A certain combination of temperament and upbringing can lead to a sense of alienation from the scriptures’ meaning. This paper considers the role that types might play in overcoming that alienation as they mediate between scriptural understanding and human experience, permitting deeper insight into both. The difficulties and possibilities inherent in such an approach shed light on a typological analysis of the figures of Abinadi and the brother of Jared.
The Type at the Border: An Inquiry into Book of Mormon Typology

Robert E. Clark

Abstract: A certain combination of temperament and upbringing can lead to a sense of alienation from the scriptures’ meaning. This paper considers the role that types might play in overcoming that alienation as they mediate between scriptural understanding and human experience, permitting deeper insight into both. The difficulties and possibilities inherent in such an approach are considered by way of typological analysis of the figures of Abinadi and the brother of Jared.

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 37:45)

Preface

What follows is a reading of typology in the Book of Mormon, a reading of several individual types as well as a reading of typology as a whole. For reasons that will become clear in the course of this paper, I have tried to avoid relying upon any standard definition of “types” or “typology,” hoping instead to let a meaning emerge from the text itself or, rather, from our interaction therewith. This has involved moving many of the words and images of the scriptures to below the surface of the argument, letting the course of the discussion be informed if not determined thereby. So while I may at times seem to stray from the topic of the Book of Mormon, more often than not it remains present as a subtext.
The ideas in this essay are an attempt to respond to the doubt that education brings in its wake. This doubt comes in two complementary forms: the inability to believe in what you can’t see, and the inability to believe in what you can see; modern rationalism and postmodern deconstruction. These two doubts crystallize in the following sequence: (1) Can I really take seriously ideas and doctrines that don’t hold up to my educated probing? (2) Can I really take seriously either my own ability to probe or my own construction of the doctrine I’m presumably probing?

The meaning of the gospel having thus come under radical question, the task at hand is one of recovery: recovering a supposed “original” meaning, one that has been lost, or covered over by a process of accretion, which happens whenever an idea is transmitted or quoted without having been understood. To effect this hoped-for recovery, it is necessary to go back to the original text, to the words of scripture. And since the very meaning of those words has come into question, it is necessary to inquire into the nature of the word itself.

I. Introduction: Philosophy of Words and Types

A word is a substitute for something that is not immediately present. A word is a sign that gives me reason to believe in the thing it denotes—not a sure knowledge that it really exists, but reason to hope. A new word suggests a new idea, though I may not yet understand it.

When I hear a new word, I have two ways I might approach it. I can demand an explanation of what the word means, in terms that I am familiar with. This provides a sense of closure, but can easily distort the meaning of the word, if it in fact represents something that I have not already experienced, that I am not familiar with.

For example, I see the word “horse.” Perhaps I have never seen a horse, so I ask what a “horse” is. I am told it is an animal, with four legs and a tail. It sounds like a dog to me, which I have seen. “So it’s kind of like a dog?” Well, kind of like a dog, yes, but do I have to stop there? Can I live with the anxiety of not knowing for sure what it really is, with the tension of hoping someday in the future to see an actual horse, if I am willing to look? Can I keep myself from feeling that I know what a horse is because I know what a dog is? Can I believe that
something exists that is genuinely different than anything I have so far experienced?

So the other option is to leave the word open to new meaning, to recognize how much I don’t know of what the word might be trying to convey, what it might be standing for. Such an attitude can make reading difficult, as I am never completely sure that I understand everything that I’m reading, never able to say that I’ve mastered the text. But it also provides the only way in which something genuinely new can reach me, can be taught to me, even from on high.

The words that are present here have roots going far back, all the way to Babel at least, tying them back like a taut string to the origin of language, a string carrying vibrations waiting for us to hear them. Without a certain tension, a tension we might call hope, the line goes dead.

A word makes its appearance on the page by virtue of pressure, from a pen or from type. It’s the same impression that gives rise to scriptural type, an earthly imprint of the heavenly pattern, the plan by which God’s Son would come to earth in the form of a man and be put to death that we might live. Or rather, an imprint of Christ himself, prefiguring his presence among us, the word and image standing in for him so long as we do not know him personally. Types thus provide the possibility of hope, if we are willing to abide the tension of the wait.

A type stands one step removed from the everyday world; the word is not the thing itself. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the most forceful types of Christ in the Book of Mormon should appear outside the main line of narrative—Abinadi in the record of Limhi, and the brother of Jared in the plates of Ether. Reaching back to the past through the texts that have been preserved, these subplots lay bare the core of our existence in this world and reveal him who makes our presence here possible and our escape secure.

