

I've just finished my edit on Alma the Younger. First of all, great job. It's going to be another fantastic installment in the series. I love the way you bring in the human perspective on who these characters really were—what they were like as human beings, with real relationships and feelings. The scenes between Alma the Younger and Cassia were so good. You really shine in those moments.

I do, of course, have a few notes for you. ☺ I'll start with just some questions I want you to mull over, and then move into bigger issues.

First of all, you talk in the preface about how Alma the Younger was very learned and intellectual, and that was his downfall. How do we know he was so intellectual? Just wondering where you're pulling that idea from.

*First, I pulled this idea from conversations with various readers and writers, as well as patterns we see in society. Feedback I received was that intellectual people might question more religious details as far as doctrine goes because they have more knowledge of the physical and scientific world. They are so well-learned that it sometimes becomes a detriment if they aren't letting the spirit teach them as well. If they are taking information at face-value then they are losing the heart of the message. It's just a characterization that I thought would be relatable and believable. I also based his character on some men that I know who have fallen away from the church for the same reasons that appear in the book, then came back to the church in full force. Their personalities were essentially all or nothing, one extreme or the other, which mirrors what Alma the Younger did. Also being the son of a high priest and best friends with the sons of King Mosiah, he certainly had the best education possible in Zarahemla. Hugh Nibley also refers to him as a "smart boy" which makes sense because he's have to know politics and religion inside and out in order to gain such a following and build up enough power to be a threat to the church.*

Second of all, in Mosiah 27:8 it says "the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also *one of the sons* of Alma was numbered among them, he being called Alma, after his father..." (emphasis mine). This sounds pretty definite to me that Alma the Younger had at least one brother. I think it might be a good idea to consider adding one, or rewriting so that one of his sisters is a brother. When it's as clear-cut as that in the scriptural account, I think we need to try to stay as accurate as we can.

*Okay, I added a younger brother, Cephaz (age 6), named after Alma's father.*

I didn't really like referring to Alma the high priest as Alma the Elder so consistently. He's the first Alma, the man we know and refer to as Alma most commonly in the Church, so I think it might be better to mostly refer to him as Alma, and distinguishing Alma the Younger with his title when it's necessary to clarify. It is certainly a challenge having two characters with the same name, and I think you did a pretty good job making it clear who was being talked about in most instances. I tried to clarify a few more places, and that's something we'll continue to watch for in

the rest of the editing stages. If it's okay with you, I think the most common names should be Alma and Alma the Younger.

*Yes, it is hard to keep them separate 😊 It's only in modern times we call the father Alma the Elder and the son Alma the Younger. So those names are really fictitious and for the convenience of the reader for clarification. In the scriptures, Alma the Younger is referred to as the son of Alma. Or he is called by Mormon "Alma, the first and chief judge."*

*Actually, I think that most "Alma" references are truly about Alma the Younger because there are a lot more chapters about Alma the Younger than there are about Alma the Elder (Alma the Elder is mentioned in 8 chapters, Alma the Younger in over 30). Alma the Elder's real prominence is when he leads the people out of the city of Nephi, then becomes the high priest in Zarahemla, but that is all before this book takes place. Everything else in the scriptures, including the missionary work among the Nephites and Lamanites (all of the book of Alma) is about Alma the Younger, where he is referred to as Alma (except at the very beginning where Mormon, and then the modern scripture headings, call him "the first and chief judge").*

*Because the title of the book is ALMA THE YOUNGER and he is the main character, I want to make an extra point in designating the father as Alma the Elder, or the high priest. But I don't want it to be cumbersome either. I do think it's important to retain at least the italicized heading at the beginning of each chapter, even if we delete the ones at the scene breaks if the same Alma is carrying into the next scene.*

*I don't like all of these "A" names! When I read KC Grant's book, ABISH, I couldn't believe she named the queen Aminash and the princess Anrah when she didn't have to use those names. Maybe I am hyper sensitive because I am forced to use 2 Alma's, Ammon, and Aaron 😊*

Is it the Church of Liberty or the Church of Freedom? Both were used, but it needs to be consistent. Which one do you want it to be?

*Church of Liberty.*

Does hunting preserve sound too modern to you? It makes me think of big ranches in Texas. Could we maybe call them hunting lands instead?

