

THE GADIANTON PARTY SECRET OATHS AND COMBINATIONS

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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.

—Ether 8:23–24

There exists another evil described in the Book of Mormon that has a power to undo the freedoms that are connected to the land of promise. This organization for the stratagem of power goes beyond the individual wickedness described as spiritual Babylon in this book. This conspiracy seeks to gain control of the populace and the leaders of governments, persuading them to commit the grossest of crimes without fear of retribution. This is all done by the same secret oaths and combinations that were established by Satan with Cain, the son of the first man Adam.

When Satan succeeded in giving some of the fruit of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” to Adam and Eve, he (along with our first parents) received a chastisement and consequence. However, a blessing is given from God to the first couple. To give mankind a chance in life, where Satan is the “god of this world” and the “natural man is an enemy to God,” a loving Father placed “enmity” between man and Satan. This enmity is a natural revulsion and reaction against evil. Coupled with the light of Christ, mankind has an innate desire to look for another way for doing things—something true and righteous, rather than something wrong. However, by learning to accept wickedness and participating willfully in sin, man forfeits that enmity and “light” because “that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience” (D&C 93:39).

Satan uses this enmity between good and evil to destroy all righteousness, seeking the temporal and spiritual misery of mankind. Satan fell from the pre-earth life because of his pride and, in this world, *he receives his powers and priesthood's from the pride of men*. Because of the pride of man, Satan gains control over spirits who choose “darkness rather than light” and bodies that have been created by God. With this “power of pride,” Satan can then use the wealth of his

worldly kingdom to “purchase” the hearts and minds of world leaders, thereby gaining control of the military and economic machines that control of the nations of the earth.

Adam and Eve

Since the time of Adam and Eve, the goal of every prophet of God in every dispensation was—and still is—to “seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion” (D&C 6:6, 11:6, 12:6) among the people of the Lord. To create a people, individually and collectively, who will have “one heart and one mind” and “dwell in righteousness” so there will be “no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). This goal has failed in every dispensation so far except during the time of Enoch and Melchizedek. And even then, the people were so wicked on earth at that time that their righteous cities were literally taken away from this wicked world.

What causes this separation between good and evil? It is not just the knowledge of good and evil that leads to a fall and separation from God, but the power to “do” good or evil in the presence of the other by our will and moral choice. There is a beginning to this separation of spiritual wickedness (Babylon) and spiritual righteous (Zion). It began in the beginning, as Adam and Eve were “driven” out of the Garden of Eden.

Tradition, rather than canonized scripture, has taught us that Adam and Eve knew and understood the gospel before they were driven out of Eden. This traditional understanding is usually attributed to Eve keeping Adam on course with her inspired will and her desire for children. However, a careful reading of Moses 5 reveals that there were at least three generations living outside the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve received any knowledge about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. Before the Fall, there was no death or separation from God in the garden, and thus no need for the gospel plan in that immortal state of innocence. However, it is taught that *if* they partook of the fruit, *then* a Savior would be provided to restore that which would be lost—the immortality and the presence of God. After the Fall, Adam and his wife Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden to begin their life in a new and terrifying environment.

And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth. And from that time forth, the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begat sons and daughters. And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord...And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. (Moses 5:2–6)

Adam and Eve, seeking light and truth from messengers sent from God, were then taught the reason of sacrifice and that it represents the sacrifice of the “Son of God.” They were told to repent and do all things in the “name of the Son for evermore” (Moses 5:8). An important point is found in Moses 5 and 6 that should be noted. In Moses 5:8–9, the gospel is given to Adam, but the details of the gospel that was given him are actually located in Moses 6.

In Moses 6:51–68 Enoch began saying, “he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying” (Moses 6:51), and then Enoch began quoting from the Book of Adam and this continues through verses 52–68. These 17 verses in Moses 6 comprise the detailed teachings of the Fall, which occurred during the time period between the verses of Moses 5:8 and Moses 5:9.

