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THE BIBLE, THE BOOK OF MORMON, AND THE CONCEPT OF SCRIPTURE

For nonbelievers, the relationship Latter-day Saints have with the Bible can be difficult to discern, especially when one considers the crucial role the Book of Mormon plays in LDS worship. This paper explores three questions a sincere critic may have concerning the relationship between the Bible and the Book of Mormon: (1) the presence of direct biblical passages and King James Version (KJV) terminology in the Book of Mormon, (2) what the Book of Mormon has to say about the Bible, and (3) the Book of Mormon's understanding of the concept of scripture.

EVEN the most casual reader of the Book of Mormon can discern an association between this record and the Bible. But the question of what exactly the relationship is challenges many—critic and believer alike. Many have noted what appears to be direct lifting of biblical texts in the Book of Mormon—Isaiah in particular, but including texts from Exodus, Deuteronomy, Micah, and Matthew as well as clauses, paraphrases, and terminology of the King James Bible.¹ For many, this is a challenge to the Book of Mormon's claim to authenticity as the outcome of a divine translation process.

Yet another criticism is that Latter-day Saints do not appreciate the Bible as scripture, at least not to the degree they do the Book of Mormon, and there may be some validity to this criticism. Certainly for an outsider who attends a typical LDS worship service, the Book of Mormon does appear to be used more extensively. If this is

witnessed, one could understand why some think of the LDS faith as one that does not value or use the biblical texts. Both of these criticisms lead to a final criticism that the LDS concept of scripture differs from mainstream Christianity; again, this is a criticism based at least on some level of reality in light of the LDS canon, which includes not only the Bible but three other books of equal stature and importance.

This study seeks to address these criticisms not so much by providing apologia for LDS doctrinal positions but by suggesting three ways in which the Book of Mormon itself may answer the questions. I have two reasons for using the Book of Mormon. First, the Book of Mormon prophets understood their writings were not to be a rival to the Bible but in a continuum with the Bible, an understanding that reveals the manner by which they—and, by extension, the Latter-day Saints—comprehend the subject of scripture. Second, because the Book of Mormon defines the LDS faith, both to members and nonmembers, what it does have to say about the Bible is important to sincere critics if they truly desire to understand how Latter-day Saints relate to the Bible, for as explained in the first reason, these two books cannot be separated.

“By the Gift and Power of God”

Of the three criticisms, the one that questions the prominent use of the biblical texts in the Book of Mormon is, paradoxically, both the easiest and the hardest of the criticisms to reconcile. According to Church history, the Book of Mormon is the result of Joseph Smith’s translation of the text, the process of which we know little about. Joseph himself was reticent in recounting the translation process, simply stating that it was done “by the gift and power of God.”²

There are numerous secondhand accounts from Joseph’s scribes, but their historical accuracy is in question, being both late in origin and written through the medium of others. With that said, however, these sources unanimously affirm that Joseph did not use any other

text when translating the Book of Mormon. Emma, his wife, was asked explicitly if he had a Bible in front of him, and she answered no; similar statements can be found from Oliver Cowdery and others. Of course, some have questioned the veracity of these statements, and believers who recognize the legitimacy of such questions have attempted to provide adequate apologia to provide explanation and qualifications to such. Yet, ultimately, the answer to the question as to how so much KJV Bible text got into the Book of Mormon is “We don’t know, yet we believe the book is true.”

Is this satisfying to critics? Probably not, and it is only fair that believers recognize how difficult it is to accept this answer. Yet perhaps the sincere critic can find solace in the answers to two related questions: why is KJV text and terminology found in the Book of Mormon, and is there internal consistency within the explicit biblical passages in the Book of Mormon? In answer to the first of these two questions, we know that within the context of Joseph Smith’s time, the use of King James English for religious purposes was neither unique nor strange but was common when one sought to establish tradition and authority to either the written or the spoken word.

The familiarity of Joseph’s contemporaries with King James English would have made their reading of the Book of Mormon an easier experience and one in which they could more readily accept the claims made by the book as both scripture and as an ancient record that was tied to biblical history. This would itself be part of the Lord’s promise that he would reveal his truth to humankind “after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:24), a prophecy given early on in the Church’s formation.

The specific phrase “manner of language” suggests that such transmission would occur not only in terms of the actual language but also in specific mannerisms that would be recognized by the audience in question. That it worked can be evidenced by how quickly the Book of Mormon became known as the “Golden Bible”

or “Mormon Bible,” demonstrating a tacit understanding that, at the very least, the Book of Mormon sounded biblical. Thus the presence of King James English and even KJV passages in the Book of Mormon helped establish the book’s validity to people already familiar with the words of God via King James English. These passages also made it easier to recognize the truths found therein because of the text’s familiar cadence and sound.³

As to internal consistency, at least twenty-nine significant passages of Book of Mormon text either quote extensively or paraphrase biblical passages; all but four are prophetic in nature, and seventeen are specific biblical prophecies from Isaiah.⁴ Furthermore, of the Isaianic material, thirteen of these blocks quote or paraphrase the Isaianic passages found in Isaiah 48–52 and 54. Isaiah 52 is particularly highlighted.⁵

Since the references span from the earliest records of Nephi to the last page of the record, it seems evident that Isaiah 48–52 is clearly important to understanding the purpose and intent of the Book of Mormon. Yet even among believers this biblical template for the Book of Mormon authors is not recognized, as the value of these texts are simply ascribed as christological in theme, so it is no surprise that the internal cohesion of these Isaianic blocks to define the Nephite experience has not been noted.

