

A Mosaic for a Religious Counterculture: The Bible in the Book of Mormon

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THE BOOK OF MORMON HAS OCCASIONALLY been portrayed as a deficient first novel. Its characters appear flat and stereotypical; the plots and characters seem to lack moral subtlety; and so on. Should we wonder that today's high literary circles ignore it? Still we are confronted with the question why such a book remains one of the most influential texts written on the American continent. Its influence must be due to more than questionable reading taste. The astonishment experienced by many readers for over 150 years testifies that there is something elusive going on that its critics have missed. Its power has eluded us largely because we have not grasped the kind of literature it is and how it functions. It is a countercultural document with literary features and values at odds with the dominant culture when it first appeared. In the prayer of the elite Zoramites, in the story of Nehor, and in other places, the values and literary techniques of the dominant culture are mocked and parodied. The book flaunts its own plainness with pride.

The book's countercultural defiance can be found on its first pages.¹ Joseph Smith selected the term "visionary" to describe self-righteous heroes such as Lehi, in contrast to more reasonable villains such as Laman and Lemuel. The term "visionary" was often used to describe fringe prophets and superstitious imaginaries in the early nineteenth century. "Visionaries" were often contrasted with the religious rationality of the educated and powerful. In the book's opening scenes, these visionaries find life in the desert. In one scene the heroic Nephi is commanded by God to commit murder to obtain the word of God. The initial shock of Nephi to

1. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming in its countercultural universality is that it is told entirely from a white male point of view.

this command anticipates the readers' shock. The irony is compounded when the Spirit alludes to Caiaphas' words as divine justification for the murder—it is better that one person die than a whole nation perish in unbelief.

Anyone who reads these opening pages as a polite set of platitudes offered by boring characters has missed the point altogether. The Book of Mormon places the pages of our culture in front of our faces and rips them to pieces. But it does more than rip—it takes pieces of an older world view and arranges them in new patterns, as a mosaic. Many of the pieces of this mosaic are from the Bible. My goal is to examine the artistry and complexity of this biblical mosaic in light of existing dominant and countercultures when it appeared.

One task the Book of Mormon sets for itself is to overcome the meaninglessness and powerlessness felt by its latter-day readers. It clearly appeals to those on the borders of society. It grants the reader meaning and power largely by reaching back to and universalizing its biblical past. Many of the pieces of this mosaic are from the King James Version of the Bible edited and rearranged to form new patterns. The diverse and complex intertextual use of the Bible makes latter-day readers enter a biblical world that has been enlarged to include all ages of the world—including the hostile and meaningless world of the reader. The Book of Mormon brims with biblical allusions. It speaks to readers who considered the Bible the ultimate authority. The biblical parallels cluster together in the Nephite text in meaningful ways and for a variety of purposes.

I will begin by summarizing the nature and functions of the biblical parallels. I will then compare these parallels with both dominant and socially marginal American biblical interpretation during the first part of the nineteenth century. This will provide a social and rhetorical setting for the audience that the Book of Mormon addressed. When discussing the early nineteenth century, I claim only that the Book of Mormon is best understood in light of the audience it originally addressed.

Before examining the use of the Bible in the nineteenth century, let us summarize the nature of biblical parallels in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon contains biblical quotations (many with textual corrections to what it sees as a corrupted biblical text), biblical paraphrases, biblical commentary, biblical allusions, and biblical echoes. (In addition, it contains writings which it presents as quotations of lost scriptural texts, as well as its own scriptural passages.) These categories of parallels are points along a spectrum from the most explicit (quotation) to the most subtle (echo). The more subtle the reference, the less discursive the parallel. At some point it is difficult to determine whether we are hearing an echo or creating our own connection. An allusion assumes that author and reader share a cognitive understanding of the place of a parallel. An

echo is a metaphor that does not rely on conscious intention and is more subtle. Yet echoes are no less important than direct quotations.

These categories at times blend imperceptibly. For example, it can be difficult to distinguish a quotation from a paraphrase or a commentary because the Book of Mormon does not see the text as independent and objective—it transforms the text for its own rhetorical purposes. The Book of Mormon treats the biblical text as a living voice that changes its tone as it appears throughout the Book of Mormon, not as a fixed text to be forever preserved with exactness. This is one of the reasons that it quotes the same text differently in different parts of the book. For the Book of Mormon, the text is a vehicle for addressing its audience. It presents the biblical text as corrupt, but it is not careful about preserving an original text. It is almost never interested in historical exegesis. Rather it emphasizes a proclamatory and revisionist view of scripture. It forces the reader to face life in light of the biblical text as the Book of Mormon presents it. In short, the Book of Mormon emphasizes relevance of text over objective preservation. In what follows I will emphasize those parallels that appear multiple times in the text to confirm our interpretive conclusions.²

The first task of analyzing the Bible in the Book of Mormon is to examine a comprehensive inventory of biblical parallels. The present study has relied on such an inventory.³ Once an inventory is established, a careful analysis can be made of each parallel. The Book of Mormon employs biblical texts with enormous variety and, at times, surprising subtlety. At times the interest in citing the biblical text is to discover its objective meaning. Sometimes these parallels simply provide scriptural verisimilitude that predisposes the reader to accept the Book of Mormon as new scripture. But not every parallel is an attempt at interpretation. As John Hollander has stated: "the revisionary power of allusive echo generates new figuration."⁴ The power of the use of the biblical parallel lies in the unstated points of resonance between the two texts. At times the subtlety of the parallel suppresses the points of resonance and cries out for the reader to complete the trope. In this circumstance the parallels act sug-

2. For methods of attaining validity in intertextual interpretation, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 18-33.

3. The most complete published list to date can be found in *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference*, vols. 1-3 (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1984-87). The first volume is careful about footnoting most biblical parallels. But later volumes do not match the care and completeness found in this initial volume. Jerald and Sandra Tanner and Michael Marquart have published several lists of biblical parallels demonstrating anachronisms in the use of the biblical text in the Book of Mormon. My inventory includes and goes beyond these works.

