

## “And Now My Son, I Have Somewhat More to Say”

Corianton’s Concerns, Alma’s Theology,  
and Nephite Tradition

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Comprising sixteen chapters of the book of Alma, the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges—at least from the perspective of Mormon—seems to have been one of the more significant years of Nephite history. Marked by such events as the emergence of Korihor, the Zoramite rebellion, and the ascension of Amalickiah, these chapters depict a Nephite community undergoing social unrest and uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> Among this block of scripture are Alma’s sermons to his sons. Though their personal and intimate structure is in marked contrast to the larger, historically minded chapters, the theological concerns that Alma addressed with his sons, particularly to his son Corianton, seem to reflect the larger challenges concerning Nephite identity and the role of the church among the Nephite society demonstrated in the other narratives. Indeed, Alma’s responses to his son’s concerns may give insight into the manner in which these challenges had been internalized by individual Nephites.

Alma's discourses to his son, comprising chapters 39–42, follow Corianton's failed missionary efforts among the Zoramites, a mission that sought to rectify both the religious apostasy and the political disaffection of this Nephite population. While attention has been given to the immediate reasons Corianton failed in his missionary attempt—namely, his involvement with a woman and the forsaking of the ministry—the majority of Alma's words address Corianton's deeper theological concerns, which in turn appear to reflect the larger issues of agency, individualism, and the “tradition of the fathers” that were being debated contemporarily by the different Nephite communities. Thus, Alma's responses, culminating in his discourse on justice and mercy in Alma 42, while specifically tailored to Corianton, continue the dialogue concerning these issues raised in earlier historical narratives—namely, those of the Zoramites, of Korihor, and of Nehor.

## **The Zoramites and the Traditions of the Fathers**

Beginning in Alma 39 and ending in chapter 42, Alma's discourse to his son Corianton addresses a number of his son's concerns: the reality of prophecy (specifically concerning the coming of Christ), resurrection, the interval between death and resurrection, and the principles of restoration. The discussion culminated in Alma's supernal teachings on the cosmic nature of justice and mercy. Alma's perceptive discussion on these principles arises from his own concern regarding Corianton's ministerial work in Antionum, the Zoramite community; or, to be more precise, Corianton's lack of ministerial labor. According to Alma 39:2, Corianton, boasting in his strength and his wisdom, at some point “forsook” the ministry by following after a woman. These had detrimental effects on Alma's own ministry, as he told his son: “How great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words” (39:11). While much attention has been given to Corianton's inordinate desire for Isabel, it is Alma's initial complaint, “boasting in thy

strength and thy wisdom,” that may be the gravest concern, namely that Corianton had begun apostatizing from the truth.<sup>2</sup>

The reader is first introduced to the Zoramites in Alma 31:1, where Alma is shown receiving a report that the Zoramites are “bow[ing] down to dumb idols.” The religious apostasy is complemented by the fear that “the Zoramites would enter into a correspondence with the Lamanites, and that it would be the means of great loss on the part of the Nephites” (31:4).<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, Alma, the high priest and former chief judge, embarked on a ministry to the Zoramites, bringing with him Amulek, Zeezrom, and two of his sons, Shiblon and Corianton. Upon their arrival, Alma was confronted not with physical idolatry, but with another form of worship in which the believers ascended a platform and pronounced a rote prayer.<sup>4</sup> Mormon further summarizes, “Yea, and [Alma] also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride” (31:25).<sup>5</sup>

The prayer itself highlighted their supposed divine election. According to Alma in his own prayer recorded in Alma 31, material wealth appears to have been the primary evidence by which the Zoramites understood their divine election (Alma 31:28). The more wealthy one was, the more righteous an individual was—thus ostentatious displays of wealth indicated one’s election.<sup>6</sup> The social ramifications of this theology resulted in a highly economically stratified population, with the lower class not only poor, but unclean or “filthy” and treated as “dross.”<sup>7</sup> It was among this lower economic class that Alma had his greatest ministerial success. Among the Zoramite elite, however, the text indicates that Alma’s message was met with askance by some who saw his message as a threat to their way of life (Alma 35:3).<sup>8</sup> As for the election itself, the Zoramites rejected, even repudiated, what they considered the foolish and childish traditions of the Nephite fathers. This appears to have included the belief in a Christ, which they understood to “bind . . . down” their fellow Nephites and “which doth lead their hearts to wander far” from God (Alma 31:17). As if to emphasize their critique, Mormon added: “They did offer up, every man, the selfsame prayer unto God, thanking their God that

they were chosen of him, and that he did not lead them away after the tradition of their brethren, and that their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about" (31:22).

The term(s) *tradition(s) of X* show up in the Book of Mormon about thirty-five times, the majority of them in reference to Lamanite beliefs or practices and are used to explain, even excuse, Lamanite behavior. As such they are most often labeled by the Nephites as "incorrect" or "not correct."<sup>9</sup> Yet, mention is also made to the traditions of the Nephites. In fact, in Alma 23:5, the traditions of the Lamanites appear to be contrasted with the Nephite tradition: "And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, yea, thousands were brought to believe in the traditions of the Nephites." In Mosiah 26:1–2, Mormon describes the generation following King Benjamin's discourse, noting that they did not understand the words, having been little children at the time, and as a result, "they did not believe the tradition of their fathers. They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ."<sup>10</sup>

As the above references suggest, the Nephite "tradition of the fathers" included not only belief in Christ but also the specific prophecy that he would come. Alma 3:11 actually defines a Nephite in these terms: "And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the traditions of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God and kept them, were called the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth." If this is the case, then the designation of Nephite had become, early on in the reign of the judges, the designation given to those who believed and followed the text brought from Jerusalem and who believed in the coming of Christ.

