



2017

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Austin, Michael (2017) "How the Book of Mormon Reads the Bible: A Theory of Types," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 26: No. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol26/iss1/3>

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How the Book of Mormon Reads the Bible: A Theory of Types

Michael Austin

Typology is a figure of speech that moves in time. . . . What it both assumes and leads to, is a theory of history, or more accurately of historical process: an assumption that there is some meaning and point to history, and that sooner or later some event or events will occur which will indicate what that meaning or point is, and so become an antitype of what has happened previously.

—Northrop Frye, *The Great Code*, 125

TYPOLGY IS ONE OF THOSE WORDS whose meaning shifts dramatically with the position of its user. For religious believers studying the scriptures, typology is a mode of history—the belief that certain events and people should be understood as both fully historical and fully allegorical at the same time. To the unbeliever (or the believer in different things), typology is a mode of rhetoric—a connecting strategy that writers use to create retroactive links between otherwise unrelated stories or that readers use to infer connections between otherwise unconnected things. Those in the first group see the repetition of key narrative elements from the Old Testament to the New Testament—say, birth narratives in which both Moses and Jesus escape from an infanticidal massacre ordered by a despot—as a fundamental part of how sacred history works (see Exodus 1:22 and Matthew 2:16–18). Those in the second group would see this repetition as the attempt of a New Testament author (in this

Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 26, 2017, pp. 48–81

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18809/jbms.2017.0102> Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18809/mjibms.23744774>

case Matthew) to harness the rhetorical authority of Judaism's greatest prophet by framing Christ as another Moses.

Before the twentieth century, discussions of typology were almost entirely confined to Christians discussing the relationship between the two Testaments of the Bible. Indeed, even the names "Old Testament" and "New Testament" make the typological argument that both scriptures exist for the same reason: to testify of Christ's divinity. As the literary critic Northrop Frye writes in *The Great Code*, his monumental study of biblical typology, "The general principle of interpretation is traditionally given as 'In the Old Testament the New Testament is concealed; in the New Testament the Old Testament is revealed.' Everything that happens in the Old Testament is a 'type' or adumbration of something that happens in the New Testament, and the whole subject is therefore called typology."¹

Accepting the theological claims of typological interpretation means abandoning the dichotomy between history and allegory and accepting that a single text can serve both functions at once. Typological interpretation of this sort can also be called "figural interpretation" (Greek *typos* = Latin *figura*), and one of the most important essays ever written about it is Erich Auerbach's "Figura" (1944), first published in English in the 1959 book *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. "Figural interpretation," Auerbach explains, "establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first."² Both theologically and historically this kind of interpretation asserts the absolute, literal truth of both the type (the Old Testament figure) and the antitype (the New Testament fulfillment). Thus, Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac was a fully historical event *and* a predictive symbol of God's sacrifice of his Only Begotten Son. Jonah was a 100 percent historical character who was swallowed by a great fish, but the three

1. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 79.

2. Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays* (Oldsbury, England: Meridian Books, 1959), 53.

days that he spent in the belly of the whale also symbolize the three days that Christ will spend in the tomb. And so on. As Auerbach concludes, this fundamental alteration of the character of the Hebrew Bible was vital to the early diffusion of Judeo-Christian religion:

The figural interpretation changed the Old Testament from a book of laws and a history of the people of Israel into a series of figures of Christ and the Redemption. . . . In this form and in this context, from which Jewish history and national character had vanished, the Celtic and Germanic peoples, for example, could accept the Old Testament; it was part of the universal religion of salvation and a necessary component of the equally magnificent and universal vision of history that was conveyed to them along with this religion. In its original form, as a law book and history of so foreign and remote a nation, it would have been beyond their reach.³

This view of typology produces a fundamentally different view of history than good post-Enlightenment intellectuals feel comfortable with. In the typological mind, past, present, and future are linked not by cause and effect but by a recurring pattern of prophecy and fulfillment. Thus, when Matthew writes in the New Testament that Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Egypt until the death of Herod “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matthew 2:15), he is actually overriding any cause-and-effect statement that we might be tempted to read into the narrative (for example, that they went there to hide the baby Jesus from Herod’s soldiers, who were massacring Hebrew children, and that Egypt was a good place to do this because it was far away and reasonably cosmopolitan) with an assertion of typological causation. The reason that the Holy Family went to Egypt was that a prophecy had to be fulfilled.

In *An Other Testament: On Typology*, Joseph M. Spencer has given us the best reading yet of the implications that this typological view of past and future has for our theological understanding of the Book of Mormon. “To relate to history temporally is to regard the past event as

3. Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, 52.

fixed, an irretrievable fact, while to relate to history spiritually is to see past events as always still relevant,” argues Spencer, adroitly clarifying how the typological mind understands the past.⁴ Spencer argues convincingly that the Book of Mormon presents itself to us as a spiritual document that must therefore be understood typologically rather than historically, as we normally define the term. In my analysis I assume that Spencer is correct about this and that the Book of Mormon was written, translated, and brought into the modern world by individuals who understood their relationship to past and future events typologically. In my own analysis of Book of Mormon typology, I will explore the implication of these assumptions for our understanding of both the Bible and the Book of Mormon as collections of narratives.

Unlike the theological understanding of typology, which has always begun and ended with the study of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the modern study of typology as a narrative device begins in the interpretation of Homer. In 1933, an influential German classicist named Walter Arend published the book *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (*Type Scenes in Homer*), which almost singlehandedly launched a new area of inquiry in classical studies.⁵ For Arend, and for those who followed in his footsteps, the typological study of narrative is based in the study of “type-scenes,” or “recurrent block[s] of narrative . . . whose elements consistently appear in the same order.”⁶ Type-scenes occur within and across different narratives in all kinds of interesting ways. In early oral cultures, they most often occurred within a narrative or cycle of narratives, where they functioned as a mnemonic device to help storytellers keep track of a large number of narrative details. Type scenes gave early poets the ability to invoke all of the elements of a well-known scene

4. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2016), 15.

5. Walter Arend, *Die Typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933). Arend's work, though extremely important in Europe, has never been translated into English.

6. Mark David Usher, *Homeric Stitchings: The Homeric Centos of the Empress Eudocia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 84.

by associating it, however briefly, with another narrative known to the audience.