Assuming the reader is familiar with Moses 6:51–68, we continue where Adam and Eve, having been taught by the angel, now understood and rejoiced:

And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for *because of my transgression my eyes are opened*, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: *Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.* (Moses 5:10–11)

Both Adam and Eve proclaimed that “were it not for our transgression,” their eyes would never have opened and they ‘never should have known’ the gospel plan (Moses 5:10–11). Lehi explained to his son what would happen if our first parents hadn’t participated in the Fall, and never received the gospel:

And now, behold, *if Adam had not transgressed* he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And *all things which were created must have remained in the same state* in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

And they would have had *no children*; wherefore they would have *remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.* (2 Nephi 2:22–23)

Adam and Eve would have remained in innocence without knowledge of the gospel plan as it would not be needed in that immortal state. Alma continued this discussion as he taught about the fall and the necessity of Adam and Eve learning about the plan of salvation. Alma stated that “after death” had come to Adam and Eve, because they lived in a temporal world, it was “expedient that man should know” the plan of salvation:

...but it was appointed unto men that they must die; and after death, they must come to judgment, even that same judgment of which we have spoken, which is the end.

And *after* God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;

Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.

And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works. (Alma 12:27–30)

It is also taught in the Doctrine and Covenants that the gospel plan was not taught until Adam and Eve had posterity on the earth. Here we learn there was a lengthy time between Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden of Eden and their coming to a knowledge of the gospel plan:

Wherefore, I, the Lord God, caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my presence, because of his transgression, wherein he became spiritually dead,

which is the first death, even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed.

But, behold, I say unto you that I, the Lord God, gave unto Adam and unto his seed, that they should not die as to the temporal death, until I, the Lord God, should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance and redemption, through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son. (D&C 29:41–42)

These verses declare that Adam and his posterity would “not die as to the temporal death” until the gospel should be declared to them by angels from God. Traditional teachings have persuaded many to believe that Eve understood the gospel plan before the fall, and hence she desired to partake of the fruit and convinced her husband to do so also. This concept could not be further from the truth according to the scriptures. Tradition is often more common and acceptable than truth and scripture.

It is clear in scripture that Adam and Eve did not understand the gospel plan of salvation before the fall. The need for a Savior and the gospel plan did not exist until the fall, as ‘*then a Savior would be provided.*’ Even though this concept is contrary to traditional thought, it is scripturally correct. The fall of Adam was a result of eternal marriage, not because of an understanding of the plan of salvation. In Moses we are taught that the fall was a result of a command to remain with Eve rather than an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the Lord questioned Adam about why he ate of the fruit, Adam responds, “The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat” (Moses 4:18). The fall was a consequence of eternal marriage, not that of gospel knowledge or an understanding of the responsibilities of having children. As Lehi taught, “all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created... And they would have had no children; wherefore (because) they would have remained in a state of innocence...” (2 Nephi 2:22–23), they would have known nothing about the gospel or having children (the potential, yes, but not the sexuality). Adam and Eve were taught the gospel and the plan of salvation and were told to “teach it unto your children” and encouraged again to “teach these things freely unto your children” (Moses 6:57–58).¹

After being cast out from the Garden of Eden and having children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, Adam and Eve are taught the gospel by heavenly messengers:

And thus the gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Moses 5:58)

Teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ—of faith, repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost—begins the effort to establish Zion. However, Satan always has strategic plans to stop the establishment of Zion and will institute his plan and teachings to establish the concepts of Babylon.

Once the gospel was on the earth and revealed to the prophet and patriarch Adam, he began to teach his posterity as commanded in Moses 6:57–58. Adam and Eve “made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:12). At the same time, Satan—“that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light...” (2 Nephi 9:9)—was there teaching his doctrines and his alternate plan as Adam instructed his family about the plan of salvation. Perhaps appearing as an “angel of light,” the wicked one taught the posterity of

¹ Enoch quoted from the Book of Adam in Moses 6:51 and continued from Adam’s record to Moses 6:68. These 17 verses are the detail of instruction that takes place in between the events of Moses 5:8–9.