The first significant block of biblical text is 1 Nephi 20–21, as Nephi quotes Isaiah 48 and 49. Before doing so, Nephi states his purpose: “that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off” (1 Nephi 19:24), indicating that no matter what future fulfillment the Isaiah passage may have, its express purpose here is to provide security and peace for the Nephites. Similarly, Jacob uses Isaiah 49:22–52:2 so that his congregation would “not hang down [their] heads, for we are not cast off” (2 Nephi 10:20), again addressing a problem that the Nephites were experiencing at that time. In light of both of these statements, one may surmise that the Nephites found comfort and solace to their current problems in

these texts, and not just information about some vague future that they were not going to experience.

Isaiah 52 is used again in Mosiah 11–15, this time in the context of Abinadi's trial before King Noah and his priests. Having been bound and brought before the assembled leaders, Abinadi is asked for his interpretation of Isaiah 52:7–10. While we are not told explicitly if this block of scripture held any particular significance for this group of Nephites, the overall context of the chapters suggests that the king and his priests believed the prophecy would demonstrate their innocence and therefore confirm the accusation that Abinadi was a false prophet.⁶

How this passage was to prove Abinadi's guilt is left up to the reader's interpretation; the author assumed the connection between the passage and the condemnation would be clear. It is possible that the passage had been used as part of the reasoning behind the recolonization of the land of Nephi undertaken by Abinadi's people and that the people therefore believed their very presence in the land demonstrated fulfillment of the prophecy contra the prophecies of Abinadi.⁷

Abinadi replies by quoting and then commenting on two biblical passages: Exodus 20:1–17 (the Ten Commandments) and Isaiah 53 (a prophetic text concerning Christ and his sacrifice). In his answer, he states that those called Christ's seed in Isaiah 53 are "all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins. . . . These are they who have published peace" (Mosiah 15:11, 14). This is then followed by his exhortation that the Nephites repent "and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved" (Mosiah 16:13), thus associating the christological message of Isaiah 53 and those who publish peace with the ideal Nephite social identity.

Though the Abinadi narrative ends in chapter 17, the editor of Mosiah continues to use Abinadi's interpretation, and thus Isaiah 52, to describe the Nephites and their condition. For instance, when

describing the significance of the Waters of Mormon, where Alma the Elder and his followers were baptized, the text reads: “Yea, the place of Mormon, the waters of Mormon, the forest of Mormon, how beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; yea, and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever” (Mosiah 18:30). This interpretation is used to describe the sons of Mosiah following their conversion: “And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer. And how blessed are they! For they did publish peace; . . . they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth” (Mosiah 27:36–37).

In both of these references, the Isaiah text was again used to describe the contemporary Nephite experience. Yet the text was also used to connect the Nephites to a future generation who would receive their record. In a vision given early on, Nephi is shown the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and told, “Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day . . . ; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be” (1 Nephi 13:37), thus associating the Restoration of the gospel and coming forth of the Book of Mormon with Isaiah’s prophecy.

Approximately 250 pages later, Isaiah 52 is used as the primary text by Christ during the second day of his ministry.⁸ Because of its significance, a comparison between Christ’s rendering of this chapter and the KJV version of 52 is provided below:

3 NEPHI 20

Then shall their watchmen lift up **their** voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye. (v. 32)

Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance. (v. 33)

ISAIAH 52

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. (v. 8)

3 NEPHI 20

Then shall they break forth into joy—Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the **Father** hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. (v. 34)

The **Father** 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 **the Father; and the Father and I are one.** (v. 35)

And then shall be brought to pass that which was written: Awake, awake **again, and** put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. (v. 36)

Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. (v. 37)

For thus saith the Lord: Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money. (v. 38)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name; **yea,** in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak. (v. 39)

And then shall they say: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings **unto them,** that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings **unto them** of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth! (v. 40)

ISAIAH 52

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

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. (v. 10)

Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean (v. 1)

Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. (v. 2)

For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; And ye shall be redeemed without money. (v. 3)

Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. (v. 6)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (v. 7)

3 NEPHI 20

And then shall a cry go forth:

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch not **that which is** unclean; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. (v. 41)

ISAIAH 52

Depart, ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. (v. 11)

Christ does not hold to the biblical sequence (a phenomenon that will be discussed later in this paper) but moves verse blocks out of position to restructure the chapter; thus his version begins with verses 8–10, then goes back to verses 1–3, skips verses 4–5, and ends with verse 11. Moreover, Christ adds to the text (noted in the bolded sections above), emphasizing the role of the Father and multiple fulfillments of these prophecies (see the addition of “again” in verse 36) and adding temporal clauses at the beginning of most of the verses, suggesting that the specific verses are sequential in terms of their fulfillment.⁹ This sequence follows a scriptural block that explicitly defines the Nephites and their role in the Father’s plan (see 3 Nephi 20:10–27).

The allusion to the feet made beautiful by publishing peace would remind the reader of earlier allusions to the same biblical prophecy and its connection to the Nephite record. Thus this Isaiah block, in terms of both content and textual placement, performs the same function as previous Isaiah sections—namely to define the Nephite experience and explain their place in the greater historical currents.

