

Chapter Six

ISAIAH 52–53 AND MOSIAH 13–14

A Textual Comparison

Shon D. Hopkin

Shon D. Hopkin is an associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

As demonstrated in the Abinadi narrative, the Isaiah chapters and shorter quotations of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon have been the subject of much study and discussion. They form the strongest case for intertextuality that exists between the Book of Mormon and the Bible. As has been demonstrated by Grant Hardy,¹ Joseph Spencer,² and others, and as has been discussed in this volume, Abinadi's use of Isaiah differs from that of Nephi, Jacob, and Christ and points to a somewhat differing interpretive approach, either due to Abinadi's own theological position or due to a differing historical need at the time of Abinadi.

This chapter will not retread those issues, although they are an important part of intertextual studies. Instead, in this chapter, I will analyze the way in which the Abinadi text, as it exists in English in the 1830 version of the Book of Mormon, relies on the Old Testament writings found in Exodus and Isaiah, in particular as they are found in the King James Version

translation that was ubiquitous in the days of Joseph Smith. Although little attention (besides Royal Skousen's work) has been given to Abinadi's quotations from Exodus, numerous scholars have used the Isaiah chapters to either attack or support the divine nature of Joseph Smith's translation, either demonstrating that it must be a modern product of Joseph's mind or that the variants show evidence of antiquity. Excellent research has been done by many, including David Wright,³ Donald Parry and John Welch,⁴ Royal Skousen,⁵ Carol Ellertson,⁶ and John Tvedtnes.⁷

In this chapter, I will look at the sections of the Exodus and Isaiah texts that are quoted in the Abinadi narrative and will highlight the words and phrases that differ from the King James Version in those quotations. After each variant, I will provide commentary that will help modern readers of the text consider possible reasons for the difference. Next, I will show the types of variants that exist in an ancient textual witness, in this case the Great Isaiah Scroll, in order to compare those variants with variants found in the Book of Mormon. After, I will analyze the Book of Mormon's repetition of the italicized words and of potentially problematic translations in the King James Version, discussing possible interpretations of that usage. Finally, I will propose several insights or lessons gleaned from the analysis. Since I believe the Book of Mormon to be divinely inspired, there are likely explanations that are acceptable to me that may not be acceptable to other readers. That being said, in my analysis, I will not seek to either "prove" or "disprove" the Book of Mormon translation but will merely present the data as it is found with analysis and possible interpretations of that data. As a point of caution, this study provides only analysis for the Abinadi narrative, which in many respects represents an unusually clean set of renderings from the biblical text. The reasoning used later can certainly be applied to passages elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, but the situation elsewhere is at times more complex.

THE VARIANTS AND ANALYSIS

There are twenty variants between the Exodus and the Isaiah passages found in the King James Version and those quoted in the Abinadi narrative in the 1830 Book of Mormon. The discussions of these variants hereafter build upon the excellent scholarship noted previously. Royal Skousen's

work has been particularly helpful and influential, as a comparison with his analysis will show.⁸ My explanations are in many cases more detailed and extensive than his purposefully truncated comments and also provide a broader analysis of the potential theological purpose of the variants. In some cases, I offer analysis that differs from his and from that of Tvedtnes and Ellertson. Thus, while I build on the shoulders of previous scholarship, the analysis that follows is not limited by that scholarship. Finally, the Book of Mormon quotations of biblical language clearly rely on or connect with King James Version renderings in fairly overt and purposeful ways. I will save a discussion of that reliance until after the analysis of each variant, but that discussion qualifies the following analysis in important ways.

1. Mosiah 12:35—Thou shalt have no other **God** before me.

Exodus 20:3—Thou shalt have no other **gods** before me.

In this textual variant, the Book of Mormon witness gives a singular in the command to not worship any other “God” instead of commanding to not worship other “gods,” as in the Hebrew of the Bible and of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁹ That being said, the Hebrew for “gods” is *’elōhîm*, and that word is typically translated in the singular when referring to God (rather than to false gods) throughout the Bible. Thus, while not a normal translation, it is possible to translate this word in the singular. Additionally, Exodus 34:14 repeats the same commandment but provides the singular in the Hebrew (“thou shalt worship no other god”), *’el*. First Corinthians 8:4, “there is none other God but one,” also provides the singular “god” in Greek, *theos* (with “God” capitalized in the King James Version). The existence of the command with “god” in the singular in other biblical witnesses demonstrates that it was considered appropriate, even in the context of polytheistic beliefs, to give this commandment in the singular.

That reasoning opens the possibility of the existence of a textual variant on the brass plates in this location, creating a match with Exodus 34:14.¹⁰ As mentioned, the capitalization of “God” in 1 Corinthians 8:4 matches the way that *’elōhîm* is translated in most other locations in the Old Testament King James Version, although that translation always refers to the true God of the Israelites. Joseph Smith almost certainly would not have been familiar with the Hebrew technicalities of *’elōhîm* at this early

stage of his life, but he could have been familiar with Exodus 34:14 (lowercase) and 1 Corinthians 8:4 (uppercase) renderings of the same passage in the English translation.

Theologically, a number of possibilities present themselves for the change in the discourse of Abinadi, as the change could have been introduced by Abinadi, Alma₁, or Mormon or in modernity as the English translation was being produced. Within the text of the Book of Mormon, there is some evidence of idolatry and the worship of a multitude of deities. (See, for example, Alma₂'s condemnation of idolatry among the Zoramites in Alma 31:1.) For the most part, however, the Book of Mormon presents a situation in which apostate beliefs focus more on a rejection of the Messiah as God who would descend among the children of men to suffer, die, and be resurrected. Because Abinadi is emphasizing this very point, the shift in the wording of the commandment could indicate that a belief in God that does not include a belief in the Messiah as God who would atone for sins is putting a false God before the true God. In that context, the singular translation of *'elōhîm* as “God” actually could fit the context of Abinadi's discourse.

