ENDNOTES

Ancient Voyages Across the Ocean to America: From “Impossible” to “Certain”
John L. Sorenson
10. See, for example, G. F. Carter, “Domesticates as artifacts,” in The Human Mirror: Material and Spatial Images of Man, ed. Miles Richardson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1974), 201–30. Many more examples from the literature are listed in Sorenson and Raish, Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas.
12. The book is entailed Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World, in press 2005 at the University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, the first in a new series by the press called “Global Perspectives on History.” Our paper will constitute chapter 9, “Biological evidence for pre-Columbian transoceanic voyages.”
19. Gupta, Plants, 58.
22. Gupta, Plants, 18.
23. Gupta, Plants, 17.
25. Gupta, Plants, 49.
33. Pullaiah, Medicinal Plants in India, 2:361.


53. Ferreira, “Encontro de ovos.”


Attempts to Redefine the Experience of the Eight Witnesses

Richard L. Anderson


11. Martin spoke of handling the leaves of the plates, but possibly when the record was covered, as William and Emma Smith did. Their phonetic transcription of the word was “kons.”

11. “Testimony of Eight Witnesses.” Curious is derived from the Latin curiosus, giving one early English meaning of “made with care or skill.” This is the sense of the Book of Mormon phrase curiosum workmanship, which is
repeated in the Eight Witnesses’ testimony.


14. Vogel, Joseph Smith, xvi; com\npare xii.


18. Preliminary manuscript, Family and Church History Depart-\nment, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter Church Archives); also transcribed in Lavina Field-\ning Anderson, Lucy’s Book (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 455–57.


20. Vogel, Joseph Smith, 442, 446. Vogel appears to favor halluci-\nation to explain both testimo-\nies of the witnesses but warns that his explanations contain “qualifying verbs and adverbs”\nthat show “where my analysis is speculative or conjectural” (xvii).


23. Vogel, “Validity,” 103. Compare Vogel, Early Mormon Docu-\ments, 3:332 on the dubious historical pedigree: “For this reason Fawn Brodie was per-\nhaps mistaken to place so much weight on Ford’s account.”


29. The most significant of these\neight accounts are used with refer-\nce citations later in this article.


32. Latter Day Saint Messenger and Advocate 2 (March 1836): 286–87; also in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 5:239. Besides this source and Turley’s report, the other four references from John Whitmer regarding his handling the plates are in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 5:245, 247, 250, 251. Vogel is legalistic in commenting on the report of Whitmer’s 1878 schoolhouse speech, which describes the physical plates and states that Whitmer “had often handled” them. Whether or not “often” is correct, Whitmer was obviously speaking about his familiar official testimony. Yet Vogel claims Whitmer did not describe the plates from “personal experience” (Early Mormon Documents, 5:245).

33. Palmer thinks eight men could “handle the plates in a vision” (Insider’s View, 206), whereas Vogel judges “this possibility unsatisfactory” (“Validity,” 102).

34. John Smith to George A. Smith, 1 January 1838, Church Archives; cited in Anderson, Investigating, 119n13.

35. Warren Parrish to E. Holmes, 11 August 1838, Evangelist 16 (1 October 1838): 226. Parrish intended to quote the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, page 171, now section 17, though he cited the facing page, 170. The Parrish quotations of Harris match those dated in mid-
March by Burnett in the long extract quoted next.


37. Stephen Burnett to Lyman E. Johnson, 15 April 1838, in Joseph Smith, Letter Book, 2:64–66, Church Archives; also discussed in Anderson, Investi-\ngating, 155–58. Most of the let-
ter is published in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 2:290–93.


39. Palmer, in Insider’s View, 206, carelessly states that Harris used the metaphor of seeing through a mountain for the experience of “the eight witnesses,” making this error a main proof for his subjective theory concerning their experience.

40. In the indented extract above, Burnett claimed the Eight Witnesses hesitated to sign a physical certificate because they had seen the plates only spiritually. Harris may have made a more faith-promoting argument. Apparently speak-\ning of the Three Witnesses, David Whitmer told James H. Hart that “when they were first commanded to testify of these things they demurred” because of general skepticism about an advanced urban culture in ancient America, but they were assured the Lord would inspire discoveries about it (Letter to Deseret News, 4 September 1883; cited by Lyndon W. Cook, ed., David Whitmer Inter-views: A Restoration Witness [Orem, UT: Grandin Book, 1991], 98). Except for the indirect Burnett letter, no source suggests the Eight Witnesses were reluctant to sign their formal testimony.