Adam and Eve that he also was a son of God, one whom they can see, unlike the Son of God their father Adam taught about:

And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish. (Moses 5:13)

Notice that only after the gospel was taught to the posterity of Adam that a choice could be made leading to a moral judgment and action that resulted in Adam's posterity becoming "carnal, sensual, and devilish." In spite of the great success enjoyed by Satan and his followers among all the posterity of Adam, our first parents Adam and Eve remained true and faithful to the light and knowledge they had received.

Cain

Now that Adam and Eve had been taught the gospel and had participated in the ordinances, Adam and Eve had another child—not the first, but the first *after* they received the gospel of Jesus Christ:

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. (Moses 5:22)

Adam and Eve hoped that this son, the firstborn child after receiving the gospel, would not reject the gospel as the other children had done. As with most mothers, Eve likely spent considerable effort teaching him and making sure that he would learn at every opportunity, praying that her son would not "reject" the words of the Lord (Moses 5:16). As time progressed, Cain became a priesthood holder as did his younger brother Abel, and they began to function in the priesthood ordinances.² But over time and by his choice, Cain "hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?" (Moses 5:16). Scripture summarizes the righteousness of the firstborn in the gospel, by stating that, Cain rejected the "greater council" from God (Moses 5:25) and "loved Satan more than God" (Moses 5:18, 28).

In the Book of Moses, we learn that Cain was willing to sell that which was sacred for money and power. He and his brother Abel held the priesthood, accepted the gospel, and participated in their endowment of power. Both were offering sacrifices (a priesthood ordinance) unto the Lord; however, Cain made his offering under the command of Satan, for he "loved Satan more than God" (Moses 5:18). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that Cain held the priesthood even though he was not righteous:

The power, glory and blessings of the Priesthood could not continue with those who received ordination only as their righteousness continued; for *Cain also being authorized to offer sacrifice, but not offering it in righteousness, was cursed*. It signifies, then, that the ordinances must be kept in the very way God has appointed; otherwise their Priesthood will prove a cursing instead of a blessing.³

² Continuing the quote, Joseph Smith stated, "If Cain had fulfilled the law of righteousness as did Enoch, he could have walked with God all the days of his life, and never failed of a blessing." See: *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City:Deseret Book Co., 1976], 169.

³ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4:207, 209; or see, Joseph Smith, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, edited by Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon [Salt Lake City:Bookcraft, 1997], 504.

As the time came for Adam to set apart his son who would receive the birthright and become the next grand patriarch, Cain—the eldest in the gospel—was unprepared spiritually for this responsibility. The birthright goes to the first *righteous* son, not necessarily the firstborn son, as can be seen throughout scriptural history. A few examples are Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Ruben and Joseph, and Laman and Nephi. Not all responsibilities are taken away from the firstborn, but the birthright of priesthood authority and keys goes to the first righteous born son. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet Joseph has taught the requirements to become a “son of perdition,” as Cain was called (Moses 5:24):

Thus saith the Lord concerning all those *who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—*

They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;

For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;

Concerning whom I have said there is *no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—*

Having *denied the Holy Spirit after having received it*, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame.

These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels— (D&C 76:31–36)

Abel’s righteousness and faith in his priesthood responsibilities is described as the Lord having “respect unto Abel, and to his offering” (Moses 5:20) but the offering of Cain was rejected by God. This rejection made Cain “wroth, and his countenance fell” (Moses 5:21), which pleased Satan, for now he (Satan) had under his control a priesthood holder who participated in sacred ordinances connected to the ‘oath and covenant’ of the priesthood, with which to set up his secret oaths and combinations. The Lord spoke to Cain in Moses 5:23, explaining that Cain could be accepted by being obedient, but if he did not live up to every covenant that he had made, he would be in Satan’s power. The Lord also told Cain that he would become “perdition” if he continued to follow Satan. Contained in this “oath and covenant” is the definition of Cain and his title of “perdition.” In D&C 84 we read:

But whoso breaketh this covenant (*the oath and covenant of the priesthood*) after he hath received it, and *altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.* (D&C 84:41; see also D&C 76:34)

Cain made his choice, and “altogether turneth therefrom” and “listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, *neither to Abel, his brother*” (Moses 5:26). This verse implies that Abel was now the priesthood leader and held a position of authority over Cain because of his disobedience. This pattern of the younger—but more righteous—son becoming the priesthood leader over a wicked elder brother seems to be a motif connected to the threat of death and murder in the scriptures.