2, 3, 4. Mosiah 12:36—or any likeness of any thing [. . .] in **the** heaven above, or **things which** is in the earth beneath.

Exodus 20:4—or any likeness of *any thing that is* in heaven above, or **that is** in the earth beneath, . . .

The first change noted (the dropping of “that *is*”) eliminates one word that is clearly found in the Hebrew text, *asher* (“that”), and one word that is not found there (“is”). The dropping of the two words does not alter the meaning of the phrase in English in any recognizable way. Similarly, the word *asher* (“that”) is not necessarily required in Hebrew to make a grammatically correct phrase, although its loss would be surprising since it exists in the following two phrases in the sentence. If “*is*” is dropped in the phrase, then “that” must also be dropped to make an understandable phrase in English. The reverse is also true: if “that” (the word that exists as *asher* in Hebrew) is dropped, there is no need for “*is*.” Of additional interest is that this verse is quoted again by Abinadi in Mosiah 13:12, and

in that second quotation he provides a completely different variant with Exodus 20:4 than the one found here.

Although this is the type of variant that could be found in an ancient text, the fact that Abinadi gives the same text differently in Mosiah 13:12 appears to indicate that there may not have been a variant in the text from which Abinadi was quoting. Because the change does not produce any discernible theological difference, it was most likely an inadvertent change produced by Abinadi in his quotation of Exodus 20:4, or it may have been produced in the modern translation into English by Joseph Smith.

The next variant (the addition of “the” before “heaven”) in one sense mirrors the existing Hebrew of the Masoretic Text¹¹ more exactly, since the Hebrew text’s vowelings actually indicates a definite article here (although the King James Version did not provide it in the English translation). Notwithstanding the existence of the definite article, however, a literally exact translation of the Hebrew in this case would be “the heavens,” because the word for heaven is also in the plural and can be translated into English either in the singular or in the plural. So the Book of Mormon rendering is an appropriate translation of the Hebrew as it exists but mixes an exact translation (of the definite article) with a more liberal translation (of the word “heavens” as “heaven”). This pair of definite article and noun, “the heaven,” parallels the definite article and noun in the next phrase, “the earth.” Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, the phrases “in the heavens” (2 Nephi 29:7, with both the definite article and “heavens”) and “in heaven” (Mosiah 13:12, without the definite article and with the singular “heaven”) can be found. Interestingly, the phrase “in heaven” in Mosiah 13:12 also proceeds from the mouth of Abinadi, when he repeats the same commandment, presumably quoting from the same text of the brass plates. This could suggest that the difference is incidental, either in the English translation or in Abinadi’s quotation, and that it does not point to any variant in the original text of the brass plates.

The King James Version also differs frequently in its translation of “in (the) heaven(s) . . . in (the) earth.” It provides the translation “in the heavens . . . in the earth” (one time, Joel 2:30), “in the heaven . . . in the earth” (two times, 1 Chronicles 29:11 and 2 Chronicles 6:14), “in heaven . . . in the earth” (two times, Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8, as a repetition

of the commandment in Exodus 20:4), and “in heaven . . . in earth” (four times, Deuteronomy 3:24; Joshua 2:11; Psalm 135:6; and Daniel 6:27). These differing translations are given notwithstanding the same Hebrew in each case, with a definite article in front of both “heaven” and “earth,” and “heavens” always found in the plural in the Hebrew. Similar differences are found in modern translations, such as the New International Version (NIV, 2011), which is not uniform throughout (nor is it in conformity with the King James Version in each instance). Thus, a long history (even after the time of Joseph Smith) demonstrates the acceptability of translating this Hebrew phrase in differing ways.

Theologically, it is difficult to determine any important difference between “in the heaven” (Mosiah 12:36) or “in heaven” (Mosiah 13:12), particularly since Abinadi’s text provides both. The ancient belief that heaven was a location that existed above the dome of the sky is reflected in Ammon’s teachings to King Lamoni in Alma 18:29–32, and the definite article could potentially point to that belief. But the existence of the phrase “in heaven” (Mosiah 13:12) for the same passage seems to counteract that possibility and suggest again that the definite article is not an important addition to the text.

The final variant witnessed in Mosiah 12:36, “**things which**” instead of “**that**,” may also have been incidental either in Abinadi’s rendering or in the modern English translation. Although there are clear semantic differences between “which” and “that,” those differences would have been even less regularized in 1830 English than they are in common usage today. The rendering in Mosiah 12:36 does match the rendering of Mosiah 13:12, strengthening the possibility that some form of the word “things” existed in the version being quoted by Abinadi. The introduction of the word “things” parallels the preceding variant phrase, “things which is heaven above,” as found in Mosiah 13:12 (discussed later). It is also a soft parallel of “any thing” in the preceding phrase of Mosiah 12:16 but is introduced as a plural (perhaps due to the connection with Mosiah 13:12), creating a grammatical inconsistency with the verb “is.” As demonstrated by the italics in the King James Version, the verb “is” is not present in the Hebrew, so any verb that matches the subject would be possible. Whether or not there would have been a verb on the brass plates version quoted

by Abinadi is, of course, unclear. In all, it is difficult to determine from where this variant may have proceeded. There are too many possibilities to consider them all here, particularly since there is no way of determining which possibility is most likely. This variant does not appear to have any theological significance that would have encouraged Abinadi to introduce it.

Abinadi's quotation of the Ten Commandments breaks off at this point in Mosiah 12 without concluding the third phrase of this verse, "or that is in the water under the earth." If he had concluded the verse, it is reasonable to assume that his version would have produced variants similar to those found in the concluding phrase of Mosiah 13:12, which follows.

5, 6, 7. Mosiah 13:12—or any likeness of **things which** is in heaven above, or **which** is in the earth beneath, or **which** is in the water under the earth.

Exodus 20:4—or any likeness of *any thing that* is in heaven above, or **that** is in the earth beneath, or **that** is in the water under the earth.