The study of type-scenes found its way into biblical studies in Hebrew scholar Robert Alter's groundbreaking book *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, which argues that the Old Testament uses type-scenes within narratives in much the same way, and for essentially the same reasons, that Homer does. Perhaps the most famous example is the betrothal-at-the-well type-scene that we first see in the book of Genesis. Alter explains the basic narrative block as follows:

The betrothal type-scene, then, must take place with the future bridegroom, or his surrogate, having journeyed to a foreign land. There he encounters a girl—the term “*na'arah*” invariably occurs unless the maiden is identified as so-and-so's daughter—or girls at a well. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well; afterward, the girl or girls rush to bring home the news of the stranger's arrival (the verbs “hurry” and “run” are given recurrent emphasis at this junction of the type-scene); finally, a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal.⁷

The first and most elaborate example of this type-scene occurs in Genesis 24, with Isaac (through a servant) and Rebekah. It recurs in a somewhat shorter form in Genesis 29 with Jacob and Rachel and as an extremely compressed scene in Exodus 2 with Moses and Zipporah. Each time it recurs, the scene requires less detail because the author assumes that the reader will remember and import the details from earlier stories into the most recent one. As they do in the works of Homer, type-scenes of this kind appear throughout the Old Testament.

Over the many years of the Hebrew Bible's composition, type-scenes formed a set of narrative building blocks available to authors at different times. They function as a kind of shorthand capable of invoking an entire narrative with just a few words—as the author of the book of Ruth invokes the betrothal-at-the-well type-scene by having

7. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 52.

Boaz instruct Ruth to “drink of that which the young men have drawn” (Ruth 2:9).⁸ Type-scenes could also function as a type of proposition testing, giving multiple perspectives on the same general principle in an attempt to prove or disprove a claim—such as the seven type-scenes in the book of Genesis featuring an older son losing the birthright to a younger brother, which served as a collective rejection of the larger culture’s belief that firstborn sons were especially favored by the Lord.⁹

Recent biblical scholarship has expanded our understanding of the way that type-scenes function across the books of the Hebrew Bible. Sometimes, we are learning, such scenes functioned as corrective, rather than simply connective narratives. In *Subversive Sequels in the Bible*, Judy Klitsner reads the original Hebrew texts carefully to uncover layers of connection between stories whose messages seem at odds with each other. Klitsner has coined the phrase “subversive sequel” to describe a biblical narrative that intentionally incorporates elements of an earlier story that “questions and overturns the assumptions and conclusions of the [earlier] narrative.”¹⁰ Subversive sequels allowed later biblical writers to reverse or reinterpret earlier narratives in light of new or different understandings. The type-scene then becomes much more than a mnemonic device or a framing strategy; it becomes a way to comment on or correct a perceived error in the earlier text.

In Klitsner’s reading, the first chapter of Job, in which all of Job’s children are killed in rapid succession, is a subversive sequel to the *Akeda*, or the story of Abraham binding Isaac in Genesis 22. In these stories, Klitsner argues, “some basic similarities are obvious, such as the featuring of God-fearing men who face a mortal threat by God to

8. For an interpretation of the type-scene, see Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 58.

9. The seven older brother–younger brother pairs in Genesis are as follows: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:2–15), Ham and Japeth (Genesis 9–10), Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 21), Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25 and 27), Reuben and Joseph (Genesis 37 and 39–47; Deuteronomy 33:13; 1 Chronicles 5:2), Er and Pharez (Genesis 30), and Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:13–19). See Michael Austin, “The Genesis Narrative and the Primogeniture Debate in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 98/1 (January 1999): 17–39.

10. Judy Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Maggid, 2011), xxxi.

their offspring.”¹¹ But the connections go much deeper. Both Abraham and Job are called “God-fearing,” for example, but the story of Abraham ends with this designation, while the book of Job begins with it, “suggesting the presence of a sequel in that the book of Job begins where the story of the *Akeda* ended.” And a number of personal names in the Abraham story reappear as place names in Job.¹² Both the thematic and the linguistic connections suggest that we are dealing with a type-scene in which God demands the sacrifice of a righteous man’s child or children as an ultimate test of righteousness. But the reactions of the two men could not be more different. In one, God demands an unjust sacrifice from Abraham and then prevents it from occurring, leading the subject of the test to praise his mercy. In the other, God determines to test Job and simply kills not one, but ten children, leaving Job to make accusations of injustice. These differences lead to very different conclusions:

These differences lead to the most striking point of contrast between the two stories, which is Abraham’s silent compliance with God’s plan to kill the innocent as opposed to Job’s outspoken objections to God’s injustice. Abraham proved his ability to call God to task in Sodom when he boldly insisted that a just God must act justly (Gen. 18:25). But at the *Akeda*, Abraham’s assertive stance gives way to an unquestioning compliance with God’s morally perplexing decree. In the end, God is pleased with Abraham’s willingness to obey Him (22:12) and seemingly with Abraham’s silence as well. In contrast, as Job’s life is unjustly shattered, the hero rejects all attempts to accept God’s actions as justified and instead demands answers from God with ever-increasing audacity. Yet despite his contentious words, so antithetical to the wordless obedience of the God-fearing Abraham, God upholds Job’s responses over those of his friends, God’s apologists. God instructs Job’s friends to bring sacrifices and to have Job pray for them, “since you have not spoken to Me correctly as did My servant Job” (42:8). In this, the subversive sequel to the binding of Isaac

11. Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible*, xxvii.

12. Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible*, xxv–xxvi.

narrative, to be God's beloved servant no longer requires voiceless acceptance of all God's actions and decrees. Rather it is to protest God's injustice and to demand a quality of life commensurate with one's deeds.¹³

What Klitsner points to is a different use of typology than scholars of the Hebrew Bible normally discuss, but one that will be crucial to my analysis of typology in the Book of Mormon. As a Jewish scholar, Klitsner confines her analysis to the Hebrew Bible. But the notion of a subversive sequel works just as well with intertestamental typology and with all the other ways that type-scenes connect to each other across narratives. And this will be my fundamental argument about typology in the Book of Mormon. As "another testament of Jesus Christ," the Book of Mormon presents itself as a narrative capable of constraining or even correcting the way we interpret the Bible. One of the primary ways that it does this, I suggest, is through the use of type-scenes that it shares with the biblical narrative. The Book of Mormon incorporates some of the most profoundly symbolic stories of both the Old and the New Testaments, but it also changes these stories in fundamental ways that can change the way we read the original texts and the way we make generalizations about the meaning of the scriptures and their relevance for us today.

Before trying to incorporate the Book of Mormon into a larger typological study, however, we will need to spend a little bit more time exploring the vocabulary that narratologists have developed to discuss both typology and type-scenes. We must, in other words, name our tools.

A theory of types: Naming the tools

Narrative theory has developed a rich vocabulary to talk about the ways that type-scenes relate to each other and to the larger narratives

13. Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible*, xxviii.

of which they are a part. I want to define four terms from this field of study that can help us understand the different levels at which a typological discourse can function. Taken together, these terms provide a framework that can be used to analyze the Book of Mormon with reference to the way it shares figural representations with the Bible and with other texts. All four words are slippery, though, and they can all be used in different contexts with very different meanings. Here I define them as I use them:

Type: A type is the first occurrence of a type-scene. A type-scene is normally a narrative that points (or is read as pointing to) another narrative that will occur later, as Abraham's binding of Isaac points to God's sacrifice of his Only Begotten Son. According to the special logic of typology, the type is simultaneously real in every way that the later narrative is real and, at the same time, a symbol or allegory of the later narrative.

