Knowledge is necessary to choice and therefore to guilt. On this intellectual basis the ethics of the *Book of Mormon* rest.[17] This emphasis and that on free will became cornerstones of the Mormon outlook as it developed in the following years.

That the *Book of Mormon* is not the creation of European sectaries but is rather the product of the new continent is reflected in a number of its subordinate themes. It is obviously an American work growing in the soil of American concerns in terms of its basic plot and its enshrining of America as the promised land, as well as in the unconcealed secular patriotism with which it refers to the United States. "And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land. . . . And I will fortify this land against all other nations" (II Nephi 10:11–12).[18] American sentiments permeate the work. In it are found the democratic, the republican,[19] the antimonarchical,[20] and the egalitarian doctrines that pervaded the climate of opinion in which it was conceived and that enter into the expressions and concerns of its Nephite kings, prophets, and priests as naturally as they later come from the mouths of Mormon leaders preaching to the people in Utah. Monarchy is never really good, and at its best the good kings work with their hands. Taxation is oppressive,[21] and lawyers are not to be trusted.[22]

In the hearts and minds of the pre-Columbian Hebrews live the ideas and sentiments which upland New England carried over into New York. Radical western religion is seen in the emphasis upon the obligation of clergymen to work,[23] a tenet that later finds permanent expression in the structure of the Mormon church. The attitudes of those who lived in the West, their feeling that the government back east neither understood their problems nor showed the proper concern for their interests and that those who lived in the supposed comfort of the settled areas neglected them are seen vividly set forth in the letter of Moroni, the military commander in the field, to Pahoran, his superior, the civil governor in the rear: "We know not but what ye are also traitors to your country. Or is it that ye have neglected us because ye are in the heart of our country and ye are surrounded by security" (Alma 60:18–19). The shadow of the man on the white horse falls across the pages of a piece of early American writing in the threat of Moroni in the same epistle: "I will come unto you and if there be any

among you that has a desire for freedom, yea, if there be even a spark of freedom remaining, behold I will stir up insurrections among you, even until those who have desires to usurp power and authority shall become extinct" (Alma 60:27).

There is much more of egalitarianism and democracy than of constitutionality in such sentiments, and the closeness to violence was thoroughly American. Interesting also is the fact that Moroni self-righteously impugns the motives of his opponent in the complete absence of evidence and, although threatening insurrection, does so only in the cause of righteousness. It is the opponent who must be guilty of ambition. Similar attitudes probably exacerbated the antagonisms between Mormon and gentile in the bitter conflicts which marked the later years. The utopianism of the *Book of Mormon* is to be seen again in the fact that Moroni accomplishes his task of rebellion within the structure of established order. Indeed, if those Europeans who today accuse us as a nation of self-righteousness in our relations with them but knew the letter of Moroni to Ammoron, the Lamanite leader—"I will tell you somewhat concerning the justice of God, and the sword of his almighty wrath, which doth hang over you except ye repent and withdraw your armies into your own lands" (Alma 54:6)—they would perhaps attribute our attitudes to less disreputable motives.

The shrewdness with which the cycle from prosperity to sin is delineated in the book seems to be forgotten in these political controversies. The consequent self-satisfaction in public life misrepresents the inner sincerity from which it springs and makes the Nephite leaders lamentable models of statesmanship; yet it is characteristic of a "peculiar-people" mentality. In the *Book of Mormon*, as in the popular opera of both "horse" and "soap" varieties, there are, in effect, "good guys" and "bad guys." The good side always fights in defense of its liberties, its families, its wives, and its children. It is never the aggressor. The good side sends out missionaries to bring the light to those in darkness. The bad side sends out armies of invasion. Moreover, the good side in war does not, like its enemies, break the Geneva Convention—"and there was not a woman nor a child among all the prisoners of Moroni" (Alma 54:3).

In the *Book of Mormon* there is religious freedom and the separation of church and state; yet, despite the fact that consciences are not coerced, religious liberty in practice becomes the legal

protection of proselytization by the church of God. Alma becomes high priest and chief judge or supreme governor in the land. The presence of "a great and abominable church which is most abominable above all other churches" (I Nephi 13:26) is given considerable attention at the beginning of the first two books of Nephi.[24] This may have been occasioned by the arrival of the Irish immigrants who worked on the construction of the Erie Canal, or, as is more likely, it may have been merely the usual accompaniment of the left-wing Protestant mentality, the little-understood inheritance of an honored past.[25] At any rate the contents was as old as the Reformation; and, when the *Rochester Observer* referred to the Roman Catholic church as "the Beast" and the "mother of abominations" and the *Rochester Album* published (on February 29, 1828) a counterfeit letter from "Pope Leo XII" to the "elect elders of Rochester" which spoke of using "our holy rack, our thumb screws, our Iron Bed, and many other such arguments" in order to convince the unbelievers "of their damnable heresies," no one could have been either surprised or upset.[26] There is no evidence that Catholic-baiting in New York was excessive by national standards, and it is certain that it did not reach the dimensions of the later nativism in many parts of the country or of the anti-Catholicism of England in 1851 when Catholic bishoprics were re-established for the first time since Elizabeth I. If anything, the "very progress of 'the Mother of Harlots' served as one of the prominent prophetic signals of the approaching judgment,"[27] as millennial hopes rose in the late 1830's and 1840's.

The conception of government in the *Book of Mormon* is democratic; among the elect, at least, it is by "voice of the people." "Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people" (Mosiah 29:26). Yet this confession of democratic faith, so characteristic of the milieu, did not pass without qualification. Not only was the upland Yankee turned Yorker democratic, he was shrewd and realistic. Whether it was the problems of developing his 92 B.C. plot or his reflection upon his experience with his contemporaries that gave him pause, Joseph appended a profound warning: "And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the

judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land" (Mosiah 29:27).

One does not, however, see any real legislation in the *Book of Mormon.* The definition of law implied throughout the work is not unlike that of ancient Greece. Law is achieved through lawgivers, and it is accepted by and the officers of its administration are chosen by the "voice of the people." Moreover, one carries away the firm impression that, while the *Book of Mormon is* democratic in sentiment, it combines charisma with constitutionality in a manner that would be quite unworkable in real life in a democratic society.

Much has been said of the many references to Masonry in the work. The Gadianton robbers who take secret oaths and are a subversive element in the history of the Nephites are the reflection in the book of the outcry against Masonry of the 1820's, made more strident in New York because of the Morgan case. That anti-Masonry was a democratic movement is confirmed by the picture given in this work of Masonic activities.[28]

The *Book of Mormon* is millennial, but it is calm in its hopes, and neither it nor the movement to which it gave rise ever suggested anything like Millerite enthusiasm. Yet it has held that in the last days the Jews will be gathered, as will their descendants on the new continents, the American Indians. This expectation, which includes in its later interpretation the building of Zion here by the members of the Mormon church, has been a continuous part of Mormon doctrine.[29] An interesting item requiring later reinterpretation is found in the five separate denunciations of polygamy.[30]

There is some ambiguity on the question of baptism in the *Book of Mormon;* an early contention on this point even led to argument between the prophet-translator and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery.[31] In the earlier parts of the book the general import and implication seem to point to a doctrine resembling that of the Baptists, that baptism is a sign witnessing to regeneration but does not remit sins. The second Book of Nephi speaks of witnessing "unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water" (II Nephi 31:14), and in the Book of Mosiah the people are urged to be "baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him,