

"That Jesus Is the Christ" - Typology

Essentially every event or person in the Book of Mormon may well remind us of another event or person; the book is like a beautifully composed symphony with repeated themes and motifs. Reference to the deliverance of Lehi and his family from Jerusalem evokes the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. We are reminded of Noah by Lehi, of Joseph the Patriarch by Joseph the son of Lehi, and of Captain Moroni by Moroni the son of Mormon. Most significantly, all God-given events or God-directed persons in the Book of Mormon are reminders of Jesus Christ or his gospel. This is Nephi's point in saying, "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (2 Nephi 11:4).¹ Abinadi says that all performances and ordinances of the law of Moses "were types of things to come" (Mosiah 13:31). Through their being types, the "things which have been given of God" in the Book of Mormon testify that Jesus is the Christ.

By "typifying" or "types," Nephi and Abinadi mean a likeness of Christ or something pertaining to him. That which is represented (for example, Christ) is the antitype. We might think of a type being the printed impression left on a sheet of paper and the antitype being the solid piece of metal or wood with a raised character on it used in making the impression. Similarly, a scriptural shadow could be compared to a tree's shadow, which in its shape is somewhat like the tree itself. A familiar type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the intended sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Nephi's brother Jacob puts it this way: "And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to [Christ]; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5). Again, Moses' lifting up a brass serpent to heal the people was a type of Christ's being lifted up on the cross. "And behold a type was raised up in the wilderness," Alma taught the Zoramites, "that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live" (Alma 33:19).²

"Everything that happens in the Old Testament," says Northrop Frye,

is a "type" or adumbration of something that happens in the New Testament, and the whole subject is therefore called typology. . . . Paul speaks in Romans 5:14 of Adam as a *typos* of Christ. . . . What happens in the New Testament constitutes an "antitype," a realized form, of something foreshadowed in the Old Testament. In I Peter 3:21, Christian baptism is called the *antitypos* of the saving of mankind from the flood of Noah.³

Frye goes on to say that typology

is a figure of speech that moves in time: the type exists in the past and the antitype in the present, or the type exists in the present and the antitype in the future. What typology really is as a mode of thought, 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.⁴

Erich Auerbach in his essay "Figura" explains typology as a connection between two events or persons separate in time, "the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the

first.” They exist in history, with promise and fulfillment being “real historical events.” An understanding of their typological connection, Auerbach says, is “a spiritual act.”⁵

Although typology in the Book of Mormon fits these definitions by Frye and Auerbach, there is also in the book a time structure in which a type exists in the past and the antitype in the future. The nature and purpose of this kind of type are clearly developed in Alma’s reminder to the people of Ammonihah that

the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people. And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption. And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God. . . . Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord. (Alma 13:1–3, 16)

Typologically, those who received the Melchizedek priesthood were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world,” as was Jesus Christ (see also 1 Peter 1:20, Revelation 13:8). Detailed aspects of their ordination showed them the manner in which to look forward to Christ for redemption. And the priesthood they received was a type of Christ’s order as well as his order itself.

The clearest explanation of typology in the Book of Mormon is Alma’s enlightenment of his son Helaman regarding the Liahona, or compass, prepared by the Lord. First, Alma reviews how the “fathers” forgot to exercise their faith and therefore “tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst, because of their transgressions.” He continues,

And now, my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual. For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land. And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. (Alma 37:42–45)

This is a textbook example of a type: according to the definitions of a type provided by various scholars, the type Alma speaks of “exists in history and its meaning is factual”; it is “a prophetic symbol . . . fixed at both of its poles of reference”; it shows “evidence of the Divine *intention* in the correspondence between it and the Antitype”; and it “was instituted to perform a specific function in God’s grand design.” As with some types, it also relates to “the progress of the individual soul through the stages leading to redemption.”⁶

Not only things that are alike may be paired as type and antitype but opposite things may be as well: “We speak concerning the law,” Nephi says, “that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the *deadness* of the law, may look forward unto that *life* which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given” (2 Nephi 25:27).

Typological Conception of History

In their conception of history, Book of Mormon prophets consider types as significant, instructive, and persuasive in focusing on Christ's earthly advent, his visit to the Nephites, and his second coming and heavenly kingdom. Nephi, for example, prophesies clearly of Christ and affirms that "as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, . . . there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ . . . whereby man can be saved" (2 Nephi 25:20). In other words, the physical salvation of Israel from Egypt is a type of spiritual salvation by Christ. Faith sustained by the first develops faith in the second. King Benjamin preaches Christ directly but at the same time speaks of indirect likenesses of Christ: "And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed [Jehovah] unto [the Israelites under Moses], concerning his coming" (Mosiah 3:15). Abinadi before King Noah's court insists, "If ye teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come" (Mosiah 16:14). Amulek taught that "this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice" (Alma 34:14). And Mormon says that the Anti-Nephi-Lehies "did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming. . . . Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ" (Alma 25:15–16).