As in the discussion of the variants in Mosiah 12:36 found in the preceding paragraphs, these variants found in Mosiah 13:12 differ from Exodus 20:4 but also differ somewhat from the quotation of Exodus 20:4 given by Abinadi in Mosiah 12:36, in the same discourse. This seems to indicate that they may not reflect true variants on the brass plates quoted by Abinadi but rather may reflect incidental differences introduced in his discourse or incidental differences in the English translation of his discourse. It is interesting to note that these minor changes occur in the textual vicinity of King James italicized words, pointing to ambivalence (or, better said, nonexistence) of an equivalent word in the Hebrew text.

8, 9, 10. Mosiah 13:13—Thou shalt not bow down thyself **unto** them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the **iniquities** of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth **generations** of them that hate me.

Exodus 20:5—Thou shalt not bow down thyself **to** them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the

iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth **generation** of them that hate me.

The first variant found in this verse, “unto” instead of “to,” does not appear to alter the meaning in significant ways. The King James Version provides “to” in Exodus 20:4 but provides “unto” in its repetition of the commandment found in Deuteronomy 5:9 even though the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text is the same in both places, *lāhem*. The Book of Mormon text also appears to use these words interchangeably. For example, the phrase “hearken to” occurs twelve times in the Book of Mormon, but eighty-one times it is found as “hearken unto,” with no discernible difference in meaning. Any theological distinction indicated by the change would be extremely tentative and is unlikely. Although this could point to a subtle difference found on the brass plates or in Mormon’s own transcription of Abinadi’s discourse, it was more likely introduced as part of the modern translation process into English.

The next variant, changing the singular “**iniquity** of the fathers” to plural “**iniquities** of the fathers,” occurs frequently in both the Book of Mormon text and in other ancient textual witnesses, such as the Septuagint.¹² It will be discussed more fully below in connection with Mosiah 14:6, 8, and 16. The change here mirrors the change there and also mirrors the Greek translation of the Septuagint, which provides the plural noun *hamartias*, “sinful acts.” Whether the Septuagint translation reflects a differing ancient Hebrew version, or whether it simply reflects the Greek translator’s choice, is impossible to know.

Theologically, the plural “iniquities of the fathers” here prepares for the description of the servant in Isaiah 53 as one who will suffer for “iniquities” (plural, Mosiah 13:6), “transgressions” (plural, Mosiah 13:8), and “sins” (plural, Mosiah 13:16), all of which are changed from the singular in Isaiah 53. It is not merely general “iniquity” that affects the children of sinning parents but individual, specific “iniquities” that are often adopted or absorbed by subsequent generations. As Abinadi would teach, the servant of Isaiah 53 would come to suffer for those sins. The intratextual connection thus created between the “iniquities” of the fathers and the “iniquities” for which the servant will suffer may serve to highlight theologically that he will assist his people to recover from the generational

cycles of sin that can be introduced and that can be so difficult to break. Isaiah 53 and Mosiah 14 are certainly texts that already give attention to the importance of descendants, generations, and seed (see Mosiah 14:8, 10). In addition to these potential connections from Abinadi's text, the plural "iniquities of the fathers" also connects with Abinadi's warnings that the people would suffer due to their "iniquities" (see Mosiah 11:22; 12:1). Indeed, Mosiah 11:22 is a partial quotation of the statement found in Exodus 20:5: "And it shall come to pass that they shall know that I am the Lord their God, and am a jealous God, visiting the **iniquities** of my people" (Mosiah 11:22).

The final variant changes "generation" to "generations" in the phrase "unto the third and fourth **generations**" (Mosiah 13:13). However, it appears to have been introduced by the typesetter rather than by Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery, since the printer's manuscript has the singular. Thus, it should not be considered an actual variant, although it exists in the 1830 edition.

11, 12. Mosiah 13:18—But the seventh day [. . .], the sabbath of the Lord thy God, [. . .] thou shalt not do any work, . . .

Exodus 20:10—But the seventh day **is** the sabbath of the LORD thy God: **in it** thou shalt not do any work, . . .

These variants leave out the italicized words from the King James Version, words which actually do not exist in the Hebrew text, and add commas to bracket the phrase, changing it to an appositive clause. This is an appropriate way to translate the Hebrew as it currently stands in the Masoretic Text, although it makes for a somewhat awkward rendering in English. Either to resolve the problem or to reflect a different textual witness than that of the Masoretic Text, records such as the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and minority readings in Hebrew manuscripts provide, "But **on** the seventh day, the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not . . ." Rather than matching the Septuagint rendering, the Book of Mormon version appears to match the Masoretic Text. This variant provides no clear shift in meaning.

13,14. Mosiah 13:19—For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, **and** the sea, and all that in them is; [. . .] wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Exodus 20:11—For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, [. . .] the sea, and all that in them *is*, **and rested the seventh day**: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The first variant above adds “and” to the list “heaven and earth, **and** the sea, and all that in them is.” Although the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text does not have “and” here, there is wide agreement in other ancient versions for this variant, including the Targums, the Septuagint, the Latin, the Syriac, and minority Hebrew manuscripts.¹³ The Book of Mormon may reflect an ancient version that was lost in the Masoretic Text. The variant does not appear to change the meaning of the text.

The final variant found in Abinadi’s quotation of the Ten Commandments is the deletion or loss of the phrase “and rested the seventh day.” There are no ancient versions that support the lack of this phrase. There are also a number of other places in Book of Mormon quotations of Isaiah where phrases drop out without a clear textual or theological explanation. Because textual support for observing the Sabbath day exists in the preceding verse, it cannot be argued that Noah’s people either did not need the reminder or had changed the Sabbath day so that the commandment did not make sense in their context. The lack of the phrase here could indicate that the brass plates had a textual variant that was unique from all extant versions. If so, this could suggest that its version is the earliest witness of the text or simply that it is a different witness. Alternatively, the phrase could have been dropped in the modern translation process, either purposefully or incidentally. Finally, Abinadi could have introduced this drop by purposefully or accidentally misquoting the text in his discourse, although this means that Alma₁ would have needed to maintain the error, as would Mormon.

