

RACE AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

2 Nephi 5:21

By Raymond White

I'm not trying to open a can of worms, I'm trying to close a can of worms. If you have no problem with the subject I introduce here, then it's probably best that you not read this essay because I don't want to create a problem where none exists.

Then why am I writing this? Because many people *do* have a problem with this subject, including me, so I am offering an alternative interpretation for those who believe the Book of Mormon but find this subject of it, race, unsettling. If that is you, read on.

So you know in advance, I am not anti Book of Mormon, I am very pro Book of Mormon. I believe that its authors — Nephi, Mormon, and all the rest — actually lived and wrote. But that doesn't mean that I always agree with everything they wrote. Even prophets are fallible, and Mormon knew it — ***Title Page*** *And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God.* And my most stark case-in-point is the subject of this essay: race.

[1] THE PROBLEM

The single most troubling verse in Mormon scriptures is this one:

2 Nephi 5:21 *And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.*

If this verse does not trouble you, stop right here. You're done. This essay can do you no good and might do you harm. But if this verse causes you to wince, then read on. I may have something for you.

The meaning of this verse is unmistakable: white is good, black is bad; white is blessing, black is cursing. If that is not racist, than I don't know what racist means.

Of course the Mormon defense is simple: This is something that actually happened in real history thousands of years ago that we have no control over, and therefore has no bearing over our current views of race or racism.

That's a valid argument, but even so, it looks bad and makes some of us cringe every time we hand out a Book of Mormon and hope that the person we give the book to somehow misses that verse.

[2] A NEW INTERPRETATION

What the church needs, in my opinion, is a new exegesis, a new understanding of those words in the book. We don't need new words — (that would turn the iron rod into a rubber rod) — but a new meaning of the words already there, a meaning that is consistent with the received text but makes God and modern Mormons not complicit in Nephi's racist understanding of the events he witnessed. After all, it is not racist or racialist to

talk frankly about someone else's racialism, especially if that someone lived 2500 years ago.

I had been flummoxed by this verse, *2 Nephi 5:21*, for decades. But it came to a head for me as I was sitting in a Gospel Doctrine class in the spring of 2008. Our Book of Mormon study arrived at this verse and once again I felt embarrassed to have to believe such a thing, that people were "cursed" with a dark skin.

Then it happened. A devout lady was in the class, Sister Perry, who had, with her husband, recently adopted two very dark Indian orphans from Guatemala. She asked the class this question: "When my two babies are old enough to read the Book of Mormon, and they come to me with questions about this verse, what am I to say?"

That's a fair question. The teacher had no answer, and the rest of the class had no answer. After everyone bumbled around a bit, I offered this blunt answer: "It is true," I said, "that if you read the Book of Mormon up to this verse and stop right there, you would have to conclude that the Book of Mormon is a racist book. But if you continue reading to the end, and meet Ammon, and Samuel the Lamanite, and Mormon, you would have to conclude that the Book of Mormon is the most anti-racist book ever written. Why? Because of the ending. The Book of Mormon is the story of two nations: one light skinned, blessed and righteous; and the other dark skinned, cursed and wicked. And who survives? The dark skinned people — supposedly cursed and wicked — survive. While the light skinned people — supposedly blessed and righteous — are marked for extinction. So, what is the real message of the Book of Mormon regarding race? It is this: Privilege — right race, right religion, right whatever — does not impress God. And people who think they are better because of their privileged station may likely be disappointed to learn that they are not so privileged after all. Nephi's opening does not brand the book as racist, it does exactly the opposite. His words are the backdrop for God's real point; which is: to God, race is irrelevant. That point can only be made against the backdrop of Nephi's opening."

That satisfied Sister Perry, and the teacher, and the rest of the class. It did not, however, entirely satisfy me. I have since thought a lot about this issue and that verse, and I now believe that I have an even better answer. Here it is, but brace yourself, you may not like it: My answer now is this: *Nephi was wrong!* The Lamanites were *not* "cursed" with a dark skin, it only appeared that way to Nephi from his perspective.

"Heresy!" you scream. "Prophets can't be wrong!" Oh, they can't? Let's consider a few examples. Was Paul right that he would go to Spain (*Romans 15:24*)? He never made it past Rome. Was Paul right to judge John Mark harshly and reject him as a missionary companion (*Acts 15:39*)? John Mark made a wonderful companion — for Barnabas. Was Paul wrong to chastise Peter (*Galatians 2:11*), or was Peter wrong? Was Paul right to defend slavery (*Philemon*)? Was Moses wrong to kill the Egyptian (*Exodus 2:12*)? Was Balaam wrong to prophecy against Israel, or try to (*Numbers 22*)? Was the unnamed "man of God" (a prophet) wrong to be tricked into disobeying God and so paid with his life (*1 Kings 13:1-30*)? Was Jeremiah wrong to resign from being prophet (*Jeremiah 20:9*)? Was Jonah wrong to refuse a prophetic call from God? Was Joseph Smith wrong to give Martin Harris the 118 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript?

And the list goes on. Of course prophets are wrong. The notion that prophets are never wrong is absurd on its surface and is scripturally impossible. Prophets are not infallible (no offense intended to my Catholic friends who believe just that of their Pope).

Don't tell me prophets are never wrong. Sometimes they don't even understand their own prophecies. A few examples: Prophets have to study God's word, often their own writings, and fret over them like anyone else (*1 Peter 1:10*). Lehi didn't even see all of his own vision (*1 Nephi 15:27*). And then there was a prophet, Abinadom, who didn't know he was a prophet (*Omni 11*). If Abinadom was a prophet, how could he not know it? And if he wasn't a prophet, then what's he doing writing in the Book of Mormon?

My point: The scriptures were written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and are therefore inspired accounts of man's dealing with God. That does not mean that every stupid thing that each prophet did or said was inspired by God — for example, I do not believe that God told Joshua to kill children (don't get me started, that's another article). This posturing of mine then (that prophets are fallible) allows me to make this outrageous claim; namely: God did not, as Nephi asserts, curse the Lamanites by changing their skin color to a darker shade.

Now that I've got your ire, I will attempt to prove my extravagant claim. Here then is my exegesis, my understanding of the verses *as they are received* without twisting the words (wresting) to make them say something different than what they actually say. It is, after all, an iron rod and not a rubber rod, so let's stick precisely to the received text.

[3] INTERMISSION, LET'S CATCH OUR BREATH

Of course, you may not need or want an alternative exegesis. If you are content with Nephi's racialism, then read no further. Nothing I have to say will please you. But if you wince at the whole idea that somehow a dark skin is a result of wickedness and white skin is a result of righteousness, then by all means, read on. This may be helpful.

One thing that I will not do is throw the baby out with the bath water. I will not reject the Book of Mormon because it says things I don't like, any more than I would reject the Bible because it says things I don't like; like for instance, Joshua killed children which is far more chilling than Nephi's racialism. Just because I disagree with Nephi does not mean that there was no Nephi, nor does it mean that Mormons are racist. But it does mean that ancient peoples thought differently about things than we do, and we have the benefit of hindsight.

The first question is: was there a Nephi? If yes, then we must grapple with what he wrote however nonsensical or harsh it may sound to us today. Truth is, a genuine ancient document must scramble our brains. Any document that is pat, that totally satisfies the modern mind, is likely a modern document and a fiction. The physicist Richard Feynman once wrote: "If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics." That applies equally well to the Book of Mormon. In my opinion, the Book of Mormon's oddness is its first-line defense, and good evidence that it really is true, and by true I mean authentic.

I believe that Nephi was a real person (that's why I am a Mormon, of course) whose writing deserves to be struggled with. And struggle, we must. If you are not struggling with this awkward book, you don't understand it, you haven't really let its harshness and weird complexities sink in, for if you had, you would be struggling with it.

Now let me ask you this question: If a great historic person was heard speaking racist words or seen doing racist things, would that lower your regard for him? Would

that condemn him in your eyes, or would you allow him and his flaws to be a product of his times rather than a critical flaw in his character?

Consider, for example, that Thomas Jefferson, the father of American democracy who canonized American notions of liberty into the Declaration of Independence, owned slaves. How can that be? Easy. Hindsight is 20-20, and people of the past made mistakes that we see as mistakes blessed as we are with 200 years of perspective. Had we been there, we might have done the same things they did. So maybe we should not be so hard with our moralistic judgments of past heroes even though we are certain that we really do have the moral high ground. Time, and not superior virtue, has given us that high ground.

I point out to you that Jefferson was a slave owner so that you can wrap your mind around this incongruous idea: Nephi was, at best, a racialist, or, at worst, a racist, and so was his brother Jacob, and so were all the Nephites until Ammon. It took them 500 years to get past their early racism. And *that* long story, Ammon's reaching out which begins in **Mosiah 28**, is a principle theme of the book.

To recap: This incongruity (the book's discussion of race and racism) persuades me to believe that the book is authentic. Fiction is congruous because it is made up to be whatever the author wants it to be. Real history is incongruous because it is not made up but happens beyond human control. History really happens and that's why it is so bizarre. Fiction writers cannot impose their order on real history. So, in my mind, I am defending the Book of Mormon by pointing out that it is very incongruous.

We should therefore not try so hard to whitewash our heroes. The more perfect we make them, the less real they become and the less need we have for God's grace. Nephi and Jefferson and all our heroes were flawed. That is why they are so believable.

[4] FIRST ASSERTION: GOD DID NOT CURSE THE LAMANITES WITH A DARK SKIN

So let's get to it, and start by reviewing the troubling verse.

2 Nephi 5:21 And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity...that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.

In Nephi's mind, a black skin is a curse. That's racism. Sorry, but it is. Or at least racialism which asserts that the races are different with different characteristics but are equal none-the-less. To his credit, Nephi did say this: **2 Nephi 26:33** ... *black and white ... all are like unto God*, which makes him a racialist and not a racist.

In Nephi's defense, we can understand why he was a racialist. He was encircled by dark skinned people who were trying to kill him. That would tilt anyone to racism. And of course he was right to defend his people with the force of arms. But that's not my point. My point is: Where did the theological notion of "cursed with a dark skin" come from? Since racism's long term destructiveness becomes clear by the end of the book, we have a right to know its origin.

And that leads us directly to this question: How did Nephi know that God had cursed the Lamanites with a dark skin? My answer is: *He didn't!* Nephi surmised it. God didn't say that or anything like that. Here is what God actually said:

2 Nephi 5:22 And thus saith the Lord God: I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities.

That's what God said and nothing else. He said Lamanites would be loathsome to Nephites but nothing about dark skin. Nephi *inferred* from God's words, and from the fact that he was surrounded by dark Lamanites, that their dark skin was God's curse. But that was Nephi's insertion and not what God said. So maybe Nephi is a racist, maybe even a bit racist, but not God.

And just how would Nephi know that anyway? The text nowhere makes Nephi an eyewitness. He couldn't have been because he was halfway across the continent —

2 Nephi 5:6 ... it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family... :7... and did journey into the wilderness for the space of many days... :8 And my people did... call [the place] Nephi.

Nor does the text bring to Nephi any such revelation from God. Therefore, Nephi could not have known as a fact, from observation or revelation, that God had altered the skin coloring of his brothers and their posterity. Therefore, Nephi surmised it.

Did he hear reports from others, people who drifted back and forth? Maybe. And just what might they have said to Nephi? And how would Nephi have interpreted such reports? "My goodness," Nephi might have thought, "they're cursed! And God did it!"