II. The Father and the Son: The Rock of Abinadi

We find ourselves in a fallen world, without a clear idea of how we got here, only gradually becoming aware in our developmental years of the world around us. And before long, we find out that this world is far from ideal, as though everything were subject to some faceless outside force, held in captivity. We sense that something is missing, that altogether half of who we are has been surrendered in order to maintain our life in this
world. Or maybe we don’t sense the loss, or we simply accept our lot as the way of the world. It seems absurd to suggest that we have given something up, in some primeval past beyond our memory. It is no doubt better just to deal with the world as it is than to pin your hopes on some kind of imagined redemption.

This is the situation of the people of Limhi when they are discovered by Ammon (Mosiah 7): subject to the Lamanites, rendering a tribute of one-half of all that they possess, but not altogether without hope. They have some recollection of the world that they left generations back, but no idea what direction to follow in order to return. And Limhi also seems to know how this bondage arose: through the slaying of the prophet Abinadi, who claimed that God himself should come into the world and would be rejected by that world.

The outlines of the type become clear already. In at least one respect, Abinadi typifies Christ, coming among an apostate people and being rejected. But identifying the type is only the first step toward really reading it, just as finding the dictionary definition of a word like “charity” is at best the first step toward really understanding the concept. We have to inquire further as to the role Abinadi plays, his place and function. And there are two crucial elements in this inquiry, as in any typological inquiry or symbolic reading: the word or name, which defines certain parameters of interpretation; and our experience, which we bring to these parameters in an effort to join the two. In fact, this is what is involved in any reading, whether or not we would label it “symbolic.” All words are symbols, after all.

The spelling of the name “Abinadi” suggests an analogy to the Hebrew word ‘eben, meaning “rock” or “stone.” We could say, following the parallel to Christ, that Abinadi himself appears among the people as a foundation stone to be rejected (cf. Psalms 118:22). And yet, as Jacob makes clear (Jacob 4), it is upon the stone that is rejected that we are able to and must build, this being the “mystery” that Jacob sets out to unfold: how it is possible to build upon this rejected stone, the stone that Abinadi typifies and to which he testifies.

We can look for the key in Abinadi’s sermons, particularly the one concerning Christ as the Father and the Son (Mosiah 15). It is no real surprise that Christ should be both, any more

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1 I suggest reading the whole of this and other cited chapters. Their structure plays an important role in the development of the following discussion.
than that my own father should be a son, or that his son should be a father. What isn’t so clear is the connection between being a father and being a son. It is easy to think of them as two distinct roles, but in Christ they are spoken of as one. Even the name of Abinadi suggests the necessity of this connection: “Father” in Hebrew is ‘ab, spelled aleph-beth; “son” is ben, spelled beth-nun. Joined together they become aleph-beth-nun, the root of “Abinadi,” or of the rock, ‘eben, on which we are to build.2

So what is the connection that joins these two together, that binds the generations? What is the relation between the father and the son? How can we know of it? Certainly our experience of being fathers, sons, mothers, or daughters is going to play a role in our understanding of this relation, but it is not always desirable to try to make the analogy directly. For example, when we say that God is our father, am I to understand that statement by analogy to my earthly father? But what if I come from a dysfunctional family? Should I think of God as I think of the father who beats me? The other option is to assume that I don’t know what the word “father” means and leave myself open to the tension of hope. And if my family isn’t dysfunctional, if it is a “normal” family, even a “good” family? Do I then know what God is like as a father? Do I then have to accept that I don’t know what the word means?

There is a certain peril involved in questioning your own knowledge of basic words, or words that your community takes to be basic. Certainly in a family where the word “love” is an expression of coercion and dependence, it is somewhat perilous to question the fact that your parents “love” you. It is perhaps a rare family that allows its “love” to be questioned.

And yet even in such a family, the results of such questioning can be devastating, or at least exhausting. Rejecting what everyone around you takes to be plain, assuming that there’s something lying beyond the word’s mark that you don’t understand, and seeking for it with all that you’ve got, you soon enough find that things begin to grow dark, that you become blind. The structure that the system had provided, sound or unsound, is no longer there for you, and you have no framework or background against which to conceptualize the things you

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2 Naturally, such an interpretation is to be taken more in the spirit of midrash than as evidence of the author’s philological naïveté. For this particular insight, I am indebted to Friedrich Weinreb, Roots of the Bible (Devon: Merlin Books, 1986), 120.
encounter. And perhaps you stumble in the dark and are left to all kinds of temptations.