One possible interpretation of these types of differences is as a support for the Book of Mormon as an inspired translation. Dropped phrases would have been possible if Joseph Smith was dictating from a King James Version, but they would have been unlikely, particularly when there is no

similar phrase to account for the eye shift that would create the mistake. Thus, while certainly not at all conclusive, these types of differences, which would have been relatively easy to notice and fix, may serve as a supporting witness that the Book of Mormon is the translation of an ancient text. I will qualify that statement further when I discuss the Book of Mormon's clear reliance on King James Version renderings, even to the point that the dropped phrase in this case is still followed by a King James Version rendering that no longer makes grammatical sense. Here, "wherefore" remains from the King James Version as a word that originally served to connect the phrases about the Lord's resting on the seventh day with the creation of the Sabbath day. Because the phrase regarding the seventh day no longer exists in the Book of Mormon rendering, "wherefore" no longer serves an obviously logical purpose.

15. Mosiah 14:2—For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of [. . .] dry ground; . . .

Isaiah 53:2—For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: . . .

In this location, Abinadi's text drops the indefinite article from before "dry ground." Because Hebrew does not contain indefinite articles, the variant is an acceptable translation of the Hebrew Masoretic Text. The indefinite article has the effect of specifying a particular location where the servant would grow up as a tender plant. The lack of an article emphasizes the adjective—the ground would be "dry." The Book of Mormon text could point to an early varying textual witness.

Theologically, the change could also suit the purposes of Abinadi's discourse, which focuses more on the nature of Christ as a universal Redeemer than on the specific location of the Messiah in Old World Palestine. Interestingly, out of twelve recent English translations surveyed,¹⁴ all drop the indefinite article.

Another change should be briefly noted here. The 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon implemented some editing changes from Joseph Smith and included a change from "hath" to "has" in Mosiah 14:4, "surely he **has** borne our griefs" instead of "**hath** borne our griefs," as indicated by Isaiah 53:4. There is no evidence from the printer's manuscript of the 1837

edition, however, that Joseph Smith intended this change, and “hath” is maintained in every other location in Mosiah 14. The two words provide the same meaning, and “has” is simply a modernization of “hath.” It appears that this change was unintentional.

16. Mosiah 14:6—and the Lord hath laid on him the **iniquities** of us all.

Isaiah 53:6—and the LORD hath laid on him the **iniquity** of us all.

This variant is different from the reading of the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which is singular. The Septuagint (as well as the Targums), however, does preserve a plural variant, *hamartiais* (“sins”). The variant in the Septuagint could have been the result of a decision made when translating the Hebrew to Greek in antiquity, or it could reflect a different or earlier Hebrew manuscript tradition that used the plural form. If so, then the Book of Mormon text could reflect an ancient witness of the same variant. In both the Septuagint and Abinadi’s discourse, a singular word is changed to a plural word three times, each when translating a word describing iniquity or sin. Mosiah 14:8 (Isaiah 53:8) provides “transgressions” instead of “transgression,” and Mosiah 14:12 (Isaiah 53:12) gives “sins” instead of “sin.” These changes connect with similar plural words already found in the Hebrew and King James Version for Isaiah 53 (as well as in Mosiah 14 and the Septuagint), “transgressions” in Mosiah 14:5 and “iniquities” in Mosiah 14:5 and 14:11.¹⁵

Theologically, a change to plural words in each of these three cases emphasizes that the servant would suffer not only for sin or iniquity in a general sense but also the sins or iniquities of his people in a very specific and personal sense. In Abinadi’s explanation of Isaiah 53 in Mosiah 15, the text actually provides a singular “iniquity” but juxtaposes it with a plural “transgressions,” possibly indicating suffering for both a general sinfulness and for specific sins: “having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice” (Mosiah 15:9). The emphasis of a very personal atoning sacrifice fits descriptions of the Atonement in the teachings of King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:11–13, which mentions both

Atonement for general sinfulness and for individual sins) and Alma₂ (Alma 7:11).

17. Mosiah 14:7—and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he **opened** not his mouth.

Isaiah 53:7—and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he **openeth** not his mouth.

This is a case in which the Book of Mormon rendering actually agrees more completely with the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text than it does with the King James Version. Although the King James Version gives the present tense of the verb “to open,” possibly to match it with the immediately preceding verbs “is brought” and “is dumb,” the Masoretic Text gives the same tense as the word that is translated as “opened” in the first half of the verse in the KJV. In a survey of twelve English translations, all translated this verb either in the past tense or the perfect tense (giving the sense of past), and all twelve translated it as the same tense as the first instance of “to open” in the verse.¹⁶ Additionally, the 1QIsa^a (the Great Isaiah Scroll) also gives the perfect tense (translated best into English as “did not open” or “opened not”), as do the Targums and the Syriac.

Theologically, the past tense “opened” emphasizes the historical nature of the servant’s refusal to open his mouth, demonstrating that the servant’s refusal to speak occurred at a historical point rather than indicating lack of speech as a consistent part of his nature. Although a minor point, and likely not the theological intent of the change, the teaching that Jesus Christ is a revelator and is the “word” is an important message in the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 11–27) and the New Testament (see John 1:1); and Abinadi’s text may wish to support the overall message of the Book of Mormon that although Christ did refuse to speak at a key historical moment, he is willing to reveal himself and God’s message to those who seek him in all times and places.

18. Mosiah 14:8—for the **transgressions** of my people was he stricken.

Isaiah 53:8—for the **transgression** of my people was he stricken.

See the explanation for “iniquities” in Mosiah 14:3 for the same basic approach here. As with “iniquities,” “transgressions” also has ancient attestation in the Septuagint, which uses the plural form for “lawless acts,” *anomiōn*. The theological significance is the same as that discussed in Mosiah 14:3.

19. Mosiah 53:9—And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no **evil**, . . .

Isaiah 53:9—And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no **violence**, . . .

