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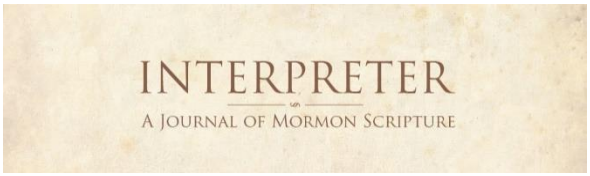

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Getting Cain and Gain

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Getting Cain and Gain

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *The biblical etiology (story of origin) for the name "Cain" associates his name with the Hebrew verb* qny/qnh*, "to get," "gain," "acquire," "create," or "procreate" in a positive sense. A fuller form of this etiology, known to us indirectly through the Book of Mormon text and directly through the restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation, creates additional wordplay on "Cain" that associates his name with murder to "get gain." This fuller narrative is thus also an etiology for organized evil—secret combinations "built up to get power and gain" (Ether 8:22–23; 11:15). The original etiology exerted a tremendous influence on Book of Mormon writers (e.g., Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni) who frequently used allusions to this narrative and sometimes replicated the wordplay on "Cain" and "getting gain." The fuller narrative seems to have exerted its greatest influence on Mormon and Moroni, who witnessed the destruction of their nation firsthand — destruction catalyzed by Cainitic secret combinations. Moroni, in particular, invokes the Cain etiology in describing the destruction of the Jaredites by secret combinations. The destruction of two nations by Cainitic secret combinations stand as two witnesses and a warning to latter-day Gentiles (and Israel) against building up these societies and allowing them to flourish.*

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." — Proverbs 4:7

Etiologies are stories of origins.[1] The biblical account of Cain and Abel offers a story of origin for the name "Cain" (Genesis 4:1) and

1 From Greek *aitia* = "cause." For a brief discussion of the phenomenon of biblical etiology, see Michael H. Floyd, "Etiology" in *The New Interpreter's Bible Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 2007), 2:352. Floyd observes, "As a critical term applied to narrative, etiology refers to stories that

an account of the beginning of murder — homicide and fratricide — in this world. Importantly, Latter-day Saint scripture attests a fuller and evidently earlier version of this narrative[2] that is, beyond an etiology of "Cain" and murder, an etiology of organized evil — secret societies organized to the end that their participants might "murder and get gain" (Moses 5:31).

In this article I will examine the biblical etiology of the name "Cain" and the fuller version of this etiological narrative, one form of which we have in the Prophet Joseph Smith's inspired expansion of Genesis 4 (i.e., Moses 5) and the closely-related version which was available to Lehi and Nephi and their posterity on the brass plates. This earlier, fuller etiology not only explains the significance of the name "Cain," but also associates "Cain" with the origin of "secret combinations" to "murder and **get gain**" (Moses 5:31, 51). I will further suggest that the collocation "get gain" begins as conscious wordplay on the name "Cain." In other words, the traditional association between "Cain" and "get[ting] gain" constitutes a pejorative Hebraistic pun on "Cain" — a pun on which the longer, extra-biblical form of the narrative turns. This "Cain"/"get gain" wordplay is reiterated throughout the text of the Book of Mormon as a warning to the Gentiles in the latter-day who build up "churches" and "secret combinations" — organizations — that "murder and get gain."

"I Have Gotten a Man" (Genesis 4:1)

The biblical text explains Eve's naming of Cain in terms of the semantically rich verb *qny*, which can mean "buy," "acquire," or "create":[3] "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare **Cain** [*qayin*], and said, I have **gotten** [*qānîtî*] a man from [*ʾet*, with] the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). Eve's expression, *qānîtî*, can not only be understood as "I have gotten," "I have gained," or "I have acquired," but also "I have created." The emphasis in the use of the verb *qny* here is on "Cain" as the product of divinely-aided "procreation."[4] Eve "gained" Cain with the Lord's help.

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tell how something came to be or came to have its definitive characteristics. In Scripture such stories are typically told about names of persons and places, rites and customs, ethnic identities and other natural phenomena."

2 See James R. Harris, "Cain," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (ed. Daniel H. Ludlow; New York: Macmillan, 1992), 245–246.

3 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1111–12. Hereafter cited as HALOT.

4 See David Bokovoy, "Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Reassessment of קנה in Genesis 4:1," *Vetus*

The name "Cain" itself, however, appears to properly derive from the root **qyn* — a root that sounds like, but also may be related to *qny*. The root **qyn* means to "forge" or "work in metal," a concept related to "create" in the sense of forming or fashioning. Arabic *qayin* to this day denotes "blacksmith."[5] This latter sense of **qyn* is corroborated by the description of Cain's descendant Tubal-cain (*tûbal qayin*) as a metal-worker at the very end of the same pericope: "And Zillah, she also bare **Tubal-cain, an instructer of every artificer in brass and iron**" (Genesis 4:22).

"Master of This Great Secret": The Cain-Cain Etiology as Preserved in Moses 5

The Book of Moses (JST Genesis) version of Cain and Abel story also includes Eve's naming of Cain: "And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare **Cain**, and said: **I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words**. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should **know** him?" (Moses 5:16). As in the biblical account, the naming of Cain in the fuller version of the etiological narrative is connected with his being "gotten" (or "gained") from the Lord, but the latter version also includes Eve's express wish that since Cain was "gotten" as a divine gift, he would not reject the Lord's words like his elder siblings, the word "reject" here being used as an antonym to "get." The same account informs us that Adam and Eve also had older children who, like Cain, "loved Satan more than God" (Moses 5:13, 28).[6] In other words, Eve named so Cain (*qayin*) in the hope that he would turn out much better than these wayward elder siblings — i.e., that he would maintain a covenant relationship[7] with the Lord (that is, "know" the Lord), rather than "love" Satan (also in a covenant sense).[8] Unfortunately, Cain turns out to be the worst of the lot. The Lord forewarns Cain that

Testamentum 63 (2013): 19–35.

5 Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, 4th ed. (Urbana, IL: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 943.

6 The phrase "loved Satan more than God" is used exclusively of Cain and his older siblings and their offspring (Moses 5:13, 18, 28) one of whom he marries (5:28).

7 Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse by Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 65.

8 Ibid., 66.

he will be called "Perdition" (Moses 5:24),[9] a term which denotes "loss," "destruction" or "ruin,"[10] and constitutes perhaps the perfect antonym[11] to "gotten," "gained," or "(pro)created." The man "gotten" from the Lord or "gained"/"procreated" with the Lord's help becomes irredeemably lost, destroyed, and ruined for eternity.