The last Isaiah block is found in Moroni 10 as Moroni paraphrases Isaiah 52:1–2 and 54:2, 4:

MORONI 10:3 I

And awake,

ISAIAH 52:1–2; 54:2, 4

Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. (52:1)

<u>MORONI 10:31</u>	<u>ISAIAH 52:1–2; 54:2, 4</u>
and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem;	Shake thyself from the dust; Arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. (52:2)
yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion;	(See v. 1.)
and enlarge and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever,	Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; (54:2)
that thou mayest be no more confounded,	Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou con- founded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. (54:4)
that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.	

Similar to Christ's handling of Isaiah in 3 Nephi, Moroni's paraphrase moves clauses from one place to another, again emphasizing the fulfillment of these prophecies in relation to the Father's covenant with his people. Moreover, Moroni explicitly ties this Isaiah text to reading the Book of Mormon. Moroni 10 begins with his exhortation "that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them" (v. 3), followed by another exhortation that precedes the Isaiah paraphrase: "And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that . . . ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?" (v. 27). The association between the Book of Mormon and



In Moroni's closing testimony, he wrote, "And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that . . . ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?" (Tom Lovell, Moroni Burying the Plates, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)

the Isaiah passages is made explicit as Moroni then states: "I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. . . . And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true" (vv. 28–29). Thus Moroni's use of Isaiah coincides with the other earlier usages, namely by relating the Nephite experience to the biblical prophecy.

So what does this discussion demonstrate? For starters, it establishes that the Book of Mormon is internally grounded in biblical text and that this biblical foundation does not change throughout the book. Recognizing the importance of Isaiah 49–52, and specifically 52, to the Book of Mormon narrative can help one appreciate the role of the biblical text and terminology throughout the entire book, both in providing meaning to the inhabitants described within and in signifying the role of biblical prophecy in the purpose of the Book of Mormon. That the biblical passages and surrounding texts are presented in KJV English reinforces these insights by harmonizing the biblical passages with their Book of Mormon interpretations. In so doing, the explicit biblical passages and the KJV English highlight the scriptural purpose of the Book of Mormon: “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD” (title page, Book of Mormon).

“To Establish the Truth of the First”

Of course, the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Bible is more than textual passages and beautiful prose. It is also manifested in a metanarrative, or theme, in which the text references itself in relation to the existence of another written record containing God’s word, known in the Book of Mormon as the Bible. The primary text concerning this relationship is found in 1 Nephi 13–14 as part of a visionary response to Nephi’s request concerning his seeing, hearing, and knowing the dream of his father.

Our relevant passage begins in 1 Nephi 13:19 with Nephi’s introduction to the colonization of the New World by Europeans. As Nephi watches the colonists’ growing prosperity, he notices they possess a book: “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth

among them.” The angel asks Nephi, “Knowest thou the meaning of the book?” (1 Nephi 13:20–21).

The question may appear straightforward, but there is no indication that Nephi has ever seen this book before in any context. Moreover, the angel is not asking whether or not Nephi is aware of this record but more pointedly if he knows what the book represents. In other words, the angel is not asking, “What is the book?” but a more powerful question, “What is the meaning of the book?” What follows for the rest of the chapter and into chapter 14 is a series of visions and discourses. This sequence of declarations and visionary elements comprising the latter half of chapter 13 and the first half of chapter 14 is complex. However, one can see a pattern emerging in which God’s work to fulfill the covenant, the marvelous work, is ultimately the deliverance of the plain and precious truths leading to the establishment of covenants.

The angel begins to answer his own question by relating the origination and historical transmission of the book Nephi saw. The book itself, we are told, originated “out of the mouth of a Jew” (v. 23) and was recorded in the form of metal plates made of brass, similar to the plates on which the Book of Mormon text was inscribed. Thus Nephi is shown the final product—the book possessed by the New World colonists—and the original written form—the brass plates. The designation of *Jew* in the Hebrew Bible follows the Assyrian conquests to refer to those Israelites, whether actual descendants of Judah or not, who remained in the Palestinian area. Thus the term was used by Nephi to refer to himself and his group, though he was a descendant of Joseph. The presence of this designation suggests, then, that the book originated at some time in the seventh to sixth century BC and had a Judean origin.

The record, we are told, contained a history of the Israelite people (“the Jews”), including the covenants between God and Israel and presumably the specific history involved with those covenants. We are also told that “many” of the prophecies of the Israelite

prophets are contained within the book (the Bible) but that the brass plates contain more. Notwithstanding the lesser amount of material, the angel states that what is contained within the text, specifically the covenants of God with Israel, sufficed and would be of “great worth to the Gentiles” (v. 23). Significantly, this material also includes the texts now found in the New Testament, for later, in 1 Nephi 14:23, Nephi is shown John the Revelator and told, “Wherefore the things which he shall write are just and true; and behold they are written in the book which thou beheld proceeding out of the mouth of the Jew.”¹⁰ We are also given the name of this book, “the book of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 13:28), which intimates its importance to the purposes of the Lamb.¹¹

Following the description of the book, Nephi is told of its transmission under the leadership of the twelve Apostles of the New Testament, and he is introduced to the corruption of this record with the formation of the great and abominable church, which stripped from the gospel many plain and precious truths as well as many of the “covenants of the Lord” (1 Nephi 13:26). Yet, even in this state, the book retains its designation as the book of the Lamb of God and appears to be necessary to further God’s purposes. Though Nephi sees the effect that the loss of plain and precious truths has on the Gentiles, he is also shown the following: “And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren” (v. 38).