Erich Auerbach in his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* sees a conception of history such as this as being structured vertically rather than horizontally. Two events are horizontal to each other if they are linked by time or causality. A vertical connection, however, "can be established only if both occurrences are vertically linked to divine Providence." God alone "is able to devise such a plan of history and supply the key to its understanding." Auerbach gives as an example of such a "figural interpretation" the sacrifice of Isaac as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ. With Isaac the type and Christ the antitype, "in the former the latter is as it were announced and promised, and the latter 'fulfills' . . . the former." With typology, "the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and which will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal."⁷

This eternal perspective is illustrated especially well in Moroni's harking back to Nephite origins through the prophecies of Ether. In what Moroni initially thought would be his last word, he gives in a few verses a sweeping view of the role of his people in divine history. He quotes Ether as declaring that the promised land is "the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord" (Ether 13:3). He then cites Ether's reference to the type, which is the Jerusalem from which Lehi should come and that would be built up again. Then he quotes Ether's declaration that

a New Jerusalem should be built upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for which things there has been a type. For as Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, even so he died there; wherefore, the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not. Wherefore, the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land . . . and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old. . . . And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old save the old have passed away, and all things have become new. (Ether 13:6–9)

Purpose of Types

From a religious-aesthetic perspective, types have a purpose similar to that of symbols, of which they may be considered a part—although symbols are open-ended, whereas types are fixed on both ends. Jonathan Edwards in "Types of the Messiah" says,

The principles of human nature render TYPES a fit method of instruction. It tends to enlighten and illustrate, and to convey instruction with impression, conviction, and pleasure, and to help the memory.

These things are confirmed by man's natural delight in the imitative arts, in painting, poetry, fables, metaphorical language and dramatic performances.⁸

Hugh Nibley in "The Expanding Gospel" quotes the Gospel of Philip as saying, "Truth did not come into the world naked, but she came clothed in types and images. One cannot receive the truth in any other way."⁹ Bruce R. McConkie affirms:

To crystallize on our minds the eternal verities which we must accept and believe to be saved, to dramatize their true meaning and import with an impact never to be forgotten, to center our attention on these saving truths, again and again and again, the Lord uses similitudes. Abstract principles may easily be forgotten or their deep meaning overlooked, but visual performances and actual experiences are registered on the mind in such a way as never to be lost. It is one thing to talk of faith as an abstract principle, another to see the Red Sea parted by its power. It is one thing to talk of the word of God coming down from heaven, another to actually gather and taste the angelic manna. . . . [God] uses ordinances, rites, acts, and performances; he uses similarities, resemblances, and similitudes so that whatever is done will remind all who are aware of it of a greater and more important reality.¹⁰

It is this greater and more important reality that the Book of Mormon develops typologically—focusing on the affirmation that "JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations" (title page). This is part of the consecrated life, seeing all divinely given things as a testimony of God and his purposes.

Persons as Types

In both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, Joseph is a notable type of Christ.¹¹ The beloved son of his father, Joseph was stripped of his robe, thrown in a pit, betrayed and rejected by his brethren, and unjustly imprisoned. The name *Joseph* relates to Hebrew roots meaning "to add" and "to take away." In addition, Hugh Nibley quotes a Hebrew authority as saying that "*asaf* is 'sorrow' in that language, and that *asif* is 'servant,' and that the two are combined in the name of Joseph."¹² Thus Joseph's name may also mean "sorrowing or suffering servant." In that capacity he came out of "burial" in prison to preserve for his brethren "a posterity in the earth, and to save [their] lives by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:7). Both Joseph the man and Joseph the people are types repeated in the Book of Mormon. For instance, Lehi evokes the person and prophecies of Joseph the Patriarch in his blessing to his own son Joseph (2 Nephi 3). Captain Moroni rallies his people, "a remnant of the seed of Joseph," by reminding them how "a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed." That led to Jacob's prophecy, "Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment" (Alma 46:23–24).¹³

Like Joseph, Nephi is a suffering servant, is resisted by older brothers who do not want him to be a ruler over them, is bound and threatened with death, fulfills his father's mission, and helps preserve the lives of those who earlier tried to take his life. Desiring to "be strong like unto Moses" (1 Nephi 4:2), he several times likens his situation to Moses'; his brothers dare not touch him because of the power of God within him; and like Moses he guides his people towards the promised land. Nephi's breaking the bonds put on him by his brothers is a type of the deliverance of the Nephites from the hands of their brethren, the Lamanites, in the promised land: "O Lord," Nephi prays, "according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren" (1 Nephi 7:17). Stilling the storm, as does Christ, Nephi is also directly like him in being an obedient son, a forgiving brother, a skillful carpenter, and a pilot.