Thus, in the fuller etiology for the name "Cain," the emphasis moves from the "acquisition" of childbirth to the "acquisition" of property through satanic murder, which has its roots in Cain's rejection of the Lord (just as Eve feared) and Cain's "love" for Satan: "And **Cain** said: Truly I am Mahan, the **master** of this great secret, that I may murder and **get gain**. Wherefore **Cain** was called **Master** Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness" (Moses 5:31). In making this declaration, Cain "re-motivates"[12] the meaning of his own name: he is no longer "gotten" from the Lord or "gained"/"procreated" with the Lord's help (Genesis 4:1; Moses 5), but is now the "master" ("creator," "possessor," see below)[13] of secret murder to "get gain."

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9 Moses 5:23–26: "If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, **I will deliver thee up**, **and it shall be unto thee according to his desire. And thou shalt rule over him; for from this time forth thou shalt be the father of his lies**; **thou shalt be called Perdition**; for thou wast also before the world. And it shall be said in time to come — That these abominations were had from **Cain**; for **he rejected** the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent. And Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord." The idea of "Cain" as "gotten," "gained," or "(pro)created" with the Lord's help is key to understanding the antonymic language of this passage: Cain will be "deliver[ed] … up," but he will called "Perdition" (loss, destruction, ruin) because he "rejected" the Lord and his counsel (cf. Moses 5:16; 25–26). Having failed to "master" sin, Cain will "rule" over Satan in eternity, making him "master" in only the most tragic and ironic sense.

10 The name-title "Perdition" also occurs in D&C 76:26, 32, 43; John 17:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; and 3 Nephi 27:32.

11 Cf. Mark 8:36 (Matthew 16:26): "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall **gain** the whole world, and **lose** his own soul?"

12 On the phenomenon of name "re-motivation" (versus so-called folk etymology or popular etymology), see Stéphane Gendron, "L'étymologie populaire: Quels enjeux pour l'onomastique?" in *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Aberdeen, August 4–11, 1996* (2 vols.; ed. W.F.H, Nicolaisen; Aberdeen: Dept. of English, University of Aberdeen, 1998), 1:130–33.

13 Compare Moses 5:25: "And it shall be said in time to come — That **these abominations were had from Cain**; for he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent."

Moreover, he assumes another unholy "new" name or title,[14] knighting himself "Mahan" the "master of this great secret." The "gain" that Cain has in view is the cattle that his brother "keeps": "And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely **the flocks** [cf. Heb. *miqneh* = cattle] of my brother falleth into my hands" (Moses 5:32–33). Significantly, one of the most prominent Hebrew terms for cattle is *miqneh*, which derives from the root **qny/qnh*, "to acquire." Hebrew *qinyān* denoted "personal property, possessions"[15] like Arabic *qunwat* and *qinwat*, "appropriation, acquisition, property in livestock."[16]

Similar terms occur throughout the Semitic languages: Old South Arabic *mqny* denotes "possession, property";[17] Akkadian attests the noun *qinītu*, "acquisition, property"[18] from the verb *qanû*, "'to keep possession' of a slave, etc."; "to acquire."[19] Arabic also attests the verb *qanā* "to acquire, appropriate, make one's own … gain … get, procure, purchase";[20] *qaniya*, "possessor, owner,"[21] as well as the noun *qain* "blacksmith"[22] or "worker in iron." Additionally, many of the ancient words for money and property are words for cattle. As Hugh Nibley noted a generation ago, "all the oldest words for *money* simply mean flocks; our words 'fee' and 'pecuniary' mean *flocks*."[23] Modern English "fee" derives from Old English (Anglo-Saxon) *feoh*, "cattle" (cf. Gothic *faihu*),[24] which derives from Proto-Germanic **fehu,* and is cognate with

14 Cain's "new name" constitutes a parody of the kind of phenomenon — or temple rite — that we see later in Genesis with the "new names" Abram (Abraham); Sarai (Sarah), and Jacob (Israel).

15 HALOT, 1114.

16 Ibid.

17 Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabean Dialect* (HSS 25; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 461.

18 *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, ed. Jeremy Black, Andrew George and Nicolas Postgate; SANTAG 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 289.

19 Ibid., 284.

20 Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 928.

21 Ibid., 929.

22 Ibid., 943.

23 Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 436.

24 Cf. Thomas O. Lambdin, *An Introduction to the Gothic Language* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006) 273: "*faihu* < PG [Proto-Germanic] **fehu* < IE [Indo-European] *pekˆu-* (cattle). Cf. ON [Old Norse] *fé*, AS [Anglo-Saxon] *feoh*, Ger[man]

Latin *pecus*, "cattle," the latter being the source of our modern English term *pecuniary*. The longer etiology of Moses 5 thus makes Cain's name virtually synonymous with unholy "acquisition" — to "get gain" by murder and with Satan's help, instead of the first, more positive notion of "gotten" with the Lord's help. It also ties his given name and his new name to "possession."

Cain's declaration "I am free" indicates that he feels that he has been economically emancipated. He is now "possessor" or "master" of his brother's livestock which had now "fall[en] into [his] hands" (Moses 5:33). He is also now "free" from the loathsome company of his brother who "walked in holiness before the Lord" and had offered acceptable sacrifice (see also Hebrews 11:4), whereas Cain had lacked the faith to do so. He also evidently deems himself now fully emancipated from the Lord, whom he had already rejected (Moses 5:16; 25–26), and from covenant bonds, i.e., the "religion" that binds him back[25] to God and to his father Adam.

Significantly, it is in the context of his supposed total "freedom" that Cain claims the title "master." Although we cannot be sure what term stands behind what we have in the restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation (Moses 5), "master" is frequently a divine epithet or appellative (see, e.g., Isaiah 1:3).[26] While most readers focus on the name "Mahan," it is interesting to consider the title "master" in terms of another Genesis passage, with the divine epithet *qōnê*, "possessor," "creator" or "acquirer," i.e., "master." In Genesis 14, Melchizedek and Abraham invoke El-Elyon by the unique title *qōnê šāmayim wā-ʾāreṣ*, "possessor" or "master of heaven and earth":

> And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high

Vieh; Skr [Sanskrit] *paśu-*, Lat[in] *pecu*. The IE root here is *pek* (to shear), found in Gk [Greek] πέκτω, Lat *pecto*."

