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Abstract Despite the establishment of Christ's church in the New World by the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, many dissenters during its thousand-year history attempted to thwart the church and preach alternative theologies. This article first discusses the doctrine that Nephi taught to his people concerning Jesus Christ. Historical context then provides further understanding of the society in which Nephi and his descendants lived. Having come from Jerusalem in the Old World, the Nephites were still accustomed to the law of Moses, which certainly would have influenced their view of a Messiah. This, along with the political circumstances of the Nephite people, facilitated the dissension of many. The experiences of the Anti-Christ Sherem, the priests of Noah, and the Zarahemla dissenters demonstrate these points. Lastly, those who altered Nephi's teachings appeared to do so for five specific reasons, which are discussed in this article, thus showing how the dissenters erased the doctrine of a Redeemer from their theologies.



Painting Out

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

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JOHN L. CLARK

The Messiah

THE THEOLOGIES OF DISSIDENTS

IN A REVELATION UNEQUALED FOR CLARITY, God gave through the prophet Nephi the most comprehensive description of the Messiah¹ that we possess in any pre-Christian source. Despite later expansions or clarifications of Nephi's description, its key elements, found in passages in 1 and 2 Nephi, established a messianic doctrine that remained remarkably stable throughout the 1,000 years of Nephite history. Belief in that doctrine, however, lacked stability.

Certain declines in belief can be attributed to the competing theologies of anti-Christ and to the moral malaise of an overwhelming majority, many of whom dissented from the teachings of the prophets but did not develop distinct theologies of their own. The dissenters, of whatever stripe, eventually painted the Messiah out of the picture. This study begins with a summary of Nephi's messianic doctrine; identifies, insofar as it is possible, the beliefs of dissidents who taught competing theologies; and discusses reasons for their dissent.

Nephi's Messianic Doctrine

Nephi's description of the Messiah can be summarized under three general headings. First, the Messiah is God, the premortal Jesus, called Jehovah by Old Testament prophets. He is "the very God of Israel, . . . the God of our fathers, . . . yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (1 Nephi 19:7, 10). This was not some subordinate being—angel, king, or prophet—but God himself whom Nephi expected to come to earth.²

Second, he is the Redeemer. Nephi alludes to the Messiah's redemptive role in 1 Nephi 10:4:

Six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.³

Nephi subsequently gives a prophetic vignette of the Savior's life and elaborates on his redemptive role, explaining that "all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state" and were therefore dependent on the Redeemer (1 Nephi 10:6). Nephi identifies the Messiah as the "Lamb of God" who would be "lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 10:10; 11:33).⁴ The foregoing statements imply universal eligibility for redemption, an idea that Nephi gives fuller expression to in the following verse:

And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam. (2 Nephi 9:21)

Third, the Messiah would be born in the flesh. This doctrinal truth is obvious in Nephi's reference to the Messiah's mother:

And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! (1 Nephi 11:20–21)⁵

Nephi testified further of the Messiah's incarnation by elaborating on Jesus' baptism, ministry, and death on a cross for the sins of the world (see 1 Nephi 11:27, 28–31, 32–33).

Historical Setting

A brief review of relevant Nephite history will clarify the social contexts from which the dissidents emerged⁶ and will help shed light on the nature of their beliefs.

Sherem

Jacob does not tell us where Sherem⁷ came from nor why or how he developed the doctrine he preached, but he informs us that Sherem was well educated, had a perfect knowledge of the language, and had sufficient background in the scriptures to be very persuasive. Jacob focuses on Sherem's rejection of Christ in favor of the law of Moses. Sherem's beliefs were most likely an extension of the attitude prevalent in Jerusalem before the exodus of Lehi and his family. When Lehi testified to the Jews of the coming of a Messiah, they

did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world. And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him. (1 Nephi 1:19–20)

No doubt Lehi's testimony of their wickedness antagonized the Jews and contributed to his exile, but according to Nephi the son of Helaman, Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem specifically because he testified of the "coming of Christ" (Helaman 8:22). Preexilic Jews in Jerusalem did not universally understand or believe what the Old World prophets taught concerning the coming of a Messiah with redemptive powers (see 1 Nephi 10:5).⁸ Sherem did not believe that doctrine either.

Sherem's antagonistic position regarding the Messiah was shared by "many" of the Nephites (see Jacob 7:3). Considering the relatively small size of the colony at that time, the many people who followed Sherem would have had a significant impact on the religious complexion of the group.⁹ Evidently viewing messianism as a threat to Jewish orthodoxy, Sherem accused Jacob of blasphemy (see Jacob 7:7). An exclusive belief in the law of Moses may have been the dominant belief among Nephites for the next four centuries. Gary L. Sturgess argues that

with the exception of Enos's private experience in the wilderness, the doctrine of Christ disappears entirely after the book of Jacob. . . . [A] plausible case could be made that Nephi and his brother were unsuccessful in their bid to establish the doctrine of Christ as the official religion of the Nephites. . . . The Zeniffites had left Zarahemla many years before the revelation of Christ by King Benjamin at his final cultic assembly. It is probable, then, that they had brought with them a religion that knew only the law of Moses. When Abinadi confronted the priests of Noah and inquired what it was that they taught, their answer was, "We teach the law of Moses" (Mosiah 12:28).¹⁰

Priests of Noah

Shortly after the first Mosiah led the Nephites to Zarahemla (see Omni 1:12–14), Zeniff, with a small colony of like-minded people, returned to the land of Nephi (see Mosiah 9). Many years later, the return of that colony (now led by King Limhi) to Zarahemla followed King Benjamin's spiritually reforming sermon on the Messiah (see Mosiah 2–4; 22). Two generations later, as Sturgess suggests, King Noah (Zeniff's grandson) and his cohorts believed firmly in the law of Moses, exclusive of a Messiah.

Zarahemla Dissidents

With the exception of Sherem and the priests of Noah, the dissident groups that developed between the reign of the second King Mosiah and the beginning of the Nephite/Lamanite wars came out of a milieu characterized by several major cultural changes in Zarahemla. These changes precipitated political and religious upheavals.

Before his death, King Mosiah changed his theocratic, monarchal government to a decentralized system of judges and separated civil matters from those that were ecclesiastical in nature (see Mosiah 29). The new political system was democratic to the extent that questions were submitted to a general consensus of the people for resolution and judges settled legal issues that arose.¹¹ The population was growing, new cities and villages were being built, the economy was expanding, and new wealth gave rise to class distinctions.¹² After dissolving the theocracy, King Mosiah confirmed Alma the Younger as high priest over the church (see Mosiah 29:42). The monolithic church was divided into branches with priests and teachers called to administer to the needs of people. Mosiah retained his position as prophet/king until his death.