There is once again ancient support for this variant choice to indicate that the servant had done no “evil” rather than no “violence.” In the Hebrew Bible, the word translated as “violence,” *hāmās*, is always used to describe wicked violence and has the sense of both “evil” and “violence.” The Book of Mormon word “evil” is, to a certain degree, an appropriate translation of the Hebrew word *hāmās*. The Targum reading is *hīt’āh*, or “sin.” The Septuagint reading is, as in the preceding verse, *anomian*, or “lawlessness.” As mentioned above, the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the ancient Hebrew text, which may have been the same or different from the Hebrew in the Masoretic Text. Thus, the Septuagint either reflects a different Hebrew word anciently or represents an interpretation of the best translation of the word *hāmās* as it was understood at the time. In 1 Peter 2:22, the author quotes from Isaiah 53:9 but does not attribute it, using the word *hamartian*, or “sin.” There is significant ancient support, then, for the Book of Mormon rendering of “evil” as well as for translating the Masoretic Text in that way.

Theologically, the difference between the servant doing no “violence” and doing no “evil” is very important for the point that Abinadi is making. The view of the servant as one who does no violence is much less important than the portrayal of the servant as free from evil and thus able to suffer and atone for the sins of the people. Because Abinadi is tying the identity of the servant to Jesus Christ, the rendering he provides would have been crucial to appropriately teaching Christ’s attributes.

20. Mosiah 14:12—and he **bear** the **sins** of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:12—and he **bare** the **sin** of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The change of “bear” to “bare” has not been counted as a true variant because it did not exist in any printed edition of the Book of Mormon, including the 1830 edition. It is found on Oliver Cowdery’s printer’s manuscript because Oliver consistently spelled the past tense of “to bear” in that way. The typesetter correctly changed Oliver’s spelling to “bare.” Readers of the 2013 edition will notice that the word provided is “bore,” a modernization of “bare.” This change was first introduced in the 1920 edition and is not part of the original rendering.

The change from “sin” to “sins,” however, was part of the 1830 edition and has support from the Septuagint rendering, as in the case of Mosiah 14:3 and Mosiah 14:6. The Septuagint provides the plural *hamartias*, or “sins,” in this location. The theological significance of the change is similar to that discussed in Mosiah 14:3 (and referred to in Mosiah 14:6).

SUMMARY OF VARIANT ANALYSIS

The following conclusions can be made from the preceding analysis of variants between the King James Version and the Book of Mormon renderings.

1. In the Abinadi narrative, of the twenty variants that exist, fourteen find support in an ancient manuscript witness—such as the Septuagint, the Targums, or the Dead Sea Scrolls—or they have an equally appropriate translation from the Masoretic Text.

2. There are times when the Book of Mormon variant could be said to prioritize the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text over the King James Version translation of that Hebrew, such as the change from “openeth” to “opened” in Mosiah 14:7.

3. Of the twenty variants, five do not have any ancient support (such as “that” changed to “which”). Although they could reflect some type of difference in the brass plates, it is difficult to determine what that variant could have been. It is more likely that these variants were produced incidentally in the English translation of the Book of Mormon.

4. Of the twenty variants that exist, one (the loss of the phrase “and rested the seventh day”) does not find support in other ancient variants but is the type of variant that might be expected in an ancient witness.

5. Of the twenty variants, nine could indicate some type of theological preference, with the alteration made by Abinadi, Alma₁, Mormon, or the modern translator.

6. In all, the picture that emerges from the analysis is varied and complex, with several possible explanations for the differences in the two texts—whether attestations of an ancient scriptural witness, theological innovations designed to better support the purposes of the writer, or incidental changes possibly resulting from error in transcription (either made by the modern translator or already found in the ancient witness).

EXAMPLE OF THE TYPES OF VARIANTS FOUND IN AN ANCIENT WITNESS: THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In order to truly compare the types of variants found in the Book of Mormon with those found in an ancient manuscript, the variants found in Isaiah 53 on the Great Isaiah Scroll (part of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery) are provided. As with the textual comparison of the Book of Mormon, the text of the King James Version is followed except for the instances in which there is a variant in the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls. When a variant occurs, it is translated into English words or phrases that differ from those in the King James Version and placed in bold. Otherwise, the King James rendering is left intact. Sometimes the translation of the variants requires a slight shift in the King James rendering in the remainder of the phrase, such as in the first phrase of Isaiah 53:11. When necessary, that shift has been made but the differing text has not been bolded because it does not represent a true variant in the Masoretic Text.

1. [No variants]
2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form, **he hath** no comeliness; and when we shall **view ourselves**, there is no beauty that we should desire **ourselves**.

3. He is despised and rejected of men; **and** a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; **and** we despised **him**, and we esteemed him not.
4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, **and** smitten of God, and afflicted.
5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, **and** he was bruised for our iniquities: **and** the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
6. [No variants]
7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb **to slaughter**, [. . .] as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he **opened** not his mouth.
8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of **his** people was he stricken.
9. And **they** made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich his **high place**; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.
10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, **and** he shall see his seed, **and** he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
11. From the travail of his soul he shall see **light**, and shall be satisfied: **and** by his knowledge shall **his** righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.
12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the **sins** of many, and made intercession for **their transgressions**.

Comparing the variants found in the Great Isaiah Scroll with the variants found in the Book of Mormon provides several interesting observations.

1. As in the Book of Mormon, some of the variants are small grammatical changes rather than significant changes with a clear purpose. The most common grammatical change in this chapter is the addition of “and,” a variant addition also found in the Book of Mormon.

2. As in the Book of Mormon, some of the variants appear to have broader theological import. For example, the phrase “From the travail of his soul he shall see **light**” is a very different statement than “He shall see of the travail of his soul,” with a very different theological meaning.

3. As in the Book of Mormon, some of the variants do not produce a grammatically or logically correct phrase but instead leave the text in a confused state. With some it is difficult to determine why the variant exists or how it came to be. For example, “And when we shall **view ourselves**, there is no beauty that we should desire **ourselves**” does not seem to fit the remainder of the text describing the servant but is an inexplicable departure.