As the verse suggests, even in its corrupted state, as the book of the Lamb of God, this book is the means by which Lehi’s descendants are reintroduced to the gospel of Christ and to Christ as the Lamb. In fact, the text establishes that the transmission of the Bible to Nephi’s descendants must happen before the restoration of the plain and precious truths through the Book of Mormon, a principle repeated almost a thousand years later by the Book of Mormon’s primary editor, Mormon.¹² Thus, without the introduction of the Bible,

the Gentiles would not receive the record of Nephi's seed, nor would Nephi's seed be prepared for the earlier Nephite record. In both cases, it is the Bible that prepares the way for the Restoration. Verses 39–40 continue to reveal the importance of the Bible even as other books of scripture are introduced: "And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true. And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first."

It is worth mentioning that the above text makes clear the importance of the Bible in the LDS faith. Even as Latter-day Saints believe the Bible to be missing "plain and precious things," they still believe that the fullness of God's gospel is to be found within. In fact, in light of this, it is possible that "the plain and precious things" are not so much new doctrines but rather plainer explanations to doctrines already established in the Bible. This is certainly the implication behind the angel's words to Nephi that later books of scripture, including the Book of Mormon, would "establish the truth of the first."

In this sense, then, Nephi is not just shown the history of the Bible but more importantly, its function, or, as the angel has suggested earlier, its *meaning* within the plan of salvation. The meaning of the Bible, or its purpose, coincides with the concept of the condescension of the Lamb of God presented earlier in the vision. Like Christ, who would come down into a mortal, corrupted body and in so doing provide the way for others to find salvation, so the Bible, even in its corrupted state, would be spread across the world and become the primary means by which all of humankind could learn of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The meaning of the Bible is also associated in Nephi's vision with the scattering and eventual gathering of Israel, a theme of particular

importance in the Book of Mormon. As the Book of Mormon makes clear, the scattering of Israel is associated with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that through Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This purpose for the Abrahamic covenant is found three times in the Book of Mormon and in each case is associated with the necessity of scattering Israel so that all can hear the gospel of Christ, a sequence that is reflected in the transmission of the book of the Lamb of God.¹³ Like the scattering of Israel, the loss of plain and precious truths from the Bible and its transmission across the world parallel the same pattern of scattering that Israel experiences, a pattern of movement necessary for the fulfillment of the Father's covenant.

But a scattering necessitates a return, and in the case of Israel, this is not just a spatial or geographic return but a spiritual one as well. In other words, the scattering also causes members of the house of Israel to forget who they are and therefore requires that they be restored to their proper understanding. This second form of return is begun, according to the vision, with the dissemination of the Bible, the primary tool by which God has revealed more of his word to more of his children, stressing, yet again, the role of the Bible in the restoration movement.

The surprisingly Bible-centric vision of Nephi concludes with this statement regarding the Book of Mormon's role in the fulfillment of the covenant: "The words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed [i.e., the Book of Mormon], as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb [i.e., the Bible]; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth" (1 Nephi 13:41). As the angel makes clear, these two texts are to work together, reflecting and building upon each other, establishing the case that God is a God of unity and that through multiple witnesses his will is demonstrated.

It is this insight that governs the LDS view of the Bible and Book of Mormon, and the unwillingness of others to appreciate this perspective can be frustrating for the Latter-day Saint, particularly since

the Book of Mormon does not deny the truths in the Bible but provides even greater evidence of God's grace. Later in his record Nephi warns the Gentiles, who will play a fundamental role in delivering both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, not to become fixated on the Bible as the only form of scripture: "Many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! a Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. But thus saith the Lord God: O fools." What follows reveals to us the manner in which God, not man, thinks of the Book of Mormon and the text called the Bible. God begins by asking those who would say there cannot be any other Bible if they fully appreciate the effort and trials that the Jews went through to bring to pass the Bible that they possess: "And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?" (2 Nephi 29:3–4).

Overall, these questions suggest that the Gentiles are not appreciative or even sufficiently aware of the Jewish people's efforts in creating the Bible in the first place. The second of these questions in particular addresses what the Gentiles even mean when they say they have a Bible and do not need another, thus asking readers to be aware of the language and terminology that they use. The third question suggests that to have a Bible is to have gone through the type of adversities required of those who are participants in God's covenant.¹⁴

The Lord continues to challenge the Gentiles to introspection when in verse 6 he asks another question: "Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?" This question appears to repeat the rhetorical questions asked earlier, emphasizing the Jewish effort in bringing to pass the Bible, but the question also precedes a five-verse discussion on other nations that God has interacted with and the commensurate records describing these interactions. The rhetorical question that posits that the Bible came from Jews, followed by this history

of other records, suggests that these other records may be titled his word. In this manner, the Book of Mormon is also his word, that is, a record that leads to salvation and was brought about by Jews through their diligence to God while experiencing adversity.¹⁵ Thus, for the Latter-day Saint, the Book of Mormon and the Bible are not so much separate texts that are competing for importance within the canon but two distinct halves of a unified whole—a complete record of God’s works and will.