To Cut a Covenant

Satan was now able to set up his kingdom based upon pride and mankind’s desire for wealth, power, and the lusts of flesh. Satan took the sacred ‘oaths and covenants’ of endowed power that

Cain had received from the Lord and transformed them into ‘secret oaths and combinations,’ establishing his powers and priesthoods upon the earth. Elder McConkie taught about the plan of Satan in relation to the offering of Cain:

In relation to the kingdom of God, Joseph Smith said, “the devil always sets up his kingdom at the very same time in opposition to God” (*TPJS*, 365). And since the kingdom of God or true church has been on earth from age to age, so also has the kingdom of the devil or the church of the devil. Adam and Abel had true worship and offered sacrifices in the way the Lord ordained. On the other hand, “Cain loved Satan more than God.” That is, he chose to live after the manner of the world, and it was Satan, not the Lord, who told Cain, “Make an offering unto the Lord” (Moses 5:18). Thus the pattern was set for all ages: Satan tells men to worship the Lord, but the proposed worship that he gives them is false and without saving power.⁴

Satan required Cain to perform the *secret* “oaths” and enter into the covenant:

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. (Moses 5:29)

These same “oaths” were administered in the Book of Mormon, and the text explained the reason they exist:

And it came to pass that they all swore 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*. (Ether 8:14–16)

The Hebrew idiom “to enter into a covenant” consists of the words “*karat beriyth*,” or to “*cut a covenant*.” The word *cut* is the oath, and the *covenant* is the stipulations associated with it. The ancient covenant could not be made without an oath, which would be a “cutting” symbol of death or sacrifice. For Satan to require Cain and his ‘brethren’ (it was a conspiracy, therefore a ‘combination’) to ‘swear by their ‘throats, and their heads’ was the symbol and sign of death and their willingness to sacrifice their life if they would fail to live up to the stipulations of the covenant of secrecy.⁵ These stipulations are “that they tell it not,” making it a secret oath and combination, “that thy father may not know it.” This ancient formulary is seen even today in the childhood play of ‘crossing your heart (the cutting in two) and hoping to die’ in a promise to keep a secret. When Satan required Cain to swear by his throat or head, there would have been a symbolic gesture like the finger across the throat.⁶ Abraham preformed a similar oath when he

⁴ McConkie, Bruce R., *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, [Salt Lake City, Utah:Deseret Book Company, 1985], 340.

⁵ *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, [Nashville, New York, Abingdon Press, 1962], 355–357.

⁶ *Ibid.*

received his covenant from the Lord. He was required to cut the larger animals into two parts, and the smaller animals he cut their throats, then passed in between these parts, signifying that this covenant was bound by blood and sacrifice (Genesis 15:9–18).

The kingdom of the devil must be set up and patterned after the true priesthood order and organization. While the Kingdom of God is powered by love and humility, the kingdom of the devil is propagated by enmity and pride which sets the stage for the secret society to “murder and get gain,” also known as the Mahan principle (Moses 5:31). Following the death of Abel, Cain gloried in the murder of his brother, saying, “I am free”—free from the priesthood authority of his younger brother through Abel’s murder. And “surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands” became the gain (Moses 5:33). When questioned by the Lord about Abel, Cain declared one of the first doctrines of Babylon: “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Moses 5:34). Followers of Satan have no responsibility for the welfare of their brethren, claiming as Korihor taught,

that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime. (Alma 30:17)

When Cain realized the curse that would come upon him for the murder of his brother, he stated, “Satan tempted me because of my brother’s flock. And I was wroth also; for his offering thou didst accept and not mine” (Moses 5:38). Cain’s excuses form the basic tenant of Babylon, defined by Paul as “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). The word for “love of money” in the Greek is *philarguria* which means not just “love” of money, but a “desire for money,” or “wanting money in the bank.” Many people seem to have a terminal case of *philarguria*, falsely assuming that the Lord will bless the righteous with financial success or, more adversely, justifying that “I am wealthy; *because I am righteous.*” Wealth is no more a sign of righteousness than poverty is proof of wickedness.