All the references to *tradition(s) of X*, whether Nephite or Lamanite, with the exception of one reference in Enos, stem from the period of King Benjamin and later. According to Omni and the Words of Mormon, this period was marked by internal dissension

and rebellion among the Nephites and coincided with the challenges of integration with a preexisting culture in the land of Zarahemla, namely the Mulekites.<sup>11</sup> While little is provided concerning this integration, hints within the text suggest that it wasn't as peaceful or as smooth as a cursory reading may suggest. Both in Mosiah 1 and in Mosiah 25, it appears that the Nephites and the Mulekites maintained their distinct cultural identities, even though Benjamin sought to erase this and provide one unifying identity.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Mosiah 25:1–3 notes that the Mulekites made up the majority of the population, which would have affected language usage and economic relationships.<sup>13</sup> Politically, we are told that Mosiah, the Nephite leader, is chosen as the monarch over both peoples; the older Mulekite royal line being used in other capacities.<sup>14</sup> Why a Nephite ruler was chosen is not clear, though the text suggests that it is because the Nephites possessed actual written records.<sup>15</sup> If this is one of the primary reasons, then the Nephite tradition now had political repercussions, with the Nephite religious texts legitimating Nephite acquisition of political authority over a people who were not originally Nephite.

The Nephite tradition also highlighted the religious authority of original Nephite lineages. While one of the primary components to the tradition was prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, both to the Old and New World, the prophecies themselves originated from members of the original Nephite elite and their descendants.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as Alma 3:11 suggests, the tradition included believing and keeping the commandments as found in the Nephite texts, which were maintained and controlled by the selfsame Nephite religious elite.<sup>17</sup> These commandments would have included the sacrificial and other ritual instruction and required priestly supervision, a hierarchical position often held, again, by original Nephite lineages.<sup>18</sup>

While the text does not document the reaction to the Nephite tradition by the Mulekite population in general, the ideologies of other cultural groups, as recorded in the book of Alma, suggest that the Nephite authority implied in the traditions was not universally accepted.<sup>19</sup> Alma 8–15 recounts Alma's ministry among the people

of Ammonihah, who repeatedly questioned Alma's message and authority. Upon his arrival, Alma's initial message concerning the "word of God" was met with the following: "We know that thou art high priest over the church which thou hast established in many parts of the land, according to your tradition; and we do not believe in such foolish traditions" (Alma 8:11). The verse prior noted that Alma had been praying for the opportunity to "baptize them unto repentance" (8:10), but as the Ammonihahite response demonstrates, they did not recognize his religious authority, noting that such may be a "tradition" of the church, but it was a "foolish tradition" to those not of the church (8:11).

Similarly, an Amalekite contending with Aaron declared that "we do not believe that thou knowest [that the Son of God would come to redeem mankind]. We do not believe in these foolish traditions. We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come, neither do we believe that thy fathers and also that our fathers did know concerning the things which they spake, of that which is to come" (Alma 21:8). In this case, belief in Christ's coming, and prophecy in general, is explicitly referred to as a tradition of Aaron's (that is, Nephite) fathers. At the same time, the individual's mention of "our fathers" as distinct from "thy fathers," who also shared a prophetic tradition that was rejected by later generations, is frustratingly intriguing.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of his exact meaning, it suggests that what it meant to be Nephite was under discussion and that the Nephite tradition was being questioned and even rejected.

Perhaps not coincidentally, these questions and concerns followed the integration with the Mulekites, which was characterized by "much contention and many dissensions" (Words of Mormon 1:16) and the political reforms that became known as the reign of the judges. In the case of Mulekite integration, Nephites were presented with a culture that was demographically larger than their own with its own political structure, its own language, and presumably its own traditions.<sup>21</sup> Displacing those traditions with the newly introduced Nephite tradition would have been resented by some. Three

generations later, the political reforms and its system of lower and higher judges, presumably representing smaller and larger geographical areas respectively, would have returned at least some political power to the Mulekites and given political power to minority groups that may never have had it earlier.<sup>22</sup> As before, this change would have led to questions concerning what a Nephite was and the rejection of the tradition, though both would still have retained cultural relevancy in the new system of judgeship. Perhaps just as importantly, any resentment one may have felt during the Nephite monarchical period in Zarahemla could now be expressed openly because of the institutional political changes, as attested in the Ammonihah and Zoramite narratives.

## **Korihor and the Traditions of the Fathers**

While the Zoramites and Ammonihahites had physically removed themselves from the center of Nephite culture, the tensions concerning identity and tradition were manifested in Zarahemla as well. At the same time that the Zoramites were uttering their prayer condemning the “tradition of the fathers,” Korihor was explicitly accusing the church leadership in Zarahemla of using the traditions to bolster their own wealth and social positions. Of Korihor’s history or background, nothing is said in the text; he just simply appears near the end of the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges. Like the Zoramites and others, Korihor questioned the reality of Christ—more specifically, the role of prophetic authority in Nephite understanding of Christ. Emphasizing an epistemology grounded in observation, Korihor declared: “No man can know of anything which is to come. Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers. How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ” (Alma 30:13–15). Korihor continues, saying: “Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But

behold, this is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement comes because of the traditions of your fathers" (30:16). Thus, the coming of Christ, even the necessity of a Christ, and repentance are deemed mental "derangements"—brainwashing completed via the traditions.

When Gideon, the high priest over the land, later confronted Korihor as to why he went "about perverting the ways of the Lord," teaching "that there shall be no Christ," and speaking "against all the prophecies of the holy prophets" (Alma 30:22), Korihor's response was, "I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers; . . . I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads" (30:23). As this declaration makes clear, Korihor accuses all aspects of the church, not just its teachings but also its practices, as forms of authoritative control. In the next verse, he asserted simply and succinctly, "Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage" (30:24).