When changes take place in a government or a church, leaders usually expect from their constituents more loyalty, cooperation, and commitment to the ideals of the organization. They also exhibit less tolerance for lack of support or rebellion. Just before the dramatic political and ecclesiastical changes took place in Zarahemla, Alma the Elder called for a spiritual renewal and organized disciplinary councils to deal with the younger generation who rebelled against the teachings of the church (see Mosiah 25:19–23; 26).

These revolutionary modifications implemented by Mosiah and Alma created a volatile situation. Amlici, who was dissatisfied with the new government, led an unsuccessful revolt to reinstate the monarchy and place himself on the throne. Nehor,¹³ a status-conscious religious rebel, reacted against Alma's new disciplinary policy and the teachings that supported it and advocated a liberal, God-will-save-all doctrine that had wide influence among the rising generation. The tension in these situations came from the nobility and the wealthy whose political positions or lifestyles were affected by governmental changes and Alma's disciplinary policies. These protest groups responded with political rebellion and by developing alternative religious beliefs that caused many to reject a belief in the Messiah.

Reasons for Dissent

Book of Mormon record keepers did not provide details about the beliefs of those who rejected Nephi's doctrine, and it is likely that they identified only a fraction of those groups. Sherem, for example, was the only apostate identified on the small plates. All the other dissidents whose theologies are mentioned in the record were identified by Mormon, and these groups all arose during the late monarchical period and the early reign of the judges.¹⁴ For the most part, we learn about these competing theologies from scriptural passages in which the prophets speak out against the dissidents.¹⁵ By evaluating such passages and the few direct statements made by the dissidents themselves, I have identified five reasons why individuals or groups rebelled against Nephite orthodoxy.

1. The dissidents felt that for a Messiah to come to earth to atone for the sins of humankind was redundant because in their view God had already provided a means for their salvation through the law of Moses.

Nephi's teachings on the Messiah's redemptive mission were explicit, but clarity does not necessarily make a doctrine convincing to those who are not prepared to receive it. Sherem, his followers, and the priests of Noah were not convinced of the doctrine; they rejected the Messiah in favor of adherence to the law of Moses. Jacob 7:6–7 contains the essence of Sherem's objection:

Brother Jacob, . . . I have heard and also know that thou goest about much, preaching that which ye call the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ. And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence. And now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come.

Similarly, in response to Abinadi's inquiry as to what they taught, the priests of Noah informed him that they taught the law of Moses and that salvation came by that law (see Mosiah 12:27–28, 31–32). In contrast, however, the prophets saw the law as a type

referring to Christ, not as an end in itself (see Mosiah 13:30–32). The dissidents retained the law but rejected the Messiah as an unnecessary perversion of their doctrine.

The prophetic writings in the Old Testament do not explain the symbolic relationship between the sacrifices offered by Israel and the future sacrifice of the Messiah. That relationship is made clear in the writings of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price. According to Moses 5, Adam was commanded to sacrifice the firstlings of his flocks as an offering to the Lord. When an angel later asked him why he offered sacrifices, Adam responded that he did not know other than the Lord had commanded him to do so.

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore. (Moses 5:7–8)

In the book of Leviticus, Moses recorded God's instructions concerning animal sacrifices. Referring to the offerings, God frequently used the following expression, or ones similar to it: "the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him" (Leviticus 4:26).¹⁶ In addition, he cautioned against misusing blood, because of its special atoning role:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. (Leviticus 17:11)

Without definitive statements to the contrary, it could easily be assumed that the law of sacrifice, which was designed by God and revealed to the children of Israel, was sufficient and that there would have been no logical necessity for a future Messiah to come and redeem the world. To these dissidents who remained loyal to the law of Moses, the doctrine of a messianic redemption was an unnecessary appendage to what they considered a fully functional system, and to preach of a coming Messiah was to be disloyal to a divinely revealed redemptive plan. They chose to believe that what God had revealed to them through Moses was adequate and complete.

2. Nephite dissidents rejected the Messiah because they failed to understand and accept messianic prophecies that were recorded in figurative language on the brass plates.

According to the Book of Mormon narrative, Nephites and subsequently the people of Zarahemla, at least by the time of Alma the Younger, were relatively literate and had access to Hebrew scriptures. The scriptures appear to have been widely available because the audiences addressed by Nephite prophets were chided for not studying them (see Jacob 7:10–11; Mosiah 13:11). These inspired writings were sufficiently accessible, even to the common people, that Alma told the poor among the Zoramites to search the scriptures (see Alma 33:2). An underlying assumption of the prophets was that the dissidents

to Lehi and Nephi (see 1 Nephi 10–12). Clear prophecies that are unique to the brass plates are found in the teachings of Zenos,¹⁷ Zenock,¹⁸ and Neum (see 1 Nephi 19:10), but we find that even these prophecies are much less specific than those of Lehi and Nephi.

One would think that the prophets would have used more specific texts from the brass plates to support their position if such texts were available. Because they did not do so, we may need to reexamine our views of what we think was written on the brass plates but was lost or removed before the compilation of our Old Testament. Even though many Latter-day Saints believe that the brass plates contain prophecies about the coming of the Messiah that are clearer than what is found in the Old Testament, I do not think a careful study of the Book of Mormon will support that assumption, even in light of the

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(except Korihor) believed the scriptures. Thus the prophets used the scriptures in their teachings about the coming of a Messiah.

The texts that the prophets cited from the brass plates—unlike the clear, specific revelations forming the basis of Nephite messianic doctrine—were figurative in nature, and the dissidents did not accept the prophets' interpretation of them. Jacob and Abinadi both affirmed that not just some but all of the holy prophets have testified of Christ (see Jacob 4:4–5; Mosiah 13:33). The examples they used to support this idea illustrate the figurative nature of messianic prophecy in the brass plates. Jacob explained that the law of Moses pointed souls to Christ and that the story of Abraham's offering up Isaac was a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son (see Jacob 4:4–5). Abinadi quoted Isaiah 53 to support the idea of an incarnate God (see Mosiah 13:34; 14). In addition, Alma the Younger, while teaching the Zoramites, identified the brazen serpent held up by Moses in the wilderness as a type of Christ (see Alma 33:19). However, none of these examples contain perfectly clear and unambiguous language when compared with the language in the revelations given

fact that the great and abominable church has “taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away” (1 Nephi 13:26).

The teachings of Lehi and Nephi formed the foundation for a belief in the Messiah among Book of Mormon peoples. Those teachings came through revelation, not through restored texts found on the brass plates, which differ from the Old Testament records. The messianic renaissance during King Benjamin's reign was likewise based on revelation rather than on insights derived from scripture study (see Mosiah 3:2). And although Abinadi's messianic teachings may have been based on an inspired understanding of the texts he referenced from Isaiah 52 and 53, these were not restored texts unique to the brass plates. Thus the Book of Mormon prophets frequently relied more on personal revelation than on previous scripture because the brass plates did not contain enough of the kind of truths they might have used in their preaching to dissidents.