41. Letter to Willard Richards, 18 January 1838, Church Archives; also reprinted in Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, Joseph Smith III, The Prophet and His Community of Christ Library–Archives. Archivist Ron Romig noted this and a series of Joseph Smith III letters between 1879 and 1888 pertaining to Poulsön. His expert assistance has been essential in producing this article.

42. Vogel, Early Mormon Docu-\ments, 3:465n1.

43. Letter of David Whitmer, 18 November 1882, Community of Christ Library–Archives, with my manuscript reading of the name; also in Cook, David Whitmer Inter-\views, 241.

44. Cook, David Whitmer Inter-\views, 71–73.

45. Poulsön’s interview with David\nWhitmer appears in the Deseret News, 16 August 1878; also in Cook, David Whitmer Inter-\views, 19–24. David likely ob-\jected to Poulsön’s report that David and Oliver Cowdery were also present when the angel appeared the second time, when he was seen by Martin Harris and Joseph Smith.
60. Compare page 22 of Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, with pages 152 and 188. David’s statement that the Eight Witnesses handled the plates is essentially another John Whitmer interview, since the brothers certainly discussed each other’s experiences.

61. Deseret News, 6 August 1878; also in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 5:247–49. This interview agrees with the above Turley report concerning engravings on both sides of each leaf and with Mary Whitmer’s report of seeing the plates joined at the side with “D rings” (see Anderson, Investigating, 31). See the last section of this article for another “D ring” report.

62. Perhaps John Whitmer originally said that the Eight Witnesses were composed mainly of two groups, meaning the four Whitmer brothers and the three Smiths, with Hiram Page not included in the general comment. Two sets of witnesses might have been mistaken for two separate viewings of the plates.

63. Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 3:465, with a redundant to removed.


65. Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 3:466.

66. Lyman Wight, manuscript journal, in Joseph Smith III and Heman C. Smith, History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (La–moni, IA: Board of Publication, 1897), 1:153. See 1:151n40 for source note.


69. Times and Seasons 5 (1 August 1844): 607, obituary by John Taylor, who had known Samuel for over six years. Emphasis in italics is mine.

70. “Notes Written on ‘Chambers’ Life of Joseph Smith,’” 15, my transcription, with underlining in the original; also in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 1:485.


73. Harun Reﬂector (Norwalk, OH), 31 October 1841, article titled “From the [Jacksonville] Illinois Patriot, Sept. 16.” The article reports a Mormon sermon “last Saturday” by a recent convert who traveled to Independence to investigate Mormonism. The day and its events correspond with the McLellan journal for Saturday, 10 September.

74. Vogel, Joseph Smith, 468. This is one of Vogel’s typographical errors. The correct nonphysical conception of how both sets of witnesses saw the plates.


76. See Vogel, “Validity,” 99, indicating Page “only testified that he saw the plates.” Palmer misses the point of Page’s reafﬁrmation, claiming he mentions “neither handling or seeing the plates” (Insider’s View, 205). Palmer springs to that conclusion by not quoting the part of Page’s 1847 statement that said his 1830 testimony was still true. The concept of not forgetting “what I saw” immediately follows and refers back to Page’s 1830 experience. But Palmer artiﬁcially connects “what I saw” to Page’s personal vision of angels, men­tioned six lines down in the published letter. See Steven Harper’s comment and comparison of the original with the fractionated quotation in “Trustworthy History?” 303–5 (see n. 13 above for full citation).


78. First-person note of visit on 18 February 1875, courtesy of Community of Christ Library–Archives; also in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 5:250.

79. See the discussion and footnotes in the last paragraph of the Turley interview section above.


81. Earlier English shown appears in the printer’s manuscript and early editions.

82. See text at note 31, and the cita­tion in that note.

83. See text at note 32, and the cita­tion in that note.

84. See text at note 46, and the cita­tion in that note.

85. See text at note 75, and the cita­tion in that note.

86. Letter of 5 March 1876, ad­dressed to “Mark H. Forest,” courtesy of Community of Christ Library–Archives; also in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 5:243.

87. Smith and Smith, History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1:576n; copied from the original that was in Heman Smith’s possession (now unlocated), with italics used for the whole sentence in the first printing.