So, my first assertion is that the notion that God cursed the Lamanites with a dark skin for their wickedness was Nephi's notion, not God's.

The importance of this assertion cannot be overstated because it unshackles the book as a whole from Nephi's racialism and allows the book to be what it really is: an epic story of the destructiveness of racism. It took 500 years for that idea to dawn on the Nephites, but dawn it did, first to four repented apostates —

Mosiah 28:1 ...the sons of Mosiah...desired of [the king]...that they might...go up to the land of Nephi...that they might impart the word of God to their brethren, the Lamanites.

My, how things changed. Nephi and Jacob couldn't even conceive of such a thing. And it took 500 years to get to that point. But that's not unreasonable; it took Americans almost as long — from 1492 to the civil war, about 350 years — to realize that slavery was so evil that it should be abolished.

And so ends my first assertion: God did not curse Lamanites with a dark skin. Nephi was sure God had done just that, but his believing it doesn't make it so.

[5] SECOND ASSERTION: INTERMARRIAGE

Now for my second assertion: If Lamanite dark skin was not a curse from God, then what was it? It was the result of intermarriage of Laman's tribe with indigenous people — (whatever indigenous means since everyone here came here from somewhere.)

Wow. Now I'm really off the deep end.

Hold on. Let's do some analysis. Remember, Nephi was not an eyewitness to any racial transformation. The Book of Mormon never says he was. Further, he did not learn of any racial morphis from any eyewitness, not that appears in any verse in the book. And further still, he was not told such a thing by God.

Well then, what exactly *did* Nephi see? How did he learn of these dark skinned people? He learned of them decades later at his inland territory they called Nephi when they were attacked. He also learned that he was pretty much surrounded by these dark skinned hostiles, that they shared a common language, and that they claimed to be Lamanites. Nephi believed that these were Laman's children and that they cursed with a dark skinned by fiat magic. However, to be realistic, and more consistent with the text, it is more likely that these dark people were indigenous and that Laman's tribe assimilated into them, intermarried with them, then dominated them culturally. That better explains the huge population imbalance.

How do we account for their Jewish language and tradition? Simple. New ideas travel fast, a lot faster than DNA which does not travel fast. So it is easy to imagine a small band of new comers with new ideas, Jewish ideas, joining to an already large society, overwhelming that society with their new ideas while at the same time their own DNA got bred nearly out of existence by that large society.

Can that happen? It can and does. Here are some examples: (1) When Mosiah arrived at the much larger society of Zarahemla, Mosiah's traditions overwhelmed Zarahemla and not the other way around. (2) When rogue Nephites, Amulon and his evil priests, joined the Lamanites, Amulon's traditions overwhelmed the Lamanites and not the other way around. (3) When Ammon and his brothers joined the Lamanites, their Christian ideas threaten to overwhelm the entire Lamanite society. It was so threatening that civil war resulted. (4) When Alexander the Great conquered Persia, the Greeks Hellenized the entire known world in a few years. (5) When Cortez and his 550 soldiers overran the Aztec empire, they changed their language, religion, society, everything, and produced the Mexican race, all in a single decade. (6) Elvis Presley said, "The Beatles conquered America while I was making those stupid movies." He was right. The Beatles did conquer America and Elvis's movies were stupid (although the music was great).

My point is this: It is not unreasonable to imagine that the ideas of a small band of newcomers could catch on and completely overwhelm a large already present society. We know for a fact that this dynamic does happen — I just gave you examples. Now think about Laman's little tribe. They lost their records (Nephi stole them), and then they encountered a large dark skinned indigenous population, joined them, then took over.

What indigenous population? The book tells us that there were lots of Jaradites around when Lehi arrived and would be for another 400 years until Ether who was a contemporary of Mosiah. The book also tells us that the Nephites saw archaeological evidence of war (swords etc.) conspicuously lying on the ground which proves that those final Jaradite battles were recent, not ancient — swords don't stay uncovered on the ground very long, certainly not 400 years, nature covers things quickly.

But the best proof that they were overlapping contemporary societies is:

Omni 1:21...And Coriantumr [the last Jaradite king] was discovered by the people of Zarahemla, and he dwelt with them for the space of nine moons

Therefore the final Jaredite battles were contemporary with the Nephite/Mulekite epoch, and the Nephites knew it. Knowing then that Jaredites and Nephite/Lamanites co-existed for 400 years, it is simply not possible for them to not have crossed paths often.

So, there were lots of indigenous people available to assimilate the Laman tribe. And very quickly, two things happened:

First: Laman's new Jewish culture overwhelmed the indigenous people. At the same time indigenous DNA overwhelmed Laman's posterity. The result: dark Lamanites.

Second: Scant decades later, Nephi and Jacob found themselves surrounded by dark skinned hostiles who have Jewish traditions and also believe that the Nephites are their mortal enemies. Why? Because that's what Laman told them. And Nephi believed, reasonably, that God had done this — changed Lamanite skin tone — and that it was a curse from God. But it wasn't supernatural magic, it was simple biology.

The indigenous people were accommodating, willing, and anxious to adopt the languages and traditions of the new comers simply because it was something new to do, just as 2000 years later the Aztecs would welcome Cortez which was a fatal mistake.

Nephi assumed that Laman's tribe actually changed skin color and said so. Well, that did happen, in a sense, but not as a fiat act of God, but as the result of intermarriage which resulted in dark children — which, by the way, *is* an act of God if you accept that God created DNA.

2 Nephi 5:21 And he had caused the cursing to come upon them ... that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.

What does “cursed” mean? It means less blessed. Were the Lamanites less blessed? Yes, in the Nephite perspective anyway. Does a dark skin mean cursed? It can if it causes a social separation that results in an underprivileged class. Can a light skin be a curse? Certainly it can. For a trivial example, imagine a white man shipwrecked and landing on an island of dark skinned cannibals who eat only white people. It's not hard to imagine the white man feeling he is cursed with a white skin as he sits in a cooking pot.

Did God cause this “curse” as Nephi says? Well, yes, but not by fiat decree. After all, God did create biology. In a stretched and overly literal sense, Nephi was not wrong, God “did cause the cursing of a skin of blackness” *if* we allow God to have created biology, and *if* we allow cursed to mean in the eye of the beholder; that is, in the eye of the Nephites. Nephi then was right, but only from his own perspective, not from ours.

Let me use a not-far-fetched example to make the point. When a homosexual male catches AIDS, he might ask, “Why did God do this to me?” And a well intended Christian might answer, “God didn't do it to you, you did it to yourself.” But that might be a wrong answer. A better answer might be: God did not attack you personally, but he did create a world that allowed AIDS to exist and be transmitted as an STD. Therefore, in that sense, yes, God did cause you to get AIDS. But he did not cause *you* to get AIDS, not by selective, fiat decree anyway. God created the danger, but you stepped in front of that danger. You knew the risk, you took the risk, and lost. Is that God's fault? Well, yes or no depending on how you want to look at it. God is a bit culpable for having created the risk but you decided to take the risk. This is like a man who stands on the beach to

watch a tidal wave. When the man drowns, is that the wave's fault for killing him? It depends on how you want to look at it.

Now let's apply that reasoning to Laman's situation. When Laman's tribe intermarried with a dark indigenous people, Laman's children took on the physical characteristics of the larger society. Was that God's doing? Of course it was, in the sense that God created DNA. Just as when the Castilian Spanish conquerors (Cortez etc.) married Mexican Indians, their offspring became the modern dark skinned (or really mid-skinned) Mexican race with little resemblance to the Castilians or the Indios but a nice blend of both.

So, was Nephi right? Did God give Laman's children a dark skin? Answer: Yes, in that God created DNA and racial drift by intermarriage, but that was not fiat magic.

Next question: Was their dark skin a "curse"? Answer: Yes, if you are a Nephi thinking person who saw it as a curse, but not if you're a more enlightened Ammon thinking person, as we should be. And that's where the Book of Mormon turns on a dime.

This is the critical point: the Lamanite change in skin color was not fiat. There was no divine magical wand that God waved over them as he said, "You are now dark."

[6] THE EVIDENCE

All right. A fine theory, but can I prove it? Yes, I can. A fiat change never occurred. Not only because the book says no such thing but because it does say this —

***Jacob 3:8** O my brethren, I fear that unless ye shall repent of your sins that their skins will be whiter than yours, when ye shall be brought with them before the throne of God.*

This is Jacob's backhanded compliment. He thinks he is complimenting the Lamanites, but actually he is condescending. Jacob says that when Lamanites are better than Nephites, then Lamanite skin will be whiter than Nephite skin. Jacob cannot let go of his connection between goodness and whiteness.

But here is the surprise: Lamanites *did* become better than the Nephites, and guess what, they *did not become white*, and the Nephites *did not become dark*. Imagine that.

What does that tell us? That Jacob was wrong! Further, it tells us that there is no connection between goodness and whiteness and *never was*, despite **2 Nephi 5:21**.

By the way, Nephi never said that the Lamanite morphis was fiat. This is all it says: **2 Nephi 5:21** *the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them*. Yes, that could be fiat magic, but intermarriage satisfies the text just as well.

But what about this?

***3 Nephi 2:14** And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites :**15** And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites.*

Isn't that a skin lightening resulting from righteousness? Maybe. But wait a second. How long did it take for their skin tone to change? *Over one hundred years!* — from Ammon (**Alma 24**) to **3 Nephi**. That's five generations! That's not a curse lifted,

that's intermarriage at work, plain and simple. If there had been a sudden fiat change, don't you think that Ammon would have reported it a century earlier? Why wait a full century? What's at work here is assimilation and intermarriage, not a divine curse lifted.

I will offer myself as evidence. My grand-mother, Suda Ann Winborn, was an Oklahoma half-breed Choctaw. I have one photograph of her — she was as dark as any Indian I've ever seen. I imagine that her father, Chief Coming-On-The-Wind, was as dark. But as for me, just four generations later, I am as white as any of my English born ancestors. Did I magically avoid a curse? Certainly not. There was no curse to avoid. And I love my dark ancestors as well as my white. I'm just grateful that they made me.

Let's continue.

Just twenty years into the Nephite epic, there were a *lot* more Lamanites than there were Nephites, spanning from the coast up to and surrounding the Land of Nephi. That huge population imbalance is inexplicable without indigenous intermarriage. Why inexplicable? Because twenty years produces one new generation, and this huge population imbalance cannot have been the result of one new generation. Children grow fast, but not *that* fast. People are not rabbits.

But even more inexplicable, 400 years later in the Zarahemula epic, the Lamanites *really* outnumbered the Nephites, *in spite* of the fact that the Nephite population more than doubled — more likely tripled or quadrupled — by merging with the Mulakites.

And still there are more and more Lamanites. Beyond the borders, beyond the horizon, to both coasts (*Alma 22:27*) and all points south, there were untold, unaccounted Lamanites, Lamanites, Lamanites. Whenever the Nephites thought they had found the end of the Lamanites (and that happened several times: *Alma 18:9, 22:27, 24:1, 25:13, 43:5, 47:35*), there were still more. Clearly, they did not come from Laman's tribe, therefore they were already there.