If there are more specific statements in the brass plates testifying of Christ's coming and the relationship

between blood sacrifices and his redemptive role, why did the prophets not appeal to them when such statements would have lent considerable additional authority to their preaching? This gives credence to the idea that any messianic prophecies now absent in the Old Testament but available to the Nephite prophets were no more explicit than the prophecies that have remained.

In contrast, Noel B. Reynolds compared texts from the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon and concluded that the brass plates version of Genesis that Book of Mormon prophets relied on may have been much more like the Book of Moses version of Genesis than the version available in our traditional Bible.¹⁹ In my study I assume that because Jacob, Abinadi, Amulek, and Alma were sincere in their desire to convince their adversaries of the reality of the Messiah, they would have drawn attention to the very best texts available to them. These prophets cite the Hebrew scriptures as a source of support for their arguments, but none of the texts they quote are as specific as those that appear in the Book of Moses,²⁰ and none of them explain the relationship between sacrifice and the Savior's redeeming act. If there were more detailed, more compelling, or more relevant statements available to them, why did they not quote them?

The Nephite prophets seem to have accepted the figurative nature of the prophecies that they referenced from the brass plates and chide their listeners for not having the spiritual sensitivity to understand them. For example, when Jacob said to Sherem, "Believest thou the scriptures?" and Sherem answered in the affirmative, Jacob responded, "Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ" (Jacob 7:10–11).²¹ Abinadi corroborated the idea that a certain spiritual sensitivity was required to understand messianic teachings in the Hebrew scriptures:

And now, did [the children of Israel] understand the law? I say unto you, Nay, they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God. Did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things? (Mosiah 13:32–33)

Commenting on this verse 33, Hugh Nibley observed that the Messiah was there in the law of Moses but that neither the priests of Noah nor the Jews could see him:

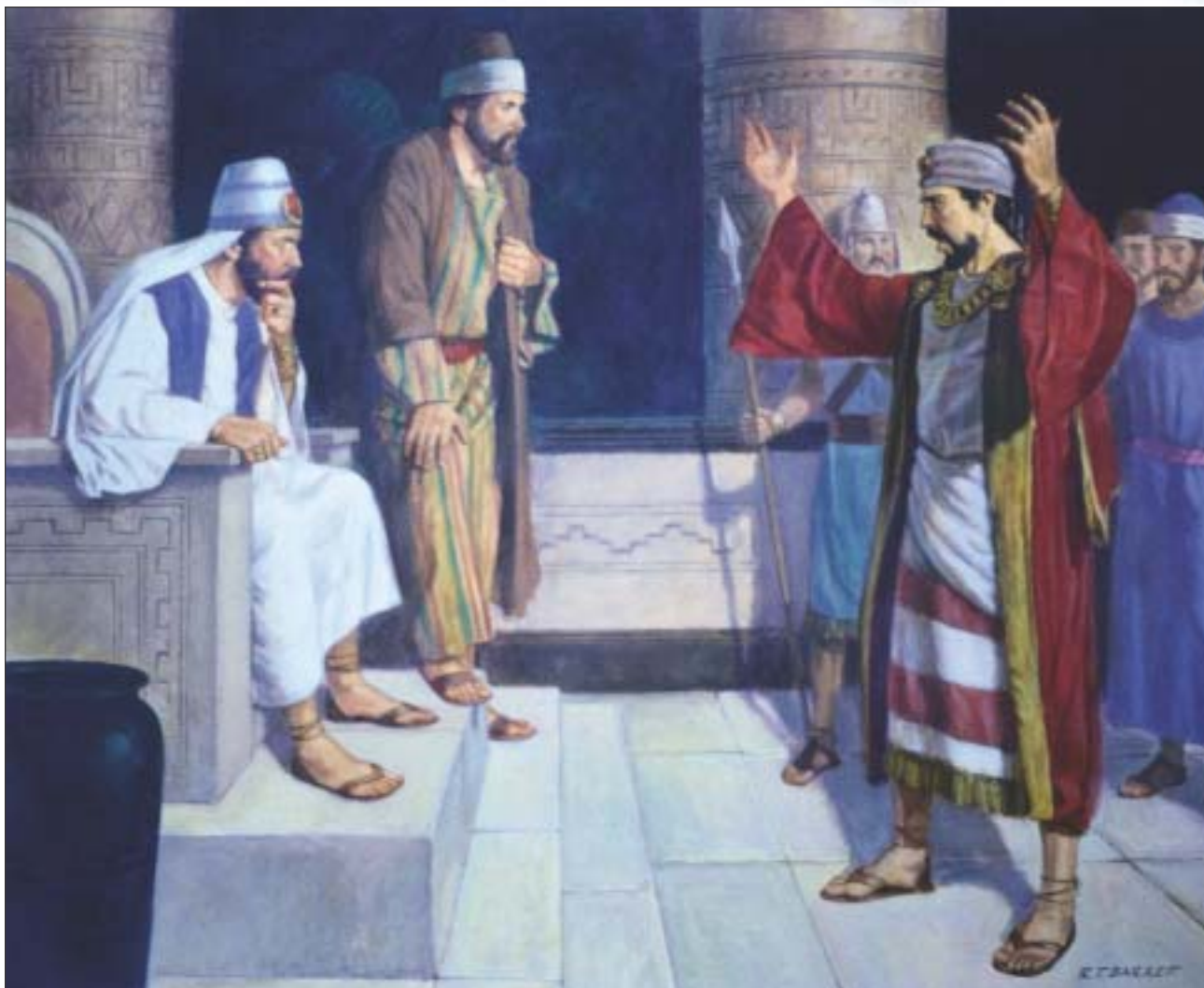
Well, they could ask, Where does Moses speak of these things? Where do the prophets tell us about the Messiah? The Jews still ask that. They say, "We don't see any Messiah there." Well, in the next chapter he proceeds to recite chapter 53 of Isaiah, . . . [a chapter that] describes the coming of the Lord. This says that he shall come forth in the form of a man and go forth in mighty power—that "God himself shall come down among the children of men. . . . Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted?"²²

There is value in searching out the meaning of nonliteral expressions. Inspired insights are given through our struggle to understand them. Elder Dallin H. Oaks remarked:

Our belief in an open canon also includes private revelations to individual seekers of the meaning of existing scriptures. Such revelations are necessary because, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve observed, "each pronouncement in the holy scriptures . . . is so written as to reveal little or much, depending on the spiritual capacity of the student."²³

Elder Oaks further observed, "If we seek and accept revelation and inspiration to enlarge our understanding of the scriptures, we will realize a fulfillment of Nephi's inspired promise that those who diligently seek will have 'the mysteries of God . . . unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost' (1 Nephi 10:19)."²⁴ If that reasoning is applicable to the messianic prophecies on the brass plates, the quotations of Zenock, Zenos, and Neum may represent the high-water mark of messianic prophetic literalism.