88. Letter to J. R. Lambert, 6 May 1877, copied from the original that was in Joseph Lambert’s possession, attest by Joseph R. Lambert in a letter to E. L. Kel­ley, 29 January 1884, Communi­ty of Christ–Archives refer­ence no. P13, f311.

“Strange Characters and Ex­pressions”: Three Japanese Translations of the Book of Mormon
Van C. Gessel


6. Alma O. Taylor to George Reynolds, January 1906, Family and Church History Depart­ment Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter Church Archives).

7. Though there is no way to de­termine the reason for Sōseki’s refusal to become involved, it is interesting to speculate on whether the negative experi­ences he had had with overbear­ing Christians on his sea voyage to London in 1900, as well as the unpleasant experience of being coerced into reading the Bible by some British ladies at a tea party in 1902, might have made Sōseki less receptive to Taylor’s petition. See Van C. Gessel, Three Modern Novelists: Sōseki, Tanizaki, Kawabata (To­kyo: Kodansha International, 1993), 39–42, 47–48.

8. Alma O. Taylor to George Reyn­olds, 6 January 1906, Church Archives.


15. Literal translation by author.


17. What are we to make, for in­stance, of the contrast between


19. Alma O. Taylor to the First Presidency, 15 April 1908, Church Archives.

20. Although the Japanese language uses different characters for mono depending on whether it means “person” or “thing,” very often the term is written only with phonetic characters that make no such distinction.

21. I am grateful to Wade Fillmore for drawing my attention to the translations of this verse.


Treaties and Covenants: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon
RoseAnn Benson Stephen D. Ricks


8. Most commentators believe that the marriage and births represent actual events in Hosea’s life because the nature of prophetic symbolism required that the divine message be represented in actual events (see James Luther Mays, Hosea: A Commentary [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969], 23). Thus demands to renounce adulterous behavior apply literally to Hosea’s wife, Gomer, and figuratively to the nation of Israel (see Krug, “Israel, the Harlot,” 110–11; see also Peifer, “Marriage Theme in Hosea,” 140).

9. Hosea’s metaphor called for not only right actions but also reciprocal feelings between the parties of the covenant, with no separation between mind and heart or thought and emotion. Furthermore, God’s expectations for covenant relationships are much deeper and more profound than those of earthly kings regarding treaty arrangements. See Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 59–60.


13. See McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, 10.


15. Although ancient Near Eastern treaties predate current biblical manuscripts, God made covenants with the great patriarchs beginning with Adam. The word know is not preserved in this context in the biblical manuscripts currently available; however, it is found in the Book of Moses. For example, Cain questioned why he should “know” the Lord (see Moses 5:16); Cain and those who followed him entered into a “secret combination” (Satan’s version of covenant) and recognized the other covenant members (see Moses 5:49, 51); knowledge of God, meaning how to know God, was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden (see Moses 7:32); and Adam participated in initiation rites, indicating his acknowledgment of their covenant relationship (see Moses 6:64–68). Other phrases also indicate a covenant relationship. For example, the expressions “The Lord God commanded the man” (Genesis 2:16) and “Adam heartened unto the voice of God” (Moses 6:1) indicate a suzerainty/vassal relationship, with God commanding and Adam obeying. Hence, the model for the ancient Near Eastern treaty pattern had its beginning in the relationship between God and Adam and not in another manner. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:40–52; and Robert J. Matthews, “Our Covenant with the Lord,” Ensign, December 1980, 33–34.


17. See the Bible dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James version of the Bible, s.v. “Covenant.”


19. In the Old Testament examples, all of the words translated as “know” or “knowledge” derive from the root “yādā.”

20. Huffman, “Treaty Background of Hebrew YÅ‘ADA,” 31–32; emphasis added. The bracketed phrase a designation for the Hitite king is our insertion; all other bracketed words are from Huffman.

21. The prophet Ezekiel used this phrase 62 times in prophesying both cursing and blessing on Israel for breaking or keeping her covenants with God. For example, when prophesying of the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel said, “They shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries” (Ezekiel 12:15; emphasis added). Forseeing the last days, Ezekiel promised, “The tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the yoke of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them” (Ezekiel 34:27; emphasis added).


23. See Genesis 18:19; Exodus 33:12; Jeremiah 1:5; 24:7.

24. Huffman, “Treaty Background of Hebrew YÅ‘ADA,” 32; emphasis added. The bracketed me is our insertion, all other bracketed words are from Huffman.

