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**Abstract** One way that those who love God and others demonstrate their love and “at-one-ment” (the state of being one) and thereby qualify for blessings is by imparting of their substance to the poor. When a people become of one heart and mind, there are no poor among them. The Book of Mormon describes two stages of at-one-ment that lead to a general economic equality: *Complete at-one-ment* (perfect observation of the laws resulting in no contentions or disputations with “all things common among them” 4 Nephi 1:3), and *at-one-ment as evidenced by equality before the law* (the ability to form and be governed by equitable and just laws wherein all status and social discrimination is eliminated). The love of riches and status increases divisions and separations among the people and brings poverty and iniquity.

# “No Poor Among Them”

Lindon J. Robison



Like a bright ribbon running through the entire Book of Mormon narrative is the promise that “if ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper” (e.g., 1 Nephi 2:20; Alma 9:13; 37:13; 50:20; 3 Nephi 5:22) and be “blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual” (Mosiah 2:41; see Jacob 2:19).<sup>1</sup>







The two most important commandments are to love God with all of one's heart and to love one's neighbor as oneself (see Matthew 22:37–40). These two commandments are connected. We cannot love God if we hate his children (see 1 John 4:20), nor can we serve others without serving God (see Matthew 25:40; Mosiah 2:17). Furthermore, if we love and serve God and others, we naturally conform to the great encompassing commandment to “be one” with God and one another (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

One way that those who love God and others demonstrate their love and “at-one-ment” (the state or condition of being one) and qualify for spiritual and temporal blessings is by imparting of their substance to the poor (see Alma 1:27). When a people become of one heart and mind, there are no poor among them (see Moses 7:18).

One awful alternative to loving God and his children is to love one's riches more than one's neighbors. Those who love their riches more than their neighbors invariably separate themselves from both God and others and break the commandment to be one. Symptomatic of this separation is the economic inequality that “exalts” those who love their riches above those with less (see D&C 49:20). The paradox is that a love of riches not only separates

neighbors but also makes acquiring more wealth more difficult.

These scriptural signposts—that we reveal our at-one-ment by our care of the poor and signal our love of riches by our separation and economic inequality—are unchanging truths taught in the Book of Mormon. Because of the unchanging nature of these truths, we may use them as modern measures of our current commitment to keep the Lord's encompassing commandment to be one and of our interest in both temporal and spiritual blessings.

### The Commandment to Be One

Christ commanded his people to be one with one another so they could be one with him (see 3 Nephi 12:23–24). The commandment to be one has both spiritual and economic requirements. To be one spiritually requires that we be united in charity (see Moroni 7:44–48), that we cooperate (see 1 Corinthians 12:14–20), that we acquire similar traits (see 3 Nephi 12:48), that we remember one another and keep our covenants (see 1 Nephi 17:40), that we have the same priorities (see Moroni 10:32), that we be set apart from the world with a holy calling (see Alma 13:3), that we be submissive to God's will (see 1 Nephi 3:7), that we be pure (see D&C 42:22), and that we be complete, or perfect (see 3 Nephi 12:48).

To be one economically requires that we live as economic equals. As a part of the law of consecration, the Lord commanded, “In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld” (D&C 70:14; see 42:30). The Lord also revealed to Joseph Smith that unless the Saints were equal in earthly things, they could not be equal in obtaining heavenly things (see D&C 78:6).



*The Death of Ananias*, by Raphael. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Art Resource, NY.





To live as economic equals may be the most difficult form of at-one-ment to achieve. At least we might infer as much after observing the rich ruler fail his final test of discipleship—to give his wealth to the poor (see Luke 18:18–22). In the Book of Mormon, during that singular season when the Lord’s people did achieve perfect at-one-ment, their drift toward separateness was signaled early on by their divisions into economic classes (see 4 Nephi 1:24–26). Because economic at-one-ment is so difficult to achieve, the poor are always with us (see John 12:8; Mosiah 4:16–21).