The dissidents did not, or would not, look beyond the figurative expressions in the scriptures to see the Messiah revealed there. Without spiritual insight, they saw only the words and missed messages of great, even eternal, import. Book of Mormon prophets, whose focus was always on Jesus Christ, made explicit in their teachings what is implicit in Old World scripture.



Confrontation between Alma and Korihor, by Robert T. Barrett

Korihor pleads his case before the chief judge (seated) and Alma, the high priest.

3. Dissidents denied that prophets could know of future events and thus concluded that the Messiah was a figment of their imagination.

The Book of Mormon preserves statements from three apostates—Sherem, an Amalekite follower of Nehor, and Korihor²⁵—who denied the revelations foretelling the coming of Christ because they did not believe that people could know of future events (see Jacob 7:7; Alma 21:8; 30:15). Through much of his dialogue with Alma, Korihor played the role of an agnostic, or one who does not deny the existence of God but believes it is not possible to come to an ultimate certainty about him.²⁶ He argued that since the future is outside

the realm of human experience, it is unknowable, and to believe in something that cannot be tested empirically is to embrace a vain and foolish hope (see Alma 30:13).

Although Korihor did not speak for the other people, he raised a relevant concern when he responded to a question asked by the high priest Giddonah: “Why do you speak against all the prophecies of the holy prophets?” (Alma 30:22). Korihor declared that the prophets had used prophecy as a tool to manipulate followers into making the sacrifices necessary for the success of the prophets’ ambitions (see Alma 30:23–28). A similar attitude appears in the undercurrent of frustration exhibited

by Laman and Lemuel, whose lives were dramatically changed by Lehi's visions and prophecies (see 1 Nephi 2:11; 17:20–21). The reactions of Sherem, Korihor, and the followers of Nehor testify to the endurance of this attitude as they declared their independence from doctrines that originated from prophecy.

The cynical attitude of Korihor and of Nehor's followers concerning prophecy may have influenced Alma's son Corianton.²⁷ In one of a series of questions that Corianton discussed with his father, he asked why the coming of Christ should be known so long beforehand (see Alma 39:15–17). A careful reading of Alma 39:12–15 suggests that Corianton was not fully committed to the idea of Christ's coming and the redemptive doctrines associated with it. More to

the expression that those who knew not God at the second trump would “depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mosiah 26:27). Beginning with Nephi, and especially in the teachings of both Almas, there is a well-defined doctrine of everlasting postmortal punishment for sin.³⁰ Nehor may not have been familiar with the teachings of the prophets who taught earlier in Nephite history, but he could hardly have avoided knowing the contents of the revelation to Alma since it outlined the disciplinary policy of the church and was recorded and undoubtedly publicized among church members (see Mosiah 26:33).

A textual comparison of Nehor's teachings and the disciplinary policy revealed by God indicates

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the point, he questioned the relevance of an event that would occur so far in the future. Alma subtly shifted the focus from the coming of Christ, as important as it is, to the plan of redemption, which would have been just as relevant to Corianton's contemporaries as it would be to the souls of those living at the time of Christ's coming (see Alma 39:17–18).

4. Because of their belief in universal salvation, dissidents rejected the idea that there was a need for a Redeemer.

During the first year of the reign of judges, Nehor went among the people teaching a radically different doctrine from that taught by Alma. He endorsed the ecclesiastical structure of the church—presided over by priests and teachers—but advocated that they become popular and that they should be supported by the people. Alma described this practice as priestcraft (see Alma 1:12).²⁸ In addition, Nehor taught a universalist doctrine that all mankind would be saved at the last day (see Alma 1:3–4). This teaching became much more popular and had a deeper impact on Nephite religious beliefs than did priestcraft.²⁹

Nehor's universalism was an apparent reaction to Alma's efforts to maintain discipline among the rebellious younger generation in Zarahemla. God revealed to Alma's father the disciplinary policy of the church (see Mosiah 26:15–32), which included

that Nehor was reacting to the concept of “everlasting fire” in Mosiah 26:27 and possibly, depending on how widely known they were, to the concepts of eternal torment and everlasting punishment that Alma describes in his conversion experience as recorded in Mosiah 27:29–31. Note the parallels between the following passages:

For it is I [Jesus Christ] that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath *created* them; and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand. For behold, in my name are they called; and *if they know me* they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand. . . .

And then I will confess unto [the unrepentant transgressors] that I never knew them; and they shall depart into *everlasting fire* prepared for the devil and his angels. (Mosiah 26:23–24, 27)

Nehor restated the same ideas with a unique twist:

And he [Nehor] also testified unto the people 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)

Nehor saw a relationship between God's creating all people and redeeming all people. By ignoring the conditional clauses in the revelation, he concluded there was no need to "fear and tremble" in anticipation of "everlasting fire"; all people would escape postmortal consequences for sin.

His followers not only rejected the concept of everlasting postmortal punishment but took the next logical step and insisted that people could be saved in their sins; therefore, there would be no punishment at all and no need for repentance. For example, in his dialogue with Amulek, Zeezrom implied that people could be saved "in their sins" (see Alma 11:34–37), and the people of Ammonihah, who were followers of Nehor, "did not believe in the repentance of their sins" (Alma 15:15).

Nehor's rejection of the concepts of eternal punishment and of the consignment of sinners to a state of misery seemed to have influenced Corianton, for Alma said:

And now, my son, I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand—which is concerning the justice of God in the punishment of the sinner; for ye do try to suppose that it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery. (Alma 42:1)

Alma responded to this issue by giving his wonderfully insightful discourse on justice and our need to repent to qualify for mercy, but he did not address the issue that seems to be implied in Nehor's doctrine and Corianton's concern. The issue is misery, but more particularly the well-documented teaching of a never-ending state to which the wicked are said to be consigned. We can empathize with Corianton. For people to suffer throughout all eternity for what was done during the few years of mortality seems disproportionate and unjust. Were these statements that describe interminable suffering intended to be understood literally or as hyperbole or metaphor? Did they apply to all sinners or only to the sons of perdition? These issues were evidently not made clear by Book of Mormon prophets. The Lord gave a revelation to Joseph Smith to help us understand the concept of eternal punishment.³¹

A few days before the Book of Mormon was released for sale in late March of 1830, Joseph Smith received a revelation that clarifies how the terms indicating an interminable postmortal punishment

should be understood. God explained that the modifiers *endless* and *eternal* are synonyms for the name of God. Punishment is given at his hand, but it does not necessarily endure forever; if we repent, Christ's suffering pays for our sins (see D&C 19).³² Part of Doctrine and Covenants 76 is directly related to this question. On 16 February 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were engaged in revising the Bible through inspiration when they were given another rendition for John 5:29. God inspired them to change the phrase "resurrection of damnation" to "resurrection of the unjust." Meditating on the implications of this change, they received a vision wherein it was revealed that God will save all to a degree of glory except the sons of perdition, who will

go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment—and the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows. (D&C 76:44–45)

In light of the last sentence, it would seem that the duration of postmortal punishment for sons of perdition is a question that God chooses to leave unanswered. The message I receive from sections 19 and 76 is that God loves us and that his overwhelming concern is our salvation, not our damnation.