Mosiah is like Moses and Lehi in leading his people into the wilderness (Omni 1:12). And in leading people out of a wicked or oppressive place, all three of these prophets are like Christ. Mosiah's son Benjamin also typifies Christ as an earthly king in the likeness of the heavenly King. Like the Christ to come, Benjamin "was a holy man, and he

did reign over his people in righteousness” (Words of Mormon 1:17). The typological connection is suggested by Benjamin himself. He reminds his people that if he “who has spent his days in [their] service, and yet has been in the service of God, [merits] any thanks from [them], O how [they] ought to thank [their] heavenly King” (Mosiah 2:19).

Abinadi is like Christ indirectly and directly: “His face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did while in the mount of Sinai” (compare this with the luster of Christ at the Transfiguration and in Lehi’s first vision); he is cast into prison for three days; his persecutors shed his innocent blood; and at death, Abinadi cries, “O God, receive my soul” (Mosiah 13:5; 17:6, 10, 19).

Alma the Elder leads his flock into and then out of the wilderness, as do Moses, Lehi, and Mosiah. As a righteous judge, he prefigures Christ, the “Eternal Judge of both quick and dead” (Moroni 10:34). The conversion story of Alma the Younger echoes that of Jonah—of whom Christ said: “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). Alma says: “I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins”; “I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God” (Alma 38:8, Mosiah 27:29; compare Jonah 1–2). Similarly, Lamoni “lay as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights” and is followed in his trance by his queen who, upon recovery, declares she is “saved . . . from an awful hell” (Alma 18:43; 19:29).

Ammon is a type of Christ in saving many Lamanites who were “in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but . . . are brought to behold the marvelous light of God” (Alma 26:3). And like Moses, Ammon leads his people through the wilderness to a promised land, giving the glory to Christ.¹⁴ In turn, Captain Moroni, who with his standard of liberty demonstrates a type of the remnant of Joseph, is “a man like unto Ammon, the son of Mosiah, yea, and even the other sons of Mosiah, yea, and also Alma and his sons,” who are “men of God” (Alma 46:24; 48:18).

The brothers Nephi and Lehi also have several experiences that prefigure Christ, or hark back to other types of Christ. When they are imprisoned and threatened with death by the Lamanites, they are preserved by a pillar of fire that encircles them (Helaman 5:23–24). That pillar of fire recalls the pillar of fire and cloud that accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness—which pillar the Israelites were told represented the presence of their God (Exodus 13:21). The fire also anticipates the pillar with which the Nephite children are encircled after the Savior blesses them (3 Nephi 17:24). The people within the prison walls hear a voice three times calling them to repentance and see Nephi’s and Lehi’s countenances shining as they converse with angels. When they call on Christ for forgiveness, the darkness around them disperses and they are themselves surrounded with the pillar of fire. Their experience anticipates the experience of the people spared destruction following the crucifixion of Christ. After three days of darkness, the remaining people gather at the temple, where a voice from heaven speaks to them. On the third time they hear the voice, they understand the words and remember the prophecies of the coming of Christ (3 Nephi 11). Nephi himself, like Moses, tries to prepare his people for this coming of Christ and, like Moses, sorrows that his prophecies have been denied (Helaman 8:11–13).

We also find categories of persons serving as types. Prophets speak by “the tongue of angels,” and angels “speak the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:13; 32:3). Book of Mormon judges are in a likeness of Christ, the “Eternal Judge of both quick and dead” (Moroni 10:34), whose role is affirmed by both Nephi and Moroni in their parting testimonies. Such high priests as Alma and his posterity prefigure Christ, the great high priest, as clarified by Alma in his discourse on the Melchizedek Priesthood (Alma 13).

Typological Objects or Events

The sixteen stones gathered by the brother of Jared are typological objects like the Liahona. They “shine forth in darkness” (Ether 3:4), reminding us of the Lord’s affirmation to Nephi, “I will also be your light in the wilderness,” and of his later declaration, “I am the light of the world” (1 Nephi 17:13; John 8:12). With such a light, travelers are never in darkness.