Antitype: The antitype is the fulfillment of a type, or the later narrative to which the type points. In the Christian typological tradition, Jesus Christ is the universal antitype, which means that nearly every narrative in the Old Testament is read by that tradition as pointing to something in the life or ministry of Jesus Christ. In other contexts, the antitype can simply be a narrative that incorporates elements of an earlier narrative, the way that *The Lion King* incorporates elements from *Hamlet*.

Neotype: The term *neotype* was coined in 1972 by literary historian Steven Zwicker to explain the way that John Dryden's poetry functioned during the political battles of seventeenth-century England. A neotype is an extension of biblical typology to the present historical situation, based on the belief that the scriptures were explicitly written to address our day. For Zwicker, this means that a poem like Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel"—which used the Old Testament narrative of Absalom's rebellion against David as a framing device to discuss the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion against Charles II—presented a contemporary event as the literal fulfillment of a biblical type. Even in the time of King David, Dryden argues, God knew about the coming perfidy of the Earl of

Shaftsbury.¹⁴ In the language of the Book of Mormon, the neotype is what we get when we “liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23).

Archetype: Those who study myth and folklore have long observed similarities in the sacred stories of different cultures. Stories of floods, elixir thefts, journeys to the underworld, tricksters, and heroes seem to exist in cultures that do not appear to have had contact with each other, leading many to speculate that there are even older stories behind these ancient ones that have been lost—stories that stretch far back into human history and penetrate deep into the human mind. These “stories behind the stories” are called “archetypes.” The term is often associated with Carl Jung, who believed that archetypes come from a universal store of memories called the “collective unconscious,” and with Joseph Campbell, who applied Jung’s theories to a wide cross section of human myths.

When we add the Book of Mormon into the mix with the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the present day, we get a lot of interesting permutations in the possible interactions between types, antitypes, neotypes, and archetypes. Not only does the Book of Mormon add a third “testament” to the scriptural canon that incorporates narratives from the other two, the drama of its coming forth in the latter days played out on a typological stage. Joseph Smith and his companions saw nearly every aspect of the restoration movement as the fulfillment of either biblical or Book of Mormon prophecy, and this understanding influenced the way they acted their part. They perceived their story as an integral part of a sacred narrative stretching back to the Garden of Eden and going forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

To get a sense of how all these different narratives can come into play in the interpretation of a single text, consider this brief passage from the third chapter of 2 Nephi, in which Lehi, coming to the end of his life, blesses his son Joseph.

14. For a book-length study of how neotypes worked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Michael Austin, *New Testaments: Cognition, Closure, and the Figural Logic of the Sequel, 1660–1740* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012).

And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed. For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph. Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom. (2 Nephi 3:3–5)

Here we have two characters named Joseph who are connected by patrilineal descent but also by their participation in a shared type-scene. The original type occurs in Genesis 49, in which the patriarch Jacob gives his dying blessing to each of his twelve sons. Joseph, as the favorite son and recipient of the birthright, receives the most elaborate blessing (though all of them are fairly short):

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. (Genesis 49:22–26 KJV)

The Book of Mormon establishes profound typological connections between Lehi's and Jacob's blessings. Both fathers have led their families on long migrations and have established them in a new land. While on

their deathbeds, both assemble all their sons to pronounce blessings that are at once directive and prophetic. And, of course, both of them have a son named Joseph. Most importantly, however, the Book of Mormon presents Lehi and his family as the fulfillment of the prophecy that the branches of Joseph will “run over the wall”—an association that Lehi draws specifically in this blessing. This is an example of a type-scene in which the antitype—directly and explicitly—provides an interpretation of the type that fundamentally alters the way that readers must interact with the text.

But the narrative is not done with Josephs. Lehi states that the ancient Joseph saw a vision of the last days and prophesied that “a seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins” (2 Nephi 3:6). This seer, we learn, will also be named Joseph, as will his father (2 Nephi 3:15), and he “shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write” and the two writings “shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down contentions” (2 Nephi 3:12). These prophecies leave little doubt that the “choice seer” should be interpreted as Joseph Smith or that the writing in question is the Book of Mormon, the very volume in which this prophecy occurs. This prophecy also invokes—and provides a strong interpretation of—a prophecy in Ezekiel that the “sticks” of Judah and Joseph will one day be joined together (Ezekiel 37:15–16). By using language that is almost identical to Ezekiel’s, but that makes it clear that the “sticks” are actually writings, Lehi’s blessing constrains interpretation of a second biblical passage by rewriting its predecessor and connects them both to the nineteenth-century neotype who brought forth the stick of Joseph.

And there is more going on still at the archetypal level, as Lehi’s blessing, like Jacob’s, is part of a much larger narrative tradition of dying fathers assembling their sons in order to impart their final blessings. The tradition of the dying father’s blessing is part of a larger archetypal pattern of interaction between fathers and sons. Most world cultures share stories of father-son interaction that emphasize (1) a son’s need to receive the father’s wisdom, status, and other resources that will help him make his way in the world and (2) the young man’s need to break ties with the father and create his own identity. Paradoxically, the son must both embrace and reject the father in order to become an adult.

Freud invoked this general tension in his theory of the Oedipus complex, in which a child fantasizes about killing his father and possessing his mother—and then feels immense guilt for daring to think such horrible things. Jung invoked a different archetype to account for this tension—the “Wise Old Man” that invariably appears as part of a young hero’s journey to adulthood. This figure (think Gandalf, Dumbledore, or Obi-Wan Kenobi) invariably provides both temporal assistance and spiritual guidance to the hero, but, just as invariably, he must die or be otherwise removed from the narrative before the hero faces the ultimate test. The hero cannot fully individuate while the father figure is still alive, as the whole point of these stories (according to Jung) is to dramatize, through myth, the fact that children cannot become functioning adults until they leave their parents’ spheres of influence.

All these typologies interact with each other through this single passage in 2 Nephi, which (under the definitions I have suggested) occupies the position of the antitype. It changes our understanding of the original type by portraying the biblical Joseph as a prophet whose prophecies of the last days, omitted from the biblical text, were restored in this portion of the Book of Mormon.¹⁵ It also reaches forward to the neotype and encourages us to see Joseph Smith and the restoration as part of a recurring typological pattern that was understood by key figures in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. And it reaches upward to the archetype and incorporates prophecy into the set of gifts that fathers give their sons to prepare them for adulthood. This is all possible because, according to the logic of typology that the passage employs, all four versions of the story are connected to each other in such a way that our interpretation of one affects our understanding of all the others.