How did that population imbalance happen? There's a better explanation than God zapping them with a dark skin. Just as the Nephite culture overwhelmed the Mulakite culture, and the Spanish culture overwhelmed the Aztec culture, and the Greek culture overwhelmed the Persian culture, let's at least allow the possibility that the Laman tribe overwhelmed the indigenous people and produced the Lamanites, and they did so quickly, within Nephi's lifetime. Laman's tribe could not have produced *so* many children *so* quickly that they were the constant military threat that the Book of Mormon claims they were in so short a time. That is simply impossible.

Well, if becoming righteous didn't lift the curse, then becoming wicked didn't cause the curse in the first place, except in the minds of Nephi, Jacob, and later Nephites, specifically Mormon, who read Nephi's words and believed them.

Let's continue.

4 Nephi 1:17 ...*Neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were one.*

We now see a fully blended society. Where they all light skinned? No, because Indians are dark today. Where they all dark skinned? No, because then the coming civil war would not have happened. So they remained what they already were: light and dark skinned people, but now living happily side-by-side. Sounds like America today.

So, why was not the curse lifted everywhere? They were all righteous, so why should this curse linger? Answer: *Because it wasn't a curse in the first place!* That's the point! If we insist in believing that the dark skin was a curse for wickedness, then we must also believe that white skin is a blessing for righteousness. The problem is: the Lamanites of **4 Nephi** did not magically become white, and that is proof that the dark skin curse was not a fiat-caused-curse in the first place. That so-called *curse* was a perspective of Nephi and his contemporaries.

Mormon and his neo-Nephites (A.D. Nephites) were still white, and the Lamanites were still dark despite 200 years of righteous co-existence. And then when this wonderful bi-racial, co-existing society separated again in **4 Nephi**, it separated on racial grounds, not cultural grounds because there was only one culture, "they were one." So it was racism all over again, and racism that destroyed the entire Nephite nation.

Here's a question: Why did Mormon fight for the Nephites? The answer is not that he was prophetically compelled to — God never gave him any such direction. Mormon fought for them simply because they were his people. He said so.

***Mormon 3:12** Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them ... **5:1** And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies ... **:2** But behold, I was without hope...*

It is important that near the end of the book, in Mormon's era, the Lamanites (good Lamanites) were still dark and Nephites (bad Nephites) were still light. So, if a dark skin was a curse for unrighteousness, then consider the epics where the Lamanites were righteous and the Nephites were wicked. Why didn't the Lamanites' skin become white, and the Nephite' skin become dark? That is what Jacob says, their skin will be whiter than yours. Sorry, Jacob, but you were wrong.

When their roles reversed, why didn't the skin colors reverse? Simple. Because changing skin color was not a curse from God, it was intermarriage — unless we *want* to be racist (as Nephi was) and make skin color a social issue (which Nephi did), in which case it *is* a curse because of social stigma which is unfair and leads to war (which it did).

But then why did Nephi insist that it was a curse from God? Because from his viewpoint, it was. He wasn't lying, he was recording his observations, and he was correct. His was a self-fulfilling prophecy. It wasn't wrong, it was just rigged.

Let's note something else about Nephi: He wrote the book. So of course he's the hero. Auto-biographers always make themselves heroic and faultless. And if guilty, they are guilty of only minor temptations, certainly not "any great or malignant sins" (**Joseph Smith 2:28**). Who knows what author/heroes are truly guilty of — they never say, maybe because they don't know themselves. Like Paul accusing Peter in **Galatians**. Paul insists he was right in his dispute with Peter. Of course Paul was right, Paul wrote the book! What if we had Peter's version? What if we had a book of Laman? What might it say?

But if they're so flawed, then how can we believe them? I believe them precisely *because* they are so flawed. A fiction writer makes his heroes squeaky clean. Or, if they must have faults, they are conspicuous faults, not the hiding-in-the-closet subtle faults

that lurk just out of sight. *Those* are the faults I'm interested to discover, the ones that the author doesn't know about, and that slip into the text *because* he doesn't know.

Nephi was a racist, and *he didn't know it!* Those undetected flaws of its heroes is what make the Book of Mormon so wonderful. And it must be true, because Joseph Smith didn't know it either. What more compelling evidence could there be than that?

***Mormon 8:17** And if there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, we know no fault; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire.*

That Mormon did not know of any faults in his book does not mean there are no faults. That's what he says. So it is no sin for me to find such faults, those that God already knows are there. What would be a sin, however, would be to condemn the book because of those faults, and that, I would never do. Indeed, I seek to do exactly the opposite: to establish the book's authenticity *because* of those faults.

[7] NOW WHAT?

So, what ought the church to do? Modify the text of the Book of Mormon? Maybe. It's permitted; it's been done. But I would never suggest that. To change the text and mitigate Nephi would cause us to lose an essential lesson that the book painstakingly gives us, that racism causes lots of grief and God would prefer that we rise above it.

But if the church does change the text, then minimal words could be added like "their *posterity* became like a flint" thus allowing more latitude for interpretation. But personally, I'd prefer to leave the text alone. The flaws of the prophets should be preserved and discussed. The received text of the Book of Mormon is scripture. Has it been changed? Yes, I know it has, and a lot. But that's between God and his prophets.

What I would rather that the church do is to footnote the critical verses, **2 Nephi 7:21-22**. Something like this might work: "The church today believes that Nephi was not literally correct to suggest that God cursed the Lamanites with a dark skin. For a full discussion, read the appendix."

The appendix could read something like this: "While it is true that Nephi believed God cursed his brethren the Lamanites with a dark skin (:21), it is also true that God said no such thing (:22). What we believe today is that Nephi's belief about race was a result of events transpiring around him and that his belief was wrong. The church today rejects the notion that any race or skin color is a curse from God, and there is strong evidence for that in the Book of Mormon. Those verses are listed in this appendix. Understood that way, the Book of Mormon is one of the most anti-racist books ever written."

The appendix would then list the verses and comments which I have provided below. That is what I would like to see happen.

[8] APPENDIX (THE TEXT AS A WHOLE)

Now that I've presented my new exegesis, and my proof of it, it is time to look at the text as a whole, from Nephi to Moroni, a whirlwind tour of the Book of Mormon, and see where that leads. Then you can decide to agree with me or not. Let's begin.

<p>Title Page <i>And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God.</i></p>	<p>Mormon acknowledges that his record may be flawed.</p>
<p>1 Nephi 1:3 ... <i>the record...is true ... according to my knowledge.</i></p>	<p>Nephi acknowledges the limits of his knowledge. In other words, “as I see it.”</p>
<p>2 Nephi 5:6 ... <i>it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family... :7... and did journey into the wilderness for the space of many days... :8 And my people did... call [the place] Nephi.</i></p>	<p>The family separates. This is the last time Nephi sees Laman. There is no later contact with Laman’s immediate family, no return journey to see what happened to them, Nephi can only conjecture, and he does.</p>
<p>2 Nephi 5:14 <i>And I, Nephi, did take the sword of Laban, and after the manner of it did make many swords, lest by any means the people who were now called Lamanites should come upon us and destroy us; for I know their hatred towards me and my children and those who were call my people.</i></p>	<p>This sudden growth of Laman’s family is inexplicable. To believe this threat as Nephi describes it, the Nephites have to already (within a decade) be surrounded by hostiles. That simply cannot have happened in the mere decade that followed since the separation. Children grow fast but not <i>that</i> fast. A single generation does not explain this too-soon threat. But if, on the other hand, the Laman tribe intermarried with a large indigenous society and culturally overwhelmed that society, that would produce lots of hostile Lamanites quickly.</p>
<p>2 Nephi 5:21 <i>And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people <u>the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.</u></i></p> <p>And Nephi’s vision of the future: 1 Nephi 12:23 ...<i>they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people...</i> This verse does not equate dark with loathsome, but it does suggest that Nephi equated the two.</p>	<p>This is the problem verse. This is Nephi’s opinion. It is racist and gives our opponents opportunity to call us racists (white is good, black is bad). Nephi does imply that the racial change is fiat, but he nowhere explicitly says so. What does “God did cause” mean? And how would he know? He didn’t witness it, he just assumed that God zapped them, or that’s how we read it. This brings us to the critical question that the Book of Mormon does not answer: how did God cause this change? Fiat decree is one possibility. Another is intermarriage with a massive indigenous society which fits the text just as well. Since God “caused” biology, Nephi is not wrong.</p>
<p>2 Nephi 5:22 <i>And thus saith the Lord God: I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities.</i></p>	<p>This is what God actually said. God said they will be loathsome to you. God did <i>not</i> say he will darken their skins — that is Nephi’s conclusion in the previous verse.</p>
<p>2 Nephi 5:23 <i>And cursed shall be the seed of him <u>that mixeth with their seed</u>; for they</i></p>	<p>Proof that intermarriage causes the genetic change that Nephi sees as a fiat change.</p>

<p><i>shall be cursed even with the same cursing. And the Lord spake it, and it was done.</i></p>	<p>Even he understood that. He is saying that intermarriage brings <i>the curse</i>. And what did “the Lord spake”? If you intermarry with cursed people you become cursed. That’s nothing new, that’s just biology.</p>
<p>2 Nephi 26:10 <i>And when these things have passed away a speedy destruction cometh unto my people...</i></p> <p>2 Nephi 3:2 <i>...the inheritance of thy seed with thy brethren, for thy security forever... :3...thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed.</i></p>	<p>A preview of the Nephite destruction. Since the dark people survived and the light people did not, this dark skin curse is not much of a curse after all, except in the minds of Nephites. Note: Nephites did survive (Mormon 5:7, 5:9, 6:15, 7:1).</p>
<p>Jacob 1:10 <i>The people having loved Nephi exceedingly, he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defense...</i></p>	<p>Perpetual warfare within a decade of the separating. That implies one of three possibilities: (1) Laman followed Nephi, which is impossible, (2) Laman bred like rabbits producing a large nation which overran the land and overtook the Nephites in a single decade, which is impossible, (3) Laman’s tribe intermarried with indigenous people, and that is the only possibility given the stated timeframe.</p>
<p>Jacob 1:13 <i>Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites. :14 But I, Jacob, shall not hereafter distinguish them by these names, but I shall call them Lamanites that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites, or the people of Nephi, according to the reigns of the kings.</i></p>	<p>It’s hard to believe this depth of tribal granularity happening in the course of a single generation unless he’s talking about mere families which is probably the case.</p>
<p>Jacob 1:15 <i>Now it came to pass that the people of Nephi...began to...indulge themselves...as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines...</i></p>	<p>The Nephites were polygamous. Whether right or wrong, this would accelerate their population growth. So, how it is that the Lamanites out-bred them at every turn?</p>
<p>Jacob 2:32 <i>And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Host, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people...</i></p>	<p>Two points: (1) Affirms my previous point that the Nephites were polygamous, and (2) “fair” is a racist adjective; it doesn’t mean sweet or pretty, it means white.</p>
<p>Jacob 3:3 <i>But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God; for except ye repent the land is cursed for your sakes; and the Lamanites, which are not filthy like unto you,</i></p>	<p>If the Lamanites are “not filthy” then why are they still cursed? My point is that their dark skin is a curse only in the minds of the Nephites.</p>

