwellers, musicians, and metalworkers, is responsible for introducing mankind to some of the primary elements of civilization through the activities of his descendants. . . . From Cain’s violent act of mortality arise exactly those activities that typify culture, in its immortal sense.” Interestingly, some early Christian writers wrote about particular gnostic sects that claimed to have been ideological descendants of Cain. For these presumed groups, Cain was an enemy of the Ialdaboath, the God of the Old Testament. To gnostic groups, Ialdaboath was not the true God, but one who interacted only in time and space and thus believed itself to be the true God. Gnosticism was, then, a system of salvation by which one became free of the strictures of matter. For some, according to Irenaeus, Cain was their “spiritual” forefather, with Judas, Christ’s disciple, being the most recent possessor of the divine wisdom.
24. Although nothing in the biblical narrative implies that Cain wrote anything, later Jewish and Christian writers understood Cain to have been a teacher. Josephus, for instance, in *Antiquities* 1.60–62, described Cain as a “teacher of wicked ways.” See John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 225–26. Interestingly, in the Book of Moses version of the narrative, while Cain is a negative figure, he is purported to have said, upon killing Abel, “I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands” (Moses 5:33). While emphasis is often placed on the economic windfall Cain believes he will receive, the first declaration suggests that Cain believed killing Abel would bring about a freedom that he did not possess before. Such a narrative strand could allow for a Cain-centric narrative in which he sought for freedom.
25. Cain’s building of the first city may indicate how he became associated with kingdom building. This aspect of the Cain narrative was of particular interest to some ancient writers (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.60–62). Its emphasis on establishing a monarchy may be one reason why Alma<sub>2</sub> censored it, since the Nephites were then engaged in establishing the judgeship system.
26. See Belnap, “And It Came to Pass,” 119–23.
27. See Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:488–89.
28. The term *priestcraft(s)* appears seven times in the Book of Mormon—twice in 2 Nephi (10:5; 26:29), twice in Alma (1:12, 16), and three times in 3 Nephi (16:30; 21:19; 30:2). Although this is not extensive, the word’s distribution

throughout the Book of Mormon suggests a continuity of meaning on the part of the authors and translators. The term *craft*, on the other hand, appears in two contexts, Helaman 2:3 and Alma 35:3, the latter noting that Alma<sub>2</sub>'s ministry to the Zoramites had the effect of destroying the “craft” of the Zoramite elite. Unfortunately, nothing more is said about this “craft,” so it is unclear if it refers to the alternative religious beliefs or to a specific economic activity. It is also possible that both are implied. Again, although the text is silent as to economic activity, there are indications that the Zoramites may have been engaged in mining or smelting. The original report received by Alma<sub>2</sub> stated that the some portion of the population was bowing down to “dumb idols” (Alma 31:1). Later, Mormon notes that the poor had been considered by their fellow Zoramites as “dross,” the impurities resulting from the smelting process. As for the religious system associated with the Zoramite elite, it was characterized by ascending the Rameumptom in their “costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold” and proclaiming their chosen status (v. 28). The name of the territory itself, Antionum, may reflect an incorporation of the term *antion*, which in Alma 11:19 is a particular weight measure for gold. See Gordon C. Thomasson, “What’s in a Name? Book of Mormon Languages, Names, and [Metonymic] Naming,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 16; and Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:433. These disparate elements hint that the Zoramite craft may have been the mining and crafting of metal objects, possibly gold objects. Intriguingly, the New Testament contains an account of the silversmiths of Ephesus remonstrating the influence of Christian missionaries precisely because of the missionaries’ successes: “Our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised” (Acts 19:27). In any case, this suggests that *craft* is not simply an abbreviation for *priestcraft*, a term used throughout the book of Alma but reflecting a different practice.

29. Examples of types of murder in the Book of Mormon: (1) Mosiah 2:13; 29:14; Alma 1:18, 32; 16:18; 23:3; 42:19; (2) Jarom 1:6; Alma 17:14; 27:6; 36:14; (3) 2 Nephi 9:9; 10:15; 26:22, 32; Alma 37:21–22. In fact, twenty-five of the references to murder appear between Helaman 1 and 3 Nephi 7, and all of them associate murder with secret societies.
30. “These were not merely murders committed during the course of a theft. These are political murders, altering the political landscape.” Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:108.