How, then, is it possible to be recovered from this state, caught in limbo between worlds? This is the great mystery, the mystery whereby the stone that is rejected, the solid structure of the language that you have lost in questioning, can itself become the foundation upon which all else can safely be built.

What is it that we have rejected? Whether “good” or “bad,” it is the tradition of our fathers that has come under question. But how is it possible to reject that tradition, deliberately cutting ourselves off from our mooring, from the sense of direction that is our birthright? Even in the most destructive cases, where we would think it obvious that something is wrong with the situation, it is often preferable for a person to deny his or her own awareness, to deny the validity of his or her own judgment, than to reject the integrity of the system. The mind will go to enormous lengths to let even a monstrously perverted world make sense, even to the point of self-annihilation. Under what conditions, then, can a person dare to make the voyage into darkness, to confront that abyss? Only when there is faith that something lies on the other side, that there will be something or someone there to carry you across. Only then can a person give himself over to suffer the abyss’s temptation and yield not to that temptation by means of retreat or suicide.

In the best of families, it is the older generation that leaves room for that faith, that lets the children go, that lets them question everything the family holds dear and true, always knowing that when the questioning is through, wherever on earth or in hell that questioning might lead, the parents will always be there to come home to.

Christ, conceived by the power of God, was able to do what he did by virtue of the hope and freedom that was always there as he made his way through the trials of the flesh. Only with the constancy of his father, and only by suffering in the flesh, was he in his turn able to extend the same constancy and hope to us, thus becoming our father, the father of heaven and of earth.

Forsaking his home, Christ establishes the possibility of return thereto, overcoming a gap that seemed unbridgeable. An individual’s transition from son to father involves going to the extremity, even the extremity of cutting himself off from his own father, from the tradition of his fathers. It is this that leaves room for him to take his own place freely in the generational
chain. The welding link that joins father to son appears to us as a loss, an absence, buried in the depths of life’s waters.

How then are we to build thereupon? Going to the extremity leaves room for restoration, true, but by no means assures it. Such a realm demands to be approached with the greatest of caution and reverence, as though entering the walls of a temple, lest the separation be eternal. And standing there as guard and guide is the type, carrying us along through the darkness as long as we are willing to abide its terms and conditions. We have got to be willing to look upon it with hope and humility, believing that protection is possible.

III. Looking into the Past: The Emptiness of Nonconfrontation

To look upon the scriptures is to liken the scriptures unto ourselves. What then do we see? It depends, of course. We need to have not only the scriptures before our eyes, but ourselves as well, ourselves and our situation in the world. And how clearly can we really see that? How well do we understand the effects of our actions, or the responsibility of our environment? When all is said and done, we simply don’t know.

But how, then, will it be possible to understand the scripture, to liken it to ourselves when those selves are foreign to us? Not really understanding our own language, our own communications among one another and within ourselves, how are we going to understand the language of scripture? This is the situation in which King Limhi, for example, finds himself with regard to the twenty-four Jaredite plates (Mosiah 8), or the learned man with regard to the sealed book (2 Nephi 27), the modern world facing the Book of Mormon. What is needed is a seer, someone who can bridge the gap from language to language, from the scripture to our experience—someone who can see into the depths of the word and of the soul; someone who knows of things past, of the worlds that we have left, where the words’ origins lie, and of things to come, the direction and purpose of it all. Only then can one really understand the present, and understand one’s role in it.

Of himself, Limhi cannot see all that; he is unable to read it. He has to turn to the seer to gain insight into that buried past. The Limhi story provides the pattern. But what is it that keeps us from looking, that we might live?
We think we know what is required; we think we know the meaning of things. And we know that we don’t live up to it. Seeing our failures and convinced that we are or ought to be able to do what is required of us, we conclude that we are just too lazy, and surely unworthy of exaltation. At least we feel this deep down, even if we try to keep ourselves from feeling that way, telling ourselves that we are good people, after all, and that we’re doing the best we can. Of course, we can only pull this off by ignoring, for the time being at least, a significant set of requirements, telling ourselves that they don’t really apply in our circumstances, or that they are to be interpreted in a certain way, not others. We turn away, and not without good reason, from the burden of unworthiness. We refuse to look at what is there, afraid that our greater knowledge will only be to our greater condemnation.