25. Huffman, “Treaty Background of Hebrew YÅ‘ADA,” 32–33; emphasis added. The bracketed our is our insertion.

26. Related to protection is the Hebrew word ʾakkhar, which means covering, and also literally “a close and intimate embrace.” Thus God’s promised protection refers not only to temporal protection, but also to eternal redemption. See Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in his Approaching Zion (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1980), 566–67.


29. In response to Joseph Smith’s query concerning “which of all the sects was right,” God repeated words similar to Isaiah 29:13: “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18–19). Thus a major responsibility of Joseph Smith was to restore true covenant “knowing,” meaning a heartfelt relationship with God. See also Whittaker, “Covenant People,” 196 (see note 4 herein for full citation).
30. Huffmon, “Treaty Background of Hebrew YADAT,” 33; emphasis added. The bracketed for is our insertion, all other bracketed words are from Huffmon.

31. Mays, Hosea, 69 (see note 8 herein for full citation). “Knowing,” or making covenants, binds or obliges the suzerain, God, to bless or curse his vassal, the house of Israel, depending upon their recognition of him. Hosea prophesied: “My people [Israel] are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hosea 4:6; emphasis added; see 8).


36. Just as Hosea and Isaiah prophesied destruction or captivity for lack of “knowledge,” the opposite, “knowledge,” will bring freedom, gathering, and protection. In the words of Nephi, “[God] will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel” (1 Nephi 22:12). Again, we see a reference to the responsibility of the suzerain to protect and gather his vassals and their responsibility to recognize him as their only source of safety and redemption. Specifically, the children of Israel will learn that their only true source of protection and deliverance comes from God.


38. We see that blessings are withheld as a consequence of “not knowing” God. “The reason why [God] ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust” (Mormon 9:20). The logic put forth here by Moroni is that the creation of heaven and earth and humans is miraculous. Since God does not change, miracles should continue. If miracles are not evident, it is not the fault of an unchanging God but the fault of humans who have changed their beliefs and been unfaithful to their covenants with him (see Mormon 9:17–19; Isaiah 24:5).

39. Abraham also desired to enter into a covenant with God; however, this point is not found in the Old Testament but rather in the Pearl of Great Price (see Abraham 1:2–4). Moses desired his people to enter into a covenant with God, but they were too frightened to do so directly (see Exodus 20:18–21).

40. See Whittaker, “Covenant People,” 206 (see note 3 herein for a full citation).

41. George Mendenhall maintains that the similarity of the Sinaitic covenant to Hittite treaties is an argument attesting to the historicity of the Exodus narrative. Along that same line of reasoning, we maintain that the similarity of Book of Mormon covenants to Old Testament covenants is evidence attesting to the historicity of the Book of Mormon. See George E. Mendenhall, “Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law,” The Biblical Archaeologist 17 (May 1954): 37. Nibley calls these similarities “patterns” and titles a chapter “Old World Ritual in the New World”; see Hugh Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), 295.

The Savior and the Children in 3 Nephi

M. Gawain Wells


12. Gundry-Volf, “‘To Such as These,’” 475.


The Zoramite Separation: A Sociological Perspective

Sherrie Mills Johnson


2. See Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), s.v. “Zoramites.”


4. Kanter, Commitment and Community, 8.


9. Mark Davis and Brent Israelens point out, however, that because of the frequent assimilation of one ethnic group into another, “the national character became one of culture, religion, and disposition, rather than of race or ancestry” (Mark Davis and Brent Israelens, “International Relations and Treaties in the Book of Mormon” [Provo, UT: FARMS, 1980], 9). Therefore it is difficult to determine how or on what basis the people at the time of Mormon determined these clans.


14. See Kanter, Commitment and Community, 116.


16. See Kanter, Commitment and Community, 41.


19. Many thanks to S. Kent Brown for the insight that the fact the Zoramite leaders were able to "[find] out privity the minds of all the people" (Alma 35:5) without resorting to intimidation reinforces the argument that these people were a distinct clan. A familial relationship would encourage this kind of trust and accessibility to people whereas a mixed-clan community would not.


"No Poor Among Them" Lindon J. Robison

1. A study of a connection between commandment keeping and economic prosperity could deal with economic issues in each Book of Mormon era; I have chosen to deal with matters that span the entire record.