31. See his seminal study “Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and Ancient Near Eastern Law,” FARMS Preliminary Report, 1985. Although Welch focuses on the root *gzl* (which appears thirty times in the Hebrew Old Testament), *šdd*, which is translated only three times as some form of robbery, actually appears fifty-five times, while *bzz*, which is translated six times as “robbery,” is found forty-three times. “As far as the nouns are concerned, *baz* denotes the act of plundering.” G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 66, s.v. “bzz” (hereafter *TDOT*). While the term *gzl* generally refers to the taking of an item from another by force (reflecting our more current understanding of robbery), *bzz* indicates a martial act in which a thing may be taken as spoil or destroyed. The final term, *šdd*, also describes a destructive act distinguished by the overwhelming power or force by which it is done. “Among the prophets of the 8th–6th centuries, *šdd* exhibits a consistent semantic spectrum in its references to the destructive activity of invading armies, to plunder, killing, and the destruction of fields and cities.” *TDOT*, 14:416, s.v. “šādād.” In all three cases, while robbery may be understood as the taking of something, it is certainly understood as a violent destruction, presumably by a powerful group. As for Welch’s identification of robbers as a “band” or “troop,” while the Hebrew word he reviews, *gdd*, may actually apply to any militarized cohort, either state controlled or not, the terms imply group behavior.
32. Gardner, in *Second Witness*, 6:248, offers this analysis: “In verse 8, Jared’s daughter was ‘exceedingly expert.’ In the 1828 Webster’s dictionary, an ‘expert’ is: ‘properly, experienced; taught by use, practice or experience; hence, skillful; well instructed; having familiar knowledge of; as an expert philosopher.’ This suggests that she was adept in the political world of the times and understood, in particular, the secret combinations that would be used to change the balance of power. Because those secret combinations were in a book and she had obviously read and understood it, she presents an interesting figure.” Joseph Spencer, in “Jared’s Two Daughters” (in this volume), provides another perspective to the daughter of Jared’s exceeding expertise.
33. “Mormon defends the recordkeepers from any possible charge of negligence that may have led to the band’s proliferation. The oaths were not part of the record that Alma<sub>2</sub> delivered to Helaman<sub>1</sub>. Therefore, the Gadiantons arose directly due to Satan’s influence.” Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:112. It is unclear here whether Gardner is merely summarizing Mormon’s stance or if he himself believes that

the oaths were not a part of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s Jaredite records. If they weren't, then Alma<sub>2</sub>'s injunction is unnecessary, for if that information is not present, then why worry about its availability? As for the direct satanic influence, the challenge is that Mormon makes the case that the Jaredites were also presumably directly influenced, yet their own record notes that they were influenced by a text.

34. It should be mentioned that the notion of ongoing action conveyed by *still* in Helaman 6:29 is present in Helaman 2:4 in the verb form *to carry on*: “For there was one Gadianton, who was exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft, *to carry on* the secret work of murder and of robbery.” The purpose of the description is to provide the reasons for Gadianton’s ascension to leader of the group. Thus it is possible that Mormon’s later words “still carrying on” refer back to this action. Yet as noted above, it is more likely, and makes more grammatical sense, that Mormon’s use of the adverb *still* and the verb *to carry on* highlights the actions he had just described in connection with the Jaredites.
35. There is another event in which control of the records may have been lost. According to Helaman 4, in the fifty-seventh year of the reign of the judges, the Lamanites attacked the Nephites with such force that by the following year the Lamanites effectively controlled “all the possession of the Nephites which was in the land southward” (v. 8), driving the Nephites out of Zarahemla, the center of Nephite society, to Bountiful in the north. In light of the small amount of time in which this took place, the exodus from Zarahemla would have been rushed and disorderly. It is conceivable that during this time of confusion one of the Nephite translations was lost or copied. This would not explain how Gadianton got the record, of course, since he had become the group’s leader by the forty-first year of the reign of the judges, sixteen years earlier, unless Mormon’s description of Gadianton in Helaman 2 is anachronistic and reflects an older Gadianton who had in the ensuing years acquired the Jaredite record. That this may have been the case could be reflected in the fact that Kishkumen, the first leader, does not appear to have had the information. If Mormon’s description of Gadianton is anachronistic, it does allow for the reconciliation of Mormon’s argument concerning the origins of Gadianton’s knowledge of the restricted material by suggesting that the robbers began as a group of people who made an oath to protect one another (presumably influenced by Satan) and then acquired the restricted material later and applied it at that point. Unfortunately, there is simply not enough information given to allow for further support for this reconstruction, and therefore it must remain just a theoretical possibility.