Related to everlasting light is the pillar of fire seen by Lehi (1 Nephi 1:6). This memorable and dramatic type of Christ is like the pillars of fire in Helaman 5 and 3 Nephi 17. We may see them as representing or containing the God who “is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). As has been discussed, this fire can be either purifying or destroying. The righteous are baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, receive a remission of sins by fire, make their sacrifice—through purifying spiritual fire—of a broken heart and a contrite spirit instead of burnt offerings, are visited by a divine person “like a refiner’s fire,” and as part of that experience are “encircled about as if it were by fire” (3 Nephi 24:2; 19:14; see also 2 Nephi 31:17; 3 Nephi 9:19–20). But if the righteous shall be saved by fire, Mormon testifies that at the last judgment the unregenerate will be punished with unquenchable fire (Mormon 7:10; 9:5). Fire and brimstone are frequently presented as figurative torments; literal fire destroys Zarahemla, Jacobugath, and Kishkumen, which are described as extremely wicked (3 Nephi 9:9–10). These burned cities also represent the wicked places that will be destroyed at the end of time when “the world shall be burned with fire” (Jacob 6:3).

Directed or lighted by objects requiring faith for their operation, Nephi’s ship and the Jaredite barges are connected with Noah’s ark in being types of rebirth and baptism (1 Peter 3:20–21); further, the Jaredite vessels “were tight like unto the ark of Noah,” (Ether 6:7). They all bring the occupants *through* the water into a new life, representing in the process the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Colossians 2:12). Or, reminiscent of Jonah, the Jaredites in their vessels, like “a whale in the midst of the sea,” are “buried in the depths of the sea” (Ether 2:24; 6:6). This is part of a significant pattern woven throughout the Book of Mormon regarding outcasts of the world, who always consider themselves strangers and pilgrims (for example, Jacob 7:26; Alma 13:23). They wander through the wilderness or through darkness to escape destruction and to find a promised land—consider the Jaredites, Lehites, Zeniff, Limhi, Alma, and Ammon. They are miraculously brought through darkness and tribulation or are released from prison or servitude in a process that can also bring repentance. The darkness or death-in-life is several times described as lasting three days, the most notable example being the vapor of darkness following the great earthquake before Christ’s coming (3 Nephi 8). There may be a voice out of heaven that calls for repentance and promises new life (Helaman 5:29; 3 Nephi 9). Then the “wanderers in a strange land” (Alma 13:23) whether they have been on an actual journey or not, are delivered into a promised land of light and fertility. (The Lehites plant seeds in the new land and bring forth the abundance of the earth [1 Nephi 18:24].) The ultimate journey, of which this is a type, is to the heavenly promised land. Mortals wander through life, often losing their way, and find direction to eternal life through the atonement of Christ, who is the way. (John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”)

The process of being led out of bondage or away from destruction to a promised land could well be called an Exodus pattern. It is clear, as George Tate shows with much support, “that Nephi is conscious of replicating Exodus and that he reads texts and visions figurally.”¹⁵ In the remainder of the Book of Mormon, the pattern recurs with implications for individuals as well as communities. Redemption experiences in the Book of Mormon reenact the Exodus. The process is one of deliverance from worldliness (Egypt), rebirth, and trial to prove worthiness. As a summary of this pattern, Tate cites Alma’s declaration that “God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, . . . and he will still deliver me. . . . for he has brought our fathers out of Egypt, . . . and he has delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time. Yea, and he has also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and

he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity” (Alma 36:27–29). In sum, Tate asserts that

in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon, the Exodus pattern recurs in greater concentration than in the Bible, and its typology is more conscious because the narrators are understood to possess the Christological key to the fulfillment of the types from Nephi’s vision forward, a fulfillment underscored by the patterning of 3 Nephi around the Exodus. The Exodus reverberates through the book, not only as theme but as pattern; and the overall design of the book generalizes the patterning of community in history while at the same time concentrating the Exodus in individual conversion.¹⁶

Just as deliverance from bondage is a type of Christ, so also is the tabernacle the people built in the wilderness under Moses’ direction. Likewise, the temple in the Book of Mormon is a type of Christ. The “mountain of the Lord’s house” built by Nephi (2 Nephi 12:2; 5:16) is the place where Jacob, by commandment, declares the word given him by the Lord and serves as the Lord’s representative (Jacob 2:2). It is to the temple that King Benjamin’s people gather to make holy covenants. In effect, they come unto the Savior. At the temple, King Benjamin gives thanks for deliverance. And the temple is the safe haven around which the multitude are gathered when Christ appears in glory to the Nephites. Here type and antitype converge: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world” (3 Nephi 11:10). Christ emphasizes that he has “come to fulfill the law” (3 Nephi 15:5), as was promised throughout the ages. He says explicitly, “Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me” (3 Nephi 20:23).