In the remainder of this essay, I will examine three type-scenes that occur in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The first involves eating a specific fruit, the second deals with the exodus pattern in both narratives, and the third features the conversion of men who persecuted the church. In each case, I will suggest that the type-scene in the Book of Mormon

15. This passage from 2 Nephi forms the basis of Genesis 50:24–38, which Joseph Smith included in his revision of the Bible and which is included as an appendix in the current LDS Bible.

functions as a subversive sequel to the same type-scene in the Bible—that it deliberately incorporates enough elements of the biblical scene to ensure a connection in readers’ minds and then reworks or corrects that scene in a way consistent with Mormon theology. In this way, many stories from the Book of Mormon constitute “subversive sequels” to the Bible.

Stories of the fall

The story of Adam, Eve, and the fall does a lot of archetypal work in the Judeo-Christian world. It proposes to explain, among other things, why we are subject to death, how sin came into the world, and why we must suffer. And, like most great archetypal narratives, it speaks through symbols, the most prominent being the garden, the forbidden fruit, and the serpent. We can locate similar symbols in the archetypal narratives of other ancient cultures; the Greek goddess Persephone, for example, partially forfeits her right to live on Olympus by eating pomegranate seeds. And the Sumerian hero Gilgamesh goes on an epic journey to find the elixir of eternal youth only to have it snatched out of his hands by a crafty serpent. These are powerful symbols that have been invoked for millennia to explain the human condition.

The Book of Mormon gathers many of these symbols into a prophetic dream that is related by Lehi and recorded by Nephi in the early part of the text. Bruce Jorgensen has astutely observed that the essential logic of Lehi’s dream creates a narrative pattern that becomes important throughout the Book of Mormon. “At bottom the pattern is a simple transformation,” he writes, “from dark and barren waste by means of the Word to a world fruitful and filled with light. And the transformation is enacted again and again in the Book of Mormon.”¹⁶ Jorgensen sees this as the basic typological pattern repeated in the stories of Enos, Alma the Elder, and Alma the Younger—each of which repeats the basic transformation from desolation to light through the vehicle of the Word of God.

16. Bruce W. Jorgensen, “The Dark Way to the Tree: Typological Unity in the Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981), 221.

If we read the pattern that Jorgensen identifies in reverse—the transformation from a fruitful world to a desolate one—we arrive back in Eden with Adam and Eve. There are several good reasons to associate Lehi’s dream narrative with the Garden of Eden. They are both stories about eating the fruit of a specific tree, for one thing, and the term *tree of life* appears in both.¹⁷ Both stories also include specific mentions of shame, enemies of God trying to convince others to disobey him, and a description of a “dreary wilderness” or a “dreary world.”¹⁸ But these elements from Genesis are inverted in Lehi’s dream.

In his dream, Lehi starts out in a “dark and dreary wilderness” (1 Nephi 8:4), where he sees a man in a white robe who led him to a large field with a single tree.

And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen. And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit. (1 Nephi 8:10–12)

As he surveys the scene, Lehi sees that that his family, along with many other people, are far away from the tree. To reach the tree they

17. Corbin T. Volluz makes the argument that the tree in Lehi’s dream was literally the tree of life mentioned in Genesis 2:9 and again in Genesis 3:24. See “Lehi’s Dream of the Tree of Life: Springboard to Prophecy,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 14–38.

18. The phrase *lone and dreary world* is frequently used in LDS discourse to describe the state of Adam and Eve’s existence after they are cast out of Eden, as James Talmage explains in his classic book *House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1912), 99–100: “The Temple Endowment . . . includes a recital of the most prominent events of the creative period, the condition of our first parents in the Garden of Eden, their disobedience and consequent expulsion from that blissful abode, [and] their condition in *the lone and dreary world* when doomed to live by labor and sweat” (emphasis added).

must follow a “strait and narrow path.” As people tried to navigate the path, dark mists arose and made it impossible for anyone to stay on the path unless they held fast to the “rod of iron” that ran beside it (2 Nephi 8:19–20). Many people lost their way because they did not hold to the rod, and many others reached the tree and partook of the fruit, only to be mocked by naysayers in a great and spacious building. “After they had tasted of the fruit,” Lehi reports, “they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:28). Only the most valiant—including Sariah, Nephi, and Sam—partake of the fruit and experience the joy that it brings, precisely because they do not feel the shame that the others feel about eating the fruit. Others are lost in the mist, drowned in the nearby river, or absorbed into the cynicism of the nearby great and spacious building.

All the typological elements that Jorgensen finds in Lehi’s dream can also be found in the Garden of Eden story. But in reverse. Over-simplified into a flowchart, the narrative arc of Genesis 3 moves like this: PARADISE → EATS FRUIT → FEELS SHAME → WILDERNESS. First Nephi 8, on the other hand, largely inverts this arc: WILDERNESS → EATS FRUIT → DOESN’T FEEL SHAME → PARADISE. To the extent that we can read the Book of Mormon narrative as an antitype of the Genesis story, we must consider it a corrective antitype, or at least one that advances a very different interpretation than the passage has normally been given. If we read the antitype back onto the type, it suggests that, just maybe, Adam and Eve didn’t sin when they partook of the fruit but rather did what God wanted and expected them to because it was the only way that they could have joy.

The notion that Adam and Eve did the right thing by disobeying God and eating the fruit would be considered a dangerous heresy in most of the Christian world today (or at least that part of the Christian world that believes that Adam and Eve lived at all).¹⁹ Yet it is a standard

19. In the many religious conversations that I had with a good friend and Catholic priest when I was working at a Catholic university, the idea that the fall could have been what God wanted from the beginning was the LDS belief that he found most at odds with his own understanding of the Christian tradition.

and accepted part of Latter-day Saint belief that is made clear in a later passage of the Book of Mormon:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:22–25)

This goes well beyond the Christian notion of the “Fortunate Fall,” derived from the work of Augustine, which holds that God’s goodness and power are so great that he can make even the catastrophe of the fall work out to our benefit. The Book of Mormon suggests that the fall of Adam was fortunate and that not falling would have been unfortunate, as it would have prevented human beings from ever coming into existence.²⁰ This is the theology of 2 Nephi, and it has become a standard part of the Latter-day Saint creed, which rejects the doctrine of original sin in the second article of faith: “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.”