4. Hays, 18-19.

gestively rather than declaratively.⁵

I will give examples of how a careful reading is essential to pick up subtle critiques of the dominant culture and to appreciate the elements in this biblical mosaic. To today's reader, the subtlety of some allusions and echoes is often missed due to our lack of familiarity with the Bible. For this reason, the Book of Mormon remains, to a large degree, undiscovered and unappreciated.

To begin to appreciate the biblical parallels, we must view them in the ahistorical light of the Nephite view of revelation. The pre-Christian Nephites often cite New Testament texts, sometimes explicitly. For example, in 2 Nephi 31:15, God *explicitly* quotes the words of Jesus to be delivered hundred of years later: "And I heard a voice from the Father, saying, Yea, the words of my beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (see Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13). Some Mormons have speculated that such anachronistic quotations are evidence of lost texts that were available to both Book of Mormon authors and New Testament authors. But this ignores the Book of Mormon's explanations of such anachronisms: "wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another" (2 Ne. 29:8). For the Book of Mormon, the Spirit speaks literally *the same words* to all ages, despite its occasional claims otherwise. For the Book of Mormon, the Spirit overcomes history and text.

A second feature of the use of the Bible is the clustering of related biblical passages in the Book of Mormon, like a mosaic, in meaningful patterns. In other words, related biblical parallels often appear in proximity in the Book of Mormon text. This requires us to interpret a large portion of the biblical parallels in a larger textual and intertextual context. These phrases from the Bible interpret each other and resonate against each other in both predictable and surprising fashions. I will first examine four types of biblical clusters and then provide concrete examples.

1. *Temporal Sequence Cluster*. This is a series of parallels in which each represents an event in time. For example, 1 Nephi 22 combines numerous biblical passages into an apocalyptic mosaic. Each biblical allu-

5. An example of such a subtle resonance or echo can be found in Moroni 10:27-28: "Did I not declare my words unto you, which was written by this man, like as one crying from the dead? yea, even as one speaking out of the dust, I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation." Here the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is said to be predicted by prophecy, and there is a clear allusion to Isaiah 29 in the reference to speaking from the dust. But I contend that the "hissing forth" echoes the hissing prophecy in Isaiah 5. If this is true, the Book of Mormon is suggesting that it is the fulfillment of this second prophecy.

sion represents an event in the last days. There may or may not be an intention to objectively interpret the particular passage cited in these clusters. There are a number of such apocalyptic mosaics, as well as other clusters of biblical parallels, that form a temporal sequence in the Book of Mormon.

2. *Clusters with a Common Theme or Theological Concern.* A number of clusters contain biblical phrases on prayer. Other themes include love, the devil, and the judgment of the wicked. Below is an example of one of them on the theme of riches.

2 Nephi 9:30

But wo unto the rich, which are rich as to the things of the world.

For because that they are rich,
they despise the poor,

and they persecute the meek,
and *their hearts are upon their treasures*; wherefore their treasure is their God. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also.

Luke 6:24

But woe unto you that are rich!

James 2:6 a

But ye have despised the poor.

**Matthew 6:19-21(//Luke 12:33-34,
Gospel of Thomas 76:3)**

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

2 Nephi 9:30 is in the middle of a series of woes pronounced upon various sorts of wicked people. Those who fit these categories of wickedness are condemned to spiritually perish in the next life. The two pronounced against the rich in 2 Nephi 9:30 is a kind of moral "argument" in which biblical parallels serve as both the premises and the conclusion. The conclusion ("wherefore") is the pronouncement that the treasures of the rich shall perish with them.

3. *Cluster of Related Images.* The cluster may contain a series of images of pathways, animals, the harvest, or the vineyard. They do not seem to interpret the fulfillment or theological significance of the particular passage. They simply evoke related images. They resonate with a kind of serious playfulness that remains fundamental to a close reading of the text. An example can be found in the allegory of the olive tree in the vineyard in Jacob 5 which combines numerous agricultural phrases from the Bible.

4. *Cluster of Catch Words.* Here a biblical passage may be cited in the text followed by another text that has a particular word found in the first parallel. Below is an example of this kind of cluster containing catch

words in Ether 13. The catch words have been italicized:

Ether 13:9-10

And there shall be *a new heaven and a new earth*; and they shall be like unto the *old*, save the *old* have passed away, and all things have become *new*. And then cometh the *New Jerusalem* . . .

Revelation 21:1-2

And I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*: for the *first heaven and the first earth* were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem* . . .

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: *old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*.

In Ether 13:9-10, the citing of a new heaven and earth and the passing of the first heaven and earth from Revelation 21 evokes the catchwords of old and new from 2 Corinthians. Both Revelation 21 and 2 Corinthians 5 are reinterpreted by being placed in a new context in this Book of Mormon latter-day drama. Some of these clusters based on catch words are the work of Joseph Smith's creativity and do not stem from an underlying text.⁶

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SETTING

Once an inventory of biblical parallels in the Book of Mormon is established, we can examine parallels and clusters in light of how the book's original nineteenth-century audience would have used them. The American Protestant view of the Bible in the early nineteenth century cannot be framed with a single perspective. As with the attempt to characterize the historical thought processes of any age, it is incomplete and reflects the fact that we can deal only with written sources that reflect the power structures of the time. The characters most in tune with the countercultural sentiments in the Book of Mormon would not be in the cultural mainstream and rarely would appear in print. So it is with considerable caution that I approach a topic as complex as the American Protestant view of the Bible.

The first part of the nineteenth century was a period of innovation and creativity in biblical interpretation. Mark Noll argues that the notion of the sovereignty of the people during this period brought a crisis of reli-

6. In Ether 12:4-5 we find allusions to Hebrews 6:19 and to 1 Corinthians 15:58 which both share the catch word "steadfast." The combining of these texts based on a catch word only works in English. The Greek text of Hebrews 6:19 uses the words "asphale" and "bebanian" for "sure and steadfast," while 1 Corinthians 15:58 uses "ametakineto" for "steadfast." At least in this instance, the cluster is the work of Joseph Smith and is not an underlying text.

religious authority within popular culture. Many religious leaders were throwing away human creeds and returning to the Bible as the sole source of faith and practice.⁷ Having said this, it would be a mistake to conclude that this was a uniform trend or that it was an absolute break with tradition.