Satan’s first article of faith is that “you can have anything in this world for money.” This love or desire for money and wealth works through the pride of mankind, giving Satan his power and control over those who seek for riches. The first commandment given to the church in this dispensation was

Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. (D&C 6:7)

The individual wicked elements that caused the downfall of the Nephite nation are reviewed again in 3 Nephi.

Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this—Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the *puffing them up with pride*, tempting them to *seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world.* (3 Nephi 6:15)

These four elements lie at the heart of individual wickedness which may eventually be expanded in the foundation of the ‘secret oaths and combinations.’ All wickedness and iniquity are built upon (1) pride; (2) seeking for power and authority; (3) seeking for riches; and (4) seeking for the vain things of the world. These are the iniquities that caused the downfall of the Nephite nation, and perhaps the downfall of all the great nations that have existed on the earth. Nephi,

speaking about the desires of the church of the devil and those who belong to it, elaborated on the four elements mentioned above, saying:

For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up (1) to get gain, and all those who are built up (2) to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up (3) to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who (4) 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 be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet. (1 Nephi 22:23, numerals added)

Because of this pride of the natural man, Satan can use the money of the world to buy up and control the leaders of nations, military machines, and even religious leaders around the world. All the power that Satan has is *given* to him through the disobedience and rebelliousness of man, just as Cain willfully turned to Satan and openly rebelled against God. Satan's power lies in the pride and enmity of the natural man. The control of Satan is only possible through humility and a "remembrance of our own nothingness before God" (Mosiah 4:5–11), exercising faith unto repentance in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Without pride, Satan has no power, for:

redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, *unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.* (2 Nephi 2:6–7)

The evil of this modern world is like "as it was in the days of Noah" (JS–Matthew 1:41)—rampant with wickedness and the influence of evil. Because of his faith, the Lord showed Enoch the great day of Satan's power, and "He beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced" (Moses 7:26, see also 3 Nephi 9:2). Through pride and the secret oaths and combinations, Satan seeks to control the world's governments and nations, religions, and philosophies.

The doctrines of Cain are different than individual wickedness, though founded on self-centeredness and the lack of love for his fellow man, and even his own family, asking, "am I my brother's keeper?" (Moses 5:34). Provoked by lust, a covetousness murder was committed and "Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands" (Moses 5:33). Founded on the Mahan Principle, Cain declared, "Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret that I may *murder and get gain.*" The Mahan principle is centered on "gain" and murder—not just the murder of man, but all life, for the purpose of personal profit and gain. "Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness" (Moses 5:31).

The Mahan principle lies even beyond the individual pride of Babylon. Encompassed in the pride of Babylon, the secret oaths and combinations also include rejection of the priesthood counsel from chosen priesthood leaders. 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" (Moses 5:26).

Listening no more to the voice of the Lord, or Abel (his brother and priesthood leader), Cain assisted in setting up a kingdom based on "secret oaths and combinations" rather than "sacred oaths and covenants" of which he was familiar. In opposition and in conflict to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, Satan and Cain established concepts,

secret oaths, and combinations contrary to the covenants, ordinances, and laws of Zion. These combination would eventually be seen in all nations of the earth.