The elements of wandering, deliverance, and coming unto Christ are all in the tree of life complex of symbolism. Lehi finds himself in a dark and dreary wilderness; through prayer and faith, however, and leadership by a man in a white robe (a Moses-Christ figure), he is led to the tree of life (akin to the heavenly destination). Many are drowned in the depths of the fountain or lost in the mist of darkness, connected for Nephi with the “mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise” that he prophesied would be part of the great destruction preceding the appearance of the Lamb of God (1 Nephi 12:4). The vision foretells the antitype of Christ’s appearance, being in himself a fruit white and pure, upon which, Alma says in his version of the tree of life story, “ye shall feast . . . even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:42; see also John 6:35). The vision also projects figuratively the destruction of the Nephite people as a result of pride and temptations, but the full sweep of history on the promised land leads to the restoration of other scripture and to Christ’s manifesting himself to all nations (1 Nephi 12:17–19, 13:38–42).

Typology, as we have seen, involves a person or event having some point in common with another. In a book full of events or relationships that are doubled and redoubled, the two prison scenes have special typological significance. Alma and Amulek are faced by murderous Nephites who do not repent and consequently are themselves destroyed; the lives of Nephi and Lehi are threatened by Lamanites who become converted and turn from their murderous intentions. The first experience is a figure of the ultimate destruction of a wicked Nephite nation; the second, a pattern of the conversion of the Lamanites. Nephi and Lehi are cast into the same prison into which the explorer Ammon was cast by the servants of Limhi. This action reminds us that Limhi came close to putting to death the principal instrument of the Lord in leading his people to freedom. Likewise, the Lamanites are incarcerating the prophets who can lead them to spiritual freedom.

Nephi and Lehi stand for the “fathers,” for whom, according to the title page of the Book of Mormon, the Lord has done great things, and the heavenly voice penetrating the darkness conveys a message for Lamanites down through time: “Repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to

declare good tidings” (Helaman 5:29). Feeling imperiled by the shaking earth and frightened by the voice that speaks to them three times, the Lamanites ask the crucial question: “What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us?” (Helaman 5:40). The answer is “Repent . . . until ye shall have faith in Christ” (Helaman 5:41). Doing so, they are brought into the light, and each is encircled about by a pillar of fire (signifying the Holy Ghost). This powerfully presented event echoes the Lamanites’ previous spiritual darkness and anticipates the darkness and the thrice-repeated voice from heaven before the Savior’s descent at Bountiful. As a pattern of conversion of latter-day Lamanites, this event images forth the prediction of Nephi that

the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among [the remnant of Lehi’s seed]; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers. And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes. (2 Nephi 30:5–6)

The Book of Mormon as Prophecy

As we study the book intently, it becomes clear that not only does it contain prophecy and fulfill prophecy but it *is* prophecy. As we have seen, when Moses was instrumental in healing the Israelites through lifting up a brazen serpent, that event was both history and prophecy. The Savior himself attested that the healing power of the raised serpent was a type of his being lifted up on a cross. Likewise, the story of Jonah being swallowed by a whale and then delivered up has significance in itself but perhaps has even more importance as a type of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

In a similar manner, events in the Book of Mormon have significance in a later time as well as in the time they occurred. For example, in his farewell to his sons (2 Nephi 1–4:11), Lehi is like Jacob in Genesis 48 in speaking to a people even more than to the individuals standing before him. Thus Lehi’s concern in 2 Nephi 1:17 that Laman and Lemuel would be cut off and destroyed forever applies to their family lines. He fears a cursing will come upon them “for the space of many generations” (2 Nephi 1:18); and he challenges them to “come forth out of obscurity” (2 Nephi 1:23), caused by disobedience and by repressions of latter-day Gentiles. Likewise, the Savior in 3 Nephi 20 is addressing a multiple audience: both the Nephites and Lamanites before him and also their descendants living in the end-time. “Then shall ye, who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth” among the Gentiles (3 Nephi 20:16), he says, at a time just before the coming of the New Jerusalem.

According to Moroni’s title page, the Book of Mormon is written primarily to the Lamanites, to show them, the “remnant of the House of Israel,” what great things the Lord has done for their fathers. As becomes apparent by subsequent references, the “great things” are the events associated with the deliverance of Lehi’s family from Jerusalem. The book is also to teach the latter-day Lamanites the covenants of the Lord and to convince them they are not cast off forever. The secondary audiences of the Book of Mormon are the Jews and the Gentiles. To the first of these, the book testifies that “Jesus is the very Christ”; to the second, that “Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (2 Nephi 26:12). As the Savior said to the Nephites regarding the Jews, “The time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them; and they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name” (3 Nephi 20:30–31). For Gentiles who profess a belief in Jesus but deny his power (Mormon 8:28), the Book of Mormon testifies of a “God of miracles” (Mormon 9:11).

The Prophetic Type and Tithing

The instructions of the resurrected Jesus concerning tithing are given for the benefit of “future generations” (3 Nephi 26:2), especially people who would live before the time of his second coming. Seen in the context of the Book of Mormon as a whole, these instructions have typological significance and explain why those who tithe will not be burned.