In the first place, there remained strong pockets of interpretive conservatism. Even among innovative interpreters, biblical commentaries held an important place (even when they were being denounced). Up to this point, America was still in many respects a spiritual colony of Europe that served as the base from which it was rebelling. For example, Alexander Campbell, Elias Smith, Charles Finney, and Abel Thornton rejected biblical commentaries and were all part of innovative trends in biblical interpretation. Yet, paradoxically, they were all influenced by and quoted traditional commentaries to support their views on the Bible.⁸ Even the most creative prophetic interpreters of the Bible, such as Robert Matthews, were influenced by biblical commentaries.⁹

There is evidence that in the early nineteenth century biblical commentaries were widely used by scholars, as well as lay people, on the

7. Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A History of the American People*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 332-33, 574; Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," in *New York History* 61 (Oct. 1980); Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-10.

8. For example, see Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System, in Reference to the Union of Christians, and a Restoration of Primitive Christianity, as Plead in the Current Reformation* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1839[?]), 202-30. The first edition of this book was in 1835. For Campbell's general view of scripture, see *The Christian Baptist* 2 (3 Jan. 1825): 26-29; William E. Tucker and Lester McAllister, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1975); Lowell K. Handy, "Where the Scriptures Speak, We Quarrel: Biblical Approaches in Disciples Founders," in L. Dale Richesin and Larry D. Bouchard, eds., *Interpreting Disciples: Practical Theology in the Disciples of Christ* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1987).

The relationship between Elias Smith and the commentaries can be seen in Elias Smith, *Sermons, Containing an Illustration of the Prophecies to be Accomplished from the Present Time, until the New Heavens and Earth are Created, when All the Prophecies will be Fulfilled* (Exeter, NH, 1808).

Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 80-88. This work was based on a series of lectures delivered from 1830-35 and originally published in 1835.

Abel Thornton, *The Life of Elder Abel Thornton, Late of Johnston, R. I.: A Preacher in the Free-Will Baptist Connection, and a Member of the R. I. Q. Meeting* (Providence: J. B. Yerrington, 1828), 9-11.

9. In the 1820s Matthews had visions and read at least one commentary on the book of Revelation while preparing his own apocalyptic message. See Margaret Wright Matthews, *Matthias* (New York, 1835), 15-19. For events in Matthias's life in this same period, see William Stone, *Matthias and His Imposters: or, The Progress of Fanaticism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 22-29; Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 69-90.

frontier and in rural areas.¹⁰ All this evidence leads to the conclusion that we are justified in taking these early nineteenth-century commentaries as a necessary base that both reflected and helped create the primary elements of early American understanding of the Bible. From this traditional base American creativity sprang.

The commentaries were generally, but not always, in the theological center of biblical studies. In the next section, I will compare examples of the Book of Mormon's countercultural use of the Bible with these commentaries, which represented the traditional center of biblical interpretation.¹¹ I will supplement this with biblical views of selected evangelicals,

10. James Erwin was a Methodist circuit rider in the early nineteenth century in central New York State. One of the books he carried in his travels was Wesley's biblical commentary. These books were approved by the presiding elder of the church. He also states that typical books in Methodists' homes were Clarke's and Benson's biblical commentaries, Watson's *Institutes*, and the works of Wesley. See James Erwin, *Reminiscences of Early Circuit Life* (Toledo, OH, 1884), 20, 48-49. In addition, Nat Lewis, uncle of Emma Smith, wished to contest Joseph Smith's claims to translating the Book of Mormon with "the miracle-working spectacles." So he asked the prophet to read the sections with foreign languages in Clarke's commentary. Reportedly, Joseph simply walked away. (George Peck, *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828* [New York: Carlton & Porter, 1860], 332-33.) The point is that Clarke's commentaries were readily accessible and acceptable near the rural areas of the prophet. In addition, there is a large body of literature in the early nineteenth century that appeals to biblical commentaries as authorities, such as Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (Poultney, VT: Smith & Lutz, 1825); and William Phoebus, *An Essay on the Doctrine and Order of the Evangelical Church of America; as Constituted at Baltimore in 1784* (New York: Abraham Paul, 1817).

11. The following early nineteenth-century commentaries published in America were consulted for this essay: Rev. Mr. Ostervald, *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments; with Arguments Prefixed to the Different Books, and Moral and Theological Observations Illustrating Each Chapter* (New York: Sage & Clough, 1803); Robert Lowth, *Isaiah. A New Translation; with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes Critical, Philological, and Explanatory* (Boston: Joseph T. Buckingham, 1815); Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments with Original Notes and Practical Observations* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1817-18); John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1817); John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1811); Philip Doddridge, *The Family Expositor; or, A Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament; with Critical Notes, and a Practical Improvement of Each Section* (Charleston, MA: Etheridge & Co., 1807); John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (New York: J. Soule & T. Mason, 1818); Joseph Priestley, *Notes on All the Books of Scripture* (Northumberland, PA, 1803); John McDonald, *Isaiah's Message to the American Nation. A New Translation, of Isaiah, Chapter XVIII with Notes Critical and Explanatory, A Remarkable Prophecy, Respecting the Restoration of the Jews, Aided by the American Nation . . .* (Albany, 1814); Ezekiel Cooper, *Critical and Explanatory Notes, on Many Passages in the New Testament, which to Common Readers are Hard to be Understood* (Canandaigua, NY: James Bemis, 1819); Alden Bradford, *Evangelical History: or A Narrative of the Life, Doctrine and Miracles of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and of his Holy Apostles; containing the Four Gospels and the Acts: with a General Introduction, and Prefatory Remarks to each Book, and Notes Didactic, Explanatory, and Critical. Designed Chiefly for those who have not leisure to peruse the larger works of voluminous Commentators* (Boston: Bradford and Read, 1813); Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with A Commentary and Critical Notes. . .* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1832[?] reprint); George Campbell, *Four Gospels, Translated from the Greek with Preliminary Dissertations, and Notes Critical and Explanatory* (Boston: W. Wells and Thomas B. Wait & Co., 1811).

primitivists, and prophets. The commentaries generally represented the Orthodox Protestant view of the perfection of the biblical text. The notion that the writing of scripture was "superintended" by God was a popular one. But one of the disagreements was whether God's superintendency allowed for minor grammatical error or whether such superintendency resulted in a perfect Bible. The reading of the biblical text was constrained by doctrines such as salvation through faith alone and the Bible as primary (if not only) source of revelation. The commentaries tended to focus on historical exegesis and some textual issues prior to interpreting the text.