It would seem, then, that Korihor did not just believe that the traditions were foolish, or theologically wrong, as the Zoramites did, but actually threatened the Nephite sociopolitical fabric. Central to Korihor's teachings was a radical individualism in which religious responsibility or a sense of guilt for sinful behavior interfered with the exercising of that individualism. As Mormon notes, Korihor taught, "there could no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength" (Alma 30:17). Significant here is Mormon's use of the phrase "could be no" in reference to the atonement. Korihor didn't say that there should not be an atonement but that there could not be an atonement because man or woman was simply a creature, like any other. Whether or not one prospered was completely dependent upon an individual's inherent skills or abilities. If people found themselves lacking, then those people could develop

that skill or find another to advance through life. A society organized by this ideology would be one in which an individual was not dependent upon others nor would have obligations for others. Such a society would be ultimately “free,” not constrained by morals or ethics that required an element of dependency on the choices of others. Thus, any belief system or structure that restrained one’s actions, particularly by instilling guilt for said actions, would itself have been immoral, even restricting the newly provided rights established under the judgeship system.<sup>23</sup>

While it appears that a number of factors entered into Mosiah’s decision regarding the establishment of the judgeship, one element was his belief that it would be better if the individual bore his or her own sins, instead of by the monarch: “that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike” (Mosiah 29:32). It is clear that this was a popular decision, as the text records that the people

relinquished their desires for a king, and became exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance throughout all the land; yea, and every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins. Therefore, it came to pass that they assembled themselves together in bodies throughout the land, to cast in their voices concerning who should be their judges; . . . and they were exceedingly rejoiced because of the liberty which had been granted unto them. (Mosiah 29:38–39)

The comment that some were “exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance” suggests that at least some did not believe that such was possible under the monarchical system, that in some fashion, discrimination existed in some form, either real or imagined. Certainly, the church had a privileged position under Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, and Nephite elite, as noted above, held the significant political positions. Establishing through reforms a level of lower judges, presumably representing smaller geographical districts, potentially gave political power to groups in those districts that either had not

had it before (e.g., followers of Nehor) or had been removed from that power (Mulekites).<sup>24</sup>

Yet even with the reforms, Nephites retained their elite positions. In terms of the chief judgeship, Alma<sub>2</sub>, a direct descendent of Nephi, was made the first chief judge. Though he abdicated his judgeship in his ninth year, his grandson Helaman<sub>2</sub> was installed as chief judge thirty years later, followed by his son Nephi<sub>3</sub> in another eleven years. The church itself was also led by Nephites, again starting with the first high priest, Alma<sub>1</sub>, followed by his son Alma<sub>2</sub> and his grandson Helaman<sub>1</sub>. Nephites also retained control over the records. Thus, while that power could now theoretically be held by other cultural groups, in reality they were still Nephite-held positions. The church in particular, because of its theology and its leadership, would have been understood as a Nephite institution, perpetuating the tradition of the fathers and thus presumed Nephite superiority.

Thus for Korihor, the church, with its emphasis on the “tradition of the fathers,” maintained Nephite influence over the greater population. By espousing a belief in Christ and promoting the importance of keeping the commandments contained in their religious texts, the church promoted the necessity of the atonement. This meant in turn that individuals could and indeed would sin, and that if they did, then they became guilty, a state that could be resolved only by going to the priest and performing the necessary ordinances to become clean again. Individuals were not free to exercise their rights and privileges but were bound by the moral and ethical system of the church that maintained Nephite authority. As Korihor himself would state: “Ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges” (Alma 30:27). Thus, with similar but slightly different critiques, Korihor also condemned the traditions of the fathers.

## Nehorism and the Traditions of the Fathers

One more ideology that interacted with and differed from the traditions of the Nephite fathers was Nehorism. Though Nehorism is introduced in Alma 1 during the first year of the reign of the judges, the text suggests that Nehorism as a theology had been around prior to that year. In terms of its performance, the reader is told that it emphasized the elevation of religious authority, though the exact functions of Nehorite priests and teachers are not described in Alma 1.<sup>25</sup> Theologically, Nehorism espoused a universal salvation in which the Lord had created and redeemed humankind, thus providing the means by which all men and women would have eternal life. How or when that redemption took place is also not revealed, but the lived religion was one in which “all mankind . . . need not fear nor tremble, but . . . lift up their heads and rejoice” (Alma 1:4).

While it is unclear if the above description given by Mormon reflects actual Nehorite texts or terminology, his description of Nehorism as a belief system that sought to bring about a state in which the believers could “lift up their heads and rejoice” is reminiscent of similar terminology used by both earlier Nephite prophets and Alma’s contemporaries. The phrase is first used by Jacob in his speech recorded in 2 Nephi 6–10. Jacob states that he cited Isaiah that they may understand the covenants and in so doing “that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children” (2 Nephi 9:3). Later, in his conclusion, Jacob reminds the people, who now know of the promises given to them, “Let us remember [God], and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, for we are not cast off” (2 Nephi 10:20). Jacob uses the phrase again in his temple speech, declaring to the pure in heart that they “lift up [their] heads and receive the pleasing word of God” (Jacob 3:2). The phrase is then used by Limhi when Ammon and the other Nephite strong men arrive in the land of Nephi: “O ye, my people, lift up your heads and be comforted;

for behold, the time is a hand, or is not far distant, when we shall no longer be in subjection to our enemies” (Mosiah 7:18). The same phrase appears in a revelation to Alma<sub>1</sub>, letting him know that his people would soon be freed from bondage as well (Mosiah 24:13). His son, Alma<sub>2</sub>, is told to “lift up [his] head and rejoice” following his initial rejection by the Ammonihahite community (Alma 8:15). Finally, Korihor uses the phrase when he accuses the church leadership of controlling the lives of the saints: “I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers . . . to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads” (Alma 30:23).