3. In an earlier issue of this journal, I discussed how keeping the commandments to love God and one’s neighbors leads to increased specialization, trade, freedom of choice, and prosperity; see Lindon J. Robison, "Economic Insights from the Book of Mormon," JBMS 1/1 (1992): 35–53.

4. Actually, Adam Smith was well aware of the importance of friendly relations. The first chapter in his book The Theory of Moral Sentiments is titled "Of Sympathy" (London: A. Millar, 1759).

5. Commentaries and I found that the same requirement for friendly relations exists today. A survey of 1,500 farmland owner-operators in Michigan, Illinois, and Nebraska showed that less than 2 percent of the sales occurred between a seller who viewed the buyer as unfriendly. See Lindon J. Robison, Robert J. Meyer, and Marcelo E. Siles, "Social Capital and the Terms of Trade for Farmland," Review of Agricultural Economics 24/1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 44–58.


The Hebrew Text of Alma 7:11 Thomas A. Wayment

1. A text critic is one who considers the process by which an accepted text has been passed down through history. All known textual variants are considered in this process as well as historical influences that may have led to alterations in the text. Therefore, it is the work of the text critic to consider which text most accurately represents what the original author wrote or intended.

2. For example, the term the law and the prophets had become a technical term for the Old Testament in Jesus’s day (see Matthew 11:13; 22:40). The descriptive nature of the term adequately expresses the contents of the Old Testament while Mosiah’s reference seems to include only the first portion of the Old Testament.

3. Moroni does explicitly state that the Hebrew had also been altered by them; therefore what we call Hebrew may have been significantly different from what he referred to as Hebrew (see Mormon 9:33).


5. The superscription included by Mormon before the beginning of Alma 7 reads, "The words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record." See The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Part I, ed. Royal Skousen (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 420.

6. Alma frequently uses introductory formulas to introduce quotations from the brass plates and earlier Book of Mormon prophets; see Alma 9:13; 24; 11:37; 30:8; 35:3, 15, 19. In Alma 11:37 Amulek uses a very similar method to introduce a prophetic quotation from an angel by saying, "I cannot deny his word, and he hath said" (compare Alma 12:21).


8. The Book of Mormon contains one other translation of Isaiah 53:4, which is found in Mosiah 14:4. The Mosiah quotation follows the KJV’s English translation of Isaiah 53:4 much more closely than the quoted version in Alma 7:11.

9. It is important to note that although infirmities and pains offer slightly different meanings, each noun is in the plural and not the singular.

10. The lexical range, or established range of meaning, for these two terms can be better appreciated in Deuteronomy 7:15; 28:61 and Isaiah 38:9 for hōlāqēnî; and in Exodus 3:7 and Isaiah 53:3 for ma’ābānî.

11. Matthew uses ἀθλητεῖαν, which should be correctly rendered as a “weakness” of any sort, and nousos, which would be the natural term for disease.

12. This is surprising given the Gospel of Matthew’s penchant for adhering to the Septuagint over the Hebrew Old Testament. Matthew does not follow the Septuagint in any substantive manner for this quotation. One suggestion is that he wanted to correct the more loosely worded Septuagint, which had translated these terms as “sins and pain.” See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., The Gospel according to Matthew (Edinburgh: Clark, 1993), 237–38. No significant textual variants to this passage would warrant the suggestion of divergent manuscript traditions for the Hebrew text and the text used by Matthew or Alma.

13. The parallel between Matthew and Alma suggests that Isaiah 53 carried a messianic interpretation even before Christ’s mortal ministry. For Latter-day Saints, and Christians generally, Isaiah 53 is one of the most important Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, but hints from the Targum on Isaiah and the Great Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest that this passage was understood messianically before Christ came; see Margaret Barker, The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (London: Clark, 2003), 203–4. Although this evidence cannot prove a messianic understanding of Isaiah 53 during the early Christian period, it suggests that other Jews had understood this passage as referring to the ministry of the Messiah before his advent.

Alma’s Enemies: The Case of the Lamanites, Amlicites, and Mysterious Amaulekites J. Christopher Conkling

1. John L. Sorenson writes that the Nephites saw things simply: “In a broad sense the Nephites’ rivals were called Lamanites, but that master rubric obscured differences that seem to have made little difference to the Nephites. At a strategic level, if Nephites wore white hats, they considered that any sort of Lamanite wore a black one” (“Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites, 200–1 bc,” in The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges [Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000], 171). Of course, many otherwise astute readers of the Book of Mormon see the Nephite–Lamanite rivalry in the same simplistic terms as the Nephites apparently did, since their view of the Lamanites is reflected in the record. For example, Fawn M. Brodie wrote: “The Nephites, peace-loving and domestic, and the Lamanites, bloodthirsty and idolatrous. The two races fought intermittently for a thousand years” (see Brodie, No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet [New York: Knopf, 1978], 44).