On the other hand, prophetic figures in the early nineteenth century were descendants of the Radical Reformation. They were more likely to state that the biblical text was corrupted, in error, and required new revelation to understand. Unlike the commentaries, early nineteenth-century prophets focused on the way a biblical text spoke directly to and about them. For example, Malachi 4 speaks of the coming of Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. The commentaries typically saw this as the coming of John the Baptist, in line with New Testament statements. Yet at least three early nineteenth-century prophetic movements saw the Malachi prophecy as referring to a person in their own movement.¹² Prophets in the early nineteenth century simply took a standard American practice to an extreme. Americans typically saw themselves as not just a sign of the Millennium, but as an intrinsic instrument to bring it about.¹³ So Ethan Smith was probably typical in combining the historical view of the commentaries with direct American fulfillment. He saw the coming of Elijah as having a double fulfillment—first, in John the Baptist, second, the preaching of the gospel by the missionary angel of Revelation 14 prior to the Millennium.¹⁴ Smith believed that this angel was a figurative representation of the preaching of the gospel in his own time.

This freedom to see biblical events reflected in one's own life was probably more pronounced among American prophets than among more mainstream Protestants and certainly more than among the commentators. This distinction probably reflects social and religious distinctions between these differing interpreters of the Bible.

12. These Elijahs include Elias Pierson of the Matthias movement; Daniel Hawley, the Presbyterian school teacher and prophet in Carmel, New York; and James and Jane Wardley among the Shakers. Also, in 1796, the minister/prophet David Austin declared himself to be John the Baptist to prepare for the coming of Christ.

13. James H. Moorehead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," in *Journal of American History* 71 (Dec. 1984): 532.

14. Ethan Smith, *Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to Antichrist and the Last Times* (Boston: Samuel Armstrong, 1814), 236-40.

One interpretive dichotomy common to almost all nineteenth-century religious traditions is the distinction between "spiritual" or "mystical" level of meaning and the "temporal" or "literal" level. This distinction is one found in various sections of the Book of Mormon, as well. I will examine this distinction in Isaiah 52:7-10.

I will now examine four examples of how the Book of Mormon, as a biblical mosaic, addresses a broad nineteenth-century audience. I will begin by providing an inventory of particular biblical parallels in the Book of Mormon and then comparing the Nephite presentation of the passage to various nineteenth-century biblical views on the passage.¹⁵ I will note significant clusters of biblical parallels as we encounter them.

PARALLEL NO. 1: HEBREWS 13:8

Biblical Text:

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 10:17-20 (allusion/proof text)

This passage uses Hebrews 13 as a proof text to argue for the presence of God's revelations (in the visionary sense of the word) in every age. It is in the midst of a cluster of biblical parallels. This cluster includes the declaration that those who diligently seek, shall find (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-10). The other biblical parallel is a discussion of the way being prepared from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34; Luke 11:50; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3). All these parallels combine into a cluster that defends the idea of extra-biblical revelation in every age.

While the Book of Mormon tries to convince readers of the uniformity of the presence of revelation in every age, it attempts to fight against the Calvinist notion of predestination, which can be supported with these same biblical texts.¹⁶ John Gill, the most prominent Calvinist of our commentators, uses Matthew 25:34 and Ephesians 1:4 as proof texts to defend predestination and unconditional election from "the foundation of the

15. The biblical text used in this work is *The Holy Bible: containing the Old and New Testament; together with the Apocrypha . . . with [C]Anne's Marginal Notes and References* (New York: Collins & Co., 1819), a widely distributed edition, printed numerous times in the early nineteenth century. The Book of Mormon text is from the 1830 edition, although the printer's manuscript and original manuscript will be referred to when they add important information.

16. Other passages in the New Testament speak of "from the foundation of the world." But they refer to Christ or truth hidden from the foundation. Hence, it is not likely that they would have been used as proof texts that the *elect* were chosen from the foundation, as the biblical texts cited above were used.

world." This interpretation was widely used among American Calvinists.¹⁷

2 Nephi 2:3 b-4 (allusion/proof text)

As in 1 Nephi 10, 2 Nephi uses Hebrews 13 as a proof text for revelation linked with an Arminian view of salvation.

2 Nephi 27:23; 29:8-9; Mormon 9:7-10; Moroni 10:19 (allusion)

These passages allude to Hebrews 13:8 as a proof text for revelation and other gifts of the Spirit. Mormon 9:7-10 adds a second proof text that is used for the same purpose (James 1:17, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning").

I now turn to the most unique use of Hebrews 13:8 in the Book of Mormon.

Alma 31:16-17 (allusion/parody of a proof text; emphasis added):

Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known to us that there shall be no Christ; *but thou art the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever*; and thou hast elected us, that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God.