Speaking in parables, the resurrected Jesus compared our works to the fruit of a tree. He taught that only a good tree produces good fruit: “Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them” (see 3 Nephi 14:16–20).

The fruit that speaks volumes about our spiritual trees is the care we provide the poor. Those on God’s right hand, those whose works qualified them to enter his kingdom, cared for the poor. They fed the hungry, clothed the naked, gave drink to the thirsty, cared for the sick and imprisoned, and offered shelter to the homeless—all acts intended to share the abundance of this world with those who have little (see Matthew 25:33–37).

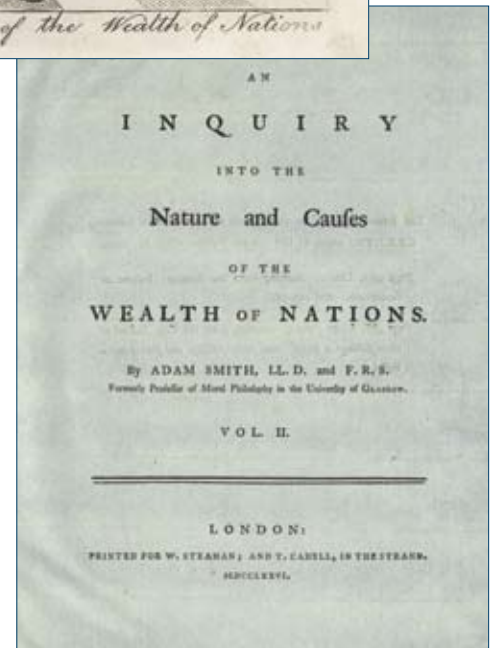
In times past, those unwilling to commit to economic equality were disqualified from society with the Saints. Ananias and Sapphira were called upon to consecrate their wealth for the building up of the kingdom of God and for the care of the poor. But they kept back part and lied about their consecration. When Peter asked them to account for their evil act, they gave up the ghost and died (see Acts 5:1–10). So it is that the likelihood of the unredeemed wealthy entering the kingdom of God is about the same as a camel passing through the eye of a needle. It is also unlikely that those who love their riches and hate their neighbors will prosper economically, as the next section explains.

### How At-one-ment Contributes to Economic Prosperity

Economists are remarkably agreed on the requirements for attaining economic prosperity. Adam Smith, an 18th-century Scottish moral philosopher, laid the foundation for much of modern economics in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. The book describes three conditions



Frontispiece and title page from Adam Smith’s influential book *The Wealth of Nations*.



essential for economic prosperity: specialization, trade, and freedom of choice. Interestingly, Smith made these arguments in an attempt to reason with his countrymen against separating from the American colonists in a destructive war that would reduce opportunities for specialization, trade, freedom of choice, and the economic well-being for both peoples.





*Specialization.* From observing pin makers, Adam Smith learned the benefits of specialization. Whereas one worker could scarcely produce one pin a day, 10 men working together and performing different pin making tasks could produce 48,000 pins a day, Smith reported. Workers can increase their productivity through specialization because their ability to perform the same task improves with practice. Furthermore, as workers repeat their tasks, they often invent tools that increase their productivity. Ralph Waldo Emerson summarized the

The Book of Mormon contrasts the economic prosperity of members of the Nephite church with that of those who did not belong to the church. This contrast provides evidence of the economic advantages of loving one another and the economic disadvantages of loving things.

connection between productivity and specialization with the aphorism “That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased.”

*Trade.* The first requirement for economic prosperity, specialization, leads naturally to the second requirement, trade (see Mosiah 24:7). If people specialize, they no longer produce all they require for their own maintenance. The need for those things that they no longer produce leads people to trade with others. It was only because pin makers in Adam Smith’s day could trade their pins for bread and butter that they were able to specialize in pin production.