<p><i>nevertheless they are cursed with a sore cursing, shall scourge you even unto destruction.</i></p>	
<p>Jacob 3:5 <i>Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of <u>their filthiness</u> and the cursing which hath come upon their skins, are <u>more righteous than you</u>; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers — that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them.</i></p>	<p>[1] The “curse” is Nephite racism. To them, “filthiness” meant dark. [2] Even though the Lamanites lost their records (Nephi stole them), they diligently kept Jewish traditions which they passed on to the indigenous people. [3] Not only are the Nephites polygamous, the Lamanites are <i>not</i> polygamous. So now we <i>really</i> have to wonder why the Lamanite population grew so fast.</p>
<p>Jacob 3:6 <i>And now, this commandment they observe to keep; wherefore, because of this observance, in keeping this commandment, the Lord God will not destroy them...</i></p>	<p>It is not the case that the Nephites are good and the Lamanites bad. So we need another explanation for the so-called curse. Intermarriage with indigenous people and Nephite racism explains everything.</p>
<p>Jacob 3:8 <i>O my brethren, I fear that unless ye shall repent of your sins that <u>their skins will be whiter than yours</u>, when ye shall be brought with them before the throne of God.</i></p>	<p>Jacob, taking his cue from his brother Nephi, still sees dark skin as a curse and gives the Lamanites a condescending backhanded compliment: when they get righteous, their skin will get white. That is not a compliment, that’s an insult.</p>
<p>Jacob 3:9 <i>...ye revile no more against them because of the darkness of their skins; neither shall ye revile against them because of their filthiness; but ye shall remember your own filthiness, and remember that their filthiness came because of their fathers.</i></p>	<p>Jacob pleads that the Nephites get over their racism, but he can’t see his own racism; namely, he still equates dark skin with filthiness. I’ll give him this: he also equates filthiness with wickedness, but that just makes matters worse because that equates dark skin to wickedness. But still, his intentions are good, and that counts.</p>
<p>Jacob 3:13 <i>And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous...</i></p>	<p>We’re still in the second generation yet there are a lot of Nephites, so many that recording their doings defies recordation. My point: Even though the Nephites are growing without bounds, there are already vastly more Lamanites even in those first two generations. How?</p>
<p>Omni 12 <i>...Mosiah...being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would harken ... should also depart out of the land with him</i></p>	<p>400 years earlier they had abandoned their first site, a coastal site where they left Laman. Now some of them abandoned their second site and found Zarahemula. Those that remained were never heard of again. Maybe they were massacred or maybe assimilated (which I think they did,</p>

	<i>Alma 22:28</i>). Either way they had vanished when later Nephites tried to find them.
<i>Omni 13 ...until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla.</i>	The Nephite population more than doubled (the Mulakites outnumber them) and still they cannot keep pace with the Lamanite population. Not even close.
<i>Omni 14 And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla. Now there was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla; and also Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews.</i>	The Mulakites were more impressed with the Nephites than the Nephites were with the Mulakites. The reason is because of the records and traditions. What I'm claiming is that 400 years earlier, the indigenous people were similarly impressed with the Laman's tribe because of their Jewish traditions and so they became Lamanites.
<i>Omni 17 And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceeding numerous...</i>	Implying that there were more Mulakites than Nephites which makes sense. Thus the Nephites numbers more than doubled.
<i>Omni 17 ... they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword...and their language had been corrupted...</i>	Two independent civilizations, and the Lamanites out-populated them both together and then some because they inhabited all the surrounding lands as well. All Nephites encountered Lamanites. But not all Lamanites (or even most Lamanites) encountered Nephites. There were even Lamanites that the Nephites knew nothing of (as we'll see). What does that tell you?
<i>Omni 18 ...Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language...</i>	At least two separate languages not including Egyptian. And Mosiah very quickly has a lot of influence. So if the Nephite/Mulekite was a joining of two nations, why not the Lamanites? How did Lamanites outnumber Nephites plus Mulekites? Especially since it is likely that at the beginning, the Mulekites (a Jewish prince and his royal entourage) outnumbered all the family of Lehi.
<i>Omni 19 And it came to pass that the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king.</i>	This proves my assertion. A minority people can socially overwhelm a majority people and quickly. That's how Laman's tribe overwhelmed the indigenous.
<i>Omni 21 And they gave an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people. And Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemula...</i>	Ahah! The Nephites/Mulakites and the Jaradites were contemporaries! The Jaredites were indigenous when Lehi arrived and still were for 400 more years.
<i>Omni 22 ...and their bones lay scattered in the land northward.</i>	This proves that this final Jaradite war was recent. Had it happened 400 years earlier,

	there would be no sign of bones. The earth covers things quickly. This final war and Mosiah were not even a generation apart.
<i>Omni 27</i> And now I would speak somewhat concerning a certain number who went up into the wilderness to return to the land of Nephi... <i>28</i> ...they were all slain, save fifty <i>29</i> And...others...took their journey again into the wilderness.	Had there been any people remaining in the land of Nephi to be discovered, they would have been discovered. Did they join the Lamanites? Were they massacred? Did they starve? Did they just drift away? Whatever happened, they were gone.
<i>Words of Mormon 13</i> ...the armies of the Lamanites came down out of the land of Nephi, to battle...	The Lamanites controlled almost everything, including the land of Nephi. This population imbalance is huge.
<i>Mosiah 1:2</i> ...he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his father, that thereby they might become men of understanding... <i>:3</i> And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass... <i>:4</i> he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings and teach them...	They spoke and read multiple languages (just as the Swiss speak Italian, French, and German; there is no Swiss language). The Nephite ancient records were Egyptian, but if Egyptian was their language, then to be “taught” Egyptian would have been pointless. Their main language was something else. Hebrew? Jaradite? Or maybe something new? A lot can change in 400 years.
<i>Mosiah 1:5</i> ...were it not for these things [the plates] which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read...we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things...	That’s simply not true. The Lamanites <i>did</i> know “concerning these things” and we will see evidence of that. What the Lamanites knew was the basis for their hatred of the Nephites (<i>Alma 20:10</i>) and their Jewish history (<i>Alma 21:1</i>)
<i>Mosiah 2:2</i> And there were a great number, even so many that they did not number them; for they had multiplied exceedingly and waxed great in the land.	Now some arithmetic. There were lots of Nephites, too many to count. But not really. Truth is, there were lots of Zarahemlites, mostly Mulekites, and a minority of pure Nephites. And it’s the pure Nephites that ought to be on a population parity with the Lamanites, but they’re not. The Lamanites vastly outnumber the pure Nephites, and much more surprisingly, they vastly outnumber the Mulekites, and that before the Nephites and Mulekites ever met. Now, how could that be?
<i>Mosiah 28:1</i> ...the sons of Mosiah...desired of [the king]...that they might...go up to the land of Nephi...that they might impart the word of God to <u>their brethren</u> , the Lamanites.	The beginning of the end of Nephite racism. Ammon thinks of Lamanites not as cursed but as brothers.
<i>Alma 17:19</i> And Ammon went to the land of Ishmael, the land being called after the	And so it begins. Of course this is a missionary incursion, but it is also

<p><i>sons of Ishmael, who also became Lamanites.</i></p>	<p>unintentionally the Nephites’ first discovery of how vast the Lamanities really are.</p>
<p><i>Alma 17:24 And it came to pass that king Lamoni was much pleased with Ammon... and would that Ammon should take one of his daughters to wife. :25 But Ammon said unto him, Nay, but I will be thy servant.</i></p>	<p>Ammon might have declined the girl because he was racist, but there are reasons to believe otherwise. Here he says “but I will be thy servant” hinting that marriage would interfere with his purpose. Also, he earlier called the Lamanites his brothers. A racist doesn’t say that. Also, there is a thin hint that Ammon did finally marry a Lamanite girl — Alma 35:14 <i>And Alma, and Ammon [and others] ... have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children and their lands</i> — inferring that Ammon finally did get married. And who would he marry? Considering that he was among the Lamanites for a very long time, maybe two decades (Alma had adult sons), Ammon could only have married a Lamanite girl, my guess is Lamoni’s daughter as originally offered.</p>
<p><i>Alma 18:9 ...a great feast appointed at the land of Nephi, by the father of Lamoni, who was king over <u>all the land</u>. [1]</i></p>	<p>The Nephite authors say “all the land” a lot. The implication is that each time they say it, they believe it, that they are finally coming to grips with how many Lamanites there really are.</p>
<p><i>Alma 20:14 Now Lamoni said...I will go with thee to the land of Middoni...</i></p>	<p>Just expanding the geography. Now we have Middoni as well as Ishmael as well as Nephi which is the seat of government. Or is it? Lamanite population is overwhelming already and we’re just getting started.</p>
<p><i>Alma 20:10 And he also said: Whither art thou going with this Nephite, who is one of the children of a liar? :13 ...his father was angry with him, and said: Lamoni, thou art going to deliver these Nephites, who are sons of a liar?</i></p>	<p>The words “sons of a liar” is a slander that has been believed for a very long time and said so often that it is now an idiom. And who is “the liar” in view? Probably Nephi who Laman accused of lying. To say the Lamanites know nothing [Mosiah 1:5] is simply not true. They hate the Nephites but with reasons. They know the story.</p>
<p><i>Alma 21:1 Aaron took his journey towards the land which was called by the Lamanites, Jerusalem, calling it after the land of their fathers’ nativity...</i></p>	<p>Another area, Jerusalem, and another evidence of Lamanite recollected history. They know where they’re from, Jerusalem, and they know all about the early conflict.</p>
<p><i>Alma 21:3 Now the Lamanites ... were sufficiently hardened, but the Amalekites</i></p>	<p>Lamanites didn’t hate Nephites per se, they accepted any who came, good or bad. They</p>

<p><i>and the Amulonites were still harder; therefore they did cause the Lamanites that they should harden their hearts...</i></p>	<p>hated the Nephite civilization. But also, isn't it interesting how easily Lamanites were influence by Nephites, good or bad? This affirms my supposition that Laman's tribe influenced the indigenous people from the very beginning.</p>
<p>Alma 21:9 <i>Now Aaron began to open the scriptures unto them concerning the coming of Christ...</i></p>	<p>What scriptures could he mean? They must have made copies to take even though paper was rare and expensive. The Jews had their scribes since Josiah found the last copy of the Bible in the temple. Eusebius read his History of the Church out loud to his student historians who wrote out every word, and because of those multiple copies, Eusebius' words survived. It would make sense that Ammon and Aaron and their brothers made copies of Isaiah or took existing copies with them. After all, their purpose was to preach Christ. How could they do that without the relevant texts? Ammon was a prince after all so he had access to royal scribes.</p>
<p>Alma 21:17 <i>...they did convince many of their sins, and of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.</i></p>	<p>Which traditions? The religious traditions (ignorant of Christ) or historical traditions (Nephi's absconding with the plates)? Whichever, they had traditions so they were not ignorant, just wrong.</p>
<p>Alma 22:1 <i>...Aaron...was led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king which was over all the land save it were the land of Ishmael...</i></p>	<p>This "all the land" is made emphatic by the "save it were the land of Ishmael." And this is the capital, so the text leads us to believe that Aaron and his brothers have done their job, they've got them all, or so they think.</p>
<p>Alma 22:7 <i>And Aaron...said... Believest thou that there is a God? And the king said: I know that the Amalekites say that there is a God, and I granted unto them that they should build sanctuaries... And if now thou sayest there is a God, behold I will believe.</i></p>	<p>How come the Amalekites got a pass? What happened to all this "son of a liar" stuff? It seems that the Lamanites hate the Nephites only when they feel like it. The Amalekites got lucky just as Ammon did. Lamoni's father hated Ammon because Lamoni had missed an important feast and embarrassed him.</p>
<p>Alma 22:27 <i>...the king sent a proclamation throughout <u>all the land</u>, amongst all his people who were in <u>all his land</u>, who were in all the regions round about, which was bordering even to the sea, on the east and on the west, and which was divided from</i></p>	<p>"All <u>the</u> land." Oh really? The author quickly backpedals to "all <u>his</u> land." Why? Because when he'd thought about it, he realized he wasn't sure just how much of "all <u>the</u> land" there was. He felt confident to refer to "all his people who were in all</p>