And we refuse to look at ourselves, as well. We commit sins, feel the sorrow of it, make what restitution we can, resolve not to do it again, and then try not to dwell on our mistakes. Or sinful thoughts come to us, and our proper response is simply to shut them out, and try to turn our minds to something better. The sin isn’t in the original thought itself, we tell one another, but in letting it persist, dwelling on it. And if those thoughts keep coming back to us, that only demonstrates that the battle doesn’t let up, that we can never let our guard down, lest we fall. We turn away, and not without good reason, sure that in doing so, we are doing the right thing.

And yet, are we not told of people who lose desire for sin altogether? Is it really possible that even the desire could cease, that even the thoughts would disappear, that the battle could have an end to it, even in this life? Oh, don’t tell me that; that just makes me feel even more guilty! Something more to turn away from. One more expectation that you are either unable or unwilling to fulfill; you don’t even know which anymore.

One more expectation. You know what is expected of you; you just aren’t doing it. You know what the words mean; you just can’t abide by them. You know they are true, all the more to your condemnation, or so you suppose. But is your knowledge in fact so sure? The Pharisees presumed to know the law and were thus forced into their pious posturing to avoid the terror of not knowing, the terror of having their foundation drop out from under them. They could not recognize the one who fulfilled the law, because they thought they knew what to expect. And they had to kill him, because to let him live would be to face the
abyss, to see their own sin, to see themselves, where every standard of goodness fails.

The Savior comes as one unexpected, received by those who wait for him in hope, those who hope for him in faith. He comes to those who have been left behind by the Pharisees’ standards of righteousness—those who don’t have anything to hang onto, or who are willing to give it all up, to put their hope in the unexpected. Everything, including the scriptures, changes aspect when he appears; a meaning emerges that the Pharisees could no longer recognize. Caught up in trying to live the law, they had lost sight of him and his presence therein, lost sight of the one who could provide the connection between the law and their lives, knowing the source of both.

That great type of Christ, the serpent raised in the wilderness, was given that whosoever should look might live (see Alma 33:19). All that is needed is to look upon the type, to look into the words, with the realization that maybe we do not know what is there. Thinking we know, we don’t look, sure that it wouldn’t save us, lazy creatures that we are. But can you believe that maybe you don’t know, that it might be something altogether different than what you expect? That it might be a message of redemption, after all? Can you believe that the word of God will not remove you from reality, but will in fact provide a sense and ground to that reality? Can you believe that it will be in your reach, and that anything that, in your honest awareness, presents itself as out of your reach could, in fact, be a false messiah? In sum, can you believe that you are right?

IV. The Mystery at the Boundary: The Jaredite Plates

Can we really reach back, becoming innocent again, as little children? We say that children will speak words that have never been revealed from the foundation of this fallen world; can we ever recover that pure language that now seems foolishness to us? Dreams, like childhood, take place in a different world, and even when we can remember them, how can we know of their meaning? The texts that, miraculously enough, come into our possession are in a language that we have lost, that we are cut off from. Can we ever read them?

As noted earlier, God has prepared a means of translation, a way of bridging that gap from language to language, from world to world. A seer, having a knowledge of things past and of things to come, can bring the contents of the ancient records
to our awareness, and can let us know of the things that took place in our primeval childhood, unfolding all such mysteries.

Childhood, however, is mediated by adolescence. To reach the one, and thus become again as little children, we must confront the other, turning ourselves back from our forward gaze and taking a look at where we got lost. Likewise, the people of Limhi must take a look at their past, at the eras of Zeniff and of Noah, before they can be brought back to the land that they had left.

A curious thing happens, though, when the record of that past is reviewed before Ammon (Mosiah 8). King Limhi immediately inquires about a way to read the twenty-four plates containing the Jaredite record, sure that they contain a great mystery. Their world has touched his, and he senses the worth for his own times of a knowledge of their times, of their origin and destruction.

But that knowledge, that mystery, is by no means easy to bring to the surface. It is something that so deeply forms the fabric of our presence in the world, an element so basic to our thought and speech, that types alone are able to render its existence discernable. And only indirectly at that, as we infer the material characters behind the type on the page. Not having witnessed the press itself, I cannot speak with authority. And yet the type is before me, the words, extending the promise that they will one day be made flesh, if their lead is followed.

What key, then, does the Jaredite record hold? What are these things that are so thoroughly hidden from our consciousness that to speak of them directly does them an injustice, that have to be known indirectly by their shadows before calling them by name is meaningful?