Smith and many economists since have resisted tariffs and other costs that discourage trade because a reduction in trade leads to reduced specialization and productivity. Joseph Smith taught the importance of cooperative activities, including trade and specialization, when he declared, “The greatest temporal and spiritual blessings which always come from faithfulness and concerted effort, never attended individual exertion or enterprise.”<sup>2</sup>

*Freedom to choose and responsibility for one’s choices.* The most efficient means for organizing the activities of consumers and producers has proven to be free markets. Free markets exist when information about prices and quantities are widely known, when market prices are determined by supply and demand, and when market participants are free to respond to market signals and are responsible for the consequences of their choices.

Rising prices in free markets encourage producers to produce more and consumers to buy less. Falling prices send the opposite signals. These free market signals lead to equilibrium prices that eliminate surpluses or shortages.

The importance of free market messages in organizing production and consumption has convinced many economists and policy makers that any effort to alter market distributions of goods and services will send uncertain signals to producers and consumers. Then, with both producers and consumers misled by muted market signals, inefficiency, illustrated by surpluses or shortages, will follow. This belief often discourages efforts to redistribute wealth from the wealthy to the poor and has led some to conclude that equity and efficiency are incompatible goals.<sup>3</sup>

To the prosperity requirements listed above, the Book of Mormon adds one more. It is a type of at-one-ment characterized by friendly, trusting relations (see Mosiah 24:5–7; Alma 23:18).<sup>4</sup> Trading requires that market participants agree on and keep the rules of the market, assuring that the benefits from trade are realized for both buyers and sellers. In addition, even if we agree on the rules of the market, we are unlikely to trade with those we dislike and distrust.<sup>5</sup> And if hostility or distrust discourages trade, then our opportunities to specialize are also limited and our productivity is decreased.

The Book of Mormon contrasts the economic prosperity of members of the Nephite church with that of those who did not belong to the church.





This contrast provides evidence of the economic advantages of loving one another and the economic disadvantages of loving things. In one era, members of the church “did prosper and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church” (Alma 1:31). The reason that those who were not members of the church failed to prosper was their lack of at-one-ment. Instead of serving one another they indulged in “idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes; persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering” (Alma 1:32). All of these evil tendencies had the effect of creating a self-interested elite, thereby reducing opportunities to specialize and trade, and increasing economic inequality.

### How At-one-ment Contributes to Economic Equality

Economic prosperity depends in large measure on our opportunities and abilities to specialize and trade. These activities in turn require an absence of hostility and a willingness to obey the laws that organize trade and protect our freedom to choose. However, the outcomes of free markets do not necessarily produce economic equality because the talents and resources that enable us to specialize and trade differ from person to person.

Economic equality may be forced on us during periods of pestilence, war, or other natural catastrophes when all become poor, but these conditions are usually temporary in nature. In fact, nonmarket methods to force people to live as economic equals have destroyed incentives to work hard and smart and were unsuccessful in producing economic equality or economic prosperity, the former Soviet Union being one example. As a result, these methods are always resisted and often abandoned. The only successful effort to reduce economic inequality while maintaining economic prosperity appears to be a result



of voluntary redistributions that depend on at-one-ment, the same characteristic required for economic prosperity.

The Book of Mormon describes two stages of at-one-ment that lead to a general economic equality. These two stages are complete at-one-ment and a lesser form of at-one-ment known as equality before the law.

*Complete at-one-ment.* Mormon recorded that because of the love of God that dwelled in the hearts of people, they were led to spiritual and economic equality: “There were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. . . . And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered” (see 4 Nephi 1:15–18).

During this period of complete at-one-ment (AD 34–200), people observed the laws perfectly, and as a result there were no contentions or disputations (see 4 Nephi 1:12–13). Also, during this period of complete at-one-ment, there were none that robbed or murdered, nor were there any social distinctions based on riches, learning, or genealogy, “nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God” (4 Nephi 1:17). One capstone consequence of this complete at-one-ment among people during this period was their economic equality. Because people loved their neighbors, they were willing to work for Zion and the elimination of poverty—“they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor” (4 Nephi 1:3).