“For I Did Liken All Scripture unto Us”

Recognizing that Latter-day Saints understand the Bible and Book of Mormon as a continuum of scripture rather than separated texts can lead one to inquire what the LDS concept of scripture is. We have seen that the writers of the Book of Mormon differentiated between their record and the record known to them as the Bible while recognizing that these two records would work in tandem to provide God’s word to mankind. We have also seen that the texts commonly associated with the biblical Isaiah were important to the writers in defining their experience within God’s salvation history. Yet it is also clear that they understood scripture in a different manner than mainstream Christianity, as evidenced by their willingness to change the text, both in structure and in terminology.

So what does the Book of Mormon say about the concept of scripture? We can begin by noting that the term *scripture* is found thirty-nine times in the Book of Mormon, the large majority of these in reference to the texts found on the brass plates, the primary record of scripture for the thousand-year history outlined in the Book of Mormon taken by Nephi and his family when they left the Old World. These plates are referred to throughout the Book of Mormon and have particular value as they provide the Nephites with their internal, communal identity as well as with the foundation of Nephite theology. Thus, on one level, the Nephites’ concept of scripture was similar to ours: a collection of texts gathered together

into one source. Moreover, the writings were predominantly records of past prophetic statements, history, or both (see 1 Nephi 19:22).

Yet the concept of scripture as a closed canon is not present in the Book of Mormon. In fact, when reading Nephi's description of the contents of the brass plates one is struck by their contemporary nature: "They did contain the five books of Moses . . . and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, . . . and also the prophecies . . . down to the commencement of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah" (1 Nephi 5:11). It appears that someone was to keep the plates updated on both current secular and prophetic events and that both types of entries were designated scripture.¹⁶ Moreover, as the history of the Nephites progresses, their own prophetic and historical writings beginning from the journey out of Jerusalem are likewise called scripture along with the extant material on the brass plates.

By the time six hundred years of Nephite culture had passed, the term *scripture* can be found to refer to the exclusively new material found only in those texts that would become the Book of Mormon. In 3 Nephi 28:33, Mormon mentions "the scriptures which give an account of all the marvelous works of Christ," referring to the scriptural texts of 3 Nephi. Thus scripture was understood to be an ongoing, organic structure that was added to when new material was provided. Scripture was not set in stone; it could be rearranged for the needs of a particular audience.

We have already seen in the examples above that the Book of Mormon prophets apparently had no compunction about rearranging, altering, or even excising passages of scripture to emphasize specific doctrinal points. Both Christ's version of Isaiah 52 and Moroni's summary of Isaiah 52 and 54 are excellent examples of this textual alternation. Nephi and his brother Jacob did not apologize for the way they used scripture passages either. In 1 Nephi 20–21, in which Nephi sought to provide hope to his people by using the words of

Isaiah 48–49, he began quoting Isaiah 49 in this manner (the bolded lines are material not found in the biblical version):

And again: Hearken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel. Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. (1 Nephi 21:1)

While it is possible that the bolded text was found on the brass plates version of Isaiah, later textual changes in the discourse suggest that maybe Nephi himself added to the text to tailor the message specifically to his community. These people had literally been driven out by the wicked in Jerusalem and scattered abroad. Similarly, in verse 8, the phrase “O isles of the sea” is not found in Isaiah and its presence in the Book of Mormon suggests that it was meant for Nephi’s specific audience, who were in fact on the isles of the sea.

The same Isaianic chapter is used just a few pages later by Jacob in 2 Nephi 6. In this chapter, again quoting Isaiah 49:17, Jacob adds the following phrase:

But thus saith the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; **for the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people.** For thus saith the Lord: I will contend with them that contendeth with thee. (2 Nephi 6:17)

What makes this example interesting is that it differs from Nephi’s version of the text. The bolded phrase is not found at all in 1 Nephi 21:17 and instead corresponds almost word for word with

the biblical version. In this case, it is clear that Jacob has added to the text to emphasize the specific theme he is addressing. He supplies another change in the first verse of the next chapter as well:

Yea, for thus saith the Lord: Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord: Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? (2 Nephi 7:1)

While the two new lines certainly fit the general context of the verse, they also highlight the specific theme of Jacob's speech (as one may note later, in 2 Nephi 10):

And now, my beloved brethren, seeing that our merciful God has given us so great knowledge concerning these things, let us remember him, and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, *for we are not cast off*. (2 Nephi 10:20; *emphsais added*)

Similarly, Jacob changes the text of Isaiah 50:8 by adding a final clause:

And the Lord is near, and he justifieth me. Who will contend with me? . . . Who is mine adversary? Let him come near me, **and I will smite him with the strength of my mouth**. (2 Nephi 7:8)

This new addition also fits the context of the speech, as Jacob is seeking to instill within his people the will to stand up for and act for themselves: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves" (2 Nephi 10:23). While it is possible that all of the above changes to the Isaianic texts are examples

of the original Isaianic text found on the brass plates, the 2 Nephi 6 example demonstrates that, at least once, Jacob added to the text to highlight the theme he was trying to emphasize.¹⁷

One may ask why these speakers are not concerned about manipulating existing scripture. I think the answer lies in what appears to have been the fundamental purpose of scripture in the Book of Mormon: to act as a catalyst to greater revelatory experiences, which may or may not be directly related to the original text itself.¹⁸ One intriguing example of scripture as revelatory catalyst may be witnessed in 2 Nephi 27.