25 Although its exact etymological meaning is disputed, the Latin noun *religio* (from the verb *religare*) seems to denote "binding back." Religion and its attendant *obligations* (from the same root *-lig*), bind us to God and him to us (cf. D&C 82:10–12). Cf. modern English "league"; French *alliance* and German *Bündnis* ("covenant," "treaty").

26 Isaiah 1:3 applies the appellatives "owner" (*qōnê*) and "master" (*baʿal*) to Yahweh (the Lord), the God of Israel: "The ox knoweth **his owner** (*qōnēhû*), and the ass **his master's** [lit., masters'] (*bĕʿālāw*) crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

> God, **possessor of heaven and earth**: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand [i.e., sworn] unto [the Lord,][27] the most high God, the **possessor of heaven and earth**, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich (Genesis 14:18–23).

Abraham's oath to the "Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth," that he would not take anything belonging to the kingdom of Sodom stands in strict contradistinction to Cain's oath with Satan (also sworn "by the living God," Moses 5:29).[28] The Most High God, the true "possessor" made Abraham rich in "goods" or "possessions." Cain sought to make himself rich — i.e., to "get gain" — by unjust means, especially murder. The king of Sodom's Cainitic value system is evident in his demanding "the persons" (*nepeš*), clearly not for altruistic reasons (see Genesis 13:13; 19:4–5; cf. Moses 5:51). For him, life was property.[29] Abraham, on the other hand, had "gotten," (literally "made," *ʿāśû*) or "won" persons/souls (*nepeš*) in Haran (Genesis 12:5; Abraham 2:15) and presumably all throughout his sojourn from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan and throughout his entire life (cf. Abraham 2:8–15).

According to Abraham 1:1–2, Abram left Ur of the Chaldees for Canaan, in part because he wanted to be "**one who possessed** great knowledge." This knowledge of God, as well as the priesthood that he sought, could only be obtained from this Melchizedek. Abram's (Abraham's) desires stand in stark contrast to Cain's desires for "mastery." Cain had made his brother a kind of sacrifice to Satan — the "god of this world"[30] who promises anything in this world for money — as a means of "get[ing] gain" (Moses 5:31). Abraham, had escaped being

27 The Tetragrammaton, *Yhwh*, is missing in the *Vorlagen* of the LXX (Septuagint), from the Syriac Peshitta, and from 1QGenAp (the Genesis Apocryphon).

28 This contrast is particularly evident in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, but not in Genesis as it now stands.

29 Hugh Nibley (*Approaching Zion*, 436) called this the "Mahan principle" (see further below).

30 On Satan as the self-styled "god of this world," see 2 Corinthians 4:4; compare the title "prince of this world" in John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; D&C 127:11.

made a sacrifice to "Elk-keener"[31] (Elkenah)[32] or Elkunirsa (*El qn ʾrṣ*)[33] by his own father because he "sought for the blessings of the fathers" (Abraham 1:2), and his faith was eventually rewarded by being ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood,[34] the priesthood of El-Elyon, the true *qōnê šāmayim wā-ʾāreṣ* (Genesis 14:19–23; Isaiah 11:1–3).

Ziony Zevit connects the biblical Cain etiology of Genesis 4:1 (cf. Moses 5:16) with Genesis 14:17, 22:

> The Hebrew word translated [in Genesis 4:1] with "created" is *qānîytîy* [*qānîtî*], from the root *q-n-h* [*qny*]. Words based on this root are usually understood as relating to the control of property and are translated with "gain, acquire, purchase," or the like. But a cognate verb that occurs in Ugaritic has a significantly different meaning that is appropriate to the context of the Garden story [i.e., including the Cain and Abel story]. Ugaritic *q-n-y*, used often in a divine epithet, *qnyt ilm*, "creatrix of the gods" suggest that "create" or "form" is likely in Genesis 4:1, as well as Genesis 14:22b, … , "El Elyon, creator of heavens and earth.[35]

This has potentially important implications for Cain's self-identification in Moses 5:31 as "Master" (i.e., "creator," "possessor") of a "great secret" that enabled him to "get gain." If the Genesis text emphasizes that "the Most High God" (El-Elyon) is *qōnê* — "creator" "possessor," "maker," i.e., "master" of heaven and earth — it is also conceivable that *qōnê* stands behind the term "master" in Moses 5:31: Cain is the "master" or "possessor" that "gets gain." It may be also noted that there are intriguing connections here with the Genesis-related Enochic

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See also Isaiah 14:12–15 (2 Nephi 24:12–15); Matthew 4:9–10; Luke 4:5–8; Moses 1:12–23.

31 The original reading for "Elkenah" in the earliest Book of Abraham manuscript. See Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscript and Editions* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2010), 8.

32 See Kevin L. Barney, "On Elkenah as Canaanite El," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19/1 (2010): 22–35.

33 Cf. Baruch Halpern, *From Gods to Gods: The Dynamics of Iron Age Cosmologies* (ed. M. J. Adams; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 65.

34 D&C 84:14: "Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah."

35 Ziony Zevit, *What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 189.

literature — God the "Creator" who teaches the secrets of creation and the Watchers (fallen spirits) who give away the divine "secrets."[36] Satan reveals a "secret" whereby Cain can "get gain" or "create" on earth in imitation of God, the true *qōnê* of heaven and earth.

Further support for the above can be found in south Semitic languages. Like Hebrew *qny*, the Ethiopic verb *qanaya* includes the meanings "acquire, [and] buy" but also to "subjugate, dominate, subdue, tame, train, make serve, make toil, reduce to servitude, bring into bondage, force to work."[37] Leslau notes that the active participial form of this verb, *qanāyi*, means "master."[38] Biella suggests that Old South Arabic *mqn*, found in a difficult reading, most plausibly means "lord, master."[39] She connects this term, interestingly, with Genesis 14:17–22.[40] Moreover, Old South Arabic, *qyn* denotes "administrator" of a god or king or "governor" of a town,[41] which is also close in semantic range to "lord" or "master."