There are two things that will always remain beyond the probing of this world’s instruments: the boundaries of this world, birth and death. These boundaries are what concern us here, and how we are to make it past them. We are on precarious ground to speak of what lies beyond until we have confronted the boundary, just as Nephi cannot or will not tell us what lies beyond baptism (2 Nephi 32).

Actually, the first boundary concerns us only secondarily; at the start, it is just death that worries us, thus providing the impetus to the religious drive. But indeed, are not birth and death essentially equated in the sign of baptism, rebirth through burial? From our perspective, the beginning and the end are
dreadfully distinct, but is Christ not both the first and the last? It is at the borders that we must seek him.

And the Book of Mormon practically lives at the borders—a voice from the dust, the inaugurator of a new dispensation, itself bridging the gap between eras and worlds. And then that persistent narrative structuring device, the crossing of the great waters. The question is always there: How are we going to make it across? How can the expanse be bridged?

But what is this expanse? What caused the lands to be divided in the first place, interrupting the continuity of eternity? We say that death is the result of sin, but what about birth, an individual’s first great catastrophe? Again, we don’t know of ourselves. All of that is hidden from us in our present situation: a veil of forgetfulness. And yet the types are there, standing between us and that knowledge, indicating the way but allowing no sure conclusions until the veil be rent, or the line of our hope reach back far enough to carry us more sure intimations.

V. The Sacrifice at Mount Shelem: All Borders Overcome

To a certain point, we can speak from our experience. We know what we are talking about because we have lived it. And our experience is then able to resonate with the words of scripture, and we can to a degree genuinely understand what is written. But sooner or later we reach a point in our reading where our experience fails us, and either the words simply make no sense, or else they speak with greater or lesser clarity of something we can hardly imagine, but which must be real, for the words testify of it. When we discuss these passages of scripture, the tone is altogether different. The experience is no longer back of it, and that absence comes through in the way we talk about and quote it.

And yet the message is one that I dare not ignore. Only in reading what is there, however limited and even flawed that reading must be, will I be ready to assimilate the experience that can truly make sense of it all. The type at the border of my experience has got to be looked upon and believed, apprehended, before the reality which it mediates can be made apparent.

The story of the brother of Jared, as a type, lies at the extremity of human experience, at that place where the veil is rent and we are taken back into the presence of the Lord. Or at least the brother of Jared is taken back, as he acts as intercessor for
his people upon Mount Shelem (Ether 3). Shelem is the Hebrew singular term for the “peace offering” of the Mosaic sacrificial rite. In going to this mountain, the brother of Jared is making a sacrifice for the sake of his people, in order that they might cross the great waters in safety.

There are several dimensions to this sacrifice, several directions of reality into which it extends and along which it mediates. Each dimension stands independently, and in the course of time they do not necessarily line up—and yet at a certain point, a point where time fails, they all intersect, and the altar of sacrifice becomes the center of the universe.

Along one of these axes lie the great waters which his people are to cross. The waters stand between two worlds. Which two worlds? The nature of types doesn’t allow us to say for sure. They may be any two worlds, and the waters could be any kind of catastrophic transition, including birth and death. We are used to thinking of death as a transition requiring mediation. And yet birth too is anything but an easy process, either for the mother or for the child, or perhaps even for the child’s spirit. Nothing will induce forgetfulness like a good trauma.

The peculiarity of the Jaredite voyage, however, is that they do not forget. Language and light remain their inheritance, thanks to the intercession of their high priest. At least until the wicked one comes to them in the new world and takes away their light as they choose themselves a king. But their arrival is safe. What seemed impossible, the soul’s preservation in safety and innocence across the void between worlds, is accomplished.

And how is it done? How can that void possibly be overcome? What is the nature of this priesthood that can accomplish such things?

Once again, the past has got to be confronted. And not a temporal past this time, but an entire past world, the world that has been forgotten in leaving our eternal childhood home. Here too, the stones, ‘ăbānîm, are at the center of the sacrifice. This priesthood centers around the father-son relationship, the process by which a son becomes a father. With Abinadi we discussed the necessary alienation, in which the father is rejected. Here we face the final reconciliation, in which the son, himself becoming a father, is able for the first time to see his own father as he is.

The brother of Jared, having gone through the alienation of four years without prayer, hears the call reminding him of his duty to his people. Physically he is already a father, but father-
hood requires something much more than physical creation. A sacrifice must be made to insure his family’s safety. And not just their safety through the vagaries of this life, but their safety as they encounter the borders of this life, whether spiritual or physical.

He hears the call and follows what instructions he receives. But those only take him so far. You can do what you saw your parents do and what they told you you ought to do, but that will not be enough to provide for the coming generation. The sacrifice will be unique, and arrived at on your own.