Again, this text is based on an Isaiah text, Isaiah 29. As before, there appears to be manipulation of the text. For instance, the first five verses of the Isaiah chapter do not appear in the Book of Mormon version. Moreover, small changes are found throughout the chapter. But what is particularly striking is the inclusion of eighteen verses' worth of new text not found in the biblical version. The subject of this new text is the Book of Mormon, specifically the Book of Mormon prophecy in which Joseph Smith via Martin Harris gave a copy of Book of Mormon inscriptions to a noted scholar, who, upon hearing of the provenance, declared that he would not read a "sealed" book.

This prophecy appears to be based on Isaiah 29:11, which speaks of a sealed book, but the verse itself does not appear in the Book of Mormon's version, nor does the biblical context fit the prophecy. In the Isaiah text, the book, which is sealed, is used as a metaphor describing the inability of Israel to understand God's vision. To those who are learned they will say they cannot read the book because it is sealed; to those who are unlearned, they will say they are too ignorant.

The extreme nature of these textual differences has been the subject of much discussion. Some have suggested that the extra material is material that was original to Isaiah but has been lost, while others see it as midrashic interpretation of the Isaiah passages. What appears more likely is that the biblical Isaiah is complete (certainly

the metaphorical reading of the book fits the context of the rest of the passage) and that Nephi's additional text is the result of Isaiah acting as a catalyst to another prophetic passage entirely. Thus 2 Nephi 27 is not an example of biblical paucity but of scripture as a catalyst to other revelatory experiences.

Yet as striking as this use of scripture may be, another even more remarkably radical form of revelation through scripture study is suggested in the Book of Mormon—actually communicating with God as another comprehensible being.¹⁹ This is explicitly taught in 1 Nephi 10, where Nephi tells us:

I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision . . . was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. . . .

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come. (1 Nephi 10:17, 19)

This declaration is followed by Nephi putting these principles into practice as he records a visionary experience he had because he desired to see the same thing his father saw. Not only was he shown Christ and the future history of his people, but he was also engaged in a real dialogue with the Spirit of the Lord.

Approximately 480 years later, King Benjamin exhorted his people, "Open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view." The people themselves respond by declaring, "We, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and

the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things” (Mosiah 2:9; 5:3).

Mormon uses the voice of the people approximately 150 years later as one of the witnesses to Christ’s visitation to the New World. In 3 Nephi 17, we find the people declaring, “The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw, . . . and no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard” (vv. 16–17). In all three of these examples, the individuals experiencing this type of prophetic revelation are not actual prophets. The last example represents the experience of two thousand five hundred unnamed people.

Nephi concludes his record with a few words concerning the doctrine of Christ. He exhorts us to feast upon the word of Christ, as provided in the scriptures, and endure to the end. If we do this, then the Father will say, “Ye shall have eternal life.” This ultimate revelation is in fact the sum and purpose of Christ’s doctrine, but it is not the end of revelation, as Nephi intimates in 2 Nephi 32:6: “There will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.” This profound promise is then followed by a regretful warning in verse 7: “And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge.”²⁰

What happens after the doctrine of Christ is fulfilled is not explicitly told, but that is not the point; the point is that one can have an experience in which more doctrine is given through an intensely personal and sacred encounter with the divine. That such an experience would be the result of scripture study is not surprising, at least

from an LDS perspective. With that said, a little empathy from the believer toward the critic who is asked to take this seriously is not too much to ask.

The Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Five-Minute Gaze

Of course, the Book of Mormon's definition of scripture is the same as the current understanding of scripture for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, we are expected to use the Book of Mormon and the Bible as templates for our own revelatory experiences, just as the Book of Mormon individuals did with their scriptures. Though we believe that our lives reflect biblical teachings and that we are a biblical people (something the critic should understand and reflect upon), we also believe that it is a living, breathing Bible that is meant to be a gateway to our own personal experiences with God.²¹

Perhaps Joseph Smith stated this best when he declared: "Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject."²² The "five-minute gaze" is the ultimate goal for the Latter-day Saint, as the words of President James E. Faust, a member of the First Presidency, demonstrate: "One of the horizons that can profitably be expanded in all of us is spiritual excellence. I would surmise that all who are members of this great Church have a desire to see the face of the Savior. This is an available blessing. . . . Too few of us catch sight of this horizon as we fail to avail ourselves of God's promises."²³

For the critic, this doctrine may be challenging, but it is at the core of the Latter-day experience and provides the foundation to the role of the Bible within the faith. For the Latter-day Saint, the Bible contains the fullness of God's gospel, and through the doctrine

of continuing revelation, it may be the gate by which even greater understanding may be gained. In this sense, the Book of Mormon, with its plain examples of personal revelation, can be a guidebook to even greater biblical experiences while at the same time establishing the divine purposes for man through its unity with the Bible. Thus, if the critic truly desires to engage productively with the Latter-day Saint, there must be at least an appreciation for what these doctrines may mean to the Latter-day Saint.