Another vital element of the dissidents' universalist doctrine was the principle of restoration. Its proponents believed that without repentance a person could be restored from a life of sin to a state of perfection, a state that was unqualified and universal. This belief was rooted in the idea that since God created all men, he could restore all men to eternal life, in a qualitative sense (see Alma 1:4). Restoration, then, as used and understood by Nehor's followers, was not a synonym for resurrection. Amulek and Alma chose to use this apostate teaching as a starting-off point to elaborate on the resurrection and to reinforce a correct understanding of this principle in contrast to the dissidents' faulty application of the concept of restoration.

Amulek explained to Zeezrom that the resurrection will restore a person's body and spirit but that a person will not be restored from sin to perfection:

The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be

restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt. Now, *this restoration* shall come to all, . . . both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be *restored* to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. (Alma 11:43–44)

Amulek insisted that “this restoration,” which was understood to be resurrection, will “come to all” but that sinners will still be held accountable for their sins.

Corianton was also concerned about the connection—or distinction—between restoration and resurrection. Alma explained that Corianton should

not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. . . . O, my son, . . . 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. (Alma 41:10, 13)

Alma’s point is that God is going to restore our body to its perfect frame but that this restoration applies only to the physical body. Salvation is conditional, and there is a pending judgment for the guilty.

For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all. (Alma 41:15)

Nehor’s doctrine of universal salvation was way off the mark because it minimized an individual’s responsibility for his or her own actions, and it is especially erroneous because Nehor missed the connection between righteousness and consequent happiness in his doctrine of restoration.

5. Dissidents objected to the incarnation, the teaching that God himself would come to earth, take a

mortal body of flesh and blood, and be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

The priests of Noah and the Zoramites both rejected the idea that the Messiah would become incarnate. Abinadi was put to death because he taught

that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth. (Mosiah 7:27)

In the prayer that the Zoramites offered each week from the Rameumptom, they intoned,

Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever. (Alma 31:15)

As I studied the beliefs of these two groups, I expected to find an antimaterialist doctrine implied in their rejection. History records numerous examples of people who adamantly rejected the incarnation on the basis that God is pure spirit and would not befoul himself by coming into contact with matter. Some groups extended this idea to a practice of celibacy, a vegetarian diet, and various other ascetic practices aimed at subduing the flesh. Even in the writings of Nephi, we see some human, fleshly impulses cast in a negative light. For instance, he speaks critically of the “lusts of the flesh” (1 Nephi 22:23) and laments, “My heart sorroweth because of my flesh” (2 Nephi 4:17). But these ascetic-like sentiments are not evident in the beliefs of the priests of Noah or the Zoramites. Their rejection of Christ’s corporeality was related to the theology of redemption, not materialism.

Redemptive theology is a belief that deliverance from sin is dependent on a sacrifice offered for the sinner. The priests of Noah endorsed this limited definition completely. To their way of thinking, the sacrifices outlined in the law of Moses were sufficient in and of themselves to bring about deliverance. What they did not believe were the teachings of the Nephite prophets that God would take upon himself a body of flesh and blood in order that he could be the sacrifice that would redeem mankind from their

sins. The priests were not rejecting materialism; as pointed out earlier, they were rejecting what they saw as an alternative form of redemption that placed the law of Moses in a secondary position. In their view, such a belief made the law contingent, not sufficient.

Much of Zoramite theology was a reaction to Nephite beliefs. It could be defined more by what the Zoramites did not believe of the teachings of orthodox Nephites than by the teachings that were unique to the Zoramites. They replaced the Nephite belief in the incarnation of Christ with belief in a God who always was and always will be a spirit. They thanked God that they were separated from the Nephites, their traditions, and their belief in Christ. They rejected the plan of redemption in favor of salvation by election. They believed not only that they were elected exclusively but also that those around them (the Nephites?) would be cast down to hell (see Alma 31:15–17).

As with the priests of Noah, there is no evidence to suggest that Zoramite rejection of God's corporeality was based on antimaterialism, but unlike the priests of Noah who rejected the Messiah based on their theology of redemption, the Zoramites did not equate salvation with redemptive sacrifice. For them salvation was exclusively a product of election. There was no need for sacrifice, whether it be self-denial, animal sacrifice, or the sacrifice of an incarnate Messiah. They were saved simply as an endowment from God. It was a shallow, reactive, elitist belief. Alma made a good-hearted effort to reconcile them to a belief in Christ but ended up teaching the less-fortunate people of their society, helping them overcome the false ideas that they might have retained from the doctrine taught to them by the upper-class Zoramites.

Conclusion

A substantial number of Nephites, at times a majority, rejected the Messiah through embracing the counter-beliefs of the dissenters identified in this study and falling away from a covenant relationship with Christ through spiritual lethargy. Amulek, in his teaching to the Zoramites, identified the issue

central to the theological history of dissenters when he said, "We have beheld that the great question which is in your minds is whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ" (Alma 34:5). In answering this "great question," he went to the very heart of redemptive theology and explained the necessity for a Messiah, testifying that

it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made. For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. . . . And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal. (Alma 34:9–10, 14)

His conclusion is as relevant for us as it was for the dissenters:

And thus he [the Son of God] shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. (Alma 34:15)

The Book of Mormon serves as another witness that Jesus Christ is a reality, that he came to earth and freely offered himself as the great and last sacrifice for the sins of the world. Through their theology, philosophy, or moral malaise, dissenters painted out this conviction. But in the latter days God called a prophet to bring forth the Book of Mormon and thereby take brush in hand and paint again the message that Jesus is the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. ■■