4. Two of the variants are the same as variants found in the Book of Mormon text: “opened” (rather than “openeth”) and “transgressions” (rather than “transgression”).

5. Overall, the text shows twenty-one variants, three times as many as the Book of Mormon text. Many of these (over one-third) are the simple grammatical conjunction “and.”

6. Although the Dead Sea Scrolls contain many differences that do not match those found in the Book of Mormon (along with some that are the same), the *types* of variants in the Dead Sea Scrolls do appear to match the *types* of variants found in the Book of Mormon fairly closely. This could possibly support the view of the Book of Mormon as a translation of an ancient text. In other words, its nature as a modern translation of an ancient record is plausible as long as one also takes into account its translation choice to rely on the King James Version, much as I rely upon the King James Version in my translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls in a way that only the variants stand out.

Interestingly, the decision to maintain the King James Version rendering in the Dead Sea Scrolls translation above (notwithstanding the

weaknesses of the King James Version in places) and to translate only variants in the Dead Sea Scrolls is one I recently made in a publication on the entire book of Isaiah. A colleague and I created a harmony of Isaiah that includes the King James Version rendering side by side with the Dead Sea Scrolls rendering for purposes of comparison.¹⁷ We chose to follow the King James Version rendering in the Dead Sea Scrolls column unless there were variants so that students of the text could actually identify the real differences between the two versions and not be distracted by differences that were only due to translator choice. At the time I was working on the Isaiah harmony, I had not yet conceived the study represented by this chapter. Thus, I actually made a logical translation decision that mirrors the translation decision of the Book of Mormon without intentionally doing so.

RELIANCE UPON OR CONNECTION TO KING JAMES VERSION ITALICS AND RENDERINGS

In his research on the Book of Mormon's reliance on italics in the King James Version, David Wright has suggested that Joseph Smith had at least a rudimentary understanding at this point of his life of the fact that the italics represented words that did not actually exist in the Hebrew text but that were necessary to make a clear translation into English.¹⁸ His proposal must remain only a suggestion for the Book of Mormon translation but becomes certain when analyzing the Joseph Smith Translation begun about a year later, in which Joseph's markings show clear attention to the italicized words. Wright, therefore, proposed that Joseph Smith paid close attention to those words during the Book of Mormon translation and that the Book of Mormon changes occur at a high rate where there are italicized words in the King James Version. For example, Wright identified forty-seven variants in the quotation of Isaiah 13 found in 2 Nephi 23. Although 77 percent of the variants are not related to the italics, 23 percent of the variants are connected with italicized words, even though those words make up only 2.4 percent of the text. Since Wright's study was published before Skousen's work, his research does not reflect the most recent research on the earliest text of the Book of Mormon, meaning that his count of variants is not always accurate according to current

understanding. Additionally, his work focused only on Isaiah quotations rather than on other material, such as the quotation of the Ten Commandments. An analysis of the italicized portions in Abinadi's biblical quotations follows.

The biblical material from which Abinadi quotes the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3–17) contains fifteen total italicized words.¹⁹ Of the fifteen words, five are changed, or 33 percent. The Abinadi text shows thirteen instances of variants, as has been discussed previously, with a total of twenty-one varying words. The five words in italics that are changed in the King James Version are 23 percent of the variants. Isaiah 52:7–10, quoted by the wicked priests of Noah, does not contain any italics or any variants. Isaiah 53:1–12 contains eleven instances of italics, or fifteen total italicized words. Of these, none have been changed in Mosiah 14. There are seven variant instances in Mosiah 14:1–12, with a total of seven variant words. None of these variants exist with italicized words. Thus, in the Abinadi narrative, Wright's conclusions are not necessarily refuted, but neither are they strongly supported.

Wright also spends a portion of his study analyzing problematic King James Version translations—problematic either because they appear to have been translated incorrectly or because manuscript evidence uncovered since the 1611 edition appears to indicate that the King James translation was based on faulty manuscript evidence. Some of those problematic translations are perpetuated in the Book of Mormon. The portions quoted by Abinadi again do not strongly support his contention, although that is not necessarily the case in other portions of the Book of Mormon.²⁰

Wright points to only two potentially problematic issues located in the Abinadi narrative. The first demonstrates a Book of Mormon propensity to pluralize words that are found in the singular in the King James Version and the Masoretic text. These situations in particular draw Wright's attention because others have used them in an effort to support the ancient nature of the Book of Mormon (because they are also frequently found in other ancient versions, such as the Septuagint). Wright disagrees that they can be used as evidence of the Book of Mormon as an ancient textual witness and instead sees them as cases of "smoothing the English text."²¹ Interestingly, Wright elsewhere finds disjointed English texts resulting

from variants to be evidence of similar modern textual tampering.²² In addition to these two often-polarized positions on the Book of Mormon text—either that the changes are proof of antiquity or that they are proof of modernity—I have provided an additional possibility, following Grant Hardy’s analysis of changes in Nephi’s quotations of Isaiah:²³ namely, the changes may represent a theological focus of the Book of Mormon text.

The second problematic issue, according to Wright, is found in Mosiah 14:8’s perpetuation of a poor King James Version translation. As Wright states it:

Isaiah 53:8//Mosiah 14:8: “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation?” The first phrase might be rendered as the KJV has it though many moderns translate it as “by oppression and judgment he was taken away” (so NIV). The second phrase is obscure in the Hebrew. It has been rendered variously: “who could consider his stock/descendants,” “who could consider his fate,” “who could describe his abode,” or “who could plead his cause.”²⁴

Wright uses the New International Version translation in order to discount the King James Version translation, but he acknowledges that the King James Version rendering is possible in the first phrase and that the second phrase is simply difficult to translate. Indeed, a look at the translation found in the New King James Version (NKJV, 1982), a version provided to update and correct outdated translations in the King James Version while retaining its strengths, provides exactly the same translation for this phrase. The NKJV, of course, prioritizes the KJV rendering where possible but moves away from it when considered necessary (in a similar fashion to the Book of Mormon).