He sees the void, sees what his people are lacking, what will destroy them. And, at the end of all his work, after all that he can do, he sees his own limitations, his own emptiness. And he brings that emptiness before the Lord, his empty stones, knowing that it is the emblem of the son joined to the father that must be filled with light. That is the great secret that he must receive, the meaning of that relationship. And there is only one way and one place in which it can be received: by making the sacrifice necessary, with an eye to the salvation of his people, at the border between time and eternity.

He makes the sacrifice, confessing his emptiness and his readiness to believe. He brings with him no preconceptions, nothing to get in the way of seeing the Lord as he is and redemption as what it is—the redemption of his own people as well as the redemption of the world through Christ to come, knowing of each through the other.

And through this sacrifice the great waters are overcome. Having confronted the forgotten past upon the mountain, and seeing his own future and the future of the entire world contained therein, he has closed up the gap that time places between birth and death, between the past and the future. Upon that mountain, time is no longer.

To us, of course, this makes little or no sense. We could perhaps go to greater lengths to spell it out in the abstract, to speculate as to its meaning and significance. But however far we take it in that direction, it can only be and must be seen as preliminary to our own liminal encounter. This is the third dimension of the sacrifice, as the account thereof extends itself into our own experience.

Recall the darkness into which questioning leads us. “Reality” is no longer self-evident, as you search for something “deeper.” It is no surprise that one of the first things to have been rejected in the great apostasy, as well as one of the last to
be restored in this dispensation, was the notion of a physical God. When all the world seems an illusion to you, you want your ultimate reality to be as far removed therefrom as possible. And when all communication seems to be a charade, it is no wonder that prayer becomes impossible.

And yet without the apostasy there would be no restoration, just as without death there would be no resurrection. When the world has more than begun to dissolve, and God along with it, the ground is prepared for a recovery, for the final revelation of God’s physical reality, dispelling all the doubts that brought you there.

But doubt alone will not reveal it. Without hope, without that willingness to believe despite all doubt, but not denying or disowning that doubt, you remain in the darkness. Let the world dissolve; be willing to search into and contemplate the darkest abyss—but only to the extent that the tether of your hope will reach. That is the compromise of living in this world both physically and spiritually. You cannot abandon the law before it is fulfilled, giving up all interaction with a physical and contingent world. But you cannot give yourself over wholly to the law, denying that which lies beyond it, and which alone can give meaning to it.

The sacrifice of the brother of Jared stands not only for the sacrifice that lies at the foundation of this world, but also for the sacrifice involved in any act of speech or of writing, of type-making. Without a willingness to surrender the purity of silence, a willingness to live by the laws of an imperfect world, no communication is possible, and hence no redemption. And yet not to believe that the words that are given us reach back somehow to the borders of perfection is to remain trapped in this world, without the saving intercession of the Word. We must recognize the sacrifice that is made, the “impurity” of a God coming into this world, but we must also believe that through that very sacrifice the heavens are opened and life is assured. And along with the brother of Jared, at the end of our journey through doubt and belief, we see for the first time, with the greatest of surprise, the physical and literal reality of the Lord, the word made flesh.

Conclusion

Our voyage across the waters has been provided for; our presence in the world is a reality. The task now before us is one
of understanding our place herein, how we got to where we are, where we are moving toward. This involves coming to know the role that Christ has played in all of these stages, and how we are in fact in his image. And this in turn can only be discovered through, among other things, the exercise of hope.

The Hebrew word generally translated as “hope,” tiqvah, carries overtones of waiting, tension, a cord pulled taut. I said at the start of this paper that, wanting my foundation to be sure, I hoped to let a meaning of typology emerge from the text itself. Given my belief that definition of a word is not something that can be accomplished within the confines of this world, that the borders of a word’s meanings have got to be confronted by each individual reader in a realm that can be known by the reader alone, I am wary of trying to build on the findings and decisions of the tradition of biblical scholarship. I agree that we need to be aware of the structures others have built, just as Joseph Smith needed to go through the process of investigating the several churches in his district. But if he had not been willing to wait, hoping and believing that the Lord would give him the understanding he was unable to find behind the conflicting definitions that the world provided, there would have been no restoration. I believe that for scholarship to be of real worth, it has got to take into account the imperative for every reader, both of scripture and of scholarship, to seek after this understanding for him or herself, letting the definitions be met at a person’s own borders, however great the tension of the wait may be.