Tithing prepares God's people "against the day of vengeance and burning"; "he that is tithed shall not be burned at [the Son of Man's] coming" (D&C 85:3; 64:23). According to the scripture from Malachi that the Savior quotes, burning is the consequence for those who do not tithe. After the Lord challenges his people to bring "tithes into the storehouse" (3 Nephi 24:10), he affirms that "the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up" (3 Nephi 25:1). That is the same consequence the Lord speaks of in the Doctrine and Covenants following his promise to tithe payers: "Tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon" (D&C 64:24).

The reason those who do not tithe could be burned is suggested in the phrase, "remain in Babylon." The capital of Babylonia was itself a type of a wicked city, which in the book of Revelation probably denotes Rome or apostate Jerusalem.¹⁷ Modern scripture also designates Babylon as the world (D&C 1:16). At the beginning of the Book of Mormon, Lehi and his family do not remain in Babylon (apostate Jerusalem); also, Lehi, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi choose the way to the tree of life. By contrast, Laman and Lemuel, by implication, choose to enter the great and spacious building—defined as "the pride of the world" (1 Nephi 11:36). The essential difference is that the first group were tithe payers, and Laman and Lemuel were not. That is, Lehi and some of his family had consecrated all that they had to the Lord and thus were willing to leave behind "gold and silver, and all manner of riches" to follow God's commandment to flee out of Jerusalem, which "must be destroyed," presumably by fire (1 Nephi 3:16–17). Laman and Lemuel, on the other hand, were tied to what they considered to be *their own* "precious things" and sided with murderous Jews in Jerusalem (1 Nephi 2:11, 12).

As Nephi understands, there will come a time when "all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned." The righteous, though, will "be preserved." How? They will be saved by a prophet like unto Moses: the Holy One of Israel. (1 Nephi 22:15–21) This rescue is repeatedly described as a deliverance of the covenant people (for example, see 2 Nephi 6:17). The Exodus pattern also applies here; that is, a covenant people are in danger and the Lord leads them out. For example, Jacob prophesies to the Nephites that the Lamanites "shall scourge you even unto destruction," and except the Nephites repent, the Lamanites will "possess the land of your inheritance, and *the Lord God will lead away the righteous out from among you*" (Jacob 3:3–4).

The most graphic portrayal of this type is the deliverance of the righteous from Zarahemla followed by the destruction of the city by fire. After the cataclysmic destructions attending Christ's crucifixion, people are heard to cry, "O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla" (3 Nephi 8:24). Zarahemla, along with other cities, was burned with fire because "there were none righteous among them" (3 Nephi 9:11). On the other hand, "it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and . . . they were spared . . . and they were not burned by fire" (3 Nephi 10:12–13).

The principle involved here is essentially this: those who were bound to their material goods and ignored or disobeyed God's commandments remained in Jerusalem, Jacobugath, or Zarahemla and were burned. Those who understood tithing and considered themselves simply stewards over what God had given them were ready to leave their homes and material goods and follow their prophets to safety. The primary gathering place for such people was the temple.

Thus the Book of Mormon sets up the type of a people willing to abandon most of their worldly possessions and be gathered to a place of refuge. They are the ones of whom Nephi prophesies, "For the time speedily cometh that the

Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire” (2 Nephi 30:10). This division is similar to the one—accomplished by free choice—of which President Benson spoke in his 1988 prophetic testimony: “As the issues become clearer and more obvious, all mankind will eventually be required to align themselves either for the kingdom of God or for the kingdom of the devil.”¹⁸ According to Malachi, as quoted by Jesus, the Lord will spare those who tithe and align themselves with him “as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (3 Nephi 24:17). “Zion shall escape” if she keeps God’s commandments; otherwise, the Lord will “visit her according to all her works, . . . with devouring fire” (D&C 97:25–26). The righteous that “hearken unto the words of the prophets, and . . . look forward unto Christ with steadfastness . . . , they are they which shall not perish” (2 Nephi 26:8).

Warfare in the Book of Mormon as a Prophetic Type

Warfare is part of the history of the Book of Mormon peoples; it is included in the Book of Mormon for purposes that pertain to the people who would receive the book. As a type, it speaks to all those who are “enlisted till the conflict is o’er.”¹⁹

Warfare is a scriptural metaphor for Christian action. The metaphor is found in the standard of liberty (Alma 51:20), in the prophet’s mouth being like a sharp sword (Isaiah 49:2; 1 Nephi 21:2), in the sword of justice (Alma 26:19; 60:29), and in the sword of the Lord’s spirit (D&C 27:18). Lehi challenges his sons to “put on the armor of righteousness” (2 Nephi 1:23), just as the Lord’s people are to “take unto [them] the whole armour of God”—including the “shield of faith” and the “helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:13–17, D&C 27:15–18). An exemplary Christian leader, King Mosiah “warred a good warfare, walking uprightly before God” (Alma 1:1).