17. For examples of the Calvinist use of "from the foundation of the world" from Ephesians 1:4-5 as a proof text of the predestinarian doctrine of election, see Daniel Haskel, *The Doctrine of Predestination . . . A Discourse* (Burlington: Samuel Miller, 1817), 10-11; Ezra Stiles Ely, *Contrast between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism* (New York: S. Whiting & Co., 1811), 26-27; Bangs, 23, 120-27, 215; Daniel Whitby, *Six Discourses* (Worcester, MA: Isaiah Thomas, Jr., 1801), 34-35; *Calvinism and Arminianism Displayed* (Wilmington, DE: Simon Kollock, 1806), 7-8; Josiah Hopkins, *The Doctrine of Decrees Essential to the Divine Character* (Middlebury, VT: T. C. Strong, 1812), 8-9; Weeks, 8, 28; R. H. Bishop, *An Apology for Calvinism* (Lexington, KY: Daniel Bradford, 1804), 5-6, 12-14; Gardiner Springs, *The Doctrine of Election* (Auburn, NY: James Beardslee, 1818). The last work is based entirely on Ephesians 1:4-5. The works cited above by Whitby and Bangs (a liberal eighteenth-century and a conservative nineteenth-century Arminian) reveal how some Arminians represented and rebutted this kind of Calvinist proof text. John Fletcher indicates that this kind of proof text was common among British Calvinists. See John Fletcher, *Checks to Antinomianism* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, n.d.), 1:110, 146.

This is a portion of the prayer of the Zoramites. It is unlike any other prayer in the Book of Mormon. It is formal, stilted, and repetitious. The hollow sound of the prayer matches the hollow religion of the Zoramites. Its pride stands in contrast to the simple, spontaneous prayer offered by Alma, just as the arrogance of the Zoramite worshippers stands in contrast to their poor. The prayer recalls the prayer of the proud pharisee in the New Testament, which is contrasted to the repentant prayer of the publican (Luke 18:9-14). This prayer reveals the smug doctrines of the social elite and their own view of election. Its hollowness turns the use of Hebrews proof text into a parody of the Zoramites.

The parody is enhanced by citing the Hebrews text in a manner that few in the early nineteenth century would have thought of—a repudiation of the doctrine of Christ. Hebrews 13:8, in fact, speaks of Christ and was often understood in the nineteenth century as a defense of his immutability. To use this text to *deny* Christ would likely have appeared outrageous to most readers, making the Zoramite doctrines ironic and absurd.¹⁸ Hence, their doctrine of election is not only portrayed as arrogant and evil, but absurd by association with such an outrageous proof text. While the Book of Mormon believes in divine immutability, it uses it only to defend the sure salvation of those who die in infancy, not the Calvinist belief in general election, which it ridicules in Alma (Moro. 8:18-19).

This is the only time in the Book of Mormon that Hebrews 13:8 is intended solely as a defense of the immutability of God rather than a defense of the universality of a doctrine, such as revelation. The context of the proof text from Hebrews in this verse makes it clear that it is arguing that God is immutable, meaning that he is always a Spirit and therefore cannot appear as a man, such as Christ.¹⁹

Less certain is the possibility that this proof text parodies the Calvinist doctrine of election, as well as being an anti-Christian proof text. If one interprets the proof text as addressing election, then Hebrews 13:8 refers to the two main doctrines mentioned in the prayer—the doctrine of Christ and the unconditional salvation of the elect. This short prayer mentions election four times, and the immutability of Christ was a typical proof of the Calvinist doctrine of election in the early nineteenth century: God does not change, his course is determined from the foundation of the world; therefore, the doctrine of the immutability proves uncondi-

18. Clyde Forsberg believes this irony is intended to be humorous.

19. The word "but" prior to citing Hebrews 13 indicates that the phrase rejects the preceding phrase, which was a statement regarding the Nephite doctrine of Christ. This interpretation of Hebrews 13:8 in Alma as a proof text against Christ is supported by verse 15, which anticipates the Hebrews 13 proof text by saying that God was always a Spirit, is a Spirit, and will always be a Spirit—hence, he will not come as a human, as Christ.

tional election. (So the Calvinist argument went.)²⁰ This is the summary of the evidence that indicates that the allusion to Hebrews 13:8 may be a parody of the Calvinist doctrine of election.

But even if the Hebrews 13:8 proof text for immutability simply refers to the doctrine of Christ, it is at least juxtaposed to the doctrine of election. Therefore election is implied as part of the outrageous and ironic nature of the prayer. Even if the proof text refers only to the doctrine of Christ, the Calvinist doctrine of election is ridiculed by implication.

Summary

Nineteenth-century commentaries interpreted this passage as a reference to the immutability of Christ and/or the constancy of Christ's doctrines over time (see Scott, Clarke, Wesley, Gill, Priestly, and Doddridge). The Book of Mormon appeals to both interpretations. It parodies the Zoramite use of the phrase as a reference to immutability, and uses it to defend the constancy of doctrine over time, particularly the doctrine of revelation.

The belief that direct revelations and miracles ceased with apostles was prominent, though far from universal, when the Book of Mormon appeared. For example, pages 3-7 of the 1818 *Methodist Magazine* contains an editorial that stated, "It should never be forgotten that the age of miracles is past." And there was a whole host of positions on visions. Some accepted them wholeheartedly as the most fundamental revelation. Others accepted them cautiously as supplements to the Bible. Many rejected post-biblical revelations. Some even rejected revealed religion altogether. The Book of Mormon exploits the common inconsistency of many mainstream Protestants who used Hebrews 13 to defend the uniformity of the gospel in all ages and at the same time taught that revelations and miracles had ceased. The contradiction is apparent. That is one of the reasons that this passage from Hebrews appears so often in the Book of Mormon. It takes a standard proof text for the universality of the gospel and expands its use.

While unusual, this Book of Mormon expansion is not unique. Two prominent Shakers, Seth Wells and Calvin Green, also defended the necessity of revelation from the Spirit in all ages, using Hebrews 13:8 as a proof text. Revelations were to come in every age "in this day, as well as under former dispensations." It is the darkness of the spiritual race that blocks out revelation, "but the Spirit of God is 'the same yesterday, to-day

20. As an example of Calvinist use of the doctrine of immutability as a proof of election, see Haskel, 6-7. For a summary of the relationship of immutability and predestination in the thought of Parks and Edwards, see Frank Hugh Foster, *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1963), 264-65.

and forever."²¹ Note how the Hebrews text quoted by Green and Wells has shifted—as it does in the Book of Mormon—from *Jesus* being the same to the *Spirit* being the same in order to appeal to the Spirit as the source of revelations. Both the Shakers and the Book of Mormon use this as a proof to demonstrate the need for revelation in modern as well as ancient times. Since the Book of Mormon uses the same textual modification and the same logic as Green and Wells, it appears that the Book of Mormon appealed to an extant early nineteenth-century biblical proof text for the universal presence of revelation from the Spirit (1 Ne. 10:17-20; 2 Ne. 2:3-4).