Poverty is a relative term, and it seems to be so in the Book of Mormon: those with more are described as being rich; those with less, as being poor (see Alma 1:29–31; 32:4–5; 3 Nephi 6:12). Why does the elimination of poverty appear to be such an elusive goal even today? A key reason is that in the world, economic equality cannot be achieved even if everyone were provided equal







or identical resources since we all have different needs and talents. Nothing would be more unequal than providing each person the same resources, because some require milk while others need meat, and some can profitably magnify five talents while others can manage only one. Allocating to each according to needs and harvesting from each according to ability would require that we all agree both on what our most important needs are and on what the measures are for determining when our needs have been satisfied. Thus the only instance of perfect economic equality recorded in the scriptures occurred when people lived the law of consecration: “They had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3).

*At-one-ment as evidenced by equality before the law.* Outward evidence of a people’s unity is their ability to form and be governed by equitable and just laws (see 3 Nephi 6:4). This impressive but lesser degree of at-one-ment was achieved at the end of King Mosiah’s reign. When his sons refused to be king, he proposed a system of judges to replace the regal system of government. While some wished for favored status (see Alma 2:1–2), just laws adopted under the reign of the judges prohibited people from taking advantage of their neighbors through lying, robbing, or murder; and those who desired inequality were restrained because of the fear of the law (see Alma 1:17–18).

Equality before the law was accompanied by other evidences of at-one-ment, all of which reduced economic inequality. Under the reign of the judges, the followers of Christ began to eliminate status and social discrimination. We read that “when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength” (Alma 1:26).

While any economic system except consecration produces inequalities, during periods of at-one-ment under the judges, inequality was moderated by voluntary redistributions: “In their prosperous cir-

cumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need” (Alma 1:30).

One way the loving and the lawful reduced inequality was to provide one another the training needed to support and defend themselves. For instance, using Laban’s sword as a model, Nephi made swords for use by soldiers as a defense against

During one difficult period when the Nephites were threatened by Gadianton robbers, they demonstrated their at-one-ment by uniting themselves under their chief military officer, Gidgiddoni, and their chief judge, Lachoneus, to defeat their enemies.

the Lamanites. But he also taught them to build buildings and to work with wood, iron, copper, steel, gold, and other precious metals (see 2 Nephi 5:14–15).

In modern times, one way that the loving and lawful reduce inequality is to invest in public goods, goods that provide public services without requiring private ownership. Such goods include public roads, public education, public water and sanitation systems, and publicly provided protection, among many others. We see similar efforts among Book of Mormon people (see Helaman 3:14; 3 Nephi 6:8).





People also manifested their at-one-ment by constructing cities (see Helaman 3:11; 3 Nephi 6:7; 4 Nephi 1:7–8; Ether 9:23). Construction of cities requires investments in public goods that generally benefit people. Moreover, for people to live in cities, they must agree to live together as neighbors. In addition, the construction of cities requires a high degree of specialization and trade, conditions requiring at-one-ment among people. For example, a group of Nephites who settled the land northward found an absence of timber. So because of their at-one-ment and ingenuity, “they did send forth much by the way of shipping. And thus they did enable the people in the land northward that they might build many cities, both of wood and of cement” (Helaman 3:10–11).

Finally, people manifested their at-one-ment by uniting for their own defense. During one difficult period when the Nephites were threatened by Gadianton robbers, they demonstrated their at-one-ment by uniting themselves under their chief military officer, Gidgiddoni, and their chief judge, Lachoneus, to defeat their enemies. This united effort put a temporary end to divisive and destructive secret combinations and led to renewed investments in public goods that integrated people and reduced inequality.

### Stages of Separation and Inequality

While a love of God and others that leads people to consecration is the only system that completely eliminates poverty, the Book of Mormon describes how a love of things produces social separation and economic inequality in stages. Helaman succinctly summarizes: “The Lord had blessed them so long with the riches of the world that they had not been stirred up to anger, to wars, nor to bloodshed; therefore they began to set their hearts upon their riches; yea, they began to seek to get gain that they might be lifted up one above another; therefore they began to commit secret murders, and to rob and to plunder, that they might get gain” (Helaman 6:17). In the initial stage of separation, the people set their hearts on their riches instead of the well-being of their neighbors. As a first example, when asked about the well-being of his brother Abel, Cain arrogantly responded that his brother’s well-being was not his concern: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Moses 5:34).