<p><i>the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west, and round about on the borders of the sea seashore, and the borders of the wilderness which was on the north by the land of Zarahemla, through the borders of Manti, by the head of the river Sidon, running from the east towards the west — and thus were the Lamanites and the Nephites divided.</i></p>	<p>his land” but beyond that, things got fuzzy. But even the king’s people were fuzzy and so he referred to them “in all the regions round about.” Who knows what that is? Here is what the author did know: the Lamanites spanned from west coast to the east coast south of the neck of wilderness which separated them from Zarahemla. And it’s repeated in the next verse.</p>
<p>Alma 22:28 <i>...they were spread through the wilderness on the <u>west</u>, in their land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers’ <u>first inheritance</u>, and thus bordering along by the seashore.</i></p>	<p>So Lamanites occupied all the west coast.</p> <p>Also notice that the Lamanites called the land of Nephi their land of first inheritance. That’s odd because that was where the Nephites originally fled <i>to</i> in order to separate themselves from Laman. So, what was the place before the first place? And also, when Mosiah left that place 300 years later, leaving Nephites behind who didn’t what to go with him, the Lamanites quickly claimed it for themselves. So how could it be “first inheritance”? Only if those Nephites who stayed behind assimilated with the Lamanites and <i>they</i> called it “first inheritance” and the Lamanites kept the name. In other words, the Lamanites were simply claiming what they saw as rightfully theirs, and it was. It belonged to remaining Nephites who probably became Lamanites.</p>
<p>Alma 22:29 <i>And also there were many Lamanites on the <u>east</u> by the seashore... And thus the Nephites were nearly surrounded by the Lamanites</i></p>	<p>The Lamanites also occupied the east coast, so they were everywhere.</p>
<p>Alma 22:33 <i>...the Nephites in their wisdom, with their guards and their armies, had hemmed in the Lamanites on the <u>south</u> ...</i></p>	<p>And the Lamanites occupied everything south. And that’s the surprise. How far south is south? Fact is, the Nephites had no idea. Fact is, the Lamanites probably occupied all of South America to the tip of Chili, and those far Lamanites probably had no idea of the on-going wars with the hostile Nephites. They might not even call themselves Lamanites though that’s what the Nephites would call them, if they ever met. What I’m saying is this: This population imbalance is far greater than the</p>

	casual reader supposes, and that's because the authors had no clue how many Lamanites there really were so they couldn't tell us.
<i>Alma 23:1 ...the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people ... in whatsoever place they should be, in any part of their land.</i>	Three points here: First: The author is content to refer to "all <u>his</u> people," implying that there are others who are not. Second: "whatsoever place" implies that the king's border is fuzzy. Third: "in any part of <u>their</u> land" implies that there is lots of land that is not the king's land.
<i>Alma 23:8 Now, these are they who were converted unto the Lord: :15 Therefore, we have named <u>all the cities</u> of the Lamanites in which they did repent and come to the knowledge of the truth, and were converted.</i>	:8-13 gives us a long list of those who converted to the Nephite gospel, and :14 gives us a short list of those who did not. What it means is this: They could take a headcount of converts but they couldn't take a head count of non-converts, in spite of the fact that the king had ordered "everyone" to convert. Well, his order was effective, we have the list. The problem was that <i>his</i> "everyone" was far short of the <i>real</i> "everyone". The <i>real</i> everyone was so numerous that they were capable of killing all the converts had they not fled. So the non-converts were the real majority, not the converted "everyone."
<i>Alma 23:16 ...the king and those who were converted were desirous that they might have a name, that thereby they might be distinguished from their brethren...</i>	Distinguished from who? Distinguished from the vague "their brethren." And how many of "their brethren" are there? Lots! And we're about to get some idea of what "lots" means.
<i>Alma 23:17 ...they called their names Anti-Nephi-Lehies...</i>	Anti- means quasi, or "sort of." They were Lamanites who were Nephites, sort of. Like a quasar (quasi-star) which is like a star but not really, just sort of.
<i>Alma 23:18 And they began to be a very industrious people; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore, they did open a correspondence with them, and <u>the curse of God did no more follow them.</u></i>	This is a critical verse. Because if we believe it, and if we believe that their curse was their dark skin, then we must conclude that all these converts became light skinned practically overnight. But that didn't happen as we'll see. Think of that Arnold Friberg painting of the stripling warriors. They're dark, aren't they? Arnold was right. Therefore we must conclude, if we're true to the text, that if removing the curse did not mean a light skin, then imposing

	the curse did not mean a dark skin. Oh, there was a curse, but it was not skin tone. All skin tone meant was “us verses them” which is what racism is.
<i>Alma 24:1 And it came to pass that the Amalekites and the Amulonites and the Lamanites who were in the land of Amulon, and also in the land of Helam, and who were in the land of Jerusalem, and in fine, in all the land round about, who had not been converted and had not taken upon them the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, were stirred up by the Amalekites and by the Amulonites to anger against their brethren.</i>	Here’s a new area, Helam. But much more is “all the land round about” because the author doesn’t even want to begin to list “all the land round about” because he doesn’t know. What he does know is that it is vast.
<i>Alma 24:26 And it came to pass that the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain...</i>	That’s a lot. A second wave of new converts and they were enough to kill the entire first wave if they had persisted.
<i>Alma 25:1 And behold, now it came to pass that those Lamanites were more angry because they had slain their brethren ...</i>	What we have here is even more Lamanites who for a short while killed the converts. And their numbers cannot be accounted for in the short list of 23:15 . How many were there?
<i>Alma 25:4 And among the Lamanites who were slain were almost all the seed of Amulon and his brethren...</i>	Enough to kill all the people Anti-Nephi-Lehi (if they’d had a mind to) and all the people of Amulon. This was no small army and they were just an angry uprising, a mob, that the author has no explanation where they all came from. There were just lots of Lamanites,
<i>Alma 25:6 ...and thus many of them converted in the wilderness.</i>	Good. These murderers found their conscience and converted. So these are a third wave of new converts and surely reduces the bad people by a whole bunch. Right? Wrong!
<i>Alma 25:8 Now this martyrdom caused that many of their brethren should be stirred up to anger; and there began to be contention in the wilderness; and the Lamanites began to hunt the seed of Amulon and his brethren and began to slay them ...</i>	And so we have even more. A wave of converts that we first thought was all the Lamanites, then a wave of killers who killed them who might have been all the Lamanites. But <i>they</i> also converted, further decimating the Lamanite rank and file, so then <i>another</i> wave of killers came to kill them but instead killed more Amulonites. Are we getting near the end of Lamanites? <i>Not even close</i> . Are you getting a picture here?

<p>Alma 25:13 <i>And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi, and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi_Lehi.</i></p>	<p>Well, imagine that. Now we have a forth wave of converts. This group started with the conversion of an entire nation, all the people of this one king who was king of “all the land” or so it said, and then grew from there. Surely they must be, oh I don’t know, maybe half of all the Lamanites there are? As I said, not even close.</p>
<p>Alma 27:2 <i>...the Amalekites, because of their loss, were exceeding angry. And when they saw that they could not seek revenge from the Nephites, they began to stir up the people in anger against their brethren...</i></p>	<p>After all the converting and killing and more converting and more killing, how can there still be even more Lamanites to kill converts? Because there are too many Lamanites to count!</p>
<p>Alma 28:2 <i>And thus there was a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land of the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens of thousands of the Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad.</i></p>	<p>How many Lamanites died? Tens of thousands. That’s at least 20,000; maybe 100,000. Who knows. But that’s after all the converts and all the killing. And still, there are more, many more, Lamanites than Nephites.</p>
<p>Alma 30:2 <i>Now their dead were not numbered because of the greatness of their number; neither were the dead of the Nephites numbered</i></p>	<p>Ten of thousands of Lamanites is a huge number, but too-many-to-count is huger still. They didn’t count the Nephites not because they were so many but probably because they were all mixed together.</p>
<p>Alma 31:4 <i>Now the Nephites greatly feared that the Zoramites would enter into a correspondence with the Lamanites, and that it would be the means of great loss on the part of the Nephites.</i></p>	<p>This is curious. If such a correspondence with the Lamanites were such an easy thing to do, why didn’t the Nephites do that and create a perpetual peace? Maybe the Nephites really did hate the Lamanites.</p>
<p>Alma 37:19 <i>And now behold, one purpose hath he fulfilled, even to the restoration of many thousands of the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth ...</i></p>	<p>Yes but these “many thousands” is small compared to the real population of Lamanites.</p>
<p>Alma 43:4 <i>For behold ... the Zoramites became Lamanites ...</i></p>	<p>No mention of race or change of skin color. Good dark people don’t become light, and bad light people don’t become dark. And there is this lingering question: How is it that the Zoramites could so easily make peace with the Lamanites but the Nephites could not? Were the Nephites trying?</p>
<p>Alma 43:5 <i>And it came to pass that the Lamanites came with their thousands ...</i></p>	<p>With all the thousands of converts, Lamoni, his father “king of all the land” and their enemies who converted, all of that was small potatoes and didn’t even put a dent in the true Lamanite population. It’s as though</p>

	none of that ever happened because here we go again.
<i>Alma 43:6 And now, as the Amalekites were of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites were, in and of themselves, therefore, Zerahemnah appointed chief captain over the Lamanites, and they were all Amalekites and Zoramites.</i>	So again we see whites easily taking charge of the darks. All the darks? Certainly not. We still have no idea how vast “all the darks” really is. This is so reoccurring that my claim is not so outrageous: that this is just what happened at the very beginning: Laman’s tribe, although a tiny minority (but a well educated minority), basically <i>took over</i> the indigenous dark skinned people thus creating Lamanites.
<i>Alma 43:14 Now those descendants were as numerous, nearely, as were the Nephites</i>	This is a gross understatement. “Nearly” proves that the Nephites had no idea how many Lamanites there really were. All they knew is what they saw coming at them in the coming battle, and as we shall see, again, that was not <i>all</i> the Lamanites by any means.
<i>Alma 43:20 ... and they [Lamanites] were naked, save it were a skin which was girded about their loins; yea, all were naked, save it were the Zoramites and the Amalekites;</i>	Nothing has changed in 500 years. The indigenous people dressed sparsely while the Europeans dressed protectively.
<i>Alma 43:37 And the work of death commenced on both sides, but is was more dreadful on the part of the Lamanites, for their nakedness was exposed ...</i>	Always it is the Lamanites who take massive casualties, and yet they are always the majority. They must have started as a super-majority.
<i>Alma 44:8 ... we will not suffer ourselves to take an oath unto you, which we know that we shall break ... :11 ... ye shall not depart except ye depart with an oath that ye will not return again against us to war. :20...after they had entered into a covenant with hi of peace they were suffered to depart into the wilderness. :21 now the number of their dead was not numbered because of the greatness of the number ...</i>	This oath of peace was not trivial. The Lamanites would rather die than take such an oath, and only took the oath when they realized they really <i>would</i> die. So, what’s the point? The point is that from the Lamanite side, the war was a total loss, 100%. Every soldier was either dead or had taken this oath to never fight again. That means that any future war, would have to be fought with new manpower. And since the Lamanites did come again to war in only two years, that means there was no shortage of military manpower. They could waste army after army and still outnumber the Nephites. What does that tell you? That they breed like rabbits, or that they were massive from the very beginning?
<i>Alma 45:10 ... the Nephites ... in four</i>	I think every Mormon has asked this

