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An Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon - The Face May Be Strange, but the Voice Is Familiar

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Gerald N. Lund

Korihor and the Word of God — A “Foil” in the Book of Mormon

At what is very near the exact center of the Book of Mormon, we have what appears to be an anomaly in terms of scripture content. In several places the major writers of the Book of Mormon tell us that they are interested only in sharing the spiritual history of their peoples. They clearly state that their focus is on Christ and on the spiritual things of history. (For example, see 2 Nephi 5:32 where Nephi says he is only going to engrave those things which are pleasing to God.) Yet in the 30th chapter of Alma, we have a whole chapter on the doings of an anti-Christ, including a detailed summary of the false doctrine that he taught. Why would Mormon take time to do that? Do we really need a summary of the teachings of evil men? What is it about Korihor that was so compelling to Mormon that he felt justified to give it four pages of textual treatment? The purpose of this chapter is to explore those questions and assess the significance of the Korihor material.

One of the first things to note is that in this portion of the Book of Mormon, Korihor is a good example of a scriptural

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“foil.” One of Webster’s definitions of a foil is something that is used “to enhance by contrast.” For example, a jeweler places diamonds on black velvet to provide a contrasting backdrop, or foil, for the gems. There are numerous places in the standard works where the scriptural writers use that same technique, placing two contrasting principles or examples side by side to show even more clearly what they were trying to teach.

For example, it is interesting that the parable of the good Samaritan, one of the most powerful lessons on Christian service found in any of the standard works (see Luke 10:25–37), is followed immediately by the story of Mary and Martha (see Luke 10:38–42), which teaches another very different lesson about service. This is what we mean by “scriptural foils.”

Perhaps scriptural foils provide one answer to the question: Why would Mormon take time and space to tell us of a person who taught false and evil doctrine? The Korihor story is an obvious foil in one sense and a subtle, but perhaps even more significant foil, in another sense. The obvious one is that we find a story of an “evil missionary,” a man who seeks to preach false doctrine and proselytize people to his way of thinking, sandwiched right in between the account of the sons of Mosiah and their mission to the Lamanites, and Alma’s great mission to the Zoramites. Is that an accidental thing, this “missionary foil” that we find here?

But there is something more subtle than this. There is an interesting conceptual chain related to the “power of the word” that flows through this section of the Book of Mormon. As the account of the mission of the sons of Mosiah begins, Alma testifies that through personal preparation, including scripture study, fasting and prayer, these brethren were able to teach the word “with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:3). Then, in the very next verse, Mormon notes that they had great success in bringing the Lamanites to the gospel because of “*the power of their words*” (Alma 17:4; emphasis added). The next ten chapters show just how true that statement is.

But as we come to the end of their fourteen-year mission, what do we find again? In Alma 26, Ammon begins to review their tremendous successes. And what does he credit for this incredible conversion story? “*The power of [God’s] word which is in us*” (Alma 26:13; emphasis added).

Chapters 27 and 28 finish out the account of their mission, telling us how the Lamanites were settled among the Nephites and so on. But chapter 29 breaks off the historical narrative. At that point, Mormon chooses to insert a prayer of Alma’s. And what does he pray for? Note his words: “Oh that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and *speak* with the trump of God, *with a voice to shake the earth*, and *cry* repentance unto every people!” (Alma 29:1, emphasis added). In other words, Alma’s prayer is that he might have even greater *power* to preach *the word* than he has hitherto had.

This is what precedes the Korihor account. For a moment now, let’s skip Alma 30 and Korihor and see what immediately follows. In chapter 31, Alma learns that the Zoramites are in a state of apostasy—a situation that has grave political overtones because of their proximity to the Lamanites. So Alma decides to begin his own mission to an apostate people. Mormon is careful to note why Alma chooses this avenue of response.

And now, as *the preaching of the word* had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had *more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else*, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God. (Alma 31:5; emphasis added)

Alma’s mission, however, is not the only thing to follow the story of Korihor. In chapter 32, when Alma begins to teach the Zoramite poor how to find God, he uses a powerful analogy of a seed. Often in the Church, we refer to Alma 32 as being a great chapter on faith. This is not incorrect; but the seed Alma refers to is not faith, it is *the word of God* (see Alma 32:28). After talking about the power of the word in Chapter 31, Alma

teaches the Zoramites how to take the word and bring it to the point where it has great power in our lives.