Helaman's statement about the initial formation of secret combinations among the Nephites perhaps takes on additional significance in light of the evidence of *qny* (*qōnê*), Moses 5:16, 31 and Genesis 14:17, 22: "And he went unto those that sent him, and they all entered into a covenant, yea, swearing by their **everlasting Maker** [cf. Ug. *qny,* Heb. *qōnê*] that they would tell no man that Kishkumen had murdered Pahoran" (Helaman 1:11; see further below). Similarly, the first Jaredite secret combination sworn in very similar terms "they all sware unto [Akish], by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth" (Ether 8:14; see further below). The original "secret combination" was, like these, sworn by "the living God" (Moses 5:29).[42]

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36 See, e.g., Andrei A. Orlov, "Secrets of Creation in 2 (Slavonic) Enoch," *Henoch* 22 (2000): 45–62. Accessible online at http://marquette.edu/maqom/enochic.html. Special thanks to my friend David J. Larsen (personal communication) for this insight.

37 Wolf Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 88.

38 Ibid.

39 Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic*, 460.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 454.

42 Moses 5:29: "And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and **by the living God**, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands."

The wordplay on "Cain" and *qny* is reiterated later in the pericope, as the secret combinations and secret works of darkness proliferate. Lamech, who becomes "master of the great secret" after Cain, finds that things quickly get beyond his "mastery":

> For Lamech having entered into a covenant with Satan, after the manner of **Cain**, wherein he became **Master** Mahan, **master** of that great secret which was administered unto **Cain** by Satan; and Irad, the son of Enoch, having known their secret, began to reveal it unto the sons of Adam; Wherefore Lamech, being angry, slew him, not like unto **Cain**, his brother Abel, for the sake of **getting gain**, but he slew him for the oath's sake. For, from the days of **Cain**, there was a secret combination, and their works were in the dark, and they knew every man his brother. (Moses 5:49–51).

Here the earlier wordplay on the name "Cain" and "get gain" (Moses 5:31) is reiterated. The reiterated wordplay, however, marks a progression: no longer are Cain's "great secret," the attendant "oath" and "secret combination" merely about "getting gain," they are now just as much about the preservation of the secret combination itself. Again we note an interesting refraction of Irad the son of Enoch the son of Cain's predicament in the Enoch literature where we find the later, righteous Enoch (from Seth's lineage) being a legitimate revealer of the true heavenly secrets,[43] this in stark contradistinction to Irad's being a revealer of the unrighteous imitations of heavenly secrets and knowledge of the Book of Moses (JST Genesis).

It is worth noting that the phrase "their works were in the dark" here finds its echo in the phrase "their works are [lit. were] in the dark" (*wĕhāyâ bĕmaḥĕšāk maʿăśêhem*) in Isaiah 29:15. Moreover, the phrase "they knew every man his brother" evokes the use of "know" in Genesis 4:1 and Moses 5:16 where the text states that "Adam knew his wife." Thus

43 See, e.g., Andrei A. Orlov, "Enoch as Expert in the Secrets," excerpted from idem, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 107; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebek, 2005), 48–50. Available online at http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/enochsecrets.html; idem, "Titles of Enoch-Metatron in 2 Enoch," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18 (1998): 71–86. Available online at: http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/titles.html. Again, special thanks to David J. Larsen (personal communication) for this insight.

Moses 5:51 may also be suggestive of the depraved sexual mores[44] of the participants in these secret combinations.[45]

Nephite Access to the Fuller Cain-Gain Etiology

In the Book of Mormon, the collocation "secret combination" is used first by Jacob in 2 Nephi 9:9 where he speaks of the devil as "the father of lies … who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto **secret combinations** of murder and all manner of **secret works** of darkness." Similarly, Nephi speaks of "secret combinations … in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil … the founder of all these things; yea, **the founder** of murder, and works of darkness" (2 Nephi 26:22). Both Jacob and Nephi allude to a version of the Cain and Abel story similar to the account recorded in Moses 5, as well as to Isaiah 29, both of which were among the writings on the plates of brass.[46]

For instance, Nephi additionally juxtaposes a citation of Isaiah 29:15, "…and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark" (2 Nephi 28:9) with a paraphrase from Genesis 4:10 ("And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them"). This suggests that Nephi views the formation of apostate churches/organizations in terms of the "Cain" etiology: "For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are **built up to get gain**, and all those who are **built up to get** power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must

44 Draper, Brown, and Rhodes (*Pearl of Great Price*, 76) state that Moses 5:51 "suggest[s] that the secret society formed by the oath-takers encouraged homosexual activity among its members."

45 The notion that this "secret combination" included sexual perversion is perhaps further intimated in Moses 5:53: "And among the daughters of men these things were not spoken, because that Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him and declared these things abroad, and had not compassion." The phrase "had not compassion" suggests the things that Adah and Zillah were "declaring … abroad" brought tremendous shame upon Lamech. Plus, it is not insignificant that Lamech's wives, whose family relationships would have suffered from the dark deeds of this "male only" society, exposed this awful secret almost without hesitation and it evidently became taboo for "the daughters of men" to talk about them.

46 See 1 Nephi 5:11; 19:23; cf. 13:23.

be **brought low in the dust** [citing Isaiah 29:4]." (1 Nephi 22:23); "And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that **they may get gain** and **grind upon the face of the poor** [quoting Isaiah 3:15]" (2 Nephi 26:20; see also 26:29). Wordplay alluding to the name "Cain" is evident in these descriptions.

Although the semantics of "church" in some instances nearly approach those of "combination" (per above), the term "combination" is probably best understood in terms of Mormon's explanation that the organizing principle of these secret societies[47] was to "unite" or "to combine against all righteousness" and to "combine against the people of the Lord" (3 Nephi 6:27–29).[48] The Hebrew term *qāšar* ("to be in league, conspire against")[49] and *qešer* ("alliance, conspiracy)[50] derive from a root that denotes "tying" together.[51] Secret combinations begin among the Nephites as the "band" (cf. *qešer)* of Kishkumen [Kishcumen].[52] Jacob warned many years earlier of "uniting" oneself to "that great and abominable church" (2 Nephi 6:12),[53] expresses a similar idea — an idea that not only enlarges upon Isaiah's descriptions of "Zion" versus works of darkness (Isaiah 29:15), but ultimately harks back to the ancient Zion/secret combination binary evident in Moses 5–8 (cf. Nephi's use of Genesis 4:10 in 2 Nephi 26:3).