In almost all the uses, the phrase is used to describe Nephite discouragement, often the result of subjugation or being cast out, or the fear of such, as in the case of Jacob’s usage, who uses the phrase to provide a sense of security to Nephites who felt “cast out.”<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, the great knowledge that Jacob declares that allows them to “not hang down their heads” is the coming of Christ, that is, the Nephite tradition. In the book of Mosiah, the phrase is used primarily by those who were in actual subjugation but anticipated imminent deliverance. Korihor uses the phrase to highlight supposed abuses by the church. Instead of allowing the people to “lift up” their heads, that is, to be free, the church restricts them from doing so by binding them through the Nephite traditions. These uses suggest that the order of Nehor understood itself as an alternative to the Nephite tradition in answering the historical fears of being cast out and oppressed. With that said, it is not surprising to see the order appearing after the integration and gaining popularity following the reforms as the traditional definitions and identities were breaking down, providing an alternative to the traditional, church-based understanding.<sup>27</sup>

## **Corianton’s Theological Concerns and the Traditions of the Fathers**

It is not clear how deeply Corianton may have been influenced by either Korihor, the Zoramites, or Nehorism, but the similarities

between his theological questions and the critiques of the Nephite tradition by these three strands of thought, as noted above, suggests that they had an effect on Alma's son. Korihor, in particular, appears to have targeted a younger audience for his teachings.<sup>28</sup> Alma's responses then are telling, as they give further insight into the manner by which he confronted these large-scale, ideological, and cultural challenges. Directly after admonishing his son for forsaking the ministry, Alma exhorted Corianton that he “seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you” (Alma 39:14), teachings which echoed the Zoramite prosperity theology.<sup>29</sup> But what appears to be of greater concern to Alma is Corianton's apparent doubts concerning the coming of Christ, a belief that had been traditionally associated with the tradition of the fathers and that the Zoramites had outright rejected as the “foolish traditions of our brethren” (Alma 31:17):

And now, my son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people. . . . Now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming? Is it not as necessary that the plan of salvation should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children? Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tiding unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming? (Alma 39:15, 17–19)

As Alma's words suggest, it appears that Corianton had entertained doubts about the specific prophecy of Christ's coming, of prophecy in general, and even of the necessity of Christ in bringing salvation.

Alma's response to these concerns constitutes the rest of Alma 40–42. He begins with a discussion about resurrection, suggesting that this too was questioned by Corianton. It is unclear whether the Zoramites believed in resurrection or not, but Korihor explicitly did not: “[Korihor] did preach unto them, . . . telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof” (Alma 30:18). The doctrine of resurrection was, of course, dependent upon a belief in Christ; therefore resurrection too may be viewed as an element of the Nephite tradition (Mosiah 26:2). Intriguingly, Alma does not make his case for the resurrection by referencing Nephite prophecy but instead describes his own revelatory process in understanding the principle: “Now, I unfold unto you a mystery; nevertheless, there are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth them save God himself. But I show unto you one thing which I have inquired diligently of God that I might know—that is concerning the resurrection” (Alma 40:3). Alma admits that at one time he did not know, or understand, the principle and therefore made personal inquiry. The admission places the onus of understanding on the individual—describing the process of understanding as such emphasizes the role of personal agency in understanding the principle, thereby undermining Korihor's claims of overt church influence.

Alma's use of the term *mystery* to designate the principle and then his description of the manner by which he understood this *mystery*, also undercuts Korihor's claims. He had accused church leadership of using their “traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries” to cow the population that they “durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do yoke them according to their desires” (Alma 30:28). Rather than refer to the church's revelatory authority, Alma demonstrates that any individual, with himself as the model, could receive the *mystery*; the principles of the tradition were not brainwashing but invitations to individual revelatory experience. Thus, Alma provided a model of an epistemological approach that contradicted Korihor's and highlighted the harmony between

the Nephite tradition and Mosiah’s reforms, namely that one individual right and privilege was, in fact, to receive one’s own revelation.

Yet, Alma doesn’t completely abandon the role of prophetic authority. Near the end of his discussion on the resurrection, he introduces the related principle of restoration by alluding to prophetic instruction and actually referring to prophetic text:

Yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets . . . this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets—and then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God. But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out, and consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup.  
(Alma 40:22, 24–26)

While it is unclear whether the material following the em dash is an actual citation of existing scripture, at least one particular segment of the material has basis in earlier Nephite prophecy.<sup>30</sup> The phrase “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God” is not a biblical passage (at least not one from the biblical text that we have), but it does appear in the writings of Nephi introducing the principle of restoration: “Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever” (1 Nephi 10:21).<sup>31</sup> Thus, it appears that the principle of restoration may be understood as one specific to Nephite prophetic authority.

This principle also appears to have been part of the larger set of questions concerning Nephite tradition being debated in the greater Nephite polity, as Alma himself notes: “I have somewhat to say concerning the restoration of which has been spoken; for behold, some

have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing" (Alma 41:1). Alma does not assign this claim to any particular group or peoples, so who was wresting the scriptures concerning this principle and in what manner they were wresting them is not provided. With that said, Alma does explicitly associate restoration with the resurrection; thus those who have challenged resurrection would therefore likely disagree with the principle of restoration. Korihor does not appear to address restoration in his diatribe against Nephite tradition, but his belief that existence ended at death negates both resurrection and restoration. Moreover, his existing teachings suggest that his response to the principle of restoration is that it would be one of the theological tools used by the church to instill fear and guilt into individuals, which could then be manipulated by the church to strengthen and perhaps expand the church's inordinate position of power among the Nephite polity.

The Zoramites too may have questioned the principle, though from a different perspective, namely that by their election as God's holy people they were inoculated from negative salvific consequences. As with the Korihor narrative, nothing in the description of Zoramite worship states explicitly that they disagreed with restoration, but Amulek's discourse to them exhorted them to "not procrastinate the day of your repentance," for "if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when y are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:33–34). Yet, the argument concerning restoration contrasts most noticeably with the teachings of Nehor.