<p><i>hundred years from the time that Jesus Christ shall manifest himself unto them, shall dwindle in unbelief. :11 ... even until the people of Nephi shall become extinct.</i></p>	<p>question: Why did the Nephites become extinct because of unbelief when the Lamanites survived and thrived in their unbelief? Was Nephite unbelief worse? That’s a pathetic answer. I have a better answer: The Nephites were always on the verge of extinction because of the massive population of their enemy. But as long as they believed, God protected them. When they stopped believing, they lost God’s special protection, and in their minority status, their situation was hopeless. Alma’s words are prophetic, but really, they’re just common sense. He was stating the obvious.</p>
<p><i>Alma 45:13 ... the seed of those who are now numbered among the people of Nephi, shall no more be numbered among the people of Nephi. :14 But whosoever remaineth, and is not destroyed in that great and dreadful day, shall be numbered among the Lamanites, and shall become like unto them, all, save it be a few who shall be called the disciples of the Lord; and them shall the Lamanites pursue even until they shall become extinct ...</i></p>	<p>For the record, the Nephites (their progeny) did not become extinct. Many finally did the only sensible thing: they joined the Lamanites. It was their civilization then that was destroyed and not their family. Another point: If the Nephites were destroyed because they were worse than the Lamanites, how come the few remaining true believers were killed? Didn’t they deserve God’s special protection? Really, it was all about population. That’s why the record rings true – it’s very believable.</p>
<p><i>Alma 46:9 Yea, and we also see the great wickedness one very wicked man can cause to take place among the children of men.</i></p>	<p>My point exactly! Since we have seen it happen repeatedly, it is entirely reasonable that Laman’s small band, encountered aborigines, joined them, then dominated them. Thus, their posterity was dark, “cursed” in the Nephite view.</p>
<p><i>Alma 47:1 ... Amalickiah ... did stir up the Lamanites to anger against the people of Nephi, insomuch that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation throughout all his land, among all his people that they should gather themselves together again to go to battle against the Nephites.</i></p>	<p>Here we go again, and just two years after the Lamanite oath (44:20). And not a word about those who took that oath, they’ve been forgotten, and they were huge, weren’t they? So, who else is fighting now?</p>
<p><i>Alma 47:35 ... he ... was the acknowledged king throughout all the land, among all the people ...</i></p>	<p>Really? <u>All</u> the land? <u>All</u> the people? Do we believe that this time? It’s been said before and has been shown not to be true.</p>
<p><i>Alma 49:6 Now the leaders of the Lamanites had supposed, because of the greatness of their numbers ... :7 ... that they should easily overpower and subject</i></p>	<p>After destroyed army, after destroyed army, after destroyed army, the Lamanites still could marshal a force so large that by its sheer mass, they were confident of</p>

<i>their brethren ...</i>	victory.
Alma 49:13 ... <i>their chief captains came forward and took an oath that they would destroy the people of that city. :17 And now behold it came to pass, that when the Lamanites had found that Lehi commanded the city they were again disappointed, for they feared Lehi exceedingly; nevertheless their chief captains had sworn with an oath to attack the city; therefore, they brought up their armies.</i>	Evidence for my earlier point that whatever else you think about the Lamanites, their oath was their bond. They would die in a futile battle rather than break their oath. That confirms my assertion that when a retiring Lamanite army took an oath of peace and went home, they meant it. In other words, a king need not look to returning veterans to field his next army, those veterans were simply not available.
Alma 49:21 ... <i>they were slain with an immense slaughter.</i>	Of course. What else?
Alma 50:15 <i>And they also began in that same year to build many cities of the north ...</i>	It's about time. Lamanites everywhere, east, west, and south, and now finally the Nephites start to colonize northward. The Lamanites were centuries ahead of them.
Alma 53:11 <i>And because of their oath they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren ... :14 ... they were about to break their oath ... :15 And Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls ...</i>	Final word about oaths: In the play "Man For All Seasons", when Thomas Moore's daughter advises him to take an oath he doesn't means, he argues, "When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers then — he needn't hope to find himself again." That's why Nephites and Lamanites took them so seriously. Remember that the next time you're on jury duty.
Alma 62:15 ... <i>and slew many of them ... :26 ... and there were many of the Lamanites who were slain.</i>	More Lamanite casualties. Just business as usual.
Alma 62:16 ... <i>after they had taken them, they caused them to enter into a covenant that they would no more take up their weapons of war against the Nephites.</i>	The Nephites still trusted the oaths that the Lamanites took. So the Nephites must have had good reason to trust such oaths; earlier oaths must have been honored.
Alma 62:30 ... <i>Moroni, after he had obtained possession of the city of Nephihah, having taken many prisoners, which did reduce the armies of the Lamanites exceedingly ...</i>	It's getting tedious to make the same argument over and over. But this scenario plays out over and over, so this dynamic is just obvious.
Alma 62:33 <i>And the armies of the Lamanites were all gathered together, insomuch that they were all in one body ... :38 ... and they did flee, even that they did not return at that time against the Nephites.</i>	Each of these three armies was large. So when they got together, they were really large. Still, they were defeated by the smaller Nephite army. No real point here except that this is reoccurring.
Alma 63:4 ... <i>a large company of men,</i>	Finally, after 600 years, the Nephites begin

<p><i>even to the amount of five thousand and four hundred men, with their wives and their children, departed out of the land of Zarahemla into the land which was northward.</i></p>	<p>to pioneer northward. The Lamanites were way ahead of them by centuries as evidenced by their massive military might.</p>
<p>Alma 63:14 ... <i>they were stirred up again to anger against the Nephites. :15 And also in this same year they came down with a numerous army to war against the people of Moroniah, or against the army of Moronihah, in the which they were beaten and driven back again to their own lands, suffering great loss.</i></p>	<p>Here we go again, and again, and again. Compare this long string of defeats to the fall of the Persian empire. In 334 BCE Alexander the Great and his Greek army crossed the Hellespont and engaged Persia. The Persians lost three battles (Granicus, Issus, Garugamela) and that was the end of the Persian empire, the greatest society and the greatest military force the world had ever seen. But three strikes and they were out. Napoleon lost all of Europe in two defeats: his retreat from Moscow and Waterloo. Now the Book of Mormon is asking us to believe that the Lamanites sustained massive casualties from a dozen or more battles, and could still field a next army and a next, and still be the dominant society in terms of population. That simply is not possible unless they already had a vastly superior population at the very beginning. In other words, when Lehi arrived 600 BCE, there was already a massive indigenous society, dark skinned, that willingly accepted new social customs from Laman and his tribe.</p>
<p>Helaman 1:14 ... <i>the Lamanites had gathered together an innumerable army of men ... :15 And they came down again that they might pitch battle against the Nephites.</i></p>	<p>Now we're in another book and it's the same story. Where did this innumerable army come from? From an endless supply of volunteers, from a huge indigenous society.</p>
<p>Heleman 1:15 ... <i>And they [Lamanites] were led by a man whose name was Coriantumr; and he was a descendant of Zarahemla; and he was a dissenter from among the Nephites ...</i></p> <p>Omni 21 <i>And they gave an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people. And Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemula...</i></p>	<p>What's in a name? Plenty. How could this name, with its 5 complex syllables, be the name of a Jaradite king and also a Nephite ex-patriot who became a Lamanite general? Answer: There was substantial social interchange between the two societies; no other explanation makes sense. I suppose there is the slight possibility that the Jaradite king living with the Nephites became somewhat of a celebrity, and some Nephite mother, looking for a cute name</p>

<p>Ether 12:1 <i>And it came to pass that the days of Ether were in the days of Coriantumr; and Coriantumr was king over all the land.</i></p>	<p>for her newborn, took the name of this foreigner. Could have happened, but I don't believe it. I believe that the Lamanite and Jaredite nations interacted and so did their languages, hence: a Lamanite Coriantumr and a Jaredite Coriantumr.</p>
<p>Helaman 3:3 <i>... there were an exceeding great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land.</i></p>	<p>Finally, after 600 years, the Nephites begin to pioneer into new territory. Why did it take them so long? They were occupied with just surviving. But the real point is that the Lamanites had no such pioneering experience; they were already disbursed throughout all of South America and had been for 600 years — maybe longer.</p>
<p>Helaman 3:16 <i>... scattered upon the face of the earth, and mixed with the Lamanites until they are no more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and ferocious, yea, even becoming Lamanites.</i></p>	<p>It seems to me that joining the Lamanites was the only sensible thing to do. To remain Nephite was suicidal, especially since the Nephites were no better, so, what would be the point?</p>
<p>Helaman 4:5 <i>... they did come down against the Nephites to battle ... :8 ... a numerous army of the Lamanites ... :19 ... so numerous were the Lamanites that it became impossible for the Nephites to obtain more power over them ... :20 ... because of the greatness of the number of the Lamanites the Nephites were in great fear, lest they should be overpowered ...</i></p>	<p>Now, where did <i>this</i> “numerous army” come from? Same as all the others: from an inexhaustible population.</p>
<p>Helaman 4:24 <i>... the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them ... :25 Therefore the Lord did cease to preserve them by his miraculous and matchless power ...</i></p>	<p>This makes my earlier point which was this: Disobedience per se did not get you extinct — it never got the Lamanites extinct and they were disobedient — it merely put you on par with your enemies, and if they had superior numbers, you got wiped out. God did not punish the Nephites, he just left them alone and that was their doom. So it was the population disparity and not their religious ineptness that got the Nephites killed off.</p>
<p>Helaman 5:50 <i>... the more part of the Lamanites were convinced ...</i></p>	<p>“More part” means more than half. Shall we believe it this time? It hasn't been true yet, but maybe this time. We'll see.</p>
<p>Helaman 6:1 <i>... the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites ...</i></p>	<p>What do you know. Maybe this time Nephite influence really did flow through all the masses. It happened when Rome became Christian (Constantine) but it took</p>