Besides being metaphorical, warfare is also typological. Typology is suggested by the implications of Nephi’s revelation concerning the last days in which he “beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth . . . to fight against the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 14:13). This conflict pertains to “things both temporal and spiritual” (1 Nephi 22:3). In both respects, the numbers of “the church of the Lamb of God . . . [will be] few” and they will be “scattered upon all the face of the earth,” yet they will prevail because they are “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:12, 14). The instances in the Book of Mormon when a righteous few in number prevail against, outwit, or elude superior forces determined to destroy them serve as types of warfare involving saints in the last days.

“We are as the army of Helaman,” begins the chorus of a song in which Latter-day Saint children identify themselves with the 2,000 stripling warriors serving under the direction of Helaman. Having been taught faith by their mothers, these youthful soldiers are spared death at the hands of superior forces. Their experiences are related at length in great detail, even though their accomplishments are only a portion of a much larger war going on. Conversely, great battles are dismissed with a few words (for example, the account in Helaman 4:5 of the Lamanites’ obtaining possession of all the Nephite lands up to the land Bountiful). The Book of Mormon does give in considerable detail accounts of the exercise of faith, inspired stratagems, the Lord’s protection, and the direction by great prophet-warriors. Time and again, it demonstrates how the Lord protects or helps the few in the face of the enemy’s much greater numbers. For example, when the Amlicites join the Lamanites, the foes are “as numerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea” (Alma 2:27). Yet the Nephites, “being strengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him that he would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, therefore the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them, and the Lamanites and the Amlicites did fall before them” (Alma 2:28).

On the other hand, iniquity brings on the destruction of the people (Alma 4:11). There is a definite relationship between the degree of spiritual righteousness and the vulnerability of the people to warfare. Indeed, in several places success or failure in battle is directly attributed to righteousness or wickedness. In this choice land, says Moroni to a latter-day audience, “he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off” (Ether 2:10).

The Book of Mormon is a witness to conflicts before the Second Coming. At that day, Satan will “rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good” (2 Nephi 28:20). The Lord will “cause a great division among the people” (2 Nephi 30:10) comparable to that between the Nephites and the Lamanites in which “the true worshipers of Christ . . . were called Nephites . . . [and] they who rejected the gospel were called Lamanites” (4 Nephi 1:37–38). In conflicts in the Book of Mormon, those who are “faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord [are] delivered at all times” (Alma 50:22). That is not to say that the lives of all believers are spared; the death by fire of the converted women and children of the people of Ammonihah shows that. But the Book of Mormon contains many accounts and promises of deliverance of the righteous.²⁰ Those accounts foreshadow the division into opposing groups and deliverance of God’s people in the latter days as prophesied by President Benson:

I testify that as the forces of evil increase under Lucifer’s leadership and as the forces of good increase under the leadership of Jesus Christ, there will be growing battles between the two until the final confrontation. . . . As these conflicts rage, either secretly or openly, the righteous will be tested. God’s wrath will soon shake the nations of the earth and will be poured out on the wicked without measure. . . . But God will provide strength for the righteous and the means of escape; and eventually and finally truth will triumph.²¹

“All the nations that fight against Zion, and that distress her,” Isaiah says, quoted by Nephi, “shall be as a dream of a night vision” (2 Nephi 27:3). In this spirit, the Book of Mormon shows the fundamental nature of latter-day warfare and gives hope to the Lord’s people. With accounts of the victories of small minorities against overwhelming odds (often with no lives of the righteous being lost) or of escapes from their enemies (as with the people of Lehi, Nephi, Mosiah, Alma the Elder, and Limhi), it confirms the truth of President Benson’s words: “God will provide strength for the righteous and the means of escape.” It illustrates that ultimately God fights the battles for the “true worshipers of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:37). As the Lord says through Nephi, “I will show unto them that fight against my word *and against my people*, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever” (2 Nephi 29:14).