Thus we see in one place after another in this section of the Book of Mormon, beginning in Alma 17 and going through Alma 33, there is reference after reference to the *power of the word*. And what is placed right in the middle of this chain? Korihor! And therein lies the more subtle scriptural foil. Korihor himself is an example of the “power of the word,” only this time it is a negative example. Just as Ammon and his brothers and Alma lead many *into* the Church by preaching the word to the people, Korihor leads many people *away* from the Church by his *preaching his word*.

In light of that foil, let us now examine what Korihor taught and see if we can determine why Mormon would devote space on the plates to describe the doctrine of this anti-Christ.

The Korihor Philosophy—A New Face and Old Voice

If we could take a moment and talk in philosophical terms, there are three branches of philosophy which have a great deal to do with what a person believes, how they approach life and what constitutes their value system: metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology.

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality. It tries to answer the question, “What is real?” *Meta* is a Greek prefix meaning *after* or *beyond*, so metaphysics means literally, beyond physics. In other words, metaphysics asks whether there is something more than (beyond) the physical world that we see around us. Is there some reality higher than the natural world—literally, a *supernatural reality*?”

The second branch of philosophy that has much to do with our discussion is axiology. *Axi* comes from the Greek root which means “worth” or “value.” Axiology is the study of ethics and values. It wrestles with such questions as, “What is good?” and “What is right and wrong?”

The third branch of philosophy is epistemology. *Epistem* is a root meaning “knowledge.” (An “epistle,” which comes

from the same root, is a message—or knowledge—sent by writing.) Epistemology is the study of *how* we know what is real or what is true. Since epistemology is central to our discussion on Korihor, a brief review of some of the major epistemological systems will serve to illustrate better what is meant by the term.

Authoritarianism is the system wherein truth is derived from those viewed as authorities or experts in an area. The recent crisis in the Middle East has illustrated how often we turn to experts for truth and information. We have seen on television a wide range of experts on war, military logistics, Islam, politics, government, etc.

Rationalism is an epistemological system wherein truth is derived through logical processes such as deduction, induction, and so on. In rationalism we ask, “Does this make sense? Is it logical?”

Pragmatism is where truth is determined by whether or not something works. For example, the business world is very pragmatically oriented, constantly focusing on whether a new product or marketing strategy actually produces the projected results. If it does, it is true; if it doesn’t, it is rejected.

Empiricism is where knowledge is gained through observation or experience. The scientific method, wherein one conducts an experiment and observes the results, is based heavily on the empirical method. Empirical evidence is often what people mean when they talk about hard or measurable evidence.

If one were to ask which of the above epistemological systems Latter-day Saints subscribe to, we would probably agree that we accept all of them as valid means of gaining knowledge or truth. However, in our theology, there is yet one more system, and this takes priority over the others.

Revelation is where truth is gained through communication of God’s mind and will to man. In Latter-day Saint theology, revelation comes via the Spirit or through direct manifestations (such as visions) to man.

There are other epistemological systems, or ways of knowing truth, but these are the main ones and will serve our purpose

here. These three branches of philosophy—metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology—have a profound effect upon how people view life, what they value, and how they act in various situations.

This proves to be true in the case of Korihor as well. A careful reading of Korihor’s “doctrine” reveals three “linchpins,” or pivotal points, of his entire philosophy. Chart 1 illustrates how these three fundamental points target the very areas we have described above. To put it more simply, Korihor defines how people come to know truth (epistemology), he talks about what constitutes reality (metaphysics), and defines what is good and what is evil (axiology).