4. These Amalekites/Nehorites differ from other apostates such as Korihor in that they definitely believed in God (see Alma 1:4; 22:7), whereas Korihor did not (see Alma 30:37–38). This may help explain why Korihor was killed by the apostate Zoramites (see Alma 30:59), who were kindred spirits with the Amalekites (see Alma 43:4–6). Not all apostates in the book are the same. See John L. Clark, “Painting Out the Messiah: The Theologies of Dissidents,” JRTMS 11 (2002): 18–28.

5. We are not explicitly told how the Amlicites arose and who their leader was (see Alma 21:1), and the same is generally true for the Amulonites (see Mosiah 23:31–24:9), the Zoramites (see Alma 30:59–31:4), the Ammonihahites (see Alma 8:6–7; 16:9), the Amalickiahites (see Alma 46:3, 28), the people of Morianton (see Alma 50:28), the king-men (see Alma 51:5; the leader is not named), the Gadianton robbers (see Helaman 2:4; 6:18), and of course the Nephites, the Lamanites, the people of Zarahemla, and the Anti-Nephi-Lehies/Ammonites. Indeed, Alma or Mormon tells us exactly how and why groups in towns and villages got such names—“after the name of him who first possessed them” (Alma 8:7). The only exception is these mysterious Amalekites in Alma 21:2.

6. In the casual introduction, the Amalekites are introduced alongside the Amulonites and Lamanites, both groups whom we know well from their detailed introductions. Even the occasional allies of the Amalekites, the mysterious Zoramites, are given an introduction in Alma 30:59: “And it came to pass that as he [Korihor] went forth among the people, yea, among a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves Zoramites, being led by a man whose name was Zoram . . . ” I use the word mysterious because this Zoram is unknown—neither the Zoram of 1 Nephi 4:35 nor the Zoram of Alma 16:5 seems a possible candidate.


10. Of course, there were no verses in the original manuscript. References in this paper to chapter and verse refer to current chapter and verse numbering.


12. These ideas are from Orson Scott Card, “Dissent and Trea son,” Ensign, September 1977, 53–58.

13. Sidney B. Sperry, for example, says “there are few or no data within these chapters [Alma 17–26] that enable us to point out specific dates” (see his Book of Mormon Chronology [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970], 12).

14. Sorenson surmises about Amlici’s long history that “it would be a good bet that part of Amlici’s appeal to a sizable population was that he was a descendant of the old chief, Zarahemla. He might well have been a person of privilege who wanted kingly authority to augment power he already possessed. He certainly had a strong political base before he launched his move . . . . It is apparent that Amlici had made an arrangement with the Lamanites” (Sorenson, An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985], 195–96).


16. For example, Sorenson prefers such terms as religious groups, lineage groups, and different peoples. See his “Peoples of the Book of Mormon,” 194; and “Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites,” 171.

17. In some ethnic studies, certain secular scholars have questioned if race has scientific meaning at all, although most admit that the common person understands what race implies. Some scholars require 40 to 4,400 generations of separation to define a race (a minimum of 800 years at the rate of five generations per century). See Jay A. Sigler, ed., International Handbook on Race and Race Relations (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), xxxi–xlv; and Michael Levin, Why Race Matters: Race Differences and What They Mean (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 19–20. To distinguish various groups, the Book of Mormon does not use the word race, nor does it mention separation into tribes until 3 Nephi 7:2–4, 12–14. Moreover, the book does not show even a different language arising during the almost 500-year separation of peoples between 2 Nephi 5:7 and the book of Alma (this was not the case with the Mulekites in Omni 1:17–18). Whether or not scholars determine that a group living separately for roughly 500 years could be technically considered a different race, tribe, or ethnic subgroup, there is no doubt that the Nephites saw different skin characteristics in the Lamanites from the start (see 2 Nephi 5:20–25; Jacob 3:3–9; Alma 3:6–7) that related to sin and righteousness (see Enos 1:20).

18. See the current The Testaments of One Fold and One Shepherd and numerous Latter-day Saint seminary films as examples.