Oaths and Combinations

The Book of Mormon teaches about secret combinations as early as 2 Nephi. Jacob explained what it would be like without the Atonement and then spoke of Satan as “that being who beguiled our first parents, 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*” (2 Nephi 9:9). Satan is the founder of these oaths and combinations for the establishment of an evil that is directly contrary to the gospel and church of Jesus Christ. There exists in mankind a natural pride and ego that leads one to seek satisfaction for his own desires, appetites, and passions. This individual pride is usually because we are conceived in a sinful world, and sin conceiveth in our hearts (Moses 6:55) as we become the “natural man” that King Benjamin spoke of (see Mosiah 2–5). This is also seen at the end of 4 Nephi as the text explained that these two evils were rising again “that the wicked part of the people began again to build up the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton. And also the people who were called the people of Nephi began to be proud in their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, and become vain like unto their brethren, the Lamanites” (4 Nephi 1:42–43).

Individual wickedness, although selfish, is not an evil bent on the destruction and murder of others by conspiring for profit and seeking to take freedoms from the people. *Secret oaths and combinations*, on the other hand, are handed down and taught by Satan with the purpose of fighting against the work of God—which requires freedoms to exist for the faith and worship of the righteous. Secret oaths are established to take away the freedoms, and control the leaders and governments that should protect the children of men from the wicked plunder of these combinations. Set up by Satan, they are “works of darkness” that extend beyond the individual wickedness that can be cured by exercising faith unto repentance.

The descriptions outlined in Helaman 6 are the editorial commentary of Mormon, who abridged the record specifically for a people who were to live upon the land in the future. He wrote:

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.

And also it is *that same being who put it into the hearts of the people to build a tower sufficiently high that they might get to heaven*. And it was that same being who led on the people who came from that tower into this land; who spread the *works of darkness and abominations over all the face of the land, until he dragged the people down to an entire destruction, and to an everlasting hell*.

Yea, it is that same being who put it into the heart of Gadianton to still carry on the work of darkness, and of secret murder; and *he has brought it forth from the beginning of man even down to this time*.

And behold, *it is he who is the author of all sin*. And behold, *he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and*

their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness, from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men. (Helaman 6:26–30)

The secret oaths and combinations exist as organizations and ideologies with specific goals and modes of operation. These secret combinations existed as far back as Cain and came forward in time as seen in the Jaredite and Nephite histories. They were rampant between Cain and the flood, and then during the tower of Babel. Moroni added that “it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people” (Ether 8:20), even “from the beginning of man even down to this time” (Helaman 6:30). Descriptions of this wickedness, its oaths, and combinations were obviously kept in the records of the righteous as well as the wicked, since the Jaredite king did “search up these things of old” (Ether 8:17–18).

Cain was the first to make and enter into agreements with Satan that would earn him the title of ‘Master Mahan, the keeper of that great secret’ that he could murder and get gain (Moses 5:31). Cain’s goal was to *control* his father’s entire posterity as the birthright son. His faithless offering rejected, Cain organized a combined effort to place himself at the head of all mankind. It is stressed in scripture that in the instigation of the plot to murder Abel, the priesthood leader, Cain was not acting alone. The murder of Abel was a conspiracy of those who loved Satan more than God (see Moses 5:27, 29; Helaman 6:27; and D&C 84:16).

After Cain’s offering was rejected, Satan used the knowledge and priesthood of Cain to establish these oaths and combinations:

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.

And Satan swore unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these *things were done in secret*.

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 5:29–31)

Likewise the same types of oaths are discussed in the Book of Mormon. Moroni, while abridging the Jaredite record, was told to make “some” of this wickedness known for the readers of the text in the latter-days. Similarly, participation in the oaths at the time of Cain and Akish were virtually the same. ‘Oaths’ are always a symbol of death or sacrifice and are often used for the righteous in connection with *sacred* covenant-making. Sacred covenants based on righteousness are individual covenants made between God and man and are not ‘combinations and conspiracies’ for evil, but rather ‘covenants’ for individual righteousness.

These oaths and symbols are also used—in a corrupted form—in the *secret* oaths of the wicked. Akish gathered all of his kinsfolk and required them to “swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall desire of you” (Ether 8:13). The process was the same as that of Cain, based on ‘secrecy’ for their protection from the law and judgement. In the case of Cain and Akish, both first swore by the God of heaven, then performed the oaths (symbols and signs of death) and entered into a mutual commitment—a *combined* or group promise of secrecy secured by an oath of death if broken. This group promise or combination is used to maintain the secrecy necessary to accomplish the evil by ‘a collective conspiracy,’ where the evil action, protection, secrecy, administration, and execution of the oath are all done, by and for, the

combined members of the group (see verse 14 below). This is called in scripture a “combination.”