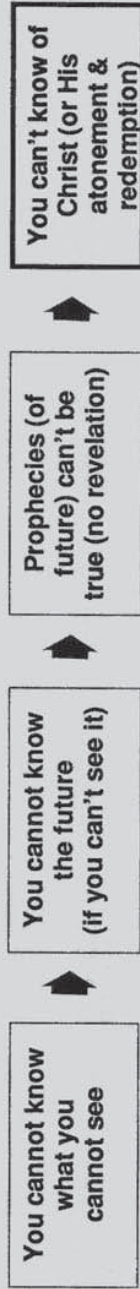
Looking at Korihor’s teachings carefully, we see that he starts with an epistemology based on strong empiricism. He states it very simply: “Ye cannot know of things which ye do not see [or we would say, experience]” (Alma 30:15). His metaphysics openly rejects any kind of supernatural explanation of reality. In Korihor’s doctrine, there is no other dimension of reality beyond the physical world—no God, no angels, no Spirit that brings revelation. From his metaphysics comes the natural conclusion that “when a man was dead, that was the end thereof” (Alma 30:18). From Korihor’s epistemology (the denial of revelation) and his metaphysics (there is only the natural world and man is the supreme reality in it), flows his axiology (the only good or bad is that which is decided by man himself). This is often the case. In other words, how we answer the questions, “How do we know what is true?” and “What constitutes reality?” often determines how we perceive what is good and bad, right and wrong.

This gets at the crux of the matter and explains why Satan would take such an interest in philosophy. Out of Korihor’s basic philosophy now flow two important corollaries. When Korihor was arrested and taken before the high priest, he boldly challenged the position of the religious leaders (see Alma 30:23–28). Giddonah demanded to know how Korihor ex-

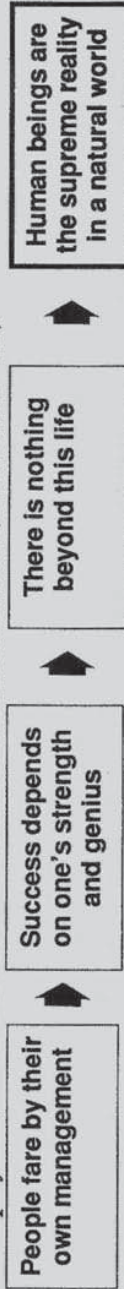
Chart 1

Korihor's Philosophical Foundations

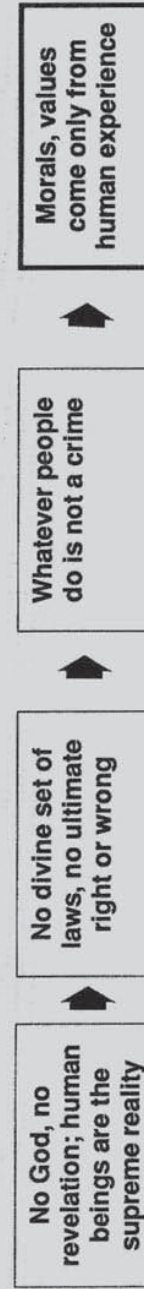
Epistemology, "How do you know things?": Empiricism & Rationalism (Alma 30:12-15)



Metaphysics, "What is real?": Humanism & Naturalism (Alma 30:17-18)



Axiology, "What is good? What is right?": Relativism, No Absolutes (Alma 30:17)



plained why the people were getting so much joy out of their religion if what Korihor said was true.

Korihor's first corollary answers that very neatly. Chart 2 diagrams his answer. There are two reasons people believe in these false ideas. The first is that they have been indoctrinated by their parents (the "foolish traditions" of their fathers) or that they have been deceived by false religious leaders who seek personal gain or power. This indoctrination leads to psychological abnormalities, a "frenzied mind" or "derangement" (see Alma 30:16).

Out of the first corollary flows a second. This is the final, practical conclusion of Korihor's philosophy. He states that there are no ultimate values set by religion or tradition which put us in jeopardy of some eternal punishment. Therefore, we can live as we please without fear of eternal consequences.

This is the heart of the matter. This is what it is all about. I don't believe for a moment Satan cares about philosophy as a mental game or academic exercise, only where it can take us. Now that can be most productive in terms of Satan's ultimate purposes. And Mormon clearly identifies that end result of deceiving philosophy: "And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, *causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness*, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms" (Alma 30:18, emphasis added).

What a victory, from Satan's point of view. This is not just wickedness, it is wickedness in which people take pride. They lift up their heads in it. And why shouldn't they? Korihor has provided the ultimate rationalization—there is no God; there is no ultimate right and wrong; man is the supreme being. All the guilt and shame people feel (psychological hang-ups) are simply the result of the foolish teachings of their parents or the designs of evil religious leaders.