Though we are never told explicitly what the Nehorian theology of restoration was, it appears that Nehorists would have understood restoration as the universal redemption of everyone regardless of behavior—a comforting doctrine to be sure. As noted elsewhere,

redemption reflected the Nephite experience and was used by Nephite prophets to ameliorate Nephite fears and insecurities concerning their place within a greater Israelite placement. Yet whereas the Nephite tradition emphasized the role of Christ and one’s own agency, as noted in Alma’s statement, Nehorism declared all people were redeemed, regardless of behavior.<sup>32</sup> It also appears that this is exactly what Alma corrects as he teaches the principle of restoration.

Having established the relationship of restoration and resurrection, Alma then links the principle of restoration to another doctrinal principle, the justice of God: “I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order; . . . and it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good. And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil” (Alma 41:2–4). Alma further claims that this is not just some divine whim but is reflective of a cosmological order: “Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, everything to its natural frame; . . . is the meaning of the word restoration to take a thing of a natural state and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature? O, my son, this is not the case” (41:4, 12–13). Thus Alma maintains explicitly that one’s moral state determines one’s eternal outcome: “The meaning of the word restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful” (41:13). Such restoration of one’s moral state followed the principle of justice, and yet Alma notes that one’s state may change through the process of repentance. Those who have taken advantage of repentance are “they that are redeemed of the Lord” (41:7).<sup>33</sup>

With that said, Alma’s admonition concerning restoration is telling: “And now behold, my son, do not risk one more offense against

your God upon those points of doctrine, which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin. Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness” (Alma 41:9–10). This suggests that Corianton has, up to this point, understood restoration to reflect an initial state of happiness, one that had been lost via the mortal experience (defined by Alma as sin), and that would be reinstated at some point, similar to Nehorism. The notion of restoration, in Corianton’s view, connotes a belief that repentance is not necessary, again similar to Nehorism, and was not at all a part of the Nephite tradition, thus requiring Alma’s corrective.

Questions concerning the necessity of authority arise again with Corianton’s last issue, his supposition that “it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery” (Alma 42:1). As Alma’s restatement of the concern suggests, the concept deals with the theological position that the “state of misery” is a consequence of sinful behavior. Alma had already established this via his explanation of the principle of restoration, yet instead of just restating the principle of restoration, he explains the manner in which God himself is defined by law. To do so, he alludes to the very structure of time and space. He begins by alluding to the Garden of Eden narrative, but rather than discussing the agency of Adam and Eve and their experience, Alma reviews the agency of God himself and notes that the cosmos itself was bound by that agency. As Alma explains, following the couple’s eating of the fruit, God now had a choice—either let the negative consequences explained to them earlier take place or, in his mercy, allow them to escape these consequences.

Though mercy would seem to be the preferred choice, doing so would lead to the following: “If Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated” (Alma 42:5). As this suggests, if Adam would have paid no negative consequences for his act and taken of the fruit of the tree of life, the word of God would have been

fulfilled and voided. Alma suggests that the two could not happen at the same time. Either the word of God is fulfilled or it is voided, but it isn't both. If it is, the plan itself grinds to an immediate halt. In fact, Alma takes it to an even greater level of consequence in subsequent verses: “Mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God” (42:13). Thus, God chose justice, making it possible that consequences would follow naturally and correctly from the given act instead of creating paradoxes that would go contrary to the proper order of the cosmos.

Yet justice on its own, while it preserved the integrity of the cosmos, was not sufficient to bring about true restoration, that is, eternal life. So, while mercy on its own destroys the cosmos, justice, which allows for the cosmos, means that nothing can return to the presence of God. In this dilemma, Alma situates Christ, who, through the atonement, made both a preparatory or probationary space-time by which one could repent (again made possible through the atonement). Thus the theological cosmology may be understood as such: by choosing to follow justice and cutting off Adam and Eve from the eternal experience, temporal time-space was engendered by which agency could be enacted. This, coupled with Christ and his performance of the atonement, made it possible for an individual to be forgiven of sin, mercy being allowed within that preparatory, probationary time or space. The state of misery experienced by the wicked via the principle of restoration was evidence that the cosmos was working right; justice was more than religious impositions; and the structure of time and space was dependent on the presence of punishment. Or, to put it another way, God too followed law, and if he did not the cosmos itself would collapse, including the option for any to receive salvation.

As noted in the last sentence, what Alma does in the last discourse with his son is to demonstrate the divine rule of law. God himself follows law, establishing the preeminence of justice, which allows for God's continuing as God. By placing mercy within the time-space

created by God's agency, mercy can be enacted without interfering with the consequences of justice. But while mercy is provided, if the conditions by which that mercy is experienced, namely the process of repentance, are not taken advantage of, then justice has final say, and must, for as Alma notes: "What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would case to be God" (Alma 42:25).

This cosmology lies behind the power and authority of the church. As Alma asserts later, "Whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds" (Alma 42:27). Indeed, the church compelled no one; the Nephite tradition did not coerce forcibly. Instead, these traditions and the authority by which the traditions were received, maintained, and transmitted provided the clear cosmological picture by which one could act accordingly. The teaching of the tradition allowed one to recognize the divine rule of law—that individual exercising of one's rights and privileges had cosmological repercussions that even God would not change. The church, contrary to Korihor, was not a malevolent entity meant to support a Nephite elite via guilt, brainwashing, and coercion, but the structure by which people could fully repent, taking advantage of God's mercy of the law of justice. The authority of the church leader was merely the means by which this could take place.

## Conclusion

Alma's discourse to Corianton ended with the following invitation: "And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people" (Alma 42:31). This is how the discourse opened, with Alma's recognition that Corianton had been called to minister to the people. Corianton's actions had been detrimental to this work, as he apparently questioned the theological traditions of the Nephite church and was perhaps influenced by similar questions that appear rampant throughout the Nephite polity. Ongoing integration with

the Mulekites, disparate Nephites, and even the Lamanites (in the form of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies) appeared to have led to widespread questions as to what it meant to be Nephite and to mistrust of original Nephite authority, particularly spiritual authority.