And it came to pass that they *all* swore 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*. (Ether 8:14–16)

These combinations are entered into that the members of this secret group might “murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God” (Helaman 6:23). One reason for the ‘combined secrecy’ is for the protection from judgment of individuals within the group.

And whosoever of those who belonged to their band should reveal unto the world of their wickedness and their abominations should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness... (Helaman 6:24)

Mormon again explained that in particular these combinations were used for the protection of their members after they committed the crimes required of them:

But behold, Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into *their covenants and their oaths*, that they would *protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed*, that they should *not suffer for their murders*, and *their plunderings*, and *their stealings*.

And it came to pass that *they did have their signs*, yea, *their secret signs*, and *their secret words*; and *this that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the covenant*, that whatsoever wickedness his brother should do he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to *his band*, who had taken this covenant. (Helaman 6:21–22)

Mormon taught that there were multiple bands or combinations, and each could recognize their own members and be protected from their own band’s iniquity. These works of darkness exist for the protection of their members and the profit in iniquity without fear of retribution of the law. The Book of Mormon explains that when the combinations (philosophies) gained control they became a political party, in all aspects from the throne, to the judgeships, lawyers, and even entered into the masses. Helaman Chapters 5-7 explains how the Gadianton party sought to silence or cancel the opposing voices and even the faith and freedom of religion of Nephi. The Political history in the Book of Mormon chronicles and how these combinations stacked the courts with the judges to protect their goals and philosophies of destruction and control.

Control

Satan seeks to destroy the work of God through his “works of darkness,” as the control of man’s freedom is his goal. By doing this he can make the gospel of Christ unavailable by these oaths and combinations, “for it is built up by the devil...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 8:25). The way the secret oaths and combinations control the gospel of Christ and the establishment of Zion is to control the freedoms that would allow faith and religion to exist once in political power. This can only be done by the control of governments:

...because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land. (3 Nephi 9:9)

The Book of Mormon describes the instigators of these combinations as those who “buildeth it up *seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries*; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people...” (Ether 8:25). Moroni stated multiple times that the purpose of these secret combinations was not just for the sake of plunder but to “*overthrow the kingdom*” (Ether 9:1) and that some “adopted the old plans, and administered oaths after the manner of the ancients, and *sought again to destroy the kingdom*” (Ether 10:33). Even the last battles of the Jaredite culture were due to “those secret combinations, fighting against Coriantumr that they might obtain the kingdom” (Ether 13:18).

This government control is seen also in Nephite history as Mormon taught that the Nephites had “turned out of the way of righteousness, and did trample under their feet the commandments of God” (Helaman 6:31). *Seducing the righteous by getting them to partake of their spoils (entitlements)* selling that which was sacred for money, (votes) they began to build up the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton, The Gadianton Political party or machine will gain control:

...and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites, and had *seduced the more part of the righteous* until they had come down to *believe in their works* and *partake of their spoils*, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations.

And thus *they did obtain the sole management of the government*, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God.

And thus we see that they were in an awful state, and *ripening for an everlasting destruction*. (Helaman 6:38–40)

Like the individual wickedness and lack of faith that led to the destruction of the Nephite culture, these secret oaths and combinations were also part of the wickedness that caused the fall of the Jaredite and Nephite cultures.

The Book of Mormon’s prophecies and promises connected to the land are those of righteousness. When the people on this land become wicked, or iniquity abounds in the hearts of the masses, the people are “ripened for destruction” as were the Nephites in their neglect of their faith and worship of Jesus Christ (Ether 2:12). In addition to individual righteousness that can affect the promises and blessings, an apathy toward the secret oaths and combinations will provoke judgments from the Lord on those living in the land of promise. Alma, speaking to his son Helaman about the blessings and judgments of the land, explained that when these secret

oaths become prevalent, there is a ripening of wickedness. For the salvation of the people of the land, Alma instructed his son to keep the actual plans, oaths, and covenants from the knowledge of the people.