Of course, a true understanding of these things is necessary for believers as well. Being able to think critically about these topics can not only benefit their own spiritual growth, but it can help believers recognize and empathize with critics for the challenges they present. Through the effort of both believer and critic, dialogue on these issues, even if there is disagreement, can be engendered, and regardless of individual differences, both believer and critic will agree that if God is loving, appreciation for all people is expected. And to those who are willing to engage the Latter-day Saint on the nature of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the concept of scripture, I say, “Come, let us reason together, . . . that all may be edified” (D&C 50:10; 84:110).

Notes

Portions of this paper can also be found in the author’s paper “The King James Bible and the Book of Mormon,” in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 162–81.

1. The criteria used to determine this is based on in-text citation. When the specific writers acknowledge that they are using other material, or when it is clear that the scripture is not the writer’s own words, the writer is often quoting from the Bible. In fact, the entire book is written in more or less Jacobean English, even those passages that are not explicitly biblical text.
2. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:220. There is a debate among Mormon scholars as to how exactly the translation of the Book of Mormon was accomplished, specifically whether Joseph Smith read the text exactly as it was (for example, see Royal Skousen, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Book

- of Mormon: Evidence for Tight Control of the Text,” in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 [1998]: 22–31), or if he was given more latitude and allowed to work out the text on his own through divine inspiration (for example, see Stephen D. Ricks, “Translation of the Book of Mormon: Interpreting the Evidence,” in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 [1993]: 201–6).
3. This was a common trend all the way up into the twentieth century. See R. H. Charles’s two-volume translation, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913); or Montague James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, cited in Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 27–42. It does seem clear that the presence of King James English may have implied a sense of authority early in Church history, as the early revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants that were given before the Book of Mormon was completed, as well as Joseph’s earliest account of the First Vision, appear also to have utilized King James English.
 4. Of the twenty-nine passages, thirteen of them (almost half) are found in the teachings and discourses of Christ as found in 3 Nephi. These passages include the only extant New Testament text in the Book of Mormon, and the Sermon on the Mount material. It is debatable whether these passages should be included in the count, because the original speaker of the discourse is the same who presented the material to the Nephites—Christ himself. Two of the blocks used by Christ are from Micah and are sandwiched between two Isaianic passages in 3 Nephi 20–21. Yet, intriguingly, Christ does not differentiate authorship when moving between the two. Of course, there has always been a strong relationship between the words of Micah and the words of Isaiah. In fact, Micah 4:1–3 is virtually word for word the same as Isaiah 2:1–3. Following the Isaiah–Micah–Isaiah material, Christ then states: “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 22:17). This statement has the effect of incorporating the Micah material into the larger Isaianic block, which brings up an intriguing possibility that what is presumed to be Micah material was originally Isaianic. For more on this relationship and a more complete bibliography, see Rick W. Byargeon, “The Relationship of Micah 4:1–3 and Isaiah 2:2–4: Implications for Understanding the Prophetic Message,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 46, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 6–26.
 5. See 1 Nephi 13:35, 37; 2 Nephi 8; Mosiah 12:20–24 (and then commented on in Mosiah 15 by Abinadi); 3 Nephi 16:17–20; 20:32–35, 36–45; 21:29; and Moroni 10:31, which paraphrases both Isaiah 52:1–2 and 54:2.
 6. Dana M. Pike, “‘How Beautiful upon the Mountains’: The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book*

- of *Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 249–92, 264: “It seems clear from the tenor of the preserved account that the priests were trying to defame, and thus eliminate, this prophet who was troubling them.”
7. Indeed there are elements within the Isaianic text that fit this particular group of Nephites: the land of Nephi is described as being in the wilderness hill country found to the south of the land of Zarahelma and the river plain of the Sidon, which coincides with the clause “how beautiful upon the mountains” (Isaiah 52:7); the Nephite return to the land matches “the Lord shall bring again Zion”; the reclamation and rebuilding projects of Zeniff and Noah could match “sing together ye waste places . . . he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:9); and finally the military successes described in Mosiah 10–11 fits “the Lord hath made bare his holy arm” (Isaiah 52:10). Thus the fulfillment of these would have been proof that Abinadi was a false prophet. See John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008), 176: “This passage of scripture quoted to Abinadi by the priests could very well have been one of the theme texts that had been used often by Zeniff’s colony as they rejoiced over their redemption of the land of their inheritance and the temple like Solomon’s. . . . In the face of Isaiah’s prophecy and its apparent glorious fulfillment by Zeniff’s people how did Abinadi dare to accuse both the king and the people of falling under God’s worst judgments?”
 8. While Christ’s commentary on this passage takes up the bulk of the second day of his ministry, he had actually been ready to begin the discussion on the first day; the first part of the Isaianic text is found in 3 Nephi 16 but is not discussed at the time because as the text states, Christ perceived the audience was weak and therefore unable to understand. Therefore, Christ tells them to “go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow” (3 Nephi 17:3).
 9. Also notable is Christ’s omission of Isaiah 52:4–5, which describes Israel going to Egypt to avoid the Assyrian invasion and eventually suffering under Assyrian domination, perhaps omitted because nothing comparable to it had happened in the Book of Mormon. Though the original colonists ran from the impending Babylonian invasion, there is no indication of widespread subjugation of the Nephites and Lamanites by another force in history or even by each other. Thus these historical verses, which speak of the Old World Israelite experience, are not included in Christ’s words to the New World Israel.
 10. This specific text appears to be the Revelation of the Apostle John as found at the end of the New Testament. Interestingly, this verse suggests, then, that the “mouth of the Jew” referred to an origination during the New Testament time period, as John’s Revelation is often dated around AD 100. The timing

between the book of the Lamb of God as originated in chapter 13 and then described in 14 suggests that the reference to the book that proceeds forth from the mouth of the Jew is meant to include the writings of all who have the fullness of the covenant prior to their loss early on in the Christian era. Thus Christians who lived during the New Testament dispensation appear to have received the designation of “Jew” in the Book of Mormon.