After describing the establishment of Gadianton's "secret combinations" in Nephite urban areas (Helaman 3:23), Mormon

47 An alternative description used in 3 Nephi 3:9; Ether 9:6; 11:22. Interestingly, "secret society" was the term that Giddianhi used of the Gadianton secret combination of which he was the leader (see further below).

48 Similar collocations occur in Helaman 6:21: "unite with those bands"; Helaman 7:25: "Yea, wo be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and **ye have united yourselves unto it**, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!"; 3 Nephi 3:7 "unite with us"; (cf. D&C 6:34; 122:7; JS-H 1:20).

49 HALOT, 1153–1154.

50 Ibid., 1154.

51 Ibid., 1153–1154.

52 See Helaman 1:12; 2:3–11; 6:18, 24.

53 2 Nephi 6:12: "And blessed are the Gentiles, they of whom the prophet has written; for behold, if it so be that they shall repent and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved; for the Lord God will fulfil his covenants which he has made unto his children; and for this cause the prophet has written these things."

specifically ties the Gadianton robbers with the fuller version of the "Cain" etiology (Helaman 6). This chapter begins on a seemingly positive note, following the mass Lamanite conversions that followed the theophanic events that attended Nephi and Lehi and God's voice being heard in the Lamanite prison (Helaman 5:20–52). The Lamanites and Nephites were on friendly terms and were able "to buy and to sell, and to **get gain**, according to their desire" (Helaman 6:7). Unfortunately, this prosperity leads quickly to apostasy among the Nephites:

> And in the commencement of the sixty and seventh year the people began to grow exceedingly wicked again. For behold, 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 6:15–16)

Mormon's twofold use of the phrase "get gain" constitutes wordplay on the name "Cain" and his mention of "secret murders" recalls the longer "Cain" etiological narrative (Moses 5). That Mormon has the fuller "Cain" etiological narrative in mind is confirmed a few verses later:

> Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit — Yea, that same being who did plot with **Cain**, that if he would murder his brother Abel it should not be known unto the world. And he did plot with **Cain** and his followers from that time forth. (Helaman 6:26–27).

Mormon matches his repetition of "get gain" in Helaman 6:15–16 with a repetition of the name "Cain." Mormon infers here that all secret combinations ultimately have their source in the Cain's first secret combination. However, Mormon is careful to exculpate Helaman$_2$ from the potential accusation that the concept and practice of secret combinations had come from the Jaredite records in his custody due to any negligence or violation of the charge given to him (Helaman) by his father Alma (Alma 37:27–34). The transmitter of these evil oaths,

covenants and traditions is none other than the "author of all sin" himself, who has the power to "put [them] into the heart of"[54] persons from any culture (see Ether 8:20).

A major point of Mormon's abridgment in Helaman is to illustrate how quickly Cainitic secret combinations can usurp political power and overtake an entire society, as Kishkumen and Gadianton's band did in only a few years:

> And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats — having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men; Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, **that they might get gain and glory of the world**, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills — (Helaman 7:4–5)

Mormon's use of the phrase "get gain" here not only indicates the primary *raison d'être* of the Gadianton robbers, but again evokes the name and memory of Cain and emphasizes that the evil being perpetrated by the Gadianton robbers stands firmly in the tradition of evil first perpetrated by Cain on his righteous brother Abel. Gadianton justice is no more just than Cain's original system of murder-for-gain. Both are utterly satanic.

Mormon apparently takes his verbal cue here from his source, the prophecy of Nephi_2 the son of Helaman_3. The phrase "might get gain and praise of the world" (Helaman 7:5) augurs Nephi's lament:

> O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you? But behold, it is to **get gain**, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might **get** gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things

54 "Put … into the heart": Satan is most often the subject of this collocation. See Moses 4:6; John 13:2; Helaman 6:26, 29. Ether 8:17 makes the daughter of Jared and then Jared the subjects of this expression with the end result that Akish established a secret combination among the Jaredites. The unstated, but clear implication is that Satan put it all into the heart of the daughter of Jared, thus setting off a horrific chain of events.

> of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity. (Helaman 7:20–21)

The name "Cain" is yet again present in the expressions "get gain" and "get gold and silver." Nephi's lament characterizes the problem that will increasingly plague Lamanite and Nephite civilization, but particularly the latter. For Kishkumen and Gadianton's secret combination, as for Cain's, the ends (gain, praise/glory of the world, gold, silver, and the vain things of the world) always justify the means (murder, plundering, robbery, bearing false witness, etc.). Nephi's lament is so plaintive, because of the fatigue of having to so "unwearyingly"[55] combat the efforts of this group to get a chokehold on the entire society.

In 3 Nephi 2–4, the struggle with Cainitic "secret combinations" becomes a fight for survival for both the Nephites and the Lamanites. The Nephite governor Lachoneus receives a letter from Giddianhi, "governor" of the Gadianton secret combination. Giddianhi's letter is bald-faced intimidation, an attempt to win the battle without even fighting a battle:

> And behold, I am Giddianhi; and I am the governor of this **the secret society of Gadianton**; which society and the works thereof I know to be good[56] and **they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us**. And I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may **recover** [i.e., acquire, possess, or obtain again] their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs. I am Giddianhi. (3 Nephi 3:9–10)

Giddianhi appeals to the antiquity of the "works" and traditions of his society, but notably does not state their ultimate source. However, invoking traditional Lamanites claims regarding the right to rule (rights

55 See Helaman 10:4–5.

56 There may be a rhetorical wordplay on the meaning of the name "Nephi" and "Nephites" here. On similar wordplay on Nephi in the Book of Mormon, see Matthew L. Bowen, "Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi's Name," *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 2; idem, "'O Ye Fair Ones': An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi," *Insights* 23/6 (2003): 2–3.

and government/rights of government),[57] Giddianhi gives himself away with his use of a word rendered here as "recover." The verb *qny*/*qnh* — the verb used to explain the name "Cain" in Genesis 4:1 (Moses 5:16) takes on precisely this sense in Isaiah 11:11.[58] The aim or end of the Gadianton robbers is not simply to "**recover** … rights and government" but to "**obtain** … rights to the government";[59] in other words, to "**get** power and **gain**" — Cain's original end, to which he and his successors would use any means necessary, especially the "shedding of blood." Thus, wittingly or unwittingly, Giddianhi's words (as presented by Mormon) also appear to play on the name "Cain."