In summary, the Book of Mormon addresses the two major uses of Hebrews 13:8. It appeals to a proof text used by a countercultural religion; at the same time it parodies the misuse of the verse in defending immutability (with probable intentions to ridicule the Calvinist understanding of election). The Book of Mormon uses a biblical text to universalize biblical revelation. This doctrine of continuous revelation challenges mainstream Protestant authority and knowledge claims.

PARALLEL NO. 2: JOHN 10:16

Biblical Text:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 22:24-25 (allusion)

The one fold of sheep represents the gathering of the righteous in the last days. 1 Nephi 22 also uses biblical imagery of animals to describe this gathering (calves of the stall, Mal. 4:2; God feeding sheep, John 21:16-17). Verse 27 makes it clear that all these latter-day events are to come to pass “according to the flesh” as temporal events, not as symbolic or internal spiritual events.²²

3 Nephi 15:16-24; 16:1-5 (two quotes and commentary; emphasis added):

And verily, I say unto you, That ye are they of which I said, *other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* And

21. Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers* (Commonly called Shakers) (Albany: Packer & Van Benthuyssen, 1823), 37.

22. For spiritual interpretation of this passage, see *ibid.*, 174, 175, 189, 207-12, and Paulina Bates, *The Divine Book of Holy and Eternal Wisdom, Revealing the Word of God* (Canterbury, NH, 1849), 380.

they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles: for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching; and they understood not that I said *they shall hear my voice*; and they understood not that the Gentiles should not at any time *hear my voice*; that I should not manifest myself unto them, save it were by the Holy Ghost. But behold, ye have both *heard my voice*, and seen me . . .

Christ here is speaking to the Nephites. He continues to speak about other separate groups of the House of Israel which will hear his voice and become part of the one fold even though they are of separate folds or locations at present. (Compare this passage with the echo of John 10:16 in 1 Nephi 19:11.) This statement is followed by a discussion of the conversion of Israel in the last days in conjunction with the fulfillment of Isaiah 52.

Summary

The voice of Christ in John 10, according to the Book of Mormon, refers to the literal voice of Christ. But both passages that cite John 10 in the Book of Mormon imply or state that the "one fold" is a physical gathering in the last days.

The consensus of nineteenth-century commentaries was that the "other sheep" to hear Christ's voice were the gentiles (see Ostervald, Scott, Clarke, Wesley, Gill, Doddridge, and Campbell). The Book of Mormon disagrees and attributes that view to the Jews at the time of Jesus. 3 Nephi states that this consensus cannot be correct since the gentiles never literally heard the voice of Jesus. John 10:16 thus becomes a prophecy of the visit of Christ reported in 3 Nephi. This daring interpretation does two things: It establishes the Bible as an endorsement of the Book of Mormon, which thereby becomes the source of the hidden words of Christ that sweep away the corrupt Christian culture experienced by the reader. This cluster of biblical passages evokes the image of a safe gathering place under God's voice. Such an eschatological gathering and new words from Christ would not be welcome by those in power.

PARALLEL NO. 3: LUKE 2:10

Biblical Text:

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

This angelic message is delivered to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 13:37; Mosiah 3:2-3; Alma 39:15-19; Helaman 5:11; 13:7; 29; 16:13-14 (echo)

In these passages a series of prophets are visited by angels and preachers who declare “glad tidings of great joy” which consist of the coming of the Messiah and his gospel.²³ These visitations prepare the recipient to receive the full gospel when Christ comes. The angelic announcement in Luke 2 has been transformed by the Book of Mormon into a literary form consisting of angelic revelation and preaching throughout all of history.

Alma 13:21-26 (echo; emphasis added):

yea, and the voice of the Lord, *by the mouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; yea, doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy; yea, and he doth sound these glad tidings among all his people, yea, even to them that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth; wherefore they have come to us.*

Summary

It is clear from Alma 39:19 that this phrase is intended as a defense of the visionary or prophetic tradition among readers of the book. So this new Nephite literary form goes beyond using the Bible as a proof text, as in the case of Hebrews 13:8. Several passages with parallels to Luke 2 universalize the phrase to apply to the necessity of angelic visitations in every age, both before and after Christ. This fits the Book of Mormon’s universalizing of biblical texts and defense of revelation in every age.

The preparatory nature of this angelic visitation formula is mentioned in the Book of Mormon passages above—preparation of people for Christ. This form served as the basis for the later Mormon doctrine assigning the visitation of angels to the preparatory, or Aaronic, priesthood. And it clarifies its meaning as preaching to prepare the mind for Christ (see D&C 13:1; 84:26).

PARALLEL NO. 4: ISAIAH 52:7-10

Biblical Text:

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that

23. The Book of Mormon angelic visitations announce *glad* tidings of great joy. (Wesley’s and Timothy Dwight’s biblical text of Luke 2:10, as well as Gill’s and Ostervald’s commentaries in Luke, use the phrase “glad tidings” instead of the Lukan “good tidings.”) For Dwight’s text, see Timothy Dwight, *Sermons* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, Durrie & Peck, 1828), 180.

bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem:

10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The imagery here is that of a messenger running in mountainous territory arriving at Jerusalem to announce the reign of God. This message is received with shouts of joy from the city's "watchmen." It is clear from Mosiah 12 that the Book of Mormon considers these four verses a single literary unit. This is a particularly important biblical parallel because it provides an explicit interpretation and appears several times, offering an excellent case of multiple attestation. And because it appears many times in the Book of Mormon, it provides a clear window for understanding the uses of the Bible in the Book of Mormon, including less obvious parallels.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 13: 37 (allusion)