The analysis above does not discount one of Wright’s most significant points that the Book of Mormon text prioritizes and relies upon the King James Version. It is difficult to see it any other way. If the brass plates were written in a type of Egyptian (see Mosiah 1:3–4) rather than Hebrew, they are already at least one step removed from the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text, from which the King James Version is translated. Nephi and others would have used those records and engraved them on their own plates.

That rendering would have led to the current English translation through at least one additional step and likely through numerous additional linguistic steps, each one of which would have produced small or large changes in the text that occur whenever a translation from one language to another is undertaken. The translation into English matches the King James Version renderings so consistently—including English idioms and grammar used in 1611, specific word choices, and italicized words that are not actually found in the Hebrew text—that it could not have occurred by accident. As in modern translations of the Bible, the same Hebrew word and phrase can be translated a number of appropriate ways, providing approximately the same meaning, since translation from one language into another is only an approximation at best. The Book of Mormon prioritizes the King James Version in every line. This prioritization even includes problematic translations and word choices. When the Book of Mormon can match the King James Version, it tends to do so. But it does not always do so, departing from it at times (perhaps when necessary), much as with the translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls I provided above.

THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE KING JAMES VERSION—WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

As stated, scholars from all sides have done excellent work illuminating details about the Book of Mormon. The challenge is to interpret what those details mean. David Wright takes the Book of Mormon's reliance upon the King James Version as clear evidence that it is a modern work by Joseph Smith or others. It is understandable that he would draw that conclusion, considering that the Book of Mormon purports to be an ancient work and that the King James Version was published in 1611. A small but important shift in viewpoint, however, comes when one considers that the Book of Mormon actually purports to be a *nineteenth-century translation* of an ancient document. When viewed in that light, the reliance upon the universally recognized language of the King James Version to translate biblical passages fits in very appropriate ways, as will be discussed further below.

Less obvious in Wright's analysis is the way that presuppositions influence his interpretation of the data. For example, in analyzing the

connection of the variants with italics in the King James Version, Wright states that the evidence clearly shows that Joseph gave special consideration to the italics.²⁵ But this seemingly clear analysis of the data is heavily weighted towards Wright's presupposition that Joseph was closely scouring the biblical text to find places to change. As can be seen in other ancient versions, such as the Septuagint, the italicized portions are at times precisely the location where ancient texts differ from each other since they reveal a lacuna in the text that needs to be resolved (or that has crept in through transcription error). Exodus 20:10, as discussed previously, provides an excellent example. The Masoretic Text as it stands does not form a grammatically correct sentence, "But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the Lord thy God, *in it* thou shalt not . . ." and requires the italicized words to round it out. The Septuagint provides a change at precisely that point, adding the word "on" and not including the italicized words, effectively resolving the issue (or providing an earlier, uncorrupted witness before the issue entered the Masoretic Text): "But **on** the seventh day, [. . .] the sabbath of the Lord thy God, [. . .] thou shalt not . . ."

Wright's conclusion that the King James renderings of the Book of Mormon clearly indicate its secondary, modern nature is one possible conclusion derived from the facts. There are other ways of appropriately interpreting those facts for those who believe in the divinely inspired nature of the Book of Mormon, particularly when recognizing the Book of Mormon's nature as a translated document. Most importantly, it is clear that the reliance upon the King James Version was purposeful. That purposeful choice can be attributed either to Joseph Smith or to God (via the divinely inspired translation process).²⁶ The King James Version was *the* Bible of Joseph Smith's day; providing a new translation of a biblical text that differed in almost every word and phrase would certainly have distracted, and almost certainly would have disenchanting, its nineteenth-century audience. The Book of Mormon needed to *feel* biblical in order to have any chance of being received by its intended audience and of eventually taking its place next to the Bible. One might ask, "Considering the influence of the King James Version in Joseph Smith's day, how else *should* he have translated those biblical passages and phrases that showed no differences from the biblical text?"

As Nicholas Frederick states, “Studies analyzing the reaction of early Mormon converts demonstrate that a primary reason for their conversion was the familiarity of the Book of Mormon—it felt biblical.”²⁷ A similar decision can be found in the Doctrine and Covenants, which preserves the rendering of “Red Sea” (D&C 8:3) when discussing Moses’s prophetic powers rather than the more accurate “sea of reeds,” as found in the biblical text.²⁸ For a scholar who does not believe in the prophetic inspiration of Joseph Smith, this inaccuracy would be a clear indication that Joseph was inventing the revelation. But for a believer, the very real possibility remains that God cared more about the message he was delivering to modern readers through Joseph Smith than he did about the distracting and unhelpful detail that the Red Sea should actually be called the “sea of reeds.” This possible conclusion can help explain the existence of all King James Version renderings from the Old Testament found throughout the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon may not have been a modern *creation*, but it was certainly a modern *translation*, purposefully reflecting language from Joseph Smith’s day, most importantly the King James Version, and departing from it only when necessary.

Ignoring that the Book of Mormon intertwines with the King James Version will cause students of the Book of Mormon to miss a valuable tool for understanding the Book of Mormon’s message and impact. I have worked to demonstrate in the variant-analysis section that recognizing and analyzing variants between the Book of Mormon biblical sections and the King James Version can help illuminate the actual theological message of the scriptural text and the purposes of its authors.