In the second stage, the separated seek gain so they can be “lifted up” above their neighbors. Early on, the Lord commanded Jacob, brother of Nephi, to call his people to repentance. They needed to repent because many had begun to search for gold and precious ores, and after acquiring more than their neighbors, some Nephites supposed their inequality was evidence that they “were better than” those with less (Jacob 2:12–13). Jacob commanded them to abandon their love of riches that caused significant separations and inequalities among them: “Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you” (Jacob 2:17).

The Book of Mormon spells out a risk for those who try to rationalize inequality by claiming that the poor deserve their deprivations because they are not as smart, don’t work as hard, or have committed some act for which poverty is their prize. Some during King Benjamin’s reign held such views, requiring him to teach that those who failed to share with the poor because they believed the poor deserved their poverty needed to repent or would have no place in the kingdom of God (see Mosiah 4:17–18).

The apostate Zoramites first separated themselves spiritually from Christ by denying his existence and then created social and religious divisions among themselves based on riches. Upon their exclusive place of worship, the Rameumptom, the upper class prayed, “Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren” and “We thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people” (Alma 31:16, 18). Alma, sickened at the spectacle, “saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods” (Alma 31:24). Exclusion and separations among the Zoramites created a large group who were poor (see Alma 32:2). Even though these had “labored abundantly” to build synagogues, they were despised because of their poverty and were excluded from places of worship (Alma 32:5).

In the third stage, though the picture is complicated, the separated generally become hostile and break laws, rob, plunder, and murder in order to get gain (see Helaman 2:4, 8; 3 Nephi 4:5). The Book of Mormon repeatedly recounts the cycle, from at-one-ment to love of riches, from love of riches to separation, and from separation to hostility and economic inequality.





Sometimes those focused on economic inequality and separation perverted the laws to achieve their ends. These Helaman censured because they “did trample under their feet [the laws] and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God” (Helaman 6:39). As another example, King Noah used his position of power to impose a tax on his people. With his heart set firmly upon riches (see Mosiah 11:14), Noah placed a tax on his people of 20 percent on all products and income, including their ziff, copper, brass, iron, fatlings, and grain (see Mosiah 11:3). With these ill-gotten gains, King Noah created not a society where righteousness and prosperity could flourish but “elegant and spacious buildings,” separate from the people, where he and his priests lived licentiously (see Mosiah 11:8, 14–15).

Another way that the wealthy and powerful demonstrated their hostility toward the poor and maintained economic inequality was by denying some people access to education. Then educational inequality increased economic inequality, and the people began to be separated into ranks “according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches” (3 Nephi 6:12). As a result, “there became a great inequality in all the land” (3 Nephi 6:14).

All three stages of separation were evident during the critical period between the 54th and the 56th years of the reign of the judges (see Helaman 4:1–4). Following a period of military successes against their enemies, the Nephites demonstrated

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the familiar pattern of sliding from unity to a love of riches, from a love of riches to separations, and from separations to hostility and inequality. First, they set their hearts on riches and used them to separate themselves from those who had less. Next

they made worse the condition of the poor by withholding from them food and clothing. Then they mocked that which was sacred and ignored their laws by murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, and finally separating themselves from their families by committing acts of adultery (see Helaman 4:11–12). In the end, inequality bloomed as spirituality faded.

Perhaps ironically, an increasing level of hostility and a desire to be rich are attitudes that the poor can acquire. As they pass through stages of hostility, the poor first declare they are not responsible for their poverty, then they blame the wealthy for their meager circumstances, and finally they discover and practice the Mahan principle of exchanging life for material gain. To these wicked poor the Lord warned, “Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men’s goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands!” (D&C 56:17).