Here the reign of God in Isaiah is changed to an *everlasting* kingdom of God and Zion is used as a type to represent those who bring forth the Book of Mormon. Here the publishing of peace refers to the distribution of the gospel in the last days in conjunction with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The phrases "publishing peace" and "good tidings" are clearly from Isaiah 52, and yet a similar phrase from Luke 2:10 ("good tidings of great joy") is weaved into this 1 Nephi 13 text. The angelic choir sings of peace on earth, as does the running messenger. This subtle echo indicates that the Book of Mormon, like several of our commentaries, understands both of these verses to address the universal gospel.²⁴

Mosiah 12:20-24 (quotation)

Here one of the priests of Noah asks Abinadi to interpret the Isaiah passage containing buoyant hope. The clear, unstated intention of the priest is to question the legitimacy of Abinadi's prophetic message of

24. For more recent arguments against reliance of Luke 2 on Isaiah 52, see John A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), and Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967), 2:107-15.

doom by asking him to interpret an optimistic statement from a respected prophet. Here the priest implies that Abinadi's message is illegitimate. The only major textual change is the replacement of "all the ends of the earth" for "all the earth" in verse 10. This addition emphasizes the breadth of the gospel's spread. Its context in the Book of Mormon clearly makes this a quotation.

Mosiah 15:14-31; 16:1(-15) (paraphrase, quotation, and echo)

Here Abinadi responds to the question of the priest in Mosiah 12. Mosiah 15:14-17 paraphrases Isaiah 52:7 and states that the messenger on the mountain who publishes peace and salvation are all those past, present, and future prophets (and possibly other preachers) who taught of Christ. The context of this paraphrase, and the use of echoes of the word "salvation" throughout the chapter, make it clear that the message of salvation and peace referred to in Isaiah refers to Christ's overcoming death and offering spiritual life.

In verse 18 a different interpretation is offered for the identity of the one "that bringeth good tidings, that is[,] the founder of peace; yea, even the Lord, who hath redeemed his people." In the prior verses, the messengers who bring the message of peace and salvation are preachers. But in verse 18 it refers specifically to Christ himself. Christ has brought salvation—he is the source of redemption. So in verses 14-18 we have two different explicit interpretations of the identity of the messenger. The chapter continues through verse 27 describing the nature of these "good tidings" of salvation through Christ. The general approach here has been to spiritualize the imagery of Isaiah 52 into a Christian view of redemption.

But then there is another shift from a spiritual to a temporal interpretation in verse 28: "And now I say unto you, that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice." The passage continues to quote verbatim Isaiah 52:8-9. Note how the Book of Mormon adds, "Yea, Lord, thy watchmen," to the Isaiah text. This transforms the watchmen from being watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem to being servants of the Lord. In addition, this quotation of verses 8-9 from Isaiah 52 is placed in a latter-day setting when all will hear this message of salvation and in the final judgment when we "shall see eye to eye," as the echo of this phrase indicates in Mosiah 16:1. The end of chapter 15 and chapter 16 contain one of the formulaic phrases used in the Book of Mormon to interpret a temporal interpretation of a biblical passage: "the time shall come when . . ." Here we find that these verses from Isaiah 52 are given a temporal interpretation—referring to both the latter

day and to the Judgment. This interpretation is reinforced by eschatological images from the Bible (gnashing of teeth, first resurrection) and biblical images about life and death (Mosiah 16:7//1 Cor. 15:55; Mosiah 16:8-10//1 Cor. 15:53-54; Mosiah 16:9//John 1:4; 8:12; 9:5).²⁵

Alma 36:26 (allusion and application)

In these words of Alma to his son, Helaman, he alludes to Isaiah 52 about seeing eye to eye as part of the conversion process. Alma's conversion included an angelic visit and a heavenly vision. This seeing eye to eye refers to the convert facing a heavenly being. The figure in Isaiah 52 is spiritualized and universalized. The imagery evoked by Alma's echo of Isaiah 52 supports both an evangelical view of conversion and a visionary view of the source of knowledge coming from visions. It seems to be more of an application of the text rather than an objective interpretation.

3 Nephi 16:17-20 (quotation)

This passage interprets Isaiah as a temporal event in the latter days.

3 Nephi 20:30-21:8 (quotation with interpretive comments added)

3 Nephi 20 contains a cluster of biblical prophecies, each introduced by the formula, "Then shall . . ." This formula appears nine times and temporally orders the biblical prophecies. A statement of the event is made, followed by the biblical quotation. The statement of the event interprets the quote that follows it. The sequence of prophetic events here is: conversion of the "remnants" of Israel, Native Americans to destroy gentiles if they do not repent (3 Ne. 20:15-23//Micah 5:7-8, 4:12-13; Acts 3:22-23), conversion of the Jews (3 Ne. 20:31-32//Isa. 52:7), conversion of the Jews to benefit gentiles (3 Ne. 20:27//Gen. 22:18), gathering of Jews to Jerusalem and their song after conversion to Christ (3 Ne. 20:33-35//Isa. 52:9-10; 52:1-3, 6), and finally words of the people of the Lord in Jerusalem who are gathered (3 Ne. 20:40-45//Isa. 52:7, 11-15). What we have in this chapter is a cluster of biblical parallels that forms a prophetic mosaic in which the parallels both interpret each other and form a temporal sequence.

There are other biblical echoes and quotations in this passage, but space does not allow a full analysis. From this passage, Isaiah 52 understands the seeing eye to eye as a reference to the latter-day conversion of

25. The Book of Mormon clearly relies on the wording and the concepts in 1 Corinthians 15. But the wording from 1 Corinthians 15:53-55 is itself a paraphrase of Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14.

the Jews. The use of the terms "*their* watchman" and "*their* voice" instead of the pronoun "thy" in the Isaiah text points to the watchmen being Jews. Clarke's commentary also suggests an alternative reading of "*their* voice."²⁶ The addition of "unto them" to verse 7 serves the same purpose of localizing the prophecy to the Jews.