Chart 2 Two Corollary Issues

How do you explain people who have faith?

You have been propagandized by:

- 1. The foolish traditions of your fathers
(religious upbringing)*
- 2. Religious leaders whose true motives are:
a. Gain
b. Power*



Which has resulted in psychological problems:

- 1. Frenzied minds*
- 2. Mental derangement*

So what does all this mean in practical terms?

You are not bound down to any imposed set of religious or traditional values.



You can live as you please without fear of eternal consequences.

The Age of Information but Not the Age of Truth

In recent years, numerous people have begun to note that society is going through a massive wave of change. It has been called by various titles—the technological revolution, the information age, the info/techo age. Alvin Toffler calls it *The Third Wave*. According to Toffler, the history of the world shows three great waves of change that have influenced the way we and all world societies live. The first massive wave of change was when man moved from hunting and gathering to an agricultural society. The second wave was when the world moved from an agricultural society to an industrial society. Now we are in the third wave, a wave that will take us from the industrial society to a new age based on technology and information.

John Naisbitt, in a best seller some years ago called *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, outlined ten of the great changes society would face in the last part of the twentieth century. One of those “megatrends” is the change to an “information” age. Naisbitt says:

In 1956, for the first time in American history, white-collar workers in technical, managerial, and clerical positions outnumbered blue-collar workers. Industrial America was giving way to a new society, where, for the first time in history, most of us worked with information rather than producing goods. (12)

Later he says, we have for the first time an economy based on a key resource that is not only renewable, but self-generating. Running out of it is not a problem, but *drowning in it is*. For example:

* Between 6,000 and 7,000 scientific articles are written each day.

* Scientific and technical information now increases 13 percent per year, which means it doubles every 5.5 years (24; emphasis added).

He had already noted:

Farmer, laborer, clerk—that is a brief history of the United States. . . . in fact today there are more people employed full-time in our universities than in agriculture. (14)

An interesting sidelight to note is that even some of our more popular games reflect this change to an information society. “Trivial Pursuit” and its numerous spin-offs are all based on the mastery of information. And the most popular television game show “Jeopardy” has the contestants vie to see who has the most information at their fingertips (or perhaps “mindtips”).

But even though we may live in the age of information, this does not necessarily mean we are living in the age of truth. Not all information is of the same value. Naisbitt, for example, suggests that “we are drowning in information but starved for knowledge.” For example he notes that scientists now say “it takes less time to do an experiment than to find out whether or not it has already been done” (24).

With this age of information has come an accompanying age of secularism. Rejection of traditional religious values is commonplace. In a talk given some years ago, Elder Neal A. Maxwell described the difference between an eternal and a secular outlook.

For the purpose of this brief discussion, eternalism is defined as that view of man and the universe which not only acknowledges, but exults in, the existence of a Heavenly Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, who have authored and implemented a redeeming plan for mankind. Secularism is herein defined as that view of man and the universe which is essentially irreligious with regard to the existence of God and cosmic purpose for man, but which is not necessarily irreverent with regard to man and his worth. (“Eternalism vs. Secularism” 69)

We are not only drowning in a sea of information, we are also drowning in a sea of secularism. In many ways we have reached the same point Ezekiel described around 600 BC, a condition, incidentally, which led to the destruction of the Jewish nation. Ezekiel said, “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have *put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean*” (Ezekiel 22:26; emphasis added).

Our educational institutions, our media, our entertainment is permeated with philosophies that are similar to those taught by Korihor. For example, note the following excerpts from “Humanist Manifesto II,” a document stating the beliefs of those who call themselves humanists. I shall take the liberty to insert a few quotations from Korihor at appropriate places.

We believe . . . that *traditional* dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. . . . *Traditional* religions often offer *solace* to humans, but, as often, they *inhibit* humans from helping themselves or experiencing their full potentialities. . . . Too often *traditional* faiths encourage dependence rather than independence.

[“They are foolish traditions of your fathers. . . . It is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement . . . comes because of the traditions of your fathers” (Alma 30:14, 16).]

We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. . . . *No deity will save us*; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices.

[“There should be no Christ. . . . When a man was dead, that was the end thereof” (Alma 30:12, 18).]