21. The closest we come to the purely evil Lamanite individual is King Laman in the book of Mosiah (see Mosiah 7:21–22; 9:10–12) and his son (see Mosiah 10:6, 11–20). Even here Zeniff’s first opinion was that “when I saw that which was good among them I was desirous that they should not be destroyed” (Mosiah 9:1). Zeniff even relates that it was his “blood-thirsty” Nephites who planned the first aggression against the Lamanites in an effort to regain land abandoned less than a dozen years earlier (see Mosiah 9:1–6). Upon entrance into the land, Zeniff finds the king willing to move his own population to give the land to the Nephites, whom he left in peace for 12 years until a war broke out. Only then did Zeniff start to describe them negatively (see Mosiah 9:10–14). Compared to secular despots and war mongers, Laman does not initially come off so badly. What’s interesting about Mosiah 9:1–9 is that the original, positive description of the Lamanites changes so drastically to their being described as “lazy and idolatrous” and practicing “cunning and craftiness” (Mosiah 9:1–6). Upon entry into the land, Zeniff finds the king willing to move his own population to give the land to the Nephites, whom he left in peace for 12 years until a war broke out. Only then did Zeniff start to describe them negatively (see Mosiah 9:10–14). Compared to secular despots and warmongers, Laman does not initially come off so badly.

22. Ammoron, a “bold Lamanite,” was really a Nephite-Zoramite (Alma 54:23–24), and thus so were his brother Amalickiah (see Alma 52:3) and his (Amoron)’s son who later became the Lamanite king Tubaloth (see Helaman 1:16); the Lamanite leader Jacob was a Zoramite (see Alma 52:20); Pachus and the king-men were Nephites from Zarahemla (see Alma 51:5–6; 62:6); Morianton and his people were Nephites (see Alma 50:25–36); Paanchi was a Nephite (see Helaman 1:3–7); Coriantumr was a “descendant of Zarahemla,” a Mulekite (see Helaman 1:15); and Kishkumen
and Gadianton were Nephites from Zarahemla (see Helaman 1:9–12; 2:4–14).

Zerahemnah is the only uncertain figure in the group. Five pieces of evidence make his Nephite (Zoramite and/or Mulekite) heritage likely: (1) in Alma 43:3–5 we are told that the Zoramites had become Lamanites and that the leader of the combined group was Zerahemnah; (2) Zerahemnah only chose Zoramites and Amalekites (Amlicites) as his captains; (3) Zerahemnah’s first attack was through Zoramite lands as if he knew that area best (had been raised there?); (4) Alma 43:44 says that “their chief captains and leaders” were Zoramites and Amalekites and immediately calls Zerahemnah their “chief captain, or their chief leader”; (5) the similarity of his name to Zarahemla may signify a Mulekite side to his family history. A possible reading (although not the only possibility) is that Alma or Mormon went into detail about the Zoramites becoming Lamanites in order to explain why the Lamanite leader would have been a Zoramite.

It would be dishonest to pretend that lineage plays no role in Book of Mormon thinking. If these villains were not pure-blooded Lamanites, they were also not pure-blooded Nephites (in terms of literal descendents of Nephi). They were often of mixed ancestry (Amulonites) or were from Zoramite and Zarahemla (Mulekite) ancestry. Sorenson points out that the major dissidents Nehor, Gadianton, and Kishkumen had Jaredite names (one possibly even “pre-Jaredite”). See Sorenson, “Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites,” 167–68, 194; and Ancient American Setting, 195–97.

The point is that there had never been Lamanite or Nephite reprobates in the thousand-year history, but that in the highly abridged version of the record, those names were not focused on or included as the villains of primary importance.


24. For me, such subtleties add evidence for the historicity of the Book of Mormon. How or why would a young Joseph Smith think to describe the destruction of Amnoniah with such slight but differently shaded descriptions? Yet it is just what we might expect from people who really lived in such a divided community. Why would Joseph describe the Lamanites with relative pleasantness in Mosiah 9:1–7 and switch, just a few sentences later, to the total negativity of Mosiah 9:10–10:18? It is just the sort of thing we might expect from a real Zeniff writing a few verses before and then in the midst of a violent confrontation after 13 years.

25. An example of such questions is, If the terms Nephites and Lamanites had only religious or political meanings and not hereditary ones, what do the further subclassifications mean, such as Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites, as described in 4 Nephi 1:36?