To put this another way, the fall does not have the same archetypal significance for Latter-day Saints that it does for the rest of the Christian world. It does not give an etiology of human depravity or show that the human race is fallen. Rather, it portrays Adam as a wise, righteous patriarch on the horns of a dilemma: he has been commanded to multiply and replenish the earth, which cannot happen until he partakes of the fruit, which he has been commanded not to partake of. In his wisdom he uses his agency to disregard the lesser commandment in order

20. See Daniel K Judd, “The Fortunate Fall of Adam and Eve,” in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2011), 297–328.

to obey the greater one. Had Adam done otherwise, he would have frustrated God's plan and therefore been guilty of a sin. And though Latter-day Saints now have multiple sources for this theology, nearly all of it can be worked out through a careful reading of Lehi's dream in conversation with the biblical type that it first invokes and then subverts.

The exodus type: Colonization without conquest

Just about everybody who writes about typology in the Book of Mormon has observed the close connections between Lehi and his family's flight from Jerusalem and the children of Israel's escape from Egypt. In both of these narratives, the Lord leads a chosen people out of captivity (actual in the Bible, eminent in the Book of Mormon) and to a promised land that has been prepared for them. In both cases, the chosen people wander in the wilderness for a time while they are prepared spiritually to enter the promised land. In 1981, George S. Tate dubbed this the "Exodus pattern." "The Book of Mormon opens with an exodus," he observes, pointing out that the confluence of the two narratives is reinforced by multiple details that connect them together:

Notice how many details of the early narrative conform to this pattern. . . . Nephi and his family depart out of Jerusalem into the wilderness, "deliver[ed] . . . from destruction" (1 Nephi 17:14). In what might be called a paschal vision—referring fifty-six times to the Lamb (Lamb of God, blood of the Lamb, etc.)—Nephi's interpretive revelation on his father's dream recalls the passover lamb of Exodus as it figures Christ (chs. 11–15). While a pillar of light rested upon a rock, Lehi had been warned to flee; and the Lord now provides miraculous guidance in the form of a compass-ball, the Liahona, and assures them, "I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you" (1 Nephi 1:6; 16:10; 17:13). When the family begins to murmur from hunger as had the Israelites before receiving manna, Nephi obtains food miraculously at the Lord's direction (see 1 Nephi 16:23, 31). He repeatedly receives instruction from the Lord on a mountain (see 1 Nephi 16:30; 17:7) and builds a ship not "after the manner of

men; but . . . after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me” just as Moses had received the design for the tabernacle (see 1 Nephi 18:1–3; Exodus 26). (Both ship and tabernacle are types of the church in Christian typology.)²¹

Nephi himself seems aware that his family is writing itself into sacred history by reenacting the foundational event of their faith. He specifically invokes the typology of exodus when he tells his brothers, who have just been cast out of Laban’s presence while trying to obtain the brass plates, that they should “be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea” (1 Nephi 4:2). This is important because it shows that, like Matthew and the other New Testament writers, he understands his own experiences typologically rather than merely historically. As Tate puts it, he realizes that “he and his family are reenacting a sacred and symbolic pattern that looks back to Israel and forward to Christ—the pattern of Exodus.”²²

Using Tate’s initial observation, other scholars have plumbed the text for similarities and typological connections, which has probably done more than any other line of inquiry to establish the Book of Mormon as a legitimate typological companion to the Bible.²³ But, according to the theory of types that I am advancing, differences matter more than similarities. For it is the differences that allow the type-scenes to function as subversive sequels. How might the Book of Mormon correct or constrain our understanding of the Bible by reformulating the deep

21. George S. Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief*, 249.

22. Tate, “Typology of the Exodus Pattern,” 249.

23. See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27/4 (1987): 15–37; Terrance L. Szink, “Nephi and the Exodus,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 35–51; S. Kent Brown, “The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1998), 75–98.

structure of their shared typology? I would argue that this question has a special urgency when applied to the exodus type, as what lies at the end of that narrative—the conquest of Canaan and the divinely mandated massacre of its original inhabitants—is one of the most difficult parts of the Bible for modern readers to reconcile with their understanding of God. The actions portrayed in Joshua and Judges amount to genocide by any contemporary standard, and most modern readers would prefer that their God not be mixed up in such things.

Though the original party in the Book of Mormon reenacts the biblical exodus in many particulars on the front end, Latter-day Saints can be glad that the Book of Mormon’s version of the exodus does not end in conquest or slaughter. Lehi and his family arrive in an empty promised land just waiting to be peopled by his descendants.²⁴ More importantly, at least for my argument, we never see either the Nephites or the Lamanites conquering a group of non-Lehite people at the request of the Almighty. This goes well beyond the initial flight-from-Jerusalem story. The exodus type goes on to repeat six more times in the Book of Mormon, becoming an internal type-scene in its own right—and not a single one of these iterations ends in conquest:

2 Nephi 5:5–10: After the Lehites come to the promised land, they divide into two factions, one led by Nephi and the other led by Laman. As hostility between the two groups increases, the Lord warns Nephi that he “should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with [him].” The Nephites leave the first settlement and establish

24. In saying this, I do not mean to take a position on the limited geography model of Book of Mormon scholarship or to challenge the recent acknowledgment of the LDS Church in the introduction to the Book of Mormon that the Lamanites were “among the ancestors of” and not the “principal ancestors of” modern Native Americans. But these kinds of historical assertions are alien to the typological mind that saw the Lehite flight from Jerusalem as an antitype of the biblical exodus. Nephi clearly held this view and acknowledges such in the text, which does not contain a single clear reference to any non-Lehite inhabitants of the land until the Nephites meet the Mulekites in the book of Omni.

the land of Nephi, which (by all indications given in the text) they find empty.

Omni 1:12: The Nephite leader Mosiah is “warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness.” This group of Lehites discovers another group of Hebrew exiles in the city of Zarahemla. When the Nephites arrive with the plates and an uncorrupted language, they immediately join with the Mulekites, and Mosiah is made king of the combined people.

Mosiah 18:34: After Alma leaves the court of King Noah and establishes a church, the king mobilizes an army to attack him and his followers. The new church is “apprised of the coming of the king’s army; therefore they took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness.”

Mosiah 22:9–12: After Limhi becomes king, the Nephites in the land of Nephi experience increasing oppression by and demand for tribute from the Lamanites. In response, Limhi provided a large tribute of wine to the Lamanites and, while they were in a deep sleep, the Nephites “did depart by night into the wilderness . . . and they went round about the land of Shilom in the wilderness, and bent their course towards the land of Zarahemla.” They literally snuck out in the middle of the night.

Mosiah 24:18–20: After the people of Alma flee the domain of King Noah, they settle in the land of Helam, which is later conquered by the Lamanites. The Lamanite king makes Amulon, the former chief priest of King Noah, the governor of this area, and Amulon begins to persecute Alma and his people mercilessly. Once again, the people of the church “in the night time gathered their flocks together” and “departed into the wilderness” after “the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon the Lamanites,” thereafter to become subjects of King Mosiah.