Following a series of battles in which Giddianhi the "governor" of the Gadianton robbers was killed in battle, and his successor Zemnarihah was hanged from a tree, the Nephite and Lamanite survivors composed this piece of liturgy: "May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them because of power and secret combinations, even as this man [Zemnarihah] hath been felled to the earth" (3 Nephi 4:29). And yet within only a few years, Mormon tells us that a man named Jacob formed yet another secret combination to advance his monarchic ambitions over the Nephites: "And they did enter into a covenant one with another, yea, even into that covenant which was given by them of old, which covenant was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness" (3 Nephi 6:28). Mormon clearly has in mind Cain and the covenant that he entered into with Satan in the beginning (see Moses 5).

The Lord himself foresaw and forewarned that Cainitic secret combinations would destroy the Nephites: "But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was **the son of perdition**; for t**hey will**

57 See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in the Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27 (Fall 1987): 15–37.

58 In Exodus 15:16, the Lord is said to have "purchased" or "acquired" (*qānîtā*) his people. Isaiah 11:11, possibly citing this text, says that "the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover [*liqnôt*] the remnant of his people." Even in the former passage, however, the verb *qny* can be understood in the sense of "recover." The Lord was "recovering" his people from Egypt according to his covenant with their ancestors.

59 We note the clear similar language in Giddianhi's stated aim in his epistle to Lachoneus ("may recover their rights and government," 3 Nephi 3:10) and Ammaron's stated aim in his letter to Moroni ("to obtain their rights to the government," Alma 54:24).

sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads." (3 Nephi 27:32). Jesus's words allude not only to Judas Iscariot who sold him for thirty pieces of silver (meager "gain"!), but also to Cain who murdered Abel to "get gain."[60] Indeed, Mormon reports that by ca. 201 CE, the people had become focused on riches, no longer lived the law of consecration, and "began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to **get gain**, and began to deny the true church of Christ" (4 Nephi 1:26) and within another 50–60 years, the "build[ing] up" of these "churches" becomes the "build[ing] up [again of] the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton" (4 Nephi 1:41–42). Mormon again evokes the name and legacy of Cain, and the Nephites, like the latter, are destined for destruction.[61]

Language from Genesis 4 and the longer "Cain" etiology preserved and restored in Moses 5 is further evident in Moroni's words to his latter-day audience at the close of his father's (Mormon's) records. Moroni emphasized that the record that he was "hid[ing] up … unto the Lord" no one would be able to "have … to **get gain**" (Mormon 8:14). He further declared that the record would "come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness" (Mormon 8:27) and asks, "Why have built up churches unto yourselves to **get gain**?" (Mormon 8:33). The expression "get gain" recalls the name Cain and the first murder to "get gain" (Moses 5:31, 50). Moroni's additional description of "blood … cry[ing] unto the Lord" recalls Genesis 4:10 (Moses 5:35); and the expression "secret combinations" and "the work of darkness" recalls the language of the fuller etiology akin to the account in Moses 5 (see especially Moses 5:51–55).

Moroni then issues a warning to latter-day Gentiles using the same language from the longer version of the Cain etiology (cf. Genesis 4, Moses 5):

> Yea, why do ye build up **your secret abominations to <u>get gain</u>**, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and

60 Both Satan and Cain stand as archetypal "Perdition" and "sons of perdition" (see D&C 76:25–46; Moses 5:24).

61 As Mormon later reports to his son Moroni, "I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 8:28). The Nephites followed the way of Cain and the antediluvians.

> also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the **blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance** upon your heads? Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the **blood of the saints** upon you, for he will not suffer their **cries** any longer. (Mormon 8:40–41).

The phrase "get gain" here again constitutes a literary echo of the name "Cain" in its fuller etiology and the imagery of "blood … cry[ing] unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance" recalls Genesis 4:10 (Moses 5:35) almost verbatim. The influence of the "Cain" etiology upon, and its importance to, the writers of the Book of Mormon can scarcely be overstated. However, its importance stems not only from its presence on the brass plates, but also from the fact that it was the Cain narrative and the subsequent narratives detailing "secret combinations" that inspired their use among the Jaredites, a mistake that eventuated in the destruction of that civilization (see Ether 8:18–21), as it also would the destruction of the Nephites (Helaman 2:13–14).

Jaredite Access to the Fuller Cain-Gain Etiology

Alma's paranetic words to his son Helaman sometime before his death contain instructions that read something like a prelude to the story of the fall of the Jaredite nation that will be told in much greater depth in the Book of Ether:

> Therefore ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people, and only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them; and ye shall teach them to abhor such wickedness and abominations and murders; and ye shall also teach them that these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders. For behold, **they murdered** all the prophets of the Lord who came among them to declare unto them concerning their iniquities; and **the blood of those whom they murdered did cry unto the Lord their God for vengeance upon those who were their murderers**; and thus the judgments of God did come upon these **workers of darkness and secret combinations**. Yea, and **cursed be the land forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations**, **even unto destruction**, except they repent before they are fully ripe.

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

Alma's use of the phrase "blood … did cry unto the Lord their God" evokes Genesis 4:10 as we have seen it recalled previously. The expressions "murder," "workers of darkness," "secret combinations" further recall the longer etiology of Moses 5. Moreover, Alma's words anticipate the possibility that the secret combinations that destroyed the Jaredites might also destroy the Lamanites. His words, of course, proved prophetic.

When Moroni undertakes to give an account of the Jaredites and their fate, he makes clear from the outset that the Jaredites had an account of the Primeval History similar in content to the account in Genesis 1–11:

> And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews — Therefore I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account. But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed. (Ether 1:3–5)

Moroni knew, as did his father Mormon, concerning "the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews" (Mormon 7:8).[62] Moroni's supposition, probably based on his knowledge of the contents of the brass plates, is that the Gentiles would have an account of the Primeval History down to the time of the tower (Genesis 1–11). Consequently, he does not expend time or energy recapitulating this account from the Jaredite record. However, we should not overlook the fact that, according to Moroni, the Jaredites had their own account of the Primeval History. Later evidence from the Book of Ether confirms that this account included details concerning the foundation of secret combinations. Moreover, Moroni — like Alma, his predecessor — is

62 See also 1 Nephi 13:23; 2 Nephi 29:12–14.

reluctant to go into detail about the specific contents of that account. As we will see, some Jaredites who had access to this account did not read it (as we might) as a paranetic warning against the formation of secret combinations — quite the opposite:

> Now the daughter of Jared was exceedingly fair. And it came to pass that she did talk with her father, and said unto him: Whereby hath my father so much sorrow? Hath he not read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old, that they **by their secret plans** did **obtain** [i.e., "gain," "acquire"] kingdoms and great **glory**? (Ether 8:9).