When hostility has matured, on whatever side, it produces complete separation that leads to destruction, demonstrating that the Spirit of the Lord has withdrawn. This condition of people is no longer characterized by a love of riches as much as a hatred of one’s neighbors. This state of complete separation was introduced by ancient terrorists when they formed secret combinations that broke the laws and formed covenants to commit crimes against the innocent and to usurp political and economic power (see Helaman 2:3–5; 6:17–26, 38–39; 3 Nephi 3:4–7).

In this state of complete separation, specialization and trade have ceased. Moreover, the human costs of complete separation are enormous. As an illustration, during the destruction of the Jaredites, Ether recorded that “every man did cleave unto that which was his own, with his hands, and would not borrow neither would he lend; and every man kept the hilt of his sword in his right hand, in the defence of his property and his own life and of his wives and children” (Ether 14:2). During periods of hostility, instead of cities and towns being built and maintained, they were destroyed (see Mormon 5:5). Instead of at-one-ment among families and respect for women, during conflict women and children were mutilated and murdered (see Moroni 9:9–10). Finally, during periods of complete chaos, not only did the poor have less, but they starved (see Moroni 9:16).





## The Book of Mormon and Modern Applications

The Book of Mormon requirements for prosperity are generally universal in their application. Thus what Alma declared in his day applies to our day as well: “We see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil, which comes by the cunning plans which he hath devised to ensnare the hearts of men” (Alma 28:13). Consider some examples of the conditions described in the Book of Mormon that we can observe today.

*At-one-ment and separations in the home.* The Book of Mormon highlights the unity of husbands and wives after the visit of Christ in the Americas: “They were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them” (4 Nephi 1:11). On the other side, the Book of Mormon documents the connection between the love of riches and the separation of husbands and wives. Jacob denounced his people because many had become proud and afflicted their neighbors because they had acquired more riches than others (see Jacob 2:12, 20–21). True to pattern, the love of riches was accompanied by separations—including the evident separation of husbands from their wives. Moreover, the whoredoms of these same proud wealth-seeking husbands broke the hearts of their wives, rupturing their support and leading many into spiritual and, it seems, economic captivity (see Jacob 1:15; 2:27–33, 35).