Ether 1:39–42: As the Lord is confounding the languages at the Tower of Babel, the brother of Jared prays that he and his family will be spared. The Lord grants the petition and instructs Jared and his family to gather their flocks and seeds and depart into the wilderness. The Jaredites are led to the New World, where they flourished for more than one thousand years before they destroyed themselves just prior to the arrival of the Mulekites.

Of the seven repetitions of the exodus type-scene in the Book of Mormon, five portray a migration into an empty territory. In one of them (Mosiah 24:18–20), a splinter group seeks reunification with the main body that they split off from—and once again, the delivery of the chosen people is accomplished without the necessity of a bloody conquest. And in one version (Omni 1:12), we see an adaptation of the exodus type that virtually stands it on its head. In this instance, the Lord warns King Mosiah to gather the faithful and leave the land of Nephi; Mosiah then leads the Nephites to the city of Zarahemla—a land that is inhabited by another group of Israelites who escaped the Babylonian captivity. The Mulekites, however, have lost their language and their culture, and they no longer have access to a sacred book. When the Nephites show up, they do not have to conquer the Mulekites; they are embraced as saviors. “There was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla,” Amaleki records. “And also Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews” (Omni 1:14). The people of Zarahemla are so happy that they willingly turn the government over to the newcomers and consent to live under their enlightened rule.

With this version of the shared scene, the typology of exodus is completely inverted. Rather than having to kill the inhabitants of the promised land to guard against being tempted by their false gods, the Nephites immediately convert the inhabitants to their religion and are invited to become their leaders. We should keep this typological inversion in mind as we move to the neotype, or the modern iteration of the exodus pattern that was called into existence when the Mormons

were expelled from Illinois in 1846. The Saints began almost immediately invoking the language of the exodus typology to describe their experiences, beginning with the choice of the name “the Camp of Israel” for the initial party that made its way west. As Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton explain, “Biblical rhetoric was used to heighten the Saints’ sense of leaving a place of persecution for a Promised Land and of being miraculously blessed and guided.”²⁵

But what about the Native Americans who were already living in the Great Basin? The biblical exodus typology would cast any inhabitants of the new promised land in the role of Canaanites—enemies of the people of God who must be exterminated in order to fulfill God’s promise of deliverance. This typology was actually prominent in the relations between Europeans and Indians on the American continent, as the early American settlers “extended their typology to encompass the American Indians as Canaanites who the Lord had promised Moses would be driven from the land to make way.”²⁶ This Canaanite–Native American typology allowed European settlers to quote from their sacred texts as they committed acts of genocide. To a mind steeped in biblical typology, being God’s chosen people means conquering whoever was in the land when you got there.

But this was not what it meant to the first generation of Mormons. For one thing, American Indians couldn’t be figurative Canaanites because they were literal Israelites. Joseph Smith and his followers saw American Indians as the literal descendants of the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon and therefore as chosen people and subjects of prophecy in their own right. Furthermore, as we have already seen, the typology of the exodus as reconfigured *in the Book of Mormon* does not require conquest or displacement. If it involves other people at all

25. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 96.

26. Richard VanDerBeets, *The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), 1. See also Alfred A. Cave, “Canaanites in a Promised Land: The American Indian and the Providential Theory of Empire,” *American Indian Quarterly* 12/4 (1988): 277–97; Maria Holmgren Troy, “Negotiating Genre and Captivity: Octavia Butler’s Survivor,” *Callaloo* 33/4 (2010): 1116–31.

(rather than just empty promised lands), it involves saving these people from their own ignorance and being invited to become their leaders.

In theory this should have made Mormons great allies with the Native Americans. In practice, the results are mixed. From very early on, Latter-day Saints felt a responsibility to proselytize their Indian neighbors. In September 1830, just six months after the LDS Church was established, Joseph Smith called Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer on a “mission to the Lamanites” of western Missouri, to be joined later by Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, and Frederick G. Williams. These early Mormon stalwarts embraced the task enthusiastically, “knowing that the purposes of God were great to that people and hoping that the time had come when the promises of the Almighty in regard to that people were about to be accomplished.”²⁷ If they were thinking typologically, they may well have been expecting that the Indians would respond to them much as the Mulekites had responded to the Nephites—with joy and gratitude for having the faith of their ancestors restored to them. But this is not what happened. The Mormon missionaries were expelled from Indian territory by Indian agents in February 1831 without converting a large numbers of Indians.²⁸

Fifteen years later, when the Mormons found themselves sharing the Great Basin with Utes, Goshutes, Paiutes, Hopis, and other Native American tribes, they often found their fellow children of Israel unwilling to help them colonize the territory and convert *en masse* to Mormonism. Though the Mormons never participated in the kind of wholesale extermination of Indian populations carried out elsewhere in the United States, they frequently did fight with them and consider them the enemy. But not always. The Mormons in Utah also frequently found common cause with the local Indian tribes, for practical reasons, but also because they really did see them as a chosen (if often recalcitrant) people. As Paul Reeve writes in *Religion of a Different Color*, “The relationships between

27. “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 60, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/66>.

28. See Leland H. Gentry, “Light on the ‘Mission to the Lamanites,’” *BYU Studies* 36/2 (1996): 228.

Mormons and Indians in the Great Basin were frequently messy. Mormons baptized, married, ordained, murdered, indentured, befriended, fought with, traded with, fed, employed, warred against, and ultimately aided in the displacement of Native Americans to reservations.²⁹

There can be no doubt that the first generation of Mormons saw the American Indians as part of the sacred story they were writing themselves into—a sacred story dominated by the typology of the exodus. This is how neotypes work. Latter-day Saints saw themselves as the literal fulfillment of ancient prophecies about the children of Israel, the house of Joseph, the Lamanites, and the gathering of Israel. And while many Mormon accounts of the settlement incorrectly portray it as something like the Lehiite settlement of the New World—a group of people colonizing an empty land that had been prepared for them by God—none of them cast Native Americans as Canaanites who needed to be exterminated for the people of God to prevail. The Book of Mormon’s revisions of the exodus type, combined with its portrayal of American Indians as part of the covenant people, permitted, and arguably encouraged, a different ending to the story.

The typology of conversion

Perhaps the clearest example of a biblical type-scene in the Book of Mormon is the conversion of Alma the Younger in Mosiah 27—a scene that incorporates many of the narrative elements of Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. The similarities include but go well beyond the fact that each story features a persecutor of Christians who is stopped on a road by a divine agent (an angel for Alma the Younger and Christ himself for Saul) and converted to be a follower of Christ. There are deeper similarities between plot elements, such as the infliction of a physical disability that is healed when the conversion is complete. And the language in the Book of Mormon distinctly mirrors

29. Paul W. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 74.

the language of the KJV account of Paul's conversion with the phrase "Why persecutest thou me?" (Paul) and the similar "Why persecutest thou the church of God?" (Alma) echoing through both versions. Both stories are told originally as third-person narratives and then repeated, twice each, as first-person narratives by the principal subjects. Table 1 represents a more detailed comparison.