11. This designation is significant in light of its prominent use in the rest of Nephi’s vision. In fact, of the thirty-three references to “Lamb of God” in the Book of Mormon, twenty-four are found in 1 Nephi 11–14, while six of the other nine are in texts that have to do with Lehi’s dream (1 Nephi 10 and 2 Nephi 21–33). This suggests that this particular designation was significant to the overall content and meaning of Nephi’s vision and its particular theme of the condescension of Christ in both the Old and the New Worlds.
12. In Mormon 7, Mormon’s last words are to the descendants of Nephi’s apostate brothers. In the chapter the prophet challenges these descendants to repent and turn away from their wickedness by reading and following the gospel of Christ as outlined in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. In terms of the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Bible, he stated the following: “Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this [the Book of Mormon] record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews [the Bible], which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. For behold, this [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that ye believe that [the Bible]; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also” (vv. 8–9).
13. See 1 Nephi 15:18; 22:9; 3 Nephi 20:25, 27.
14. “In the vein of modern scholarship, the passage seems to say that scripture is the product of a people whose labors and pains must be honored along with their records.” Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 100.
15. We learn elsewhere in Nephi’s writings that he considered himself a Jew, and therefore the Book of Mormon could rightfully fit the requirements for a Bible, namely that it was brought forth through the “travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews.”
16. See Jacob 2:23, in which the exploits of David and Solomon are considered scripture by Jacob.
17. Similarly, exclusively Book of Mormon text was changed by those who apparently felt they had authority to do so. In Moroni 7:26, Mormon is recorded as saying, “And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.” While similar, this is not exactly what Christ actually said: “And whatsoever ye

- shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20). Though the changes are minor and the overall subject matter virtually the same, the changes do suggest that all scripture could be manipulated.
18. Terryl L. Givens, "The Book of Mormon and Religious Epistemology," in *Dialogue* 34, nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2001): 31–54, 39: "Through chiasmic form, thematic structure, numerous textual examples, and a final, concluding instance of readerly invitation, the [Book of Mormon] hammers home the insistent message that revelation is the province of everyman."
 19. Givens, "The Book of Mormon and Religious Epistemology," 39: "This may well be the Book of Mormon's most significant and revolutionary (as well as controversial) contribution to religious thinking."
 20. As one looks at the use of the verb *search* in the Book of Mormon, it is clear that this is a term employed to describe the act of not just reading but also studying and pondering the scriptures. Thus in Jacob 4:6 we are told that the Nephites "search the prophets, and we have many revelations . . . and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken." In Alma, the sons of Mosiah "waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched diligently, that they might know the word of God" (Alma 17:2). The Book of Mormon ends with Moroni's challenge: "Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true." He promises that if one does so with real intent, "[God] will manifest the truth of it unto you" and that "God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true" (Moroni 10:4, 29).
 21. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854), 1:237, stated: "The moment you make it known that you have embraced the Book of Mormon, and that you believe Joseph Smith is a Prophet, they will at once accuse you of throwing away the Bible, they will publish abroad that you have become a 'Latter-day Saint,' 'a Mormon,' and consequently have denied the Bible you formerly believed, and have cast it entirely away. What is the reason of this, which I need not undertake to substantiate, for it is a fact that almost every person knows? Now, we are believers in the Bible, and in consequence of our unshaken faith in its precepts, doctrine, and prophecy, may be attributed 'the strangeness of our course.'" Elsewhere he stated: "There is one idea entertained by 'the Mormons' which is somewhat of a stumbling-block to the people, and apostates handle it to suit their purpose. It is, that we consider the Bible merely as a guide or fingerboard, pointing to a certain destination. This is a true doctrine, which we boldly advance. If you will follow the doctrines, and be guided by the precepts, of that book, it will direct you where you may see as you are seen, where you may converse with Jesus Christ, have the visitation of angels, have dreams, visions, and revelations, and understand and know God for yourselves. Is it not a stay and a staff to you?"

Yes, it will prove to you that you are following in the footsteps of the ancients. You can see what they saw, understand what they understood, and enjoy what they enjoyed. Is this throwing the Bible away? No, not at all.” More recently, Elder Dallin H. Oaks (“Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, January 1995, 7) stated, “What makes us different from most other Christians in the way we read and use the Bible and other scriptures is our belief in continuing revelation. For us, the scriptures are not the ultimate source of knowledge, but what precedes the ultimate source.”

22. *The Teachings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 577. This statement was immediately followed by another, which suggested a revelatory function to the rituals which are found so prominently in the Latter-day Saint faith: “I assure the Saints that truth, in reference to these matters [the plan of salvation], can and may be known through the revelations of God in the way of his ordinances, and in answer to prayer.”
23. James E. Faust, “Spiritual Horizons,” *Ensign*, August 1999, 4–5.