Science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, *the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context.*

[“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” (Alma 30:17).]

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous and situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stem from human need and interest (“Humanist Manifesto II” 5–6; emphasis in text).

[“Whatsoever a man did was no crime” (Alma 30:17).]

This Manifesto was signed by 113 individuals when it was published. Signers include such notables as Isaac Asimov, the famous science fiction writer; B. F. Skinner, an influential

psychologist from Harvard University; Andrei Sakharov, the famous Russian scientist and dissident; and James Prescott, who at the time was the director of the National Institution for Child Help and Human Development. Of the total, over 50 were college professors, some 10 were authors, and 11 were listed as ministers. In other words more than half of the endorsers were people who are in positions of influence in the teaching of others. Not surprisingly then, these secular philosophies permeate much of our society today.

The final statement quoted above reveals the humanist view of ethics, declaring them to be “situational” and derived from “human experiences.” Again, we find some interesting parallels to Korihor in modern society.

There is a whole body of ethical thought today known as “situation ethics,” which states that there are no absolutes by which we determine what is right or wrong. Rather, the situation determines what is good or bad. Joseph Fletcher has given situational ethics its most articulate airing. Dr. Fletcher claims to be a Christian ethicist. In fact, he was a former Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in Cincinnati, and at the time he wrote his book, *Situation Ethics*, he was a professor of social ethics at the Episcopal Theology School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Dr. Fletcher argues that love is the highest good and what determines whether something is right or wrong is simply whether or not it is the “loving thing” to do. Here are some excerpts from his book *Situation Ethics: True or False?*

Love is the highest good and the first-order value, the primary consideration to which in every act . . . we should be prepared to sidetrack or subordinate other valued considerations of right and wrong. . . . Whether we ought to follow a moral principle or not *would always depend upon the situation.* . . . In some situations unmarried love could be infinitely more moral than married unlove. Lying could be more Christian than telling the truth. . . . stealing could be better than respecting private property. . . . *no action is good or right of itself.* It depends on whether it hurts or helps. . . . There are no normative moral principles whatsoever *which are intrinsically valid or universally obliging.* We may not absolutize the norms of human conduct. (back cover; emphasis added)

In the book itself he says,

if we are, as I would want to reason, obliged in conscience sometimes to tell white lies, as we often call them, then in conscience we might be obliged sometimes to engage in white thefts and white fornications and white killings and white breakings of promises and the like. (15)

Mormon noted that the end result of Korihor's philosophy was a breakdown of morality amongst the people. The end result of situation ethics leads to much the same result. In Dr. Fletcher's earlier book, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, he reasoned away any moral standard as we know it in terms of sexual morality:

What sex probably needs more than anything is a good airing. . . . People are learning that we can have sex without love, and love without sex; that baby-making can be (and often ought to be) separated from lovemaking. It is, indeed, for re-creation as well as for pro-creation. But *if people do not believe it is wrong to have sex relations outside marriage, it isn't*, unless they hurt themselves, their partners, or others. . . . All situationists would agree with Mrs. Patrick Campbell's remark that they can do what they want "as long as they don't do it in the street and frighten the horses." (140; emphasis added)

Remember, this teaching comes from a man who calls himself a Christian ethicist. In a debate with another Christian minister, Fletcher shared some of his feelings toward Christ. When the other minister cited a New Testament statement made by the Savior to support the point he was making, Fletcher retorted: "Jesus was a simple Jewish peasant. He had no more philosophical sophistication than a guinea pig, and I don't turn to Jesus for philosophical sophistication" (Fletcher and Montgomery 55).

It is not hard to see why Satan would rejoice in such philosophy. Mormon said Korihor taught the people to "lift up their heads in their wickedness" (Alma 30:18). Fletcher's philosophy provides a similar rationalization. As long as it is the "loving thing" to do, it is not sin.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell described the eventual results for a society that accepts ethics that are not based on absolute, God-given truths:

Relativism involves the denial of the existence of absolute truths and, therefore, of an absolute truthgiver, God. Relativism has sometimes been a small, satanic sea breeze, but now the winds of relativism have reached gale proportions. Over a period of several decades relativism has eroded ethics, public and personal, has worn down the will of many, has contributed to a slackening sense of duty, civic and personal. The old mountains of individual morality have been worn down. This erosion has left mankind in a sand-dune society, in a desert of disbelief where there are no landmarks, and no north, no east, no west, and no south! There is only the dust of despair. (“Some Thoughts” 74)

When we look at teachings that permeate our day, we begin to sense why Mormon felt it important to include Korihor’s philosophies in the Book of Mormon. President Ezra Taft Benson specifically said this was one of the values of the Book of Mormon for our day.