Table 1. Similarities in the conversions of Saul and Alma

Saul (Acts 9)	Alma the Younger (Mosiah 27)
Saul is well known for "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (9:1).	Alma and his companions "became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church of God; stealing away the hearts of the people; causing much dissension among the people" (27:9).
He and his companions were stopped on their way to persecute Christians, "and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven" (9:3).	While they were persecuting the members of the church, Alma and his companions (the sons of Mosiah) saw an angel, who "descended as it were in a cloud" (27:11).
"He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (9:4).	The angel spoke to Alma and said, "Arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God?" (27:13).
He is stricken with a physical disability and becomes unable to eat: "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink" (9:9).	He is stricken with a physical disability and becomes physically weak: "The astonishment of Alma was so great that he became dumb, that he could not open his mouth; yea, and he became weak, even that he could not move his hands; therefore he was taken by those that were with him, and carried helpless, even until he was laid before his father" (27:19).
His blindness is healed, and he becomes able to eat when he is converted to Christianity by Ananias (9:18–19).	His muteness is healed and his body is strengthened when he repents and is converted (Alma 36:23).
Years later, he retells the story in two first-person narratives that are also included in the text (Acts 22; 26).	Years later, he retells the story in two first-person narratives that are also included in the text (Alma 36; 38).
Paul goes on to become one of the greatest missionaries in the early church, establishing congregations throughout Asia Minor and writing a large portion of the New Testament in the form of letters.	Alma the Younger goes on to become one of the greatest missionaries in the Nephite church, launching missionary expeditions to Zarahemla, Gideon, Ammonihah, and the land of the Zoramites.

How do we account for these similarities in two narratives that, under their own terms, could not have been known to each other? Readers uncommitted to the Book of Mormon's account of its own origins might naturally conclude that the story of Alma's conversion is simply derivative, but believers might just as naturally explain it in their own terms. Maybe all instances of divine intervention into the lives of church-persecutors work the same way. Or perhaps more modest similarities in the narratives were amplified via translation. But the fact that we can see such a clear pattern of similarity in the canonical forms of the texts, both of which present themselves as the result of revelation and inspiration, means that we are almost certainly supposed to notice. And as important as the similarities are, the differences are more important to our overall understanding of the texts (see table 2).

Table 2. Differences in the conversions of Saul and Alma

Major Difference	Saul	Alma the Younger
Saul and Alma the Younger occupy completely inverted positions within their cultures	Saul is an elite member of his culture's established church persecuting an offshoot that he believes to be heretical.	Alma the Younger, the son of the head of his culture's established church, has become a leader in an offshoot that his father believes to be heretical.
The text defines "persecution" very differently	Saul's persecution is physical. He acknowledges beating men and women in the synagogue and even persecuting them "unto death" (Acts 22:4).	Alma's persecution is rhetorical. He confesses to "murdering" people, but then defines that as having "led them away unto destruction" (Alma 36:14). His form of persecution was convincing people not to believe in Christ.
The kind of conversion is different in both stories	Saul was a deeply religious person who (according to the text) believed in the wrong religion. He had to change his beliefs.	Alma was a person raised in the true church who, out of wickedness, set about to destroy people's faith. He had to change his behavior.

They are converted for different reasons	Saul is converted because the Lord needs him for a very specific purpose, as he tells Ananias: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).	Alma is converted because of the prayers of his father. The angel tells him specifically, "I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith." (Mosiah 27:14)
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It is the third of these differences, I believe, that has the most profound implications for understanding the way the Book of Mormon relates to the Bible—here a major difference between the two scriptural texts emerges: The New Testament, by and large, portrays religious conversion as a change in a person's knowledge, while the Book of Mormon primarily treats it as a change in a person's behavior. This is not an absolute distinction; there are examples of both kinds of conversion in both narratives. But we can see an overall pattern emerge out of both volumes, and this pattern is even clearer in the book of Acts (in which all three versions of Paul's conversion appear) and the book of Alma (in which two of the three versions of Alma the Younger's conversion appear). It is certainly no coincidence that the primary theme of both books is the process of conversion.

The book of Acts opens with Christ ascending to heaven after instructing his disciples to "be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This charge is accomplished spectacularly in the second chapter, when an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost leads to the conversion of about three thousand people to a belief in Christ (Acts 2:41). Other major examples of conversion in Acts include Philip's conversion of the crowd in Samaria (Acts 8:5–12), the vision that converts the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:1–4), the conversion of the gentiles who hear Paul and Barnabas preach (Acts 13:46–48), the conversion of Lydia in the city of Thyatira (Acts 16:14–15), the conversion of Apollos (Acts 18:24–26), the conversion of the disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–5), and of course, the three separate versions of Saul/

Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. In each of the conversion narratives—ten in all—the act of “conversion” means accepting as truth the knowledge of Christ's divinity and acting accordingly.

If we look at the conversion stories in the book of Alma (including the first story of Alma's conversion at the end of the book of Mosiah), we see a very different dynamic at play. The only conversions that fit the pattern of the book of Acts are those involving the sons of Mosiah and the Lamanites. Nearly all of Alma the Younger's missionary work is dedicated to convincing people who already know the truth to change their behavior. The logic of this pattern even holds true in the case of the antichrists of the book of Alma—Nehor and Korihor—who both renounce their heresies at the end of their lives and acknowledge that they intentionally led people away from the things that they knew to be true (Alma 1:15; 30:52). The Book of Mormon narrative regularly assumes that Nephites who do not believe in Christ are not sincere—and that their supposed unorthodoxy is really just rebellion masquerading as disbelief.³⁰

As the religion of Nehor permeates the Nephite realm, fanned into open civil war by Amlici and his followers, Alma gives up his political office and devotes himself to full-time missionary work. He begins in Zarahemla proper, where he experiences great success. But his preaching in Zarahemla does not try to persuade people to believe in Christ; rather, he assumes that they believe in Christ already but have lost the will to be Christians. Alma leads them to a conversion, not of belief, but of desire, which is compared in the text to waking up from a sleep:

Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about

30. In the case of Nehor, the narrative contains an intriguing hint that his recantation of his beliefs may have been coerced: “And it came to pass that they took him; and his name was Nehor; and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti, *and there he was caused*, or rather did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth, that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death” (Alma 1:15).

by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them. (Alma 5:7)

Alma's main message to the people of Zarahemla is that they need to act with integrity to the truth that they already know. "Do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day?" he asks them. "Can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse?" (Alma 5:17-18). His listeners are in the same position that he was in before his conversion: they know what is true and have not been faithful to it. Like Paul, Alma seeks to convert others the way that he was converted himself. But unlike Paul, this is not a conversion that requires a change of belief.