*Although hunting lands have a different meaning than preserve, they aren't "supposed" to be hunting in the preserve. So it's like off-limits to hunters except for special permission by the king.*

Slightly more of a bigger issue: it was odd the way that the sun god, moon goddess, maize god, etc. are discussed and accepted without the blink of an eye, hardly (see for example, p. 128-129). Wouldn't members of the church—even straying ones—at least be taken aback or question just a little the mention and worship of these gods? Kaman talks of the maize god like he's a sure thing, but Kaman was a member of the church, and it sounds as though he had been faithful until recently, with the death of his mother. It doesn't seem to me like he would turn so quickly to such a sin as idolatry. Moving into more and more serious iniquities is usually a kind of gradual thing. How did he go from hating the church because of what happened to his mother to worshipping a maize or sun or moon god(dess)?

*I revised those pages so that we learn Kaman was just a member in name because of his mother. He took after his father and kept the "old" beliefs.*

It is the same for Alma the Younger. Even though he struggled with believing the church's and his father's teachings, he was raised to believe in the one true God, no? So it was weird to me that he didn't seem to react in any way indicating he thought it strange or worrisome or anything when Kaman compared him to the maize god,

*I revised this part.*

Or when Belicia and Alma did the dance as the sun god and moon goddess. I mean, wouldn't one of the larger sins of the dance be the fact that it was in a way worshipping these false gods?

*In the scene when Alma first meets Belicia, he has been drinking and at this point because of his bitterness against his father and the church, he is open to new ideas. Also, once he starts "sinning" he doesn't have the spirit with him, therefore things that might have seemed wrong before are now justifiable and appealing. It's the "rush" of being rebellious as well that Alma gets caught up in. Experimenting and trying new things, even if he has been taught correct principles in the past, he's closed himself off to the still small voice. Instead of recognizing that "idol worshipping" is a temptation because it gives the worshipper a false sense of control, he confuses his drunken dreams as revelations that Belicia is a true goddess and that the Lord is not the true god. On page 100 I added a little more to Alma and how he covers up the warning thoughts echoing through his mind.*

I would like to see more hesitation and thought on Alma the Younger's part in response to the mentioning of the gods. It would be good, if possible, to also somehow show how the villagers were brought to the worshipping of those gods, or just show the seriousness of that. Does that make sense?

*I think Alma would know from the get-go that the village he chose to live by is nothing like where he grew up. The outlying villages would be filled with all kinds of people. Part of the reason he decides to "hide" there. (added on p 30 and 50)*

I was confused about the whole letter from Nehem thing that proved he had commanded the burning of the tavern. It seemed kind of random and made up. In fact, for a while I thought it was actually a lie, or a forgery of some kind. Because we never actually get to see the letter (or Alma the Younger doesn't, anyway), and Kaman just says they found it (after the fact of killing Nehem, as a convenient excuse), I'm worried some readers will also think they made it up just so they could kill Nehem. In addition, because we never really saw anything in Nehem's character that necessarily indicated he felt strong antagonism to the unbelievers (we were only told he did—after the fact), it doesn't seem believable. We need to either see more of that in his character so it won't be such a surprise and/or we need to see the letter, and it needs to be made clear it wasn't a forgery. (This could also work into when Alma the Younger actually does forge some letters in Nehem's hand—he could copy from that letter instead of the records Aaron (or was it Ammon?) brought him from the temple).

*Added more to Nehem's job description, p. 75, 116. 157-158,*

*Had Alma copy from Nehem's original letter. Alma forged two letters that gave a lot more information and are a lot more incriminating than Nehem's original letter: p. 226, 226*

One last thing I thought was kind of odd: there's never any mention of any soldiers or guards deserting their duties. Alma had the whole deal with the head guard or whoever, and they talked about a specific number of soldiers who were being recruited to the rebellion, but when the mob comes to the temple, it doesn't really say anything about any guards or soldiers deserting their posts to join the rebels, or even just the number of guards being low because some had quit or anything (unless I just totally missed it—which is possible). So, especially for the sake of the rebel mob scene, that needs to be cleared up.

*Showed the guards defecting: p. 7, 12, 266–268, 270*

That might have looked like a lot, but I really think the book is great. You readers are going to love it. I loved it. You'll find more notes and comments from me in the tracked changes on the side, so please also be sure to take care of those and answer questions there. I kind of did a light copyedit as I went along, just because sometimes I can't help it. ☺ Just accept the changes as you go, but if you come across any changes you don't agree with, don't reject the change—just leave a comment for me or email me with the issue and let me know what you'd rather change it to. Also, please remember to track any new changes you make.

Let me know if you have any questions. Do you think it would possible for you to get this back to me by the end of the week next week (the 26<sup>th</sup>)? Let me know if that deadline will work for you.

Best,

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