Summary

One of the greatest overstatements made about the Book of Mormon is that it provides a literal interpretation of scripture. In fact, it explicitly states otherwise. Fortunately, the recent work of Philip Barlow has described the book as containing spiritual interpretations, while leaning toward the literal.²⁷ The Book of Mormon itself adopts a nineteenth-century two-tiered methodology in interpreting Lehi's journey, Lehi's dream, and the prophecies of Isaiah (see 1 Ne. 15:27-36; 22:1-3; Alma 37). It uses the usual terms "spiritual" and "temporal" to designate these two levels of meaning. Typology was considered a subset of this interpretive strategy.

In the passages above, we have seen how the Book of Mormon gives a temporal interpretation of Isaiah 52 as the conversion and gathering of the Jews in the last days. The spiritual interpretation is the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of sinners in all ages. Other than the visionary element in Alma, this dualistic interpretation could have been acceptable to a large majority of American Protestants. Clarke, Gill, Lowth, Ostervald, and Scott all explicitly appeal to the spiritual and temporal meanings of Isaiah 52.

Gill is clearly the most spiritual of our commentators. He relishes spiritual meanings. For example, he sees the cry to depart from Babylon as a cry to depart from sin and the whole of Isaiah 52 as a description of the conquest of sin in the church. Finney refers to preachers as "watchmen," and "seeing eye to eye" was used to describe the unity that he hoped to see among rival Christian religions.²⁸ Others emphasized literal fulfillment. Several referred to a latter-day fulfillment but tended to see

26. Recent works have argued that this alternate reading does not coincide with the KJV, but does coincide with ancient manuscripts. These studies take this as evidence of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. However, this approach fails to consider that there were numerous alternate versions as well as textual discussions in the commentaries that must be examined before claiming evidence for antiquity. We have seen several times how the Book of Mormon varies from the KJV text and agrees with the variant reading in Wesley. These textual variants were often followed carefully because of their theological implications. Certainly Joseph Smith was not a trained textual exegete. However, he may have been familiar with verbal uses of such variants and the theological implications surrounding them.

27. Barlow, 32-38.

28. Finney, 144, 328.

temporal fulfillment in the return of the Jews from captivity.

It should be noted that the two-tiered interpretive methodology was not uniformly accepted. Priestly interprets Isaiah 52 as simply the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, with no mention of spiritual meanings. Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* argues against those in the early nineteenth century who denied the literal return of the Jews. He argues against those who interpret Isaiah 52 and other prophecies solely as referring to spiritual conversion.²⁹

The Book of Mormon, in line with visionary interpreters, focusses interpretation on the latter days. But there is a hint that the Book of Mormon may also understand Isaiah's prophecies in an ancient temporal setting. The more obvious interpretations of Isaiah by the Book of Mormon are as events in the latter days and, spiritually, as the redemption of Christ. This passage from Mosiah 15-16 contains both echoes and explicit interpretations that at least some biblical texts are understood according to the spiritual/temporal dichotomy of the original audience and that there are multiple temporal and spiritual interpretations of this particular text. No other biblical passage is interpreted in the Book of Mormon in this detail or with this degree of complexity. It should serve as a guide to less explicit biblical interpretations.

CONCLUSION

The first impression that strikes me as I examine this inventory of biblical passages is how diverse and intricate the use of the Bible is in the Book of Mormon. Its complexity is surprising. This diversity of source and use has caused me to entertain the figure of a mosaic as an appropriate description of the use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon. The figure of a mosaic is useful for three reasons: the biblical parallels are clustered together in meaningful ways; the Book of Mormon uses the Bible in a variety of ways; and the Book of Mormon combines a variety of biblical usages both typical and unusual for the nineteenth century. It ranks with other early nineteenth-century American prophets as being among the most creative views of the Bible in early America. We have seen how the Book of Mormon repeats a nineteenth-century prophetic proof text and parodies Calvinism (Heb. 13:8); it universalizes and transforms a biblical passage into a new literary form (Luke 2:10); it gives an explicit interpretation at odds with existing interpreters (John 10:16); and it gives a stan-

29. See Ethan Smith, 56-60, 225, and Appendix as examples. Smith actually adopted the two-tiered method. Besides examples in Smith, a later visionary example of a strictly spiritualized interpretation of Isaiah 52 is found in Bates, 91-93. Bates does not believe in a physical resurrection or an eschatological new heaven and new earth. These are all spiritual events in the life of the soul.

dard spiritual/temporal interpretation of biblical prophecy (Isa. 52:7-10) with a touch of visionary radicalism.

In each of these instances the Book of Mormon either universalizes or lets the texts address latter-day readers directly. Its interpretive directness fits closer to the marginalized prophets than to the commentaries of the early nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century readers saw the Bible as two separate books: a source of universally valid insights about human nature and a typical history being repeated in America.³⁰ The Book of Mormon simply takes the typifying of biblical history to new visionary heights. All migrations to establish nations are like the Hebrew exodus. All nations have secret combinations and prophetic warnings in times of wickedness. All nations possess their own Bible and revelations. It is the universalizing of revelation that made the Book of Mormon possible, and makes it such a countercultural threat. The prophetic figures in the early nineteenth century were generally people who had been marginalized. An appeal to their message was therefore a countercultural statement.

The appeal of this countercultural mosaic lies in its ability to recreate the shattered world of those broken by the history they experienced; the Nephite biblical mosaic provides a new authority and world view. The Book of Mormon created a countercultural perspective from the pieces of inherited tradition surrounding the book's readers. This mosaic is one of the reasons that, as one prominent historian states, the book is "an extraordinary work of popular imagination and one of the greatest documents in American cultural history."³¹ Yet the figure of a mosaic evokes an image of creation from destruction, and preserves the past in small remnants. It confronts us in the form of holy texts having the power of creative destruction. To save the gospel, we must therefore destroy the texts. This is both a beauty and a sorrow of the Book of Mormon. Mormons too often envision Joseph Smith as a prophet of the objective. Hence the Book of Mormon tells us facts about where people come from and how history works under God. Yet I relish the image of Joseph as a folk artist crafting mosaics of the soul—a prophet of meaning rather than a scientist of objectivity.

30. Noll, 43-44.

31. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," 381.