	300 years. Still, we seem to have here a rare example of a single idea running over an entire massive society. It happens. More support for my assertion that Laman culture overwhelmed the indigenous at the first.
<i>Helaman 6:4 ... the Lamanites did come down into the land of Zarahemla, and did declare unto the people of the Nephites the manner of their conversion ... :7 And behold, there was peace in all the land, insomuch that the Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites of the Lamanites. :8 And ... the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites; and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire.</i>	And so ends the age of war between these two peoples along with my string of evidence for a massive Lamanite society. And now begins an age of interracial interchange, and I think it's fair to ask, could the two races exist for the next 400 years, or would they intermarry to the point of being indistinguishable? What I will be looking for are verses that indicate that there were or were not two races when we arrive at the age of Mormon.
<i>Helaman 6:34 And thus we see that the Nephites did begin to dwindle in unbelief, and grow in wickedness and abominations, while the Lamanites began to grow exceedingly in the knowledge of their God ...</i>	Now that things are switched, do we hear of any skin color changing? Do Nephites get dark and Lamanites get white? No. Skin color has nothing to do with righteousness except in the minds of the early Nephites.
<i>Helaman 11:20 ... the people of Nephi ... began to multiply and spread, even until they did cover the whole face of the land, both on the northward and on the southward, from the sea west to the sea east.</i>	But the Lamanites were already there, so we now have a fully integrated society, in the south anyway. Are we to believe that the Nephites outnumber the Lamanites? Unlikely because of (1) the Lamanite headstart, and (2) result of the final war.
<i>Helaman 13:16 ... woe be unto all the cities which are in the land round about, which are possessed by the Nephites ...</i>	“The land round about” is much more limited than “the whole face of the land.” I think they didn't know what “whole face of the land” really meant.
<i>3 Nephi 1:17 ... all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth :27 And it came to pass that ninety and third year did also pass away in peace, save it were for the Gadianton robbers, who dwelt upon the mountains, who did infest the land...</i>	All? From Alaska to Chili? Really? Now, how would they know that? Sounds like an exaggeration to me. I think “all” means the area that they are familiar with, and I think that's all it ever meant. My claim is not frivolous, “all” certainly did not mean the Gadianton robbers. How could Nephites possibly have known what was going on in Gadianton camps?
<i>3 Nephi 2:12 Therefore all the Lamanites</i>	But weren't <i>all</i> the Lamanites already

<i>who had become converted unto the Lord did unite with their brethren the Nephites...</i>	converted? Again all doesn't mean all. There are more than the Nephites know.
3 Nephi 2:14 <i>And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites :15 And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites. :16 And their young men and their daughters became exceedingly fair, and they were numbered among the Nephites, and were called Nephites ...</i>	This seems to cement the idea that sin causes a dark skin and righteousness causes a light skin. But the flaw in that Nephite thinking is that this text was written 100 years after the skin lightening, plenty of time and generations (5) for intermarriage to alter their genetics. From Mormon's perspective, yes, right living lightens skin tone. But actually, in my opinion, it was the intermarriage that did the job.
3 Nephi 3:14 <i>... And he caused that armies, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites, or all of them who were numbered among the Nephites, should be placed as guards round about ...</i>	A major merger of nations, but there is no skin tone change here. The two races remain two races, just as America has accommodated its many races for 500 years, from 1492 on. It's about marriage patterns, not good people versus bad people.
3 Nephi 7:2 <i>And the people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends; and thus they did destroy the government of the land.</i>	No mention of race. But racism is probably what these final battles were about. There was nothing else to squabble over.
3 Nephi 9:2 <i>Wo, wo, wo unto this people ... because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters ...</i>	Does "fair" mean white? Yes, it does because of 2 Nephi 2:15 and therefore race is still the issue.
3 Nephi 9:9 <i>And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah</i>	The Gadiantons still existed as a society and built cities all the way 'till the death of Christ. This mitigates 1:17 . All is not all.
3 Nephi 10:12 <i>And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved ... :18 ...and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared ...</i>	So the great catastrophe affected Nephites and Lamanites with equally ferocity and equal deliverance. That means that they were equally righteous and wicked. So then why still two races after all the talk of white=good and dark=bad? Because Nephi, and later Mormon, were wrong in their assessment. There were two races, light and dark, but their skin tone had nothing to do with good or bad. Only twice did skin tone get serious mention: (1) Nephi/Jacob. But it's far easier to believe that Laman intermarried with indigenous people. And (2) Mormon. But he wrote 400 years after the fact, which is plenty of time for

	<p>intermarriage to alter skin tone. It is never necessary to take literally that good makes white and bad makes dark in order to believe the Book of Mormon. Its authors were as vulnerable to nonsensical interpretation of facts as we are. This argues for the historical accuracy of the book, not against it.</p>
<p>3 Nephi 16:8 ... <i>the Gentiles — for notwithstanding they have come forth upon the face of this land, and have scattered my people who are of the house of Israel ...</i> :11 <i>And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel ...</i> :16 ... <i>I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance.</i></p>	<p>Future. Lamanites are Israel long after Nephites have become extinct. He is speaking to Nephites and says “this people”. But they die off, so the “this people” must mean Nephites and Lamanites collectively. In other words, race is irrelevant.</p>
<p>3 Nephi 21:22 ...<i>among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance.</i></p>	<p>He is speaking to Nephites but can only be talking about Lamanites, therefore in God’s mind, they are one and the same.</p>
<p>3 Nephi 24:6 <i>For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.</i></p>	<p>The point: I (God) do not change therefore I won’t kill you however bad you are. But if that’s true, why did he kill the Nephites? It must be that in God’s mind, they were never two people but always one people, and race had nothing to do with it.</p>
<p>4 Nephi 1:2 ... <i>the people were all converted to the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them ...</i> :10 <i>the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightful people.</i></p>	<p>Here is an interesting tension. Nephites and Lamanites are now both equally Christian, yet the Nephites get this racial compliment: “fair” which means white, and pretty because they are white. That’s a poke in the eye to the Lamanites, isn’t it? Are they not equally “fair”? Unless fair doesn’t mean white and never did. Or racism just never really goes away which finally led to the Nephite extinction.</p>
<p>4 Nephi 1:17 <i>There were no ... Lamanites, nor any manner of –ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.</i></p>	<p>So, finally, one single utopian nation. But what of race? And who was “fair” and who was not? Was everyone dark, light, or both? Must have been both, or what could “fair” possibly mean?</p> <p>This begins the A.D. epic. If there were no more –ites, then it might follow that there was pervasive intermarriage and the races blended into a single race. But that explanation leaves the final division and</p>

	<p>war inexplicable. Much more likely is that the two races remained two races but were united in a common cause (Christianity) until racism reemerged and destroyed their unity, just as America is one people but many races. And our unity is fragile and can disintegrate into it multiple tribes at any time. Race riots do happen and quickly</p>
<p>4 Nephi 1:20 ... there was still peace in the land, save it were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land.</p>	<p>Were these new Lamanites white or dark or both? Or was everyone dark? Certainly not everyone was white, or Indians (I hate that word, how about NatAms?) would be white today. Maybe these new Lamanites were dark and just got weary of deprecating racial slurs like “fair” under the guise of “church”. So, maybe this new separation really was racial. After all, it was gradual and began with “a small part.”</p>
<p>4 Nephi 1:23 And now I, Mormon, would that ye should know that the people had multiplied, insomuch that they were spread upon all the face of the land, and that they had become exceeding rich ...:25... And ... they did have their goods and their substances no more common among them. :26 And they began to be divided into classes ...</p>	<p>So class warfare and class envy begin in earnest. What Mormon doesn’t say is: how much of this new class-ism is racial at its roots? Clearly (to me anyway) it must have been racially motivated if we are to believe the final story of Nephite annihilation. The Lamanites were dark and the Nephites were white. Now think. How could that have happened other than that this class-ism was racially motivated? There is no other explanation considering that for 200 years, they were one people. Unless you insist on believing that God once again (sigh) “cursed” the Lamanites with a dark skin which is racial lunacy. If we are to believe the story at all, it was racism that divided this society and finally destroyed the Nephites. That is believable because it is so like the whole human experience. What is surprising is that Mormon doesn’t get it. He blames the division on Lamanite apostasy which misses the point of the very facts he is reporting to us. He doesn’t want to believe that he and his people are racists to the core, and that’s why they died.</p>
<p>4 Nephi 1:35 ... in the two hundred and thirty and first year, there was a great division among the people. :36 ... there</p>	<p>Not just a division but a <i>great</i> division. Mormon claims it is religious. If so, how do we explain the neat separation of dark</p>

<p><i>arose a people who were called the Nephites, and they were true believers in Christ ... :38 And ... they who rejected the gospel were called Lamanites, and Lemuelites, and (etc.) :39 ... And they were taught to hate the children of God, even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning.</i></p>	<p>and light skinned people? Do dark skinned people instinctively abandon the true gospel while light skinned people cling to it? I think not. More likely there was something else going on that Mormon does not want to believe, and that something is racism. Now there is another explanation, and that is: at this time <i>all</i> Nephites and Lamanites were dark skinned and the division really was religious only. But that can't be because of the many references to "fair" as though it were a badge of beauty.</p>
<p>4 Nephi 1:42 <i>And it came to pass that the wicked part of the people began again to build up the secret oaths an combinations of Gadianton. :43 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. :45 ... both the people of Nephi and the Lamanites had become exceeding wicked one like unto another.</i></p>	<p>So it's no longer good versus bad, believers versus non-believers, it's just which team you're playing on. Remember, Mormon is writing these accounts 200 years after the fact. That's like us writing about the American Revolution and trying to get it right in every detail. To Mormon, it's all about true and false religion. But the facts he presents to us tell us a much different story and he doesn't see it. Good. It means his history is at least authentic.</p>
<p>Mormon 1:14 <i>There were no gifts from the Lord ... :16 ... they had willfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity.</i></p>	<p>Confirms that Nephites and Lamanites were spiritually on an equal footing, neither had any spiritual advantage over the other. Then why the separation? The only explanation is race.</p>
<p>Mormon 1:18 <i>And these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again.</i></p>	<p>Now we get a better idea of what "cursed" means. They couldn't keep their stuff because robbers continually stole their stuff. Mormon calls the land "cursed". That's an exotic explanation. Well, okay. The land is full of bad guys and the Lord allows it. That, Mormon calls "cursed." So be it. But if that is so, isn't it as likely that the first Lamanites were "cursed" with a dark skin simply because they intermarried with indigenous people? And in Nephi's view, dark is cursed, dark is bad. Doesn't this loose interpretation of "curse" apply equally well in both cases? Mormon and Nephi were very loose with their notion of "cursed". It doesn't have to mean fiat.</p>
<p>Mormon 2:1 <i>...there began to be a war again between the Nephites and the</i></p>	<p>Why did Mormon accept this commission? It had nothing to do with defending the</p>

<p><i>Lamanites ... the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader ... :2 ... I did go forth at the head of an army of the Nephites, against the Lamanites ...</i></p>	<p>people of God; they <i>weren't</i> the people of God. He fought for them simply because that was the team he was on. Had he been a Lamanite, he would have fought for the Lamanites.</p>
<p>Mormon 2:8 ... <i>they [Nephites] did not repent of their evil doing; therefore there was blood an carnage spread throughout all the face of the land ...</i></p>	<p>Mormon is not fighting for any good religious cause, but simply for the survival of his people. Does that make him right? It certainly makes him different than, say, Captain Moroni and his standard of liberty fighting for a righteousness people.</p>
<p>Mormon 2:10 ... <i>the Nephites began to repent ... :12 ... my heart did begin to rejoice ... :13 But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance ... but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned ...</i></p>	<p>Mormon had no reason to be optimistic. He was indeed fighting on the wrong side, and he knew it. Is that a sin? Apparently not.</p>
<p>Mormon 2:15 ... <i>I saw that the day of grace was passed with them ...</i></p>	<p>Which demands this question: Why them and not the Lamanites? There is no good answer, not one that you will like. Were the Nephites worse? No. They and the Lamanites were equally bad. Were the Nephites more blessed and therefore more responsible? No. They were all one people not so long ago. What then? They were <i>outnumbered!</i> Plain and simple. And they were outnumbered because — because why? Because they let their racism alienate a people who outnumbered them which is a stupid and dangerous thing to do.</p>
<p>Mormon 2:25 ... <i>we did contend with an army of thirty thousand against an army of fifty thousand ... :26 ... the strength of the Lord was not with us; yea, we were left to ourselves ...</i></p>	<p>There's no doubt that the Nephites were vastly outnumbered. When the Lord was with them, they were more than a match. But when spiritual things were equal and God had no favorites, the bigger side won.</p>
<p>Mormon 3:12 <i>Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them ... 5:1 And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies... :2 But behold, I was without hope...</i></p>	<p>In the Mormon epic the Lamanites are said to be the more righteous, and the Nephites the more wicked. Yet there is no talk of a dark skin curse, no dark Nephites, no light Lamanites. Possibly they are all a single blended race and their separating into two nations seems to be cultural and not racial. But I doubt it. More likely the war was racial. Why did Mormon fight for the Nephites? Only because he was a Nephite and not because God told him to.</p>