NOTES

1. See Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61–76.
2. Joseph Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 69–104, 141–72.
3. David P. Wright, “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

4. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998).
5. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009); and Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Provo, UT: Neil A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2004-9).
6. Carol F. Ellertson, "The Isaiah Passages in The Book of Mormon: A Non-Aligned Text" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2001).
7. John A. Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1981).
8. See, in particular, Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 2:1303-24. I have also consistently consulted the research of John Tvedtnes, Carol Ellertson, and David Wright. I will not note each instance of consultation, as my analysis includes and combines all of these analyses wherever available, building upon them and adding conclusions.
9. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the last century, are currently the oldest surviving witness of the Hebrew Bible. This does not necessarily mean that the Hebrew renderings of the text are undoubtedly more ancient than those found in the Masoretic Text but rather that the Dead Sea Scrolls provide a witness of a different textual tradition than that found in the Masoretic Text. In all, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic Text show remarkable consistency. But there are hundreds of variants between them. Later, I will demonstrate the types of variants found on the Dead Sea Scrolls.
10. Latter-day Saints often consider the selections from the brass plates that appear in the Book of Mormon as a translation of the earliest and best Old Testament texts. Although that certainly may be true in some or many cases, a variety of other possibilities exists. The brass plates could provide another varying witness of the Old Testament text, with variants from the Masoretic Text (see next footnote) reflecting either earlier or later editing stages than the stage reflected by the Book of Mormon. Additionally, as will be seen, the Old Testament passages quoted in the Book of Mormon and provided in English translation could reflect changes by Book of Mormon prophets such as Abinadi, changes created in the translation process, and heavy reliance in the English translation on the King James Version.
11. The Masoretic Text is the Hebrew text received from antiquity, carefully compiled, and preserved in the seventh to tenth centuries AD by the Masorete family,

who carefully noted the majority manuscript witnesses and also included in notes the minority readings from the collected manuscripts. Although our earliest manuscript witness of the Masoretic Text is of late date (ninth century AD), it is the text that was used in the King James Version translation and that is primarily still used in Bible translations today.

12. The Septuagint was produced in the third century BC as a Greek translation from the Hebrew. It is therefore a derivative of the Hebrew text from which it was translated. Whether differences in meaning in the Greek reflect translator choices or whether they reflect an earlier or different Hebrew text is not easy to discern. Thus, an ancient witness in the Septuagint could support a parallel Hebrew text that is no longer available. It could also represent the same Hebrew text, translated differently than the Masoretic Text. Either way, it is interesting to note the kinds of differences that occur in the Septuagint version, which are often similar in type to the changes in the English Book of Mormon translation.
13. The Targums are translations from a Hebrew text in Aramaic (the language spoken by Jews at the time) around first century BC to first century AD. At times, they are purposefully liberal in their translations, so any conclusions based solely on the witness of the Targums would be highly tentative. Like the Septuagint, it is not always possible to know if the variant reading is due to a translator's choice or due to a differing Hebrew version than the Masoretic Text. The Latin was translated primarily from the Septuagint (date uncertain, but likely first or second century AD) and thus typically follows its renderings. The Syriac was a translation produced by Christians living in Syria in the second century AD. The minority Hebrew readings could have come from any date and were reproduced as part of the Masoretic project. While they could attest early Hebrew variants, they could also be due simply to Masoretic suggestions to fix a problematic text.
14. All give "dry ground" without the indefinite article. New International Version (NIV, 2011), Amplified Version (AMP, 1987), Complete Jerusalem Bible (CJB, 1998), Contemporary English Version (CEV, 1995), English Standard Version (ESV, 2016), New American Standard Bible ("parched ground," NAS, 1995), New English Translation ("parched soil," NET, 2005), New International Reader's Version (NIRV, 1998), New Jerusalem Bible ("arid ground," NJB, 1990), New King James Version (NKJV, 1982), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989), Today's English Version (TEV, 1992).
15. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 2:1320.

16. New International Version (NIV, 2011), Amplified Version (AMP, 1987), Complete Jerusalem Bible (CJB, 1998), Contemporary English Version (CEV, 1995), English Standard Version (ESV, 2016), New American Standard Bible (NAS, 1995), New English Translation (NET, 2005), New International Reader's Version (NIRV, 1998), New Jerusalem Bible (NJB, 1990), New King James Version (NKJV, 1982), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989), Today's English Version (TEV, 1992).
17. Ann N. Madsen and Shon D. Hopkin, *Opening Isaiah: A Harmony* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2017), <https://rsc.byu.edu/opening-isaiah>.
18. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 160–61.
19. Counting the number of words instead of the number of instances follows Wright's methodology. There are twelve instances of italicization. Some instances contain more than one word.
20. The Abinadi quotations of Isaiah are unusually free of problematic renderings in the KJV. These are more numerous elsewhere in Book of Mormon quotations of Isaiah, such as in 2 Nephi 12–24.
21. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 196, 226.
22. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 178.
23. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 61–76.
24. This statement is found in an online expansion of his published study. The discussion in the published study is located at Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 219–20. The expansion upon that study, quoted above, is found at "KJV Translation Errors in the BM Isaiah," <https://user.xmission.com/~research/central/isabm3.html>.
25. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 159–60.
26. Joseph Smith and others described his role more as a transmitter of the text as given to him through inspiration than as a true translator. According to early witnesses, the words of the translation appeared in light with the help of seer stones. See Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light: Joseph Smith's Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 124–27. Additionally, none of these early witnesses to the translation process ever indicated that Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery used a copy of the King James Bible at any point in the translation process, and Oliver's manuscript shows evidence of the biblical text being dictated to him rather than being copied (as indicated by errors in spelling and errors resulting from mishearing

- a word). This evidence should not necessarily be considered conclusive, since those describing Joseph's translation process were interested in demonstrating its miraculous nature.
27. Nicholas J. Frederick, "If Christ Had Not Come into the World," herein. See Steven C. Harper, "Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts," *RAC* 10, no. 1 (2000): 99–118. Paul Owen adds, "The language and themes appeared to early converts to have a seamless flow. . . . A perceived harmony between the original and the latter-day revelations was essential for their acceptance of the Mormon message." Paul Owen, "The Apologetic Impulse In Early Mormonism," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 36.
 28. Interestingly, both Acts 7:36 and Hebrews 11:29 do the same thing, providing "Red Sea" rather than "sea of reeds," even though they were over two thousand years closer in time to the actual event than was Joseph Smith.