For behold, there is a *curse* upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness, according to the power of God, *when they are fully ripe*; therefore I desire that this people might not be destroyed. *Therefore ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people...* (Alma 37:28–29).

Moroni, writing for the future Gentiles who would come upon the land of promise, explained that when the record would come forth, that it 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). After the restoration and going forth of the Book of Mormon, these works of darkness will be upon the land of promise. Having a knowledge of these secret oaths and combinations is a serious issue that both the Lord and the writers of the Book of Mormon felt was important for the latter-day reader to be aware of. Its importance lies in the fact that the prophecies connected to the land, and the promise of destruction for the people upon that land, cannot be and should not be ignored. This information is contained in the scriptural text because it *needs* to be there. The record is inspired by God and the things contained in it are for the physical and spiritual benefit of all mankind, especially for those who would be living on the land of promise.

Alma, when speaking to Helaman, stressed the importance of this information being contained in the histories of the Nephites and on the plates of gold. Mormon obviously felt the same way since he included them in his abridgment for our day.

And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates, that ye keep them, *that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed, may be made manifest unto this people*; yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations, *may be made manifest unto this people*; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters.

For behold, the Lord saw that *his people began to work in darkness, yea, work secret murders and abominations*; therefore the Lord said, if they did not repent *they should be destroyed* from off the face of the earth.

And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that *I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations*.

And now, my son, these interpreters were prepared that the word of God might be fulfilled, which he spake, saying:

I will bring forth *out of darkness unto light all their secret works and their abominations*; and except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, *unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land*.

And now, my son, we see that they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed, and thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us. (Alma 37:21–26)

Alma continued, with the commandment to his son that after he explained to him the secret oaths and combinations, their goals and purposes, that he not provide or disclose the details and particulars about their signs, oaths, and covenants. Mormon's editorial comment in Helaman emphasized the importance of this commandment:

Now behold, it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, *lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction.* (Helaman 6:25)

These details were eliminated in order to keep the people from falling into the darkness, devastation, and eventual destruction from these wicked combinations.

And now, my son, I command you that ye *retain all their oaths, and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations; yea, and all their signs* and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not, *lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed.*

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.*

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 37:27, 29, 31–32)

After the death of his father, under the inspiration of the Lord, Moroni included an abridgment of the record of the fallen Jaredites. However, their history is not so much a record of individual wickedness that led to ruin like the Nephite history explained, but the Jaredite record specifically delineates a destruction that came about by the 'secret oaths and combinations' seeking to gain control of the governments. Moroni wrote that these secret works of darkness were involved in both cultures and "caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking [the Jaredites], and also the destruction of the people of Nephi" (Ether 8:21). Moroni then explained why he had abridged this Jaredite record, and why the latter-day Gentiles on the land of promise need to have an understanding about these secret combinations, including a 'commandment' to be aware of them—in order that they may do something about them.

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...

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 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...* (Ether 8:22–25)

Moroni concluded his main explanation of the secret oaths and combination with a declaration of purpose: “Wherefore, I, Moroni, am *commanded to write these things that evil may 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).

The secular history of these combinations that seek to take away the freedoms and exercise control of the governments, leaders, and judges for the security of rampant evil is presented by Mormon and Moroni in scripture for a reader who was yet to come. Today, the Latter-day Saints are the readers of this book. There then exists a responsibility—if the Book of Mormon is to be taken seriously—upon those who read it and understand it. There is no such thing as a ‘silent security’ in the responsibilities that are inherent in the concepts of freedom. Moroni is commanded to make *us* aware of these oaths and combinations, that in his words, “evil may be done away...that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men...that they may be persuaded to do good...that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness.” Just *knowing* about these things is not enough for the protection of our faith, our freedoms, and our families. We must act to protect them.