ENDNOTES

Quetzalcoatl, the Maya Maize God, and Jesus Christ
Diane E. Wirth

- See John Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882), 201–3, for a view that Jesus Christ and Quetzalcoatl are the same individual. B. H. Roberts came to a similar conclusion in his *New Witnesses for God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909–11), 3:37–38, 42–46. See also the booklet by Mark E. Peterson, *Christ in America* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1972).
- H. B. Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl: The Once and Future Lord of the Toltecs* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001), 17.
- See Dennis Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 171, which reads: “And the languages of the tribes changed there; their languages became differentiated. They could no longer understand one another clearly when they came away from Tulan.”
- See *ibid.*, 177, where it states, “It isn’t clear how they crossed over the sea. They crossed over as if there were no sea. They just crossed over on some stones, stones piled up in the sand. . . . Where the waters divided, they crossed over.”
- Adrián Recinos and Delia Goetz, trans., *The Annals of the Cakchiquels—Title of the Lords of Toninacapan* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 194. The original was reputedly written by Diego Reynoso, a noble Quiché (see Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*, 178).
- Allen J. Christenson, trans. and ed., *Popol Vuh: The Mythic Sections—Tales of First Beginnings from the Ancient K’iche’-Maya* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 34.
- Stephen D. Houston, “An Example of Homophony in Maya Script,” in *American Antiquity* 49/4 (1984): 800. See also Linda Schele and Peter Mathews, *The Code of Kings: The Language of Seven Sacred Maya Temples and Tombs* (New York: Scribner, 1998), 372 n. 61.
- For a discussion of the time frame for which Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl lived according to the various post-conquest documents, see Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*, 271–79.
- See Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*, 1985, 28–32.
- See Justin Kerr, “The Myth of the Popol Vuh as an Instrument of Power,” in *New Theories on the Ancient Maya*, ed. Elin C. Danien and Robert J. Sharer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992), 116, 120. See also Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 69, for a clear illustration of the bowl.
- See David H. Kelley, “Astronomical Identities of Mesoamerican Gods,” *Archaeoastronomy* (supplement to *Journal for the History of Astronomy*) 11/2 (1980): S1–S54.
- See David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman’s Path* (New York: Morrow, 1993).
- Michel Graulich, “Myths of Paradise Lost in Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico,” *Current Anthropology* 24/5 (1983): 575.
- See Freidel, Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos*, 71–74. If Reilly is right, this tradition may possibly go back to the Olmec (see *ibid.*, 132).
- Modern Mayanists sometimes refer to the Maize God as First Father because of the role he played in the creation. However, no text gives his name as a literal translation of “First Father.”
- Kent Reilly, “Visions to Another World by Kent Reilly,” lecture at the H. M. de Young Museum, San Francisco, 8 July 1993.
- See Raphaël Girard, *Le Popol-Vuh: Histoire Culturelle des Maya-Quichés* (Paris: Payot, 1972), 201.
- See John Bierhorst, *The Mythology of Mexico and Central America* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 147.
- See John E. Clark, “A New Artistic Rendering of Izapa Stela 5: A Step toward Improved Interpretation,” *JBMS* 8/1 (1999): 26.
- See Karl Taube, *Aztec and Maya Myths* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 39.
- See *ibid.*, 67.
- See John Bierhorst, *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 145–46. The myth is translated from the Nahuatl language.
- See Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 118; and Dennis Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, rev. ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 280 n. 132.
- See Elizabeth A. Newsome, *Trees of Paradise and Pillars of the World* (Austin: University of Texas, 2001), 192.
- See Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 70, 71, 80.
- For a translation, see Tony Shearer, *Beneath the Moon and under the Sun* (Albuquerque: Sun, 1975), 72. In 1578 Cordova wrote *Arte en Lengua Zapoteca* in Mexico. In addition to the linguistic part, this book contains a short but valuable note on the rites and beliefs of the Zapotec Indians of Oaxaca.
- Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, 161.
- See Taube, *Aztec and Maya Myths*, 42.
- Raphaël Girard, *Esotericism of the Popol Vuh: The Sacred History of the Quiche-Maya* (Pasadena, Calif.: Theosophical University Press, 1979), 226.
- See E. Michael Whittington, ed., *The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001).
- H. B. Nicholson, “Ehecattl-Quetzalcoatl vs. Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan: A Problem in Mesoamerican History and Religion,” *Actes du XLIIe Congrès International des Americanistes, Congrès du Centenaire*, vol. 6 (Paris, 2–9 September 1976), 43.
- See Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*, 71–72. See also Nicholson’s summary on the following post-conquest manuscripts: *The Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, 41, 45; the bibliographical section on the *Histoire du Mechique*, the “lost Olmos,” 60; and a commentary on the codices *Telleriano-Remensis* and *Vaticanus A*, 63.
- The Memorial Breve*, a post-conquest document, informs the reader that when the Toltec King (Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl) left Tollan, he promised to return and reestablish his kingdom. The later Aztecs of Tenochtitlan were aware of this prophecy. See David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 194, 197. Other “returning” myths in post-conquest documents are discussed in Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*, 37; the bibliographical section of the *Histoire du Mechique*, the “lost Olmos,” 56, 59; the codices *Telleriano-Remensis* and *Vaticanus A*, 71; the writings of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, 115; and the Chimalpahin, 131.
- H. B. Nicholson, *The “Return of Quetzalcoatl”: Did It Play a Role in the Conquest of Mexico?* (Lancaster, Calif.: Labyrinthos, 2002), 8.
- Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*, summarizes these stories in the post-conquest accounts as follows: from Sahagún’s *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, 26, 37; from the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, 47; and from a discussion based on the bibliographical section of the *Histoire du Mechique*, the “lost Olmos,” 47.
- Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, 31.
- For a discussion on Venus in post-conquest manuscripts with reference to Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, see the following pages in Nicholson, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl*: 44 (regarding *The Anales de Cuauhtitlan*), 51–52 (regarding the writings of Motolinía), 59 (regarding the bibliographical section on the *Histoire du Mechique* [the “lost Olmos”]), and 65, 71 (regarding the codices *Telleriano-Remensis* and *Vaticanus A*).
- See Numbers 21:6–9.
- See 1 Nephi 17:41; 2 Nephi 25:20.
- See Helaman 8:14–15.
- See George Stuart, “The Timeless Vision of Teotihuacan,” *National Geographic* 188/6 (1995), 14.
- There is a Mexican war serpent called Xiuhtecuhtli, who is associated with warriors and fire, but he appears late in Mesoamerican history. Xiuhtecuhtli is distinguished by his upturned snout and fire tail. See Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 189.
- See Eloise Quiñones Keber, *Codex Telleriano-Remensis: Ritual, Divination, and History in a Pictorial Aztec Manuscript* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 181.
- See William M. Ringle, Tomás Gallareta Negrón, and George J. Bey III, “The Return of Quetzalcoatl: Evidence for the Spread of a World Religion during the Epiclassic Period,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 9/2 (1998): 214, 218.
- Revelation 22:16 refers to Christ as the “bright and morning star.” We do not know if the Nephites were under the impression that Christ referred to himself as this heavenly body.
- John B. Carlson, “Venus-Regulated Warfare and Ritual Sacrifice in Mesoamerica: Teotihuacan and the Cacaxtla ‘Star Wars’ Connection” (College Park, Md.: Center for Archaeoastronomy, 1991), 30.
- See John B. Carlson, “Rise and Fall of the City of the Gods,” *Archaeology* 46/6 (1993), 61.
- See Ringle et al., “The Return of Quetzalcoatl,” 226.
- See Esther Pasztory, *Teotihuacan: An Experiment in Living* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 115.
- Raúl Velázquez, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 32.
- See Genesis 1:6 and Moses 2:6–7 on raising the firmament to divide the waters. For the Book of Moses as a constituent part of the plates of brass, see Noel B. Reynolds, “The Brass Plates Version of Genesis,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:136–173.
- “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (John 6:33); see 3 Nephi 18:1–7; 20:1–9.
- See Ephesians 4:9; 1 Peter 3:19; 2 Nephi 9:3–14; compare 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Moses 7:56–57.
- See Hebrews 9:12, 14; Mosiah 3:7; 3 Nephi 18:8–11; Moses 6:59; 7:45–47.
- See Acts 5:30; 1 Nephi 11:33; 2 Nephi 25:13; Moses 7:55.
- See 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Nephi 9:4–13; Moses 7:56–57.
- See Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17; 3 Nephi 11:8; 19:25, 30.
- See Psalm 84:11; Malachi 4:2; 3 Nephi 25:2.
- See Allen J. Christenson, *Art and Society in a Highland Maya Community: The Altarpiece of Santiago Atitlán* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 26, 114.
- See for example Luke 22:44; Moses 5:6–11; 2 Nephi 9:4–13.
- See 1 Peter 3:19–20; 2 Nephi 9:3–14; compare Moses 7:56–57; 3 Nephi 25:5–6.
- See 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Nephi 9:6–13; Helaman 14:25.
- Compare Moses 7:38, 57.
- See Linda Schele and Nicolai Grube, *The Proceedings of the Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop: Late Classic and Terminal Classic Warfare*, transcribed and edited by Phil Wanyerka (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1995), 31. See also Christina M. Elson and Michael E. Smith, “Archaeological Deposits from the Aztec New Fire Ceremony,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 12/2 (2001): 171.
- See Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, 30–31, 64–66, 69, 146.