Yet Alma did not give up on his son. Instead, he led him point by point, principle by principle, to the correct understanding, demonstrating confidence in the tradition of the fathers. By the end, Alma had explained the cosmological scope of the traditions and thereby given Corianton a greater sense of his own authority. Corianton was meant to be one of those ancient priests someday, receiving his own mysteries, thereby bringing many unto repentance and a state of happiness. Thus, Alma provided the means for Corianton to navigate the cultural and political crises that were defining the Nephite experience at that time. Like our current prophets, who respond to our own contemporary challenges, Alma suggested that these concerns could be resolved through one’s own revelatory experiences, the words of prophets, and an eternal perspective.

It is easy to lose the significance of Alma’s teachings by avoiding or ignoring the context in which they are situated. However, when the context is discovered and understood, the truth is that Alma’s discourse to his son Corianton becomes profound, even supernal, for we too find answers to our contemporary challenges through personal revelation, the teachings of prophets, and the eternal view. And when we do, we may, like Corianton, be ministers of the word.

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## Notes

1. The chapters span from Alma 30 to Alma 46, beginning at the end of the seventeenth year and ending in the beginning of the nineteenth year.
2. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2007), 4:526–29. The exact nature of Corianton’s relationship with Isabel is not clear from the text. While Alma does discuss sexual impropriety, the text simply states that she “stole” the hearts of many, including Corianton. What we do know is that he followed after her, forsaking the ministry to which he had been assigned.
3. The text does not give reasons as to why the Zoramites separated. Sherrie Johnson, in her study “The Zoramite Separation: A Sociological Perspective,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 74–84, 129–30, suggests that the separation reflects political and economic dissatisfaction within the larger Nephite polity. She assumes that the Zoramites are, for the most part, actual descendants of the original Zoram, who was brought out of Jerusalem and became related to Nephi via marriage (Zoram married the oldest daughter of Ishmael, Nephi’s father-in-law). As such, Johnson asserts, they may have felt politically marginalized and economically disenfranchised by the other “Nephite” groups. While this is possible, nothing is actually said about the background or lineage of Zoram, the leader. Moreover, if it is economic disaffection, then it is unclear why the Zoramites have such a segmented society via economic prosperity, as the Zoramite poor would presumably also be of Zoramite lineage. What is clear is that the Zoramite crisis represents a threat to the larger Nephite polity; see John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 239–40. The dangerous situation was made even more so by the placement of the weaponless Anti-Nephi-Lehies in territory immediate adjacent to the north, thus potentially risking the entire eastern polity if the Zoramites did ally with the Lamanites.
4. As we learn in Alma 32, the Zoramite worship described in Alma 31:12–23 was exclusive to the elite members of Zoramite society. While the passage

details meticulously this form of worship, it reflects only the public, communal element of the worship. It is possible that other worship behaviors were engaged in by the Zoramites. In fact, verse 1, mentioned above, suggests that other forms, such as the “bowing down to dumb idols,” were present among the Zoramites, though perhaps practiced by those excluded from the worship described in 12–23.

5. Interestingly, the term *boasting* is mentioned only eight times in the book of Alma, five of them being used in Ammon’s speech to his brother concerning the work they had performed among the Lamanites in the land of Nephi. Outside of these, *boasting* occurs only in Alma 31, 38, and 39. Alma 38 is Alma’s discourse to his son Shiblon, while 39 is the beginning of his discourse to his son Corianton, both of whom Alma took with him in his ministering to the Zoramites. The explicit use of the term *boasting* both to describe the Zoramite worship system and to warn the two sons who were actually in Antionum suggests that Alma was concerned about Zoramite influence on his two sons. See Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:525–26, who notes further similarities between Alma’s instruction to Shiblon and Corianton.
6. Parrish Brady and Shon Hopkin, “The Zoramites and Costly Apparel: Symbolism and Irony,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 1 (2013): 40–53: “Although the prayer’s constantly repeated themes were certainly important in establishing and maintaining doctrinal focus and consistency, the position upon the Rameumptom during the prayer also provided a perfect opportunity for the individual at the top to show off his or her attire and adornments to the rest of his community. The ritual form of prayer—with arms outstretched to the heavens—further maximized this opportunity, allowing precisely those ornaments that Alma had noticed—the bracelets, ringlets, and ornaments of gold—to be displayed for all to see. In the way that Mormon structures the narrative, the worship at the Rameumptom was one of the few ways in which Alma could have determined that the hearts of the Zoramites were ‘set upon’ their adornments, because he saw them in essence parading that costly attire and elevating it upon the holy stand during their weekly worship” (43).