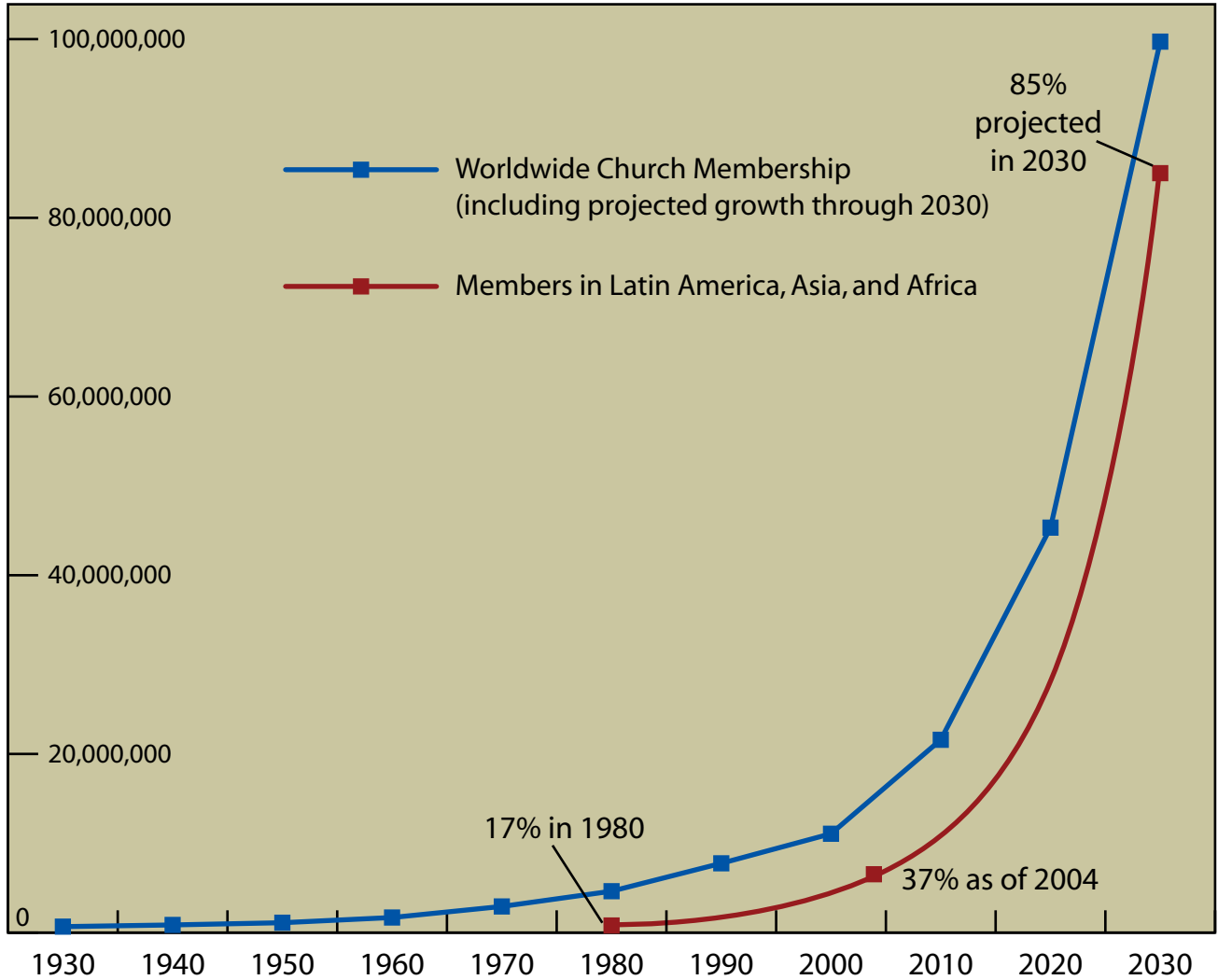
The emotional—and eventual physical—separation of fathers and mothers in Jacob’s day has a parallel in our own time. Modern prophets have warned that “the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets” (First Presidency and Council of the



Modern prophets proclaim the sanctity of wholesome family life and urge its preservation as a bulwark against social ills and calamities.

Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 23 September 1995). One calamity that has followed the disintegration of the family is increased poverty. According to the *Economist*, households in which fathers are separated from their children because of divorce and unwed births are the “largest and fastest-growing segment of the poor,





Church membership grew at a rate of 90% from 2000 to 2004. This graph shows conservative projected growth per decade based on a growth rate of 95% through 2010, 110% through 2020, and 120% through 2030. Experts predict that by 2030, 85% of total Church membership will live in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, where large segments of the population live in poverty.

making up over half of all poor families [in the U.S.] in 1998, compared with 21% in 1960. The poverty rate is almost six times higher for one-parent families headed by women than it is for those with two parents.” Continuing, the *Economist* notes that “just over 30% of American children now live in single-parent families, and these account for almost two-thirds of the children in poverty.”<sup>6</sup>

*Divisions among nations.* When pride and hostility entered into the hearts of the Nephites and Lamanites, they could no longer be governed by laws established by the voice of the people. Then people became “divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes, every man

according to his family and his kindred and friends, and thus they did destroy the government of the land” (3 Nephi 7:2). A modern parallel to the division described in the Book of Mormon has been the division among nations. When the United Nations was founded in 1945, the world was organized into 51 countries. This number increased to 100 in 1960 and to 192 in 1994. Since 1994, the number of national divisions among countries has continued to increase.<sup>7</sup> If increasing the number of countries results in trade restrictions between those who were formerly members of the same country, then we can expect less specialization, reduced trading opportunities, limited opportunities to choose, and





reduced income for all, especially for those in newly fragmented countries.

*War and Poverty.* When hostility is fully grown, it inevitably leads to war, and in war's wake follows famine and poverty. The Book of Mormon reports that a great and lasting war between the Lamanites and Nephites caused much loss of life and famine (see Alma 62:35, 39). In our time, the major famines in recent years—famines that have accounted for the deaths of tens of millions of people—have all occurred in war zones: examples include Biafra, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Chad, Sudan, Liberia, and Somalia.