The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. *It confounds false doctrines* and lays down contention (see 1 Nephi 3:12). It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and *doctrines of the devil* in our day. *The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today.* God, with His infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time. (56; emphasis added)

A Prophet’s Answer to the Philosophies of Satan

We have now examined the teachings of Korihor in some detail, and also have seen how they parallel some of the common teachings of our day. If Mormon had included nothing but those teachings, they would have been of great value to us. But he did more than that. He also included Alma’s answer to Korihor. It is an interesting contrast, not only to Korihor’s teachings, but also to his whole situational philosophic approach.


The first thing to note is that Alma does not get into a philosophical debate with Korihor. He does not talk about metaphysics or axiology or epistemology. He does not allow himself to get pulled onto the ground that Korihor tries to define as the area of debate. There is a great lesson in that. Alma teaches that we should combat false philosophies with revelation and doctrine, not with academic debate.

This is not to imply that Alma dodges the issues; in fact, he confronts Korihor's criticism directly by proving that it is contradictory. Firstly, Alma points out that Korihor knows that the Church leaders "do not receive anything for [their] labors in the Church" except in receiving joy for teaching truth (Alma 30:35). Yet Korihor has claimed that the leaders "glut themselves" upon the labors of the people (Alma 30:27). Alma then concludes that since what Korihor knows to be true and what he says to be true clearly oppose one another, Korihor deliberately twists the truth.

In his second answer, Alma is absolutely brilliant. Let's follow that one for a moment to see what he is suggesting. Korihor has stated that people can believe only that which they can see, or prove to be true. Then he categorically states that he believes there is no God. Alma points out that he is trapped in his own epistemology, saying, "And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your own word only" (Alma 30:40). If Korihor really were consistent (in believing only that which he can experience), then he cannot believe there is no God, because he cannot prove there is no God.

Let's see if we can illustrate the force of this argument. Suppose that a person decided he wanted to prove once and for all there is no God. Since the scriptures claim that God dwells in the heavens, the first task the person would have is to examine every cubic inch of the heavens (the universe), to see if there was no God. But even that impossible task creates a new set of problems. First of all, it would have to be an examination in the fullest sense of the word. Human beings *see* only visible light,

Chart 3
Alma's Answer (Alma 30:32-45)

YOU KNOW:	BUT YOU SAY:	THEREFORE:	FINAL CONCLUSION:
We don't profit from our service in the Church.	We glut ourselves on the labor of the people.	You deliberately twist the truth.	 <p style="text-align: center;">You are possessed of a lying spirit.</p>
You cannot prove there is no God.	You only believe what can be proved.	You are not consistent with yourself.	
You believe there is a God.	You cannot believe in him.	You are lying to yourself and to us.	
There are many signs which prove God lives.	You won't believe unless you see a sign.	You won't accept truth when it is given to you.	

* Note Korihor's confirmation of this in Alma 30:52.

which is a tiny portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. If by *see* we mean only what the eye can register, God would be totally missed if he exists at another frequency of the light spectrum. In other words, suppose God were at the ultraviolet or infrared frequencies. This person looking for God would miss him completely.

But examining every inch of the universe across the fulness of the electromagnetic spectrum still wouldn't provide irrefutable proof. Suppose the person marked out the universe in a grid and began to search it systematically, square by square, from A to Z, and doesn't find God in any of the squares. Could that person then say there was no God? No! What if God was in square L when the searcher started in square A, but by the time that person reached square L, God had moved back to square B or C?