The daughter of Jared's use of a term translated "did obtain" subtly recalls the name Cain and the phrase "get gain" as we have seen it used elsewhere.

Although apparently withheld from the Nephite public, at least for a time,[63] Moroni presents a fuller story of the origin of the secret combinations that destroyed the Jaredites, written as a paranetic warning to the Gentiles, although he too seems to have embraced Alma's editorial charge to Helaman to "retain" the most unsavory elements of the account from general readership.[64] The Jaredites were, of course, themselves Gentiles that had been led to the western hemisphere millennia earlier to inherit the land as a land of promise and whose destruction Moroni uses as a cautionary tale for latter-day Gentiles whom the Lord would lead to the land of promise over the course of future centuries.

Just as secret combinations arose out of a Nephite political dispute (see Helaman 1), Jaredite secret combinations arose amid intrigue and infighting for the throne in the royal family. At the instigation of his daughter (mentioned above), Jared enlists Akish to assassinate Jared's own father, offering his daughter to Akish as the bride-price for this assassination. The daughter of Jared and Akish appealed to known and, even by then, ancient accounts of "secret combinations." Moroni's description of these events specifically recall the story of Cain's murder of Abel in the more detailed ancient version akin to Moses 5:

> And it came to pass that Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolk, and said unto them: Will ye swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall

63 See Alma 37:27–34.

64 See especially Alma 37:27–31.

> desire of you? And it came to pass that they all sware unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, the same should lose his life. And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish. And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from **Cain**, who was a murderer from the beginning. And they were kept up by the power of the devil to administer these oaths unto the people, to keep them in darkness, to help such as sought power **to gain** power, and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms. And it was the daughter of Jared who put it into his heart to search up these things of old; and Jared put it into the heart of Akish; wherefore, Akish administered it unto his kindred and friends, leading them away by fair promises to do whatsoever thing he desired. And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God; For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man. (Ether 8:13–19)

Moroni's use of wordplay on Cain and "to gain" is evident here and it effectively connects this scene back to the Primeval History as well as the events that led to the destruction of the Nephites that Mormon and Moroni have already recounted. Perhaps Moroni is also invoking the law of witnesses (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15): the fact that the Jaredites and Nephites knew the Cain etiology independently of one another and yet both nations adopted the ways of Cain and his followers to their own destruction, serves as a twofold witness and warning to the mighty latter-day gentile nation "raised up" upon the land of promise, of the inevitable fate of those who embrace Cainitic secret combinations.

If we take Moroni at his word, his use of the phrases, "Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning," "them of old"/"these things of old" and "secret combination" leaves no doubt that the Jaredites had their own account of Cain, his followers and their doings, and that it is these very events that he has in mind. Moroni is, however, reluctant to go into

detail about the specifics of this account, either from the brass plates or the Jaredite records:

> And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites. And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi. And whatsoever nation shall uphold such **secret combinations, to get power and gain**, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; *for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not* (Ether 8:20–22)

Yet again, Moroni uses the collocation "get … gain," thus invoking the name "Cain." For good measure, he uses the phrase "blood … cry[ing] from the ground" from Genesis 4:10 (Moses 5:35–36). The secret combinations that ultimately destroyed both the Jaredites and the Nephites trace their origin to Cain, Satan, and organizing to "murder and get gain." Moroni's point could not be clearer: the path of Cain and secret combinations to "get gain" is a path to individual, collective, and even total national destruction. Mormon and Moroni reiterate this lesson almost ad nauseam in an urgent, almost frantic attempt to get the attention of their latter-day audience. They witnessed firsthand what these combinations did to their society during their own lifetimes.

Moroni, who has seen the latter-day Gentiles, and "know[s] [their] doing," particularly insists on getting through to this group. Again the wordplay on "Cain" and "get … gain" are a major focus of his warning:

> Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to **get power and gain** — and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be. Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be

> unto it, because of the **blood of them who have been slain**; **for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up**. For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath **caused man to commit murder from the beginning**; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning. (Ether 8:23–25).

The same "secret combinations" that were built up in the beginning of time are to be distinguished little from those that will be (are) built up in the end of time. In fact, the former inform us of the nature of the latter. In other words, their *raison d'être* is just same as Cain's "secret combination" to "murder and get gain" (Moses 5:31) or to "get power and gain" (Ether 8:22–23). Again, Moroni invokes the language of Genesis 4:10 and the fuller version of the "Cain" etiology from the brass plates to emphasize the nature and source of all secret combinations.

Moroni further highlights the inherent instability of the leadership of these secret combinations and the political power they wield once it has been obtained. No sooner has Omer fled and abdicated (by divine inspiration, Ether 9:1–3) and Jared taken the throne (9:4), then Akish seeks the head and throne of Jared, his father-in-law (9:5). Moroni ominously notes that "so great had been the spreading of this wicked and secret society that it had corrupted the hearts of all the people; therefore Jared was murdered upon his throne, and Akish reigned in his stead" (9:6). Indeed, war immediately breaks out between Jared and his sons over the throne (9:8–12). Not only had the secret combination corrupted all hearts, "the people of Akish were **desirous for gain**, even as Akish was **desirous for power**; wherefore, **the sons of Akish did offer them money**, by which means they drew away the more part of the people after them" (9:11). The ensuing war, which lasts "many years" claims the lives of the entire Jaredite nation, "save it were thirty souls, and they who fled with the house of Omer" (9:12). Moroni thus evokes the name "Cain" again with the term "gain" (cf. Moses 5:31). Just as the Cainitic secret combination before the flood culminated in the near destruction of humanity, the derivative secret combination among the Jaredites destroyed that civilization and not just once!

After a comparatively brief return to righteousness and prosperity — a few generations — the Jaredites and their monarchy begin to decline. Heth, the fourth generation from Omer "began to embrace the secret plans again of old" (Ether 9:26) which swiftly leads to Heth himself "perish[ing] by famine and all his household" except Shez, and "Shez [beginning] to build up again a broken people" (10:1). Prophets came crying repentance, but they were rejected (9:28–29). This is the second near-total destruction of the Jaredite nation due to Cainitic secret combinations.