War creates poverty in the following ways. First, it removes young men and capable older men and women from the workforce and sacrifices them for the war effort. Second, war teaches combatants to hate each other so that the possibility of future commerce between them is reduced. Finally, war soaks up resources that could otherwise be put to productive uses to mitigate the plight of the poor. We can imagine a similar situation among Book of Mormon peoples during periods of conflict.

Unfortunately, very poor countries are those most likely to go to war, or perhaps they are poor because they pursue war. Of the 150 conflicts fought since the end of the Second World War, more than 9 out of 10 occurred in the developing world, and 21 of the 26 current armed conflicts are taking place in developing countries. In 1999, the developing countries spent over \$100 billion a year on the military. In 2003, \$12.4 billion of this was spent on arms imports from the industrialized countries.

## Looking to the Future

Experts predict that by 6 April 2030, membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will reach between 75 and 175 million. Of that large number 85 percent will live in Latin America, and Asia, where large segments of the population live in poverty.<sup>8</sup> The contrast between the economic conditions of Church members living in developing countries with their North American brothers and sisters will lead many to ask, How can we build Zion with so many poor among us?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland offered some helpful hints about where we can begin. "I know we can each do something, however small that act may seem to be. We can pay an honest tithe and give our fast and free-will offerings, according to our circumstances. And we can watch for other ways to help. To worthy causes and needy people, we can give time if we don't have money, and we can give love when our time runs out."<sup>9</sup>

We can also build Zion by avoiding the stages of separation and their ugly consequences: disintegration of the family, perversion of laws, division of nations, and war, which so often begin by our loving things more than neighbors and by assuming that those with more are better than those without (see Jacob 2:13). Ultimately, we must strive for a condition of at-one-ment where our converted hearts consider the happiness and well-being of others to be as important as our own. Then we will ensure that there are no poor among us (see 4 Nephi 1:3; Moses 7:18). ❏



18. See James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
  19. Many thanks to S. Kent Brown for the insight that the fact the Zoramite leaders were able to “[find] out privily 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.
  20. Michael L. Schwalbe and Douglas Mason-Schrock, “Identity Work as Group Process,” in *Advances in Group Processes*, ed. Barry Markovsky, Michael J. Covaglia, Robin Simon, and Edward J. Lawler (New York: Jai Press, 1996), 122–23.
- of Agricultural Economics* 24/1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 44–58.
6. “Out of Sight, Out of Mind,” *The Economist*, 20 May 2000, 28.
  7. York W. Bradshaw and Michael Wallace, *Global Inequalities* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996), 28.
  8. See James W. Lucas and Warner P. Woodworth, *Working Toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1996), 3.
  9. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Handful of Meal and a Little Oil,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 31; see also H. David Burton, “More Holiness Give Me,” *Ensign*, November 2004, 98–100.

**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).
4. Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 141–42.
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 introduc-

- tory formulas to introduce quotations from the brass plates and earlier Book of Mormon prophets; see Alma 9:13, 24; 11:37; 30:8; 33:3, 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).
7. Matthew 3:3, 4:14, and 12:17 each introduce an Isaiah quotation with an introductory formula. It is a common feature of the New Testament to introduce an Old Testament quotation using a formulaic introduction.
  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* differ 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 *hōlāyēnū*; and in Exodus 3:7 and Isaiah 53:3 for *mak’ōbēnū*.
  11. Matthew uses *astheneias*, which should be correctly rendered as a “weakness” of any sort, and *nosous*, 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, 1991), 2:37–38. 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 gener-

ally, 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), 303–4. 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 Amalekites**  
J. Christopher Conkling

1. John L. Sorenson writes that the Nephites saw things this 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).
2. George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 3:290.

**“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.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), 183.
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. Colleagues and I found that the same requirement for friendly relations exists today. A survey of 1,500 farmland owners/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*