Let's put it simply. Korihor says he will only believe what can be seen or proven. Yet he says he believes there is no God. To prove there is no God, a person would have to perceive (in the fullest sense of the word) every cubic inch of the entire universe simultaneously! In other words, *one would have to be a god in order to prove there is no God*. And yet Korihor blithely denies any belief in God's existence. In other words, Korihor is acting as much on faith (not righteous faith, but belief based on evidence that cannot be seen) as are those who believe there is a God. No wonder Alma accuses Korihor of having a "lying spirit" (Alma 30:42).

There is one more thing on Chart 3 that ought to be noted. After pointing out that there is much evidence that God does exist, Alma asks Korihor if he believes these things are true. Without waiting for an answer, he flatly states: "Behold, I know that thou believest" (Alma 30:42). Is this just a prophet's attempt to confound an argumentative person? Hardly. A few verses later, after having called down the sign upon himself, Korihor confirms Alma's statement, saying, "I *always* knew that there was a God" (Alma 30:52; emphasis added). So again, Alma shows that Korihor's real problem is that he is a liar.

The Word of God and Its Power

Let's return back to the scriptural foil that we began with. We showed that through this portion of the book of Alma there is a focus on the power of the word. It starts in the account of Ammon and his brothers and continues through Alma's mission to the Zoramites. Right in the middle of that chain, we see Korihor, a compelling, negative example of the power of the word. This serves as a foil which contrasts the power of God's word and truth and the power of Satan's word and untruth.

As we close our discussion of Korihor, we note two great ironies that also seem to be part of that scriptural foil as well. When Korihor demanded to have a sign before he would believe, Alma warned him of consequences of this action. But he still demanded proof. Of all the things the Lord could have chosen to convince Korihor of his power, what did he choose to do? Korihor is struck dumb (see Alma 30:49–50). In other words, *Korihor had the power to persuade others by the word taken from him.*

When Alma refused to lift the curse from him, Korihor left the Land of Zarahemla and went over among the Zoramites. There he was “run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead” (Alma 30:59). Here is the second great irony. The Zoramites were a group of apostates who had left the Nephite religion and started their own church. In chapter 31, we are given an account of their teachings in some detail. Note the following phrases from that chapter which describe the doctrines of the Zoramites. Mormon tells us they had “fallen into great errors” (v 9); they rejected the traditions of their Nephite brethren as being “handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers” (v 16); they did not want to be “led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief in Christ” (v 17); and they refused “to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about” (v 22).

Familiar echoes? Indeed they are. The Zoramites are a reflection of some of Korihor's primary teachings. In other words, the Zoramites represent the end result of Korihor's

philosophy. This is where his doctrine leads people. What an irony that Korihor should come to his end by the hands of the very people that practiced what he preached.

Elder Maxwell, citing C. S. Lewis, pointed out that this is typical of those who try to reject God as part of their philosophy.

C. S. Lewis wrote well when he asserted: "What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they . . . could . . . invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy. . . .

"That is the key to history. Terrific energy is expended—civilizations are built up—excellent institutions devised; but each time something goes wrong. Some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin. In fact, the machine conks. It seems to start up all right and runs a few years, and then it breaks down. They are trying to run it on the wrong juice. That is what Satan has done to us humans." (*Mere Christianity*, New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1958, p. 39, cited in "Eternalism vs Secularism" 71)

Might this not be the very thing which caused Mormon, working under the inspiration of God, to include in the Book of Mormon an account of this anti-Christ and his teachings? It is for our benefit. It helps us see false teachings for what they are and the end result of them. This is partly what is meant by the "power of the word." This is part of the power of the Book of Mormon. President Benson made this clear when he said:

It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called "the words of life" (see D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance. These promises — increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—these are not idle

promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God. (54)

Korihor tried to teach people that there is happiness and joy to be found outside of God and the gospel. The Book of Mormon clearly shows that this is not true. It reminds us of the power of God's word, the power to change our lives, the power to bring us peace and joy and the answers to those issues in life that trouble us. As we learn this lesson from Korihor, we again are reminded of the promise of President Ezra Taft Benson, the living Prophet:

I bless you with increased discernment to judge between Christ and anti-Christ. I bless you with increased power to do good and resist evil. I bless you with increased understanding of the Book of Mormon. I promise you that from this moment forward, if we will daily sup from its pages and abide by its precepts, God will pour out upon each child of Zion and the Church a blessing hitherto unknown. (65)

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