Painting Out the Messiah: The Theologies of Dissidents John L. Clark

- The Book of Mormon does not use a conventional definition for *Messiah*. In traditional biblical writings, *Messiah* is a transliteration of the Hebrew *mashiah*, meaning “anointed” or, when referring to a person, “the anointed one.” The Book of Mormon does not relate the term *Messiah* to *anoint* or any of its derivatives. Joseph Smith used the word *Messiah* when he translated the glyph on the plates that represented the concept that Nephi and other prophets had in mind when they referred to the Son of God. *Messiah* is used in the Book of Mormon as a synonym for words or phrases such as “Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4); “Redeemer of the world” (1 Nephi 10:5); “Lord” (1 Nephi 10:7); “Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 10:10); “Lord and . . . Redeemer” (1 Nephi 10:14); “Son of God” (1 Nephi 10:17); “Holy One of Israel,” “Redeemer,” “God” (2 Nephi 1:10); “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (2 Nephi 25:19); and “God of our fathers”

- and “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (1 Nephi 19:10).
- God* is a generic term that applies to each member of the Godhead. The scriptural context of any given instance of the term usually indicates which member is being referred to.
 - In this verse, Nephi uses the expressions *prophet*, *Messiah*, and *Savior of the world* synonymously. He relates *prophet* to a Messianic prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15–19, the first of several instances wherein Nephite prophets cross-reference their prophecies to the brass plates. Nephi, in 1 Nephi 22:20–21, describes the “prophet” as the “Holy One of Israel.” Christ identifies himself as the “prophet” in 3 Nephi 20:23. New Testament authors interpret these verses to refer to the coming of Christ. See John 1:21, 25, 45; 5:46; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22–26; 7:37. Moroni in his 21–22 September 1823 visit to Joseph Smith refers to Acts 3:22 and defines the “prophet” as Christ (Joseph Smith—History 1:40).
 - The expression *Lamb of God* is unique in the Bible to John 1:29, 36. Nephi uses the expression repeatedly and defines it as the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world (see 1 Nephi 13:40).
 - In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, the words *Son of* were not included in 1 Nephi 11:21. The virgin was “the mother of God,” and the Lamb of God was “the Eternal Father.” A comparison of 1 Nephi 11:18, 32; 13:40 in the current edition with the same verses in the 1830 edition shows that other such clarifying insertions of *Son of* were later added to the text, most likely to be consistent with the phrase *Son of God* in 1 Nephi 11:24.
 - For more information on Nephite culture, see John L. Sorenson’s insightful essay “Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites, 200–1 B.C.,” 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, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 163–208; see also his essay “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *JBMS* 1/1 (1992): 4, for Jacob’s encounter with Shereem.
 - See Jacob 7:1–4, 7. For more on Shereem, see Robert L. Millet, “Shereem the Anti-Christ,” in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center), 175–91; and Clark V. Johnson, “Jacob: In Harmony with God,” in *Studies in Scripture, 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 7:180–82.
 - King Benjamin and Abinadi accused Old World Jews of failure to understand the typology of the law of Moses and how it referred to Christ’s redemption (see Mosiah 3:15; 13:31–33).
 - John L. Sorenson suggests that Nephi’s group may have comprised as few as 50 adult males (see Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land,” 3–4).
 - Gary L. Sturgess, “The Book of Mosiah: Thoughts about Its Structure, Purposes, Themes, and Authorship,” *JBMS* 4/2 (1995): 130–31.
 - Richard Bushman points out that the democracy in Zarahemla was unlike democracy experienced in America. The line between church and state was blurred—Alma was chief judge and high priest—and there was no distinct separation of powers between the branches of government. The chief judge was judge, governor, and legislator. For more on government in Zarahemla, see Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution,” *BYU Studies* 17/1 (1976): 14–17; see also Noel B. Reynolds, “Book of Mormon Government and Legal History,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:160–62.
 - For government changes, see Mosiah 29. Economic changes are discussed in Mosiah 27:6–9; Alma 1:29–31. See also John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 161–67, for observations on dissenters and on other signs of social unrest.
 - For more information on Nehor, see Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 102–4, 365–66.
 - Mormon does not identify the beliefs of other dissidents such as the Gadiantons, nor does he detail the beliefs of individuals or groups that dissented following the harmonious period described in 4 Nephi.
 - Hundreds of sects developed out of the ferment of early Christianity, the Reformation, and early Mormonism. We would expect more sects to have developed among Book of Mormon peoples than those that are identified in the Nephite record.
 - Leviticus 1:4; 4:20; 5:6, 10; and 6:7 illustrate the relationship between sacrificial offerings and forgiveness for sin.
 - See 1 Nephi 19:10, 12, 16; Alma 33:13; 34:7; Helaman 8:19; 3 Nephi 10:16.
 - See 1 Nephi 19:10; Alma 33:15–18; 34:7; Helaman 8:20; 3 Nephi 10:16.
 - See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Brass Plates Version of Genesis,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 136–73.
 - See Moses 1:6, 13, 32; 2:1; 5:7–9; 6:52, 54, 57, 62; 7:11, 45–47, 50, 55, 59–62.
 - King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:15), Abinadi (Mosiah 13:32), King Mosiah (Mosiah 26:1–3), and Alma (Alma 33:2) each make a similar observation.
 - Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 2* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1993), 74, citing Mosiah 15:1 and 13:35.
 - Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, January 1995, 7. The quotation by Elder McConkie is from his book *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 71.
 - Oaks, “Scripture Reading,” 7.