7. The term *dross* shows up twice in the Book of Mormon; here in Alma 32 and in Alma 34:29. The latter reference is in Amulek's instruction to the Zoramite poor, in which he warns them that if they did not take care of their fellow brethren (that is, be charitable) then they were dross and deserving of being cast out and "trodden under foot of men." Amulek's usage suggests that he is aware of the use of the term in the elite's treatment of the Zoramite poor and is therefore demonstrating in what capacity one finds true worth. The metallurgical meaning of the word (dross being the waste product accumulated during the smelting process) may indicate specific trade associated with the Zoramite community and thus perhaps indicate what exactly Mormon meant by "craft" in Alma 35:3.
8. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 489: "The fact that the Zoramite leaders treated those sympathetic to the gospel message as revolutionaries, driving them into exile, is a clear indication of how dangerous they found the missionaries' message. This fear was not unrealistic. Alma and Amulek found their most receptive listeners among the farmers at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. Though not respected by the elites, these peasant farmers were the economic foundation of Antionum. . . . Nephite egalitarianism could easily, even logically, leads [*sic*] to a farmer's revolt and a rejection of their obligation to continue supporting the elite."
9. The term *tradition(s)* of used in relation to the Lamanites is often to contrast their traditions with those of the Nephites. While it often highlights sinful behavior on the part of the Lamanites, it is also noted that the Lamanites do these things because they don't know the truth, only having the "traditions of their fathers" to guide their behavior. When they are introduced to the truth (that is, the Nephite traditions), their behavior changes, primarily as remorse because of the "incorrectness" of their own traditions (see Alma 9:16–17; 24:7; 25:6; 26:24; 37:9; 60:32; Helaman 5:51; 15:4, 7, 15).
10. Interestingly, these appear to be two of the same issues that Corianton had; ironically, the rising generation described in Mosiah 26:1–2 appears to have included Alma<sub>2</sub> and four sons of Mosiah. Alma describes his own ignorance concerning Christ at this age in Alma 36, his message to his son Helaman.

11. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:107: “A close reading of the text discloses that Benjamin is currently experiencing peace [Mosiah 1:1], strongly suggesting that controversy and conflict have marked earlier periods of his reign.” For more on the challenges of this integration, see Dan Belnap, “The Abinadi Narrative, Redemption, and the Struggle for Nephite Identity,” in *Abinadi: He Came among Them in Disguise*, ed. Shon D. Hopkin, The Book of Mormon Academy (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), 27–66.
12. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3, 107–8: “What is Benjamin’s reason for giving the two peoples a new name? . . . Benjamin is giving a new name to the combined people of Zarahemla and the people of Mosiah so that this new people will be greater than ‘all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem’—a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Benjamin is making a bold political move designed to preserve the internal peace he has created, perpetuating it by restructuring the political world within the city of Zarahemla. While kin divisions will likely remain, Benjamin intends to erase the political divisions and unify his people.”
13. See Dan 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 Mormon Studies* 23 (2014): 101–39.
14. See Belnap, “‘And It Came to Pass . . .,’” 101–39, for more on this particular integration.
15. The text gives no explicit reason as to why Mosiah<sub>1</sub> was appointed king by the Mulekites, but it has been suggested that Nephite possession of the plates legitimized his position. See Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:63, who suggests that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> was selected 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. Gordon C. Thomasson and Brett L. Holbrook 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.

16. Interestingly, prophecy that specifically and explicitly alluded to Christ's visit to the New World is only found twice prior to Alma 39. The first reference is in Nephi's vision, where he was shown "the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself" to the seed of Lehi's children (1 Nephi 12:6). The second explicit reference is in 2 Nephi 26:1, 9: "And after Christ shall have risen from the dead he shall show himself unto you, my children, and my beloved brethren; . . . the Son of Righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him, until three generations shall have passed away, and many of the fourth generation shall have passed away in righteousness." Jarom 1:11 suggests that this specific prophecy is still known approximately 220 years later: "The prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; . . . persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was." Yet, it is unclear as whether the phrase "believe in him to come as though he already was" refers to his specific arrival in the New World or within human history generally. This ambiguity exists in most of the other Book of Mormon prophecies concerning Christ's coming.
17. The commandments appear to have included not only those found in the brass plates but also those specifically given to the early Nephite prophets concerning the land (Alma 9:12–14).
18. The earliest Nephite community would have had Nephite priests, of course (2 Nephi 5:26; Jacob 1:18), but even later communities, including those following the integration, appear to have retained original Nephite lineages for priestly service. Alma<sub>1</sub>, Alma<sub>2</sub>, and Helaman<sub>1</sub> served as high priests over the entire church, while Ammon, one of the sons of King Benjamin, was high priest over the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. At least three of the twelve

disciples are Nephite elite (Nephi<sup>4</sup>, his brother Timothy, and either his son or nephew, Jonas).

19. Brant A. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2015), 223: “In describing the merger of the Nephites and the Zarahemlaites, LDS researcher J. N. Washburn suggests that the ‘lamb ate the lion,’ meaning that the smaller population [the Nephites] dominated the larger [the Mulekites] . . . religiously; eating the lion gave the lamb heartburn . . . much of later Nephite history may be attributed to the easy fissionability along Nephite/Zarahemlaite religious and political systems. The distinctions were never far from the illusory political and or religious unity.”
20. The origin of the Amalekites is unclear, with some suggesting that this is an alternate spelling for “Amlicite”; see J. Christopher Conkling, “Alma’s Enemies: The Case of the Lamanites, Amlicites, and Mysterious Amalekites,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 108–17, 130–32. If this is the case, then “Amalekites” were inhabitants of Nephite territory who in the fifth year of the reign of the judges sought to install Amlici, a Nehorite, as king. Though Mormon will group the opposing parties as Amlicites and “Nephites, or the people of God,” those opposed to this movement included not only members of the church but also “all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici” (Alma 2:3). In the consequent conflict, the Amlicites ally with a Lamanite army, marking themselves, apparently, in the same manner as the Lamanites, thus distinguishing them as “not Nephite.” Accordingly, the Amlicite narrative (comprising Alma 2–3) includes four distinctive groups, three of which may be understood as “Nephite,” but only one of which accepts the Nephite tradition. If Amalekite is not an alternative spelling for Amlicite, then the origin of the Amalekites is unknown, yet their presence among the Lamanites would still seem to indicate that they are Nephite dissenters, who, as our unnamed Amalekite makes clear, see themselves as separate from other Nephites. Thus, regardless whether there is one group or two, the term(s) indicates those who are not Nephite.
21. The most comprehensive study on the Mulekites is John L. Sorenson, “The ‘Mulekites,’” *BYU Studies* 30, no. 3 (1990): 6–22. For the impact of these