The Book of Mormon as a Type

As with the fruit of the tree of life, the Book of Mormon itself is considered of great worth. Indeed, as the word of God, it is a figure of Christ the Word. It is also a treasure, typifying Christ “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). In the beginning of the book, Laman and Lemuel represent the unbelievers who lament leaving “their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness,” or so they suppose (1 Nephi 2:11). On the other hand, Nephi is willing to give up the family’s material treasures to try to obtain the heavenly treasure represented by the contents of the brass plates. When he is finally successful in obtaining the plates, he finds them in the treasury. Later, Nephi’s younger brother Jacob admonishes the rich whose hearts are set upon their treasures that “their treasure shall perish with them” (2 Nephi 9:30). The same lesson is preached by Samuel the Lamanite. Treasures hidden up not unto the Lord are lost; the riches are cursed, says Samuel, “because ye have set your hearts upon them, and have not hearkened unto the *words* of him who gave them unto you” (Helaman 13:21). The capstone instruction is given by Christ himself to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” rather than earthly treasures (3 Nephi 13:20). The book ends with Moroni hiding up—unto the Word—the words of life, an echo of the Lord’s instruction to the brother of Jared to “treasure up the things which ye have seen and

heard” (Ether 3:21). With an awareness that Christ is the ultimate treasure, Moroni admonishes his future readers to “come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift” (Moroni 10:30). Seen as a type, then, the Book of Mormon itself is a precious treasure of the earth and as such is a figure of the treasures of heaven.²²

Notes

1. Notable treatments of Book of Mormon typology are by Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); Bruce R. McConkie in *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), chapters 21–24; and Bruce W. Jorgensen, “The Dark Way to the Tree: Typological Unity in the Book of Mormon” (217–31), Richard Dilworth Rust, “‘All Things Which Have Been Given of God . . . Are the Typifying of Him’: Typology in the Book of Mormon” (234–43), and George S. Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon” (245–62) in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981).

Instruction of the Lord to Adam expresses more fully the idea presented by Nephi: “And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me” (Moses 6:63).

2. Some additional Old Testament types of Christ clearly set forth as such are manna (John 6:51), water coming out of the rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40), and the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). A thorough, even encyclopedic, treatment of Old Testament typology is by the Puritan minister Samuel Mather, *The Figures or Types of the Old Testament* (London, 1705; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1969, intro. and notes by Mason I. Lowance, Jr.). Mather defines a type as “some outward or sensible thing ordained of God under the Old Testament, to represent and hold forth something of Christ in the New” (52). Besides being contained within the perpetual system of Mosaic ceremonies, sacrifices, and festivals, types, as Mather shows, can be found as well in occasional persons, things, and events. As a work that can profitably be consulted along with Mather’s, *Upon the Types of the Old Testament* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) is a recently discovered series of sermons on typology by the great Puritan poet Edward Taylor.

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

4. *Ibid.*, 80–81.

5. Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” trans. Ralph Manheim, in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: Meridian, 1959), 53.

6. Perry Miller, introduction to *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, by Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 6. Ursula Brumm, *American Thought and Religious Typology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 24. Van Mildert, *An Inquiry into the General Principles of Scripture-Interpretation* (Oxford, 1815), quoted in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 12:500. Mason I. Lowance, Jr., “Images or Shadows of Divine Things: The Typology of Jonathan Edwards,” *Early American Literature* 5 (Spring 1970): 141. Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 39.

7. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 73–74.
8. Jonathan Edwards, “Types of the Messiah,” in *The Works of President Edwards* (1847; reprint ed., New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 9:493.
9. Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 203.
10. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, 377.
11. Nibley in *Since Cumorah* (202–5) shows how the ancient apocrypha, like the Book of Mormon, “give a peculiar importance to the figure of Joseph, who is both a real person and a symbol.”
12. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 204.
13. Nibley in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 211–13, 218–21, develops the typical apocryphal variations of this theme of the rent garment of Joseph. With respect to the typological way of thinking, Nibley says (212): “To the modern and the western mind all this over-obvious dwelling on types and shadows seems a bit overdone, but not to the ancient or Oriental mind. The whole Arabic language is one long commentary on the deep-seated feeling, so foreign to us but so characteristic of people who speak synthetic languages, that if things are *alike* they are the *same*.”
14. An extensive discussion of Ammon as a type of Christ is found in Camille Fronk’s essay, “‘Show Forth Good Examples in Me’: Alma 17–23,” in *1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson, *Studies in Scripture Series*, vol. 7 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 323–29.
15. Tate, “Typology,” 252.
16. *Ibid.*, 257.
17. Bible Dictionary, LDS edition of the Bible (1983), s.v. “Babylon or Babel.”
18. Ezra Taft Benson, “I Testify,” *Ensign* 18 (November 1988): 87.
19. “We Are All Enlisted,” *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 250.
20. See Mosiah 7:20; Alma 9:10; 19:27; 29:11; 36:28–29; 60:20; 62:50; 3 Nephi 3:25; 4:8, 4:29–33.
21. Benson, “I Testify,” 87.
22. Hugh Nibley amplifies this point in his article “Treasures in the Heavens: Some Early Christian Insights into the Organizing of Worlds,” *Dialogue* 8, nos. 3–4 (1973): 76–98.