<p>Mormon 4:2 ... <i>And while they [Nephites] were yet weary, a fresh army of the Lamanites did come upon them ...</i></p>	<p>The Lamanites still were inexhaustible, <i>and fresh</i>. More evidence of a huge population disparity. Even at the end we see it.</p>
<p>Mormon 4:13 ... <i>their number [Lamanites] did exceed the number of the Nephites. :17 ... and they [Lamanites] were not numbered because of the greatness of their number. 5:6 ... it was all in vain, for so great were their numbers ...</i></p>	<p>Always more Lamanites.</p> <p>Exactly my point. Without God they stood no chance against overwhelming forces.</p>
<p>Mormon 5:7 ... <i>and those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites did escape. 4:2 and did take many prisoners. 5:9 ... the remnant of these people ... the Lord hath said should scatter this people ... 6:15 ... a few who had escaped into the south countries. 7:1 ... of this people who are spared.</i></p>	<p>“All” never means “<i>all</i>”. We are told that all the Nephites were killed. Well, not so. Many escaped. Many were taken prisoners. And there would be a remnant. It is the Nephite society that died, not all its people.</p>
<p>Mormon 5:15 ... <i>this people shall be scattered, and shall become <u>a dark</u>, a filthy, and a loathsome people ... :16 ... they were once a delightsome people ... 6:16 ... I cried: :17 O ye fair ones ... :19 O ye fair sons and daughters ... ye fair ones, how is it that ye could have fallen!</i></p>	<p>For the Nephites, it was about race. Dark is filthy and loathsome. Either Mormon is a racist for authoring these words or Joseph Smith is. One or the other. I prefer to believe that Mormon is the racist while Joseph Smith did exactly what he said he did: he merely translated words that were given to him. Now the story makes sense. White Nephites disliked dark Lamanites, which Nephi said at the very beginning, 2 Nephi 5:21 ... <i>that they might not be enticing unto my people</i>. And thus the two nations were never at peace (well, they were for 200 years) and it was only a matter of time ‘till the larger society would one day overrun the smaller. And that’s exactly what happened. But it is not a racist message, it is an anti-racist message, it is the “fair ones,” the beautiful ones who died. That’s the point. God loved the un-fair ones, the un-chosen ones more. Mormon is a racist but God is not. God is not impressed by skin color or ancestry. But who could blame Mormon under those circumstances. It’s hard not to play a race card when your armies are being butchered by <i>those</i> people. Dying disrupts fair thinking.</p>
<p>Ether 1:2 <i>And I [Mormon] take mine</i></p>	<p>Hints that we should think of Ether as a</p>

<p><i>account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether.</i></p>	<p>contemporary of Limhi, that Ether left his record in such a place so that it <i>would</i> be found. If so, that's a 500 year overlap with the Jaredites.</p>
<p><i>Ether 1:33</i> Which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families ... :41 ... and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families. :43 ... and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, <u>upon all the face of the earth.</u></p>	<p>This was not a small migration but larger, much larger, than Lehi's migration.</p> <p>Side note: Jared's nation would cover the entire earth which means two things: (1) There was travel back and forth, they were not isolated. And (2) when their civilization got wiped out by the final war, that did not make the whole race extinct. They survived and hugely — around the entire planet and, more specifically, as the family of Laman.</p>
<p><i>Ether 4:1</i> ... and for this cause did king Mosiah keep them ... :3 And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth.</p>	<p>Mormon's subject is the plates of Ether, but there's more to be learned; namely, "none save it be the Lamanites" cannot be taken literally because we <i>know</i> there were Nephites among them. We should take these words "none" and "all" with a grain of salt. Lamanites included surviving Jaradites and surviving Nephites.</p>
<p><i>Ether 7:4</i> And when Corihor was thirty and two years old he rebelled against his father, and went over and dwelt in the land of Nehor; and he begat sons and daughters, and they became exceeding fair; wherefore Corihor drew away many people after him.</p>	<p>Now wait a minute. "Nehor" is a Nephite word, <i>Alma 1:15</i>. So this area that Corihor went to live in was Nephite territory. Further, Corihor's children were "fair," in fact, "exceeding fair." Now I have to ask, as opposed to what? Obviously, not-fair. His ancestral people were dark, but <i>his</i> children were light. So light and pretty that they had political influence to "draw away many people." I'm not making this up, it's what the text says.</p>
<p><i>Ether 7:2</i> And he [Corihor] begat sons and daughters; yea, he begat thirty and one ... :12 And it came to pass that Shule also begat many sons and daughters. :14 ... Corihor had many sons and daughters. :26 And because the people did repent of their iniquities and idolatries the Lord did spare them, and they began to prosper again in the land. And it came to pass that Shule begat sons and daughters in his old age.</p> <p>And backing up a bit —</p>	<p>Obviously Corihor was a polygamist. And "also begat many" means the Shule was on a parity with Corihor therefore he was a polygamist too. But Shule, in the end upstaged Corihor in that he had children "in his old age," that must mean with young wives, because old wives don't have children. Now this was a result of their repentance and God's favor, therefore God approved of their polygamy. This confirms the meaning of <i>Ether 6:20</i>. Clearly, the Brother of Jared, this great righteous</p>

<p>Ether 6:20 ... the number of the sons and daughters of the brother of Jared were twenty and two souls.</p> <p>And this —</p> <p>Ether 10:5 ... Riplakish did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord, for he did have many wives and concubines, and did lay that upon men's shoulders which was grievous to be borne; yea, he did tax them with heavy taxes ...</p> <p>And finally this —</p> <p>Ether 14:2 ... every man kept the hilt of his sword in his right hand, in the defence of his property and his own life and of his wives ...</p>	<p>prophet, was a polygamist. Now, what's the point? The point is: this nation which began large became extremely large (polygamy does that) so that they spread over the entire earth. It is therefore impossible for them not to have encountered and intermarried with the Lehi tribes.</p> <p>If Shule was a good polygamist then Riplakish was a bad polygamist. The difference is vague. But his real evil was the taxes, the polygamy was just an extra grievance.</p> <p>The word "wives" is plural, and that means polygamy.</p>
<p>Ether 9:26 And the people had spread again over all the face of the land ...</p>	<p>My, how fast. Over <i>all</i> the face of the land in a single generation? Not likely. More likely, they never left.</p>
<p>Ether 9:31 ... their flocks began to flee before the poisonous serpents, towards the land southward, which was called by the Nephites Zarahemla. :33 And it came to pass that the Lord did cause the serpents that they should pursue them no more, but that they should hedge up the way that the people could not pass. :34 And it came to pass that the people did follow the course of the beasts, and did devour the carcasses of them which fell by the way ...</p>	<p>A funny thing happened on the way to Zarahemla. There were these snakes! For awhile, Jaradites were barred by snakes from the land south, the land of Zarahemla. That means two things: (1) Before the snakes, they were not barred. And (2) after the snakes they were not barred but in fact they, Jaradites, traveled to Zarahemla, and apparently regularly. These two societies were not ignorant of each other, they were just apart, as Europe and China were in the 12th century; they were very aware of each other as Marco Polo made clear.</p>
<p>Ether 10:9 ... Morianton, (he being a descendant of Riplakish) gathered together an army of outcasts, and went forth and gave battle unto the people ...</p>	<p>Remember, he's one of those fair ones, and he was in the south (towards Zarahemla) among "outcasts," possibly Jaredites who lived with Nephites.</p>
<p>Ether 12:1 And it came to pass that the days of Ether were in the days of Coriantumr; and Coriantumr was king over all the land.</p>	<p>See Helaman 1:15. There you will meet a Lamanite general named Coriantumr. It is statistically impossible for this five syllable name to occur in these two different languages (600 B.C. Hebrew versus 3000 B.C. pre-Akkadian) by coincidence. This is</p>

	the smoking gun. Jaradites and Lamanites interacted with each other for 500 years.
Ether 13:21 ... <i>And he [Coriantumr] should only live to see the fulfilling of the prophecies which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance; and Coriantumr should receive a burial by them; and every soul should be destroyed save it were Coriantumr.</i>	Get the picture here. Coriantumr saw all (whatever “all” means) his own people die and then finally himself and was buried by the Nephites, or Lamanites. Now, if the proximity of these two huge nations was so large that the one found and buried the last survivor of the other, is it even possible that the two societies did not intertwine?
Ether 15:2 ... <i>there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children.</i>	2,000,000 <i>men!</i> Now add the women and children, what’s that? 5,000,000 plus slain? That’s a lot. It is impossible to believe these two societies did not intermingle.
Ether 15:12 ... <i>they did gather together all the people upon all the face of the land ...</i>	There’s that pesky word “all” again, and twice. From “all the face of the land”? How? That would have to include all the Nephites and Lamanites as well.
Ether 15:33 ... <i>and he [Ether] hid them [the plates] in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them.</i>	Ether hid them so that Limhi would find them. That means that Ether and Limhi (and Mosiah) were contemporaries. Therefore, these two societies overlapped by 500 years! It was impossible to not intermingle. They not only intermingled, they intermarried from the very beginning,
Moroni 9:8 <i>And the husbands and fathers of these women [Nephites] and children they [Lamanites] have slain; and they feed the women upon the flesh of their husbands ... :9</i> <i>And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doeth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughter of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue — :10</i> ... <i>they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death. :14</i> <i>How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?</i>	This text documents the depth of evil that both societies, Nephites and Lamanites, had fallen to. They are equally evil and without goodness. They are full of cruelty. But the text brings us to an odd conclusion: “How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?” In other words, God is destroying us because we are evil. But there’s a problem: Why us and not them, as God did with the Jaredites? If we are equally evil, shouldn’t we be equally destroyed? The Jaredites were. My point is that God didn’t destroy the Nephites, he just stopped protecting them. Without God taking sides, the stronger army won. It was inevitable from the very beginning, good and evil not withstanding. What does that tell us? That the Lamanites were always the dominate society by sheer numbers. There is only one way that the Lamanites could have achieved such dominance so

	<p>quickly in the first generation, and to have maintained that dominance throughout their violent history in spite of the Nephites merging with the Mulikites, and Ammon's converts, and huge Lamanite battle casualties — and that is this: The tribe of Laman got a <i>huge</i> head start by intermarrying with indigenous people. That makes sense, and it explains everything; the population inequality, the racial tensions, and their contacts with indigenous people already here. Read that way, the Book of Mormon becomes plausible (it actually happened in real history) and much easier to defend. It's not a racist book after all. Some of its authors were racist, but that's not the issue. The issue is that <i>God</i> is not a racist, and he proves it from Nephi to Moroni.</p>
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