When Alma goes to Ammonihah, a stronghold of Nehorism, he gets a much chillier reception—largely due to his role as the chief judge during the recent civil war in which the people of Ammonihah, as followers of Nehor, would have been on the other side. In their disputations, a lawyer named Zeezrom functions as the chief mouthpiece of the religion of Ammonihah. But we are told right off the bat that Zeezrom and the other judges wanted to stir people up against Alma and Amulek "for the sole purpose to get gain . . . that they might get money according to the suits which were brought before them" (Alma 11:20). In other words, Zeezrom is not a sincere believer in an incorrect doctrine. He does not even have mixed motives. The only reason he opposes the church is because it is profitable for him to do so. "Thou knowest that there is a God," Amulek tells him in a rebuke, "but thou lovest that lucre more than him" (Alma 11:24).

But Zeezrom comes to his senses and becomes Alma and Amulek's most prominent convert. This begins to happen in chapter 14, when other converts are burned alive and Alma and Amulek are imprisoned:

And it came to pass that Zeezrom was astonished at the words which had been spoken; and he also knew concerning the blindness of the minds, which he had caused among the people by his lying words; and his soul began to be harrowed up under a consciousness of his own guilt; yea, he began to be encircled about by the pains of hell. (Alma 14:6)

Zeezrom then goes through a conversion that incorporates many of the elements of Alma the Younger's own conversion. He falls gravely ill due to "the great tribulations of his mind on account of his wickedness," and his many sins "did harrow up his mind until it became exceedingly sore, having no deliverance; therefore he began to be scorched with a burning heart" (Alma 15:3). Compare this to Alma's own description of his conversion, when he was "racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins" (Alma 36:17). Like Alma, Zeezrom sins chiefly by knowing the truth and not following it. When he seeks out Alma and Amulek, he repents of his sins and is baptized, ending his torment and turning him into a valiant companion on Alma's mission.

The conversions of Zeezrom and Alma the Younger typify what we might reasonably consider a core ideology of the Book of Mormon, which sees rebellion and disbelief primarily as failures of will rather than as failures of belief. This is because a primary assertion of the Book of Mormon—and of the nineteenth-century narrative of its coming forth—is that God will reveal the truth to anyone who really wants to know it. This is precisely the gist of the "experiment upon the word" sermon that Alma preaches to the Zoramites in Alma 32. And it is the thrust of Moroni's famous promise to his readers that they can know the truth of his words, and by extension the entire Book of Mormon, "if [they] shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ" (Moroni 10:4). The flipside of this assertion is that, if someone does not believe that these things are true, they must lack either a pure heart or real intent. Far more than any of the texts of the Old or New Testament, the Book of Mormon frames the lack of faith as a failure of will. In most cases, therefore, conversion is presented as a change in behavior instead of as an increase in understanding.

Conclusion

There are, of course, perfectly good historical arguments to account for the differences between biblical and Book of Mormon narratives that I have mentioned. Lehi's dream was never intended to be a creation

story—it was supposed to be an allegory of converting to Christ. The exodus of some two million souls from Egypt could hardly have been accomplished as easily as the removal of a single family from Jerusalem, so it makes no sense to compare the two. And Paul’s conversion occurred at the beginning of a movement, so we cannot expect him to have had the same problem as Alma in reconverting lapsed Christians. All this is true. However, these kinds of historical arguments are alien to the typological mind and therefore, I would argue, contrary to the way that the Book of Mormon itself wants to be read.

This requires a little bit of explanation. Narrative theorists frequently talk about texts “wanting” to be read in certain ways, as if an abstract collection of words could have concrete desires and a species of agency. This bit of anthropomorphic fantasy is really just a way to elide messy discussions of authorship that take our focus off of what the text actually says. This is an especially important convention to observe when talking about either the Bible or the Book of Mormon—both of which present themselves to us as the works of multiple narrators and translators compiled over long periods of time. Sustained narrative analysis requires us to assume that the canonical, final form of each scripture has a unified structure and purpose that can be derived from the text. (Such an assumption, I would add, is not at all incompatible with the assumption of a divine origin.)

So, what does the Book of Mormon want? More specifically, how does the Book of Mormon want us to read it in relation to the Old and New Testaments? Given the assumptions above, I think that most readers of the Book of Mormon would agree that it “wants” the following three things.

- The Book of Mormon wants us to be familiar with the Bible before we even start reading. It begins at a specifically identifiable point in biblical history (the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah), and it continually references biblical events (the Tower of Babel, the destruction of Jerusalem, the birth and death of Christ). These aspects of the text clearly

suppose that the reader will have a solid understanding of both the Old and the New Testaments.

- The Book of Mormon wants us to read typologically. Most of the major figures in the Book of Mormon talk specifically about reading the scriptures, including sometimes their own experiences, as types. These include Nephi (2 Nephi 11:4), King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:15), Abinadi (Mosiah 13:10, 31), Alma the Younger (Alma 13:16; 33:19), Mormon (Alma 25:15), and Ether (Ether 13:6). If we take the Book of Mormon as a unified text, these passages show us clearly that that text understands the notion of typology and expects its readers to apply that understanding to its own narrative.
- The Book of Mormon wants to influence and constrain the way that we understand the Bible. This is a more difficult assertion to support than the other two, as it relies partially on extratextual sources, such as the eighth article of faith, which states, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God”—a formulation that gives interpretive precedence to the Book of Mormon on the grounds that the accuracy of its translation is not in question. We can find some textual warrant for this argument in Nephi’s prophecy of the future reception of the Book of Mormon. Nephi writes that, in that day, “many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible” (2 Nephi 29:3), and the Lord will answer, “Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written” (2 Nephi 29:10). At the very least, this formulation maintains that the Book of Mormon will add to the totality of the sacred narrative of which the Bible is a part.

Taken together, these three narrative intentions virtually guarantee the presence of the kinds of type-scenes that I am suggesting in this essay—type-scenes that intentionally connect themselves to biblical narratives and then change the underlying logic of those narratives in ways that force us to reread the original. This does not necessarily change the way that we interpret the Bible, but it does shape and constrain our understanding by teaching us which aspects of the original texts to emphasize and which avenues of interpretation to pursue. We should expect nothing less of a book that advertises itself as “another testament” capable of augmenting the teachings of previous testaments and leading its readers to a unique set of truths.

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