Later in his translation of the Jaredite record, Moroni makes clear that the final, permanent destruction of the Jaredites also began with the revival of the secret combination that nearly destroyed them twice previously:

> And it came to pass that there arose a rebellion among the people, because of that **secret combination** which was built up to **get power and gain**; and there arose a mighty man among them in iniquity, and gave battle unto Moron, in which he did overthrow the half of the kingdom; and he did maintain the half of the kingdom for many years. (Ether 11:15)

Again, the memory and name of Cain are evoked by the collocation "get power and gain" (cf. Ether 8:22–23; Moses 5:31). In response to this development, prophets again come preaching repentance and prophesying of the destruction of the people, including issuing a warning that "the Lord God would send or bring forth another people to possess the land," but "they did **reject** all the words of the prophets, **because of their secret society and wicked abominations**" (Ether 11:20–22). Just as it was in the beginning with Cain when he "rejected"[65] the Lord on account of his love of Satan and "murder to get gain," so it was with the Jaredites. In the end Coriantumr and his people also "**rejected** all the words of Ether" and brought upon themselves the destruction foretold. Coriantumr alone (that we know of) lived to see the prophecy of another people possessing land — the Judahite Mulekites (of the house of Israel). Moroni's warning to the Gentiles today is expressly this: repent or suffer the exact same fate. The Lord's people will eventually "inherit the

65 Moses 5:16, 25–26.

earth"[66] — i.e., "inherit [dispossess] the Gentiles,"[67] whether the latter repent or not.

Conclusion and Pragmatics: "Awake to a Sense of Your Awful Situation"

There can be little doubt that the references throughout the Book of Mormon to "secret combinations" that enable men to "murder" and "get gain" have a direct reference to Cain whose name is etiologically tied to the verb *qny*, denoting "get," "acquire," "(pro)create." The Nephites on the brass plates and the Jaredites in their records had access to a fuller etiological narrative than the one that currently stands in Genesis 4. That etiological narrative exerted tremendous influence on Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni who are perhaps most responsible for the contents of the Book of Mormon.

In the repetition of the "Cain" wordplay and the numerous references throughout the Book of Mormon to the "Cain" etiology, we can discern one of Mormon's and Moroni's most urgent messages to people today, particularly the Gentiles. Moroni warns that Cainitic secret combinations "are had among all people"; that they "caused the destruction of [the Jaredites] … and also the destruction of the people of Nephi" and that "whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they [i.e., that nation] shall be destroyed" (Ether 8:20–22), this because "precious" to the Lord is the "the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15) and the "blood of his saints, which … cr[ies] unto him from the ground for vengeance" (Ether 8:22) — i.e., for justice. The way that all churches and organizations are formed and the purposes for which they are formed truly matter.

The description of human society after Cain and before the Flood could just as easily describe or own society: "And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power" (Moses 6:15). The question then becomes: are those combinations "get[ting] above" us (Ether 8:23)? Or have they already "gotten above

66 Psalm 25:11–12; 37:9–11, 22; Matthew 5:5 (3 Nephi 12:5); D&C 56:13–20; D&C 59:1–2 (and *passim*).

67 See also Isaiah 49:8 (1 Nephi 21:8); 54:3 (3 Nephi 22:3). See further Numbers 33:51–52; Deuteronomy 7:17–24; Judges 11:19–24; and especially Micah 4:13; 5:8–9; 3 Nephi 20:15–20; Mormon 5:24.

us"? In describing what he called Cain's "Mahan principle," Hugh Nibley gives an appraisal of modern socio-economics that is both sobering and frightening:

> The "Mahan principle" is a frank recognition that the world's economy is based on the exchange of life for property. This is most apparent, of course, in time of war — a Catch-22. Today the biggest business in the world is the selling of deadly weapons by all to all, with the advantage going to the most efficient killing machines. Not long ago it was drugs, but it is all the same in a descending scale of accountability, where none is free from guilt: the hit man, soldier of fortune, weapons dealer, manufacturer, plundering whole species for raw materials, destroying life in both processing them and getting them (by pollution, dangerous work conditions, and so on), and by distributing them (additives, preservatives). The fearful processes of industry shorten and impoverish life at every level, from forced labor to poisonous air and water. This is the world's economy, for Satan is "the prince of this world."[68]

All of this brings us back to the "Cain" etiology and the horrific cynicism of Cain's retort to the Lord: "Am I my brother's keeper"? The testimony of the Book of Mormon and latter-day prophets[69] is an unambiguous "yes!"

If we are true "saints," we ever seek to emulate the Lord, the true possessor/creator of heaven and earth who, as the Good Shepherd, ever seeks to "recover" (*liqnôt,* i.e., reacquire, regain) his people,[70] like sheep, wherever they are scattered. And he gives us — and has given the latter-day Gentiles — the same responsibility (see 2 Nephi 29:5; D&C 39:11). In the end, it will come down to a simple choice: to gather to Zion (i.e., to gather to the Lord) or to "fight against … Zion"[71] and unite ourselves to the great and abominable church — i.e., "combine against all righteousness" (3 Nephi 6:28). We can organize, create, and unite the Lord's way or the way of the world, the way of Cain — the way of

68 Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 436–437.

69 See, e.g., Dallin H. Oaks, "Brother's Keeper" in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1986, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 20.

70 Isaiah 11:11; Jacob 6:2; D&C 39:11.

71 Isaiah 29:7–8; 1 Nephi 22:14, 19; 2 Nephi 6:12–13; 27:3. See also 1 Nephi 11:34–36; 14:13; 2 Nephi 25:14; 29:14; Alma 23:7; D&C 121:38.

the adversary. We cannot do both. We need "revelation upon revelation [and] knowledge upon knowledge that [we may] know the mysteries and peaceable things — that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal" (D&C 42:61), not Satan's counterfeits.

In a sense much truer than Cain's self-boasted freedom ("I am free!" Moses 5:33), "**men are free** according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). In view of the fact that Cain and Satan are forever miserable, may we choose the Savior, liberty, and eternal life to our eternal happiness.

Moroni and his predecessors were "commanded to write" what they wrote so "that evil might be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved" (Ether 8:26; cf. 2 Nephi 30:18). Evil will be done away and humanity saved as soon as — and to the degree that — the Gentiles and all the house of Israel give heed to their words of warning.

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