 - For discussion of Korihor, consult Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 367–69; LaMar Garrard, “Korihor the Anti-Christ,” in *Studies in Scripture, Alma 30 to Moroni*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 1–15; and Gerald N. Lund, “An Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon—The Face May Be Strange, but the Voice Is Familiar,” in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992), 107–28.
 - Korihor goes through the spectrum from atheist to believer. In Alma 30:28 Korihor takes an atheistic position; but when pressed by Alma in verse 37, he reverts to an agnostic position. Then in verse 52 he claims that he had always known there was a God.
 - Although no direct reference indicates that Corianton was familiar with Nehor’s or Korihor’s teachings, he would likely have been exposed to the teachings of both high-profile figures. From the questions Corianton discussed with Alma, it is evident that he was familiar with and perhaps sympathetic to Nehor’s teachings. Corianton’s questions can be discerned from the following texts, each of which corresponds to the main elements of Nehor’s teaching: (1) Nehor’s followers denied prophecy (Alma 21:8). Corianton questioned why so much emphasis was placed on the coming of Christ so long beforehand (Alma 39:17). (2) Nehor’s followers seemed uninformed on the subject of the resurrection (Alma 12:20–27). Corianton evidenced concern about the resurrection and its sequence (Alma 40). (3) The followers of Nehor taught that a person could be saved in his sins (Alma 11:34–37). Corianton asked, “Will the resurrection restore a person from wickedness to happiness?” (Alma 41:1, 10–13; compare Alma 40:23–24). (4) Nehor rejected postmortal punishment for sin (Alma 1:4; 11:34–37). Corianton questioned the justice of God in punishing sinners and consigning them to a state of misery (Alma 42:1).
 - According to Nephi’s definition, “priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Nephi 26:29).
 - Universalism influenced Amlic, the people of Ammonihah, the remnants of Noah’s priests (Amulonites), the Amalekites, and Alma’s younger son Corianton. Priestcraft is more than being paid for services; it is a motive, a desire to gain money and recognition. Priestcraft, as it appears in the Book of Mormon, is more of a practice, with moral or ethical overtones, than it is a theology. Concerning priestcraft in the Book of Mormon, see Monte S. Nyman, “Priesthood versus Priestcraft among the Nephites,” *The Sixth Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators Symposium on the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 66–69.
 - A word search for terms indicating time (*eternal, endless, everlasting*) and consequences (*burning, damnation, destruction, fire, punishment, torment*) produces dozens of references. They are multiplied if *cast off, hell, and brimstone* are added. Examples are 1 Nephi 15:28–35; 2 Nephi 9:16, 19; Jacob 6:10; Mosiah 2:39; 26:27; Alma 5:7.
 - Within the last decade, at least three scholars have addressed the concept of hell as taught in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. Consult Larry E. Dahl, “The Concept of Hell,” in *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: The 1991 Sperry Symposium*, ed. Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 42–56. See Mark C. Stirling’s review of Dahl’s article in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 290; and Dennis L. Largey, “Hell, Second Death, Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and Outer Darkness,” in *The Book of Mormon and the Message of the Four Gospels*, ed. Ray L. Huntington and Terry B. Ball (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 77–89.
32. Brigham Young offered an interesting commentary on this concept: “The punishment of God is Godlike. It endures forever, because there never will be a time when people ought not to be damned, and there must always be a hell to send them to. How long the damned remain in hell, I know not, nor what degree of suffering they endure. If we could by any means compute how much wickedness they are guilty of, it might be possible to ascertain the amount of suffering they will receive. They will receive according as their deeds have been while in the body. God’s punishment is eternal, but that does not prove that a wicked person will remain eternally in a state of punishment” (*Journal of Discourses*, 9:147–48 [12 January 1862]).

The Sesquicentennial of Four European Translations of the Book of Mormon

Traduit de L’Anglais: The First French Book of Mormon
Richard D. McClellan

- Because spreading the message of the restored gospel in France required French scriptures, and because the translation process required believers who were fluent in French and English, the opening of missionary work in France and the translation of the Book of Mormon into French were codependent. This explains why the project of translating the Book of Mormon was so daunting—without French members, church leaders couldn’t translate; without a French Book of Mormon, they couldn’t convert. Curtis Bolton was assigned to translate because of his experience with the language, which actually amounted to his having “lived in France for a short time” (Gary Ray Chard, “A History of the French Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1850–1960” [master’s thesis, Utah State University, 1965], 6).
- Although the Danish translation of the Book of Mormon, published in 1851, has also persisted, the French translation is the only one of the four foreign-language editions published in 1852 that is still used. The German translation was retranslated in 1980, the Italian translation was retranslated in 1964, and the Welsh translation is out of print.
- See the *Latter-day Saints’ Millennium Star*, 1 December 1847, 359–360 (hereafter *Millennial Star*).
- See Chard, “History of the French Mission,” 6.
- Louis A. Bertrand, *Mémoires d’un Mormon*, trans. Gaston Chappuis, Family and Church History Department Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter LDS Church Archives), 2.
- The Icarians were French immigrants who tried to establish a communal society in Texas in 1847 and 1848. The experiment failed, resulting in Cabot’s emergency trip to New Orleans in 1849, when he authorized an advance party to arrange for a temporary move to Nauvoo. The party purchased Temple Square in Nauvoo, along with several nearby homes.
- The church’s International Genealogical Index shows an unidentified event relating to one Lewis Alphonse Bertrand at Saint Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands, dated 3 July 1848—possibly the birth of a son or even Bertrand’s marriage. Because ordinances were performed in behalf of