- elements on Nephite-Mulekite relations, see Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers*, 213–24, and Belnap, “And It Came to Pass . . .”
22. While there is no explicit narrative in which a recognized Mulekite holds a political position following the installation of the judgeship, the Ammonihah narrative in Alma 8–16 suggests that the judges represented their constituents. The text suggests that the population was predominantly of the order of Nehor (after the destruction of Ammonihah, the land was actually referred to later as the “Desolation of Nehors” Alma 16:11), and their political leadership was representative of this demographic situation.
  23. For more on Korihor’s relationship with the reforms of Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, see Dan Belnap, “And He Was Anti-Christ: The Significance of the Eighteenth Year of the Reign of the Judges, Part 2,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 28 (2019): 91–136.
  24. It is unclear whether the Mulekites obtained any political power following the reforms, but Sorenson suggests that Mulekite dissatisfaction may have been the source of some of the contentions and dissensions that occurred following the integration of Nephites and Mulekites; see Sorenson, “Mulekites,” 17–18. Others have suggested that the “king-men” that emerge during the Nephite-Amalickiahite war may have been Mulekite. See John A. Tvedtnes, “Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 296–326, particularly 298–300. Tvedtnes suggests, based on Alma 51:17–19 and the required hoisting of the title of liberty by the king-men “upon their towers, and in their cities” (Alma 51:20), that the king-men were settled in “specific cities” and were “more likely a tribal group than a political faction.” Yet, if they did live in specific cities, it would make sense that, like Ammonihah, they had representation in those cities. As for political representation, it is clear from Alma 51:7 that they were politically vibrant enough to induce a decision by “the voice of the people” and eventually wrest Zarahemla from Nephite judges (Alma 62:6). In any case, it certainly appears that the king-men did not see themselves as Nephites, both by their actions in Alma

- 51:13 and in their unwillingness to provide military support for Helaman and Moroni (Alma 58–61).
25. For a detailed description of Nehorism, see Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:41–51.
  26. See Dan Belnap, “I Will Contend with Them That Contendeth with Thee: The Divine Warrior in Jacob’s Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1–2 (2008): 20–39, specifically 32–33; also Belnap, “‘We Are Not Cut Off’: Separation and Reconciliation through Sacred Covenants,” in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 113–24; also Belnap, “Abinadi Narrative,” 27–66.
  27. Many have noted the relationship between Nehorism and the Nephite splinter groups (Amlicites, Ammonihahites, Amalekites, and so forth).
  28. See Belnap, “And He Was Anti-Christ,” 106: “We are not told anything regarding the social makeup of those who accepted Korihor’s precepts, but his disparaging of the ‘traditions of the fathers’ suggests that perhaps his audience was comprised of a young cohort. This hypothesis would make sense particularly if Korihor sought to institute social change. As we shall see, Korihor was not only against religion in general, but also particularly against the ‘ancient priests’ who made up the ecclesiastical leadership and who he believed had usurped the power of the younger generations (Alma 30:23). Thus, the message itself may have resonated with the younger generation who had lived with the chaotic first eighteen years of the reign of the judges.”
  29. Though some have suggested that the theology is insincere, material wealth as an indication of divine favor appeared earlier in a number of Christian traditions, particularly among Pentecostal and charismatic forms; for more see Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For more on prosperity theology in contemporary Africa, see David Tonghou Ngong, “Salvation and Materialism in African Theology,” *Studies in World Christianity* 15, no. 1 (2009): 1–21.

30. Though the em dash appears to mark the point where Alma quotes actual text “by the mouths of the holy prophets,” the em dash itself is a printer’s addition and does not appear to be originally placed in the text. Thus, while it may very well be that Alma is quoting actual text, it is also possible that he is paraphrasing or rewording existing scripture.
31. The phrase is also found in Alma 11:37; it is spoken by Amulek, who is addressing the function of Christ to the Ammonihahites. The phrase is found in the context of the ongoing discussion concerning the validity of the Nephite tradition.
32. Korihor, of course, would have denied the need for redemption, but Nehorism apparently included the belief that “all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life” (Alma 1:4). The Zoramite practice believed something similar, exclaiming “thou hast elected us that we shall be saved,” but whereas Nehorism espoused a universal salvation, the Zoramites believed this salvation was only to be experienced by themselves: “Thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell” (Alma 31:17).
33. The concept of redemption is a significant doctrine in the Book of Mormon. The verb *redeem* at its different aspects are found fifty-seven times, the word *redeemer* forty times, and the word *redemption* forty-eight times (contrast with eighty-eight times, eighteen times, nine times respectively in the Old Testament). The heightened interest of the Book of Mormon peoples regarding redemption may stem from the Nephite fear alluded to earlier in the paper, namely the fear of being cut off, cast out, and abandoned by virtue of their repeated separations from lands of inheritance. Biblical redemption was understood to be a family responsibility in which the oldest adult male relative had the responsibility to buy back or redeem those who were lost. As such, redemption is a primary doctrine underlying Israel’s covenantal relationship with God, who redeemed them from Egypt. In light of the Nephite fear, Nephite prophets often used redemption terminology and examples to instill within the Nephites an

understanding that God was still with them even if they were “driven out” of their lands of inheritance (2 Nephi 10:20). Not surprisingly, the doctrine of redemption was the primary contention between Abinadi and the priests of Noah, and their dispute reflected two different definitions as to what redemption meant. As noted earlier, the doctrine of redemption was a principle theological point for both the church and Nehorism. Alma’s use of the term in his dialogue with Corianton tied restoration to this greater Nephite doctrine and to the teachings of earlier Nephite prophets and scriptural texts. For a review of redemption in the Old Testament, see Jeremiah Unterman, “Redemption (OT),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 650–54. For more on the significance of redemption in the Book of Mormon, see Joseph M. Spencer’s study *An Other Testament: On Typology*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2016), and Belnap, “Abinadi Narrative,” 41–48.