36. The Nephite church in particular appears to have been a target of animus by Gadianton's group. In Helaman 6:39 we are told that the Gadianton robbers "did obtain the sole management of the government," and when they did so "they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God." Although mention of "the poor and the meek" may indicate that the Gadianton robbers did indeed persecute the lower classes, mention of the last group, "the humble followers of God," suggests it wasn't so much a general persecution but a targeted one against the church itself. That possibility is reinforced in Helaman 7, which notes again that the Gadianton robbers had "fill[ed] the judgment-seats—having usurped the power and authority of the land" (a description that may be expected), but then adds that the robbers disregard the commandments of God and "[condemn] the righteous because of their righteousness" (vv. 4–5).
37. A similar scenario presents itself in Alma 46, concerning the supporters of Amalickiah. Although the text suggests that the supporters were themselves wicked people, simply "seeking for power" and to be "rulers over the people" (vv. 4–5), later descriptions of Amalickiah's followers state that they were wicked, seeking to destroy the church and the "foundation of liberty" (v. 10). This suggests that the followers knew what they were doing and still chose to engage in such behavior. Yet later in the chapter, following the dissemination of the title of liberty and the potential for conflict between Captain Moroni and the Amalickiahites, Mormon observes that some of Amalickiah's followers had become "doubtful concerning the justice of the cause in which they had undertaken" (v. 29). This suggests that at least some of the followers believed initially that they were morally and ethically doing the right thing—that it was the right thing to reestablish a monarchy and that doing so was not just a means to increase individual wealth.
38. Nephite-Lamanite aggression, which had resulted in conflict for the first 570 years of Lehite colonization, does not appear again until approximately two hundred to three hundred years after Christ's arrival. By then the definitions of *Lamanite* and *Nephite* appear to be primarily contingent on one's membership in the church. The lack of military conflict does not necessarily mean that the sources of the conflict were completely resolved following the war that ended in the sixty-second year. As will be shown, it appears that the Gadianton robber organization was flexible enough to incorporate Lamanites who may have felt



that the détente between the “Lamanites” and “Nephites” had robbed them of what was rightfully theirs.

39. For Gardner, the Gadianton robbers were made up from a non-Lehite population to the north (associated with the Mesoamerican site Teotihuacan) that influenced the cultures to the south, including the Lehite cultures. This influence, he states, took place with the northern migration described in Helaman 3:3–12, the assumption being that the migrating people must have encountered the Gadianton culture and then brought it back (though there is no mention of them returning). That culture was perhaps influenced by the Mulekite culture, which Gardner believes was a direct descendant of Jaredite culture, which in turn was associated with the northern territory. See Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:11–29. While this reconstruction is possible, it is founded on a Mesoamerican model, to which the text is then arranged. In other words, the presumed archaeology becomes the lens to understanding rather than the text itself. Since Gardner assumes the Mesoamerican setting, he presumes that Teotihuacan, with its supposed militaristic organization, must have been the source for the Gadianton robbers. The text, though, at every step notes the Nephite/Lehite connection and makeup. Thus the text is downplayed in Gardner’s analysis, even ignored, in order to demonstrate the validity of the archaeological model.
40. For more on these traditions, see Richard L. Bushman, “The Lamanite View of Book of Mormon History,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 2:52–72. See also Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1987): 15–37.
41. Gardner suggests that the Zoramites mentioned here pertain to the Zoramite community in Alma 31–35 and that their mention here indicates that the Gadianton robbers were members of a “religious order” that reflected the “Zoramite heresy.” See Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:244.
42. According to Gardner, “The Gadiantons trace their ruling authority to an even older source, the Jaredites” (*Second Witness*, 5:255). Yet Gardner never does explain exactly how the Gadianton robbers trace that authority. His reconstruction, while suggesting Jaredite influence, does not provide the exact mechanism by which that influence supposedly took place, unless he assumes cultural contact with a northern population center.
43. The relationship between Jeroboam’s reforms and the Sinai narrative has long been noted. For an excellent review, see Gary N. Knoppers, “Aaron’s Calf and

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Jeroboam's Calves," in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 92–104.