Anthropopatheia: God and Man with Similar Attributes

The figure of speech called anthropopatheia is a fascinating Hebrew form found extensively throughout the scriptures. Upon understanding the true nature of God—his goals, mission, and physical attributes—the ancient prophets included in their writings a number of characteristics of deity that describe both God’s and man’s passions and physical attributes. For instance, God has body parts that are mentioned frequently in scripture. He is also a God who knows how to forgive, love, give comfort, and demonstrate anger. Yes, man is truly created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26—27).

Many of the passions and physical features attributed to God are also ascribed to humanity, hence the descriptive term anthropopatheia, which is a compound of Greek words meaning “the ascribing of human attributes to God.” Regarding this figure of speech, Bullinger pens that it “is used of the ascription of human passions, actions, or attributes to God.” He notes further that the Hebrews called this figure Derech Benai Adam, “the way of the sons of men.” This included “having human feelings” or at least the “ascription of human feelings and passions” to deity. Thus God spoke “after the manner of men.”

The Old Testament, as we all know, begins with the writings of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Interestingly, Moses took care to record both his own personal experiences with God (some were face to face) and also the sacred experiences of other prophets who knew God. Through the employment of this figure of speech, Moses demonstrated a familiarity with deity and identified the attributes of God and man as being similar.

An Old Testament passage helps us to grasp this form quite simply: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26—27). This key passage demonstrates that God created man and woman after his image and likeness. Likeness has been defined as “1: copy, portrait; 2: appearance, semblance; 3: the quality or state of being like: resemblance.” In a world filled with miracles, why should men doubt their divine characteristics?

Two forms of anthropopatheia seem evident: (1) the characteristics of man are literally like those belonging to God; “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exodus 33:11); and (2) God’s characteristics are used in a nonliteral, or figurative, sense: “Both riches and honour come of thee [literally “from before thy face”]” (1 Chronicles 29:12).

Anthropopatheia is the first form on which we will concentrate in this chapter. Its extensive use in the Bible is consistent with the close comfort level the Hebrews felt in their relationship with God. He was part of their lives so completely that they wrote many of their messages using this form.

Both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon contain a number of examples of anthropopatheia. The following body parts and characteristics are included:
Feet

*How beautiful... are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.*

(Isaiah 52:7)

*And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him.*

(1 Nephi 11:24)

*For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people.*

(Mosiah 15:18)

Body

It is interesting to note that Jesus was particularly interested in communicating the fact that with his body he would be made known to man.

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion.*

(Genesis 1:26)

*His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude... Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.*

(Daniel 10:6, 18)

*And many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed.*

(1 Nephi 15:13)

*Yea, I know that ye know that in the body he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him.*

(2 Nephi 9:5)

*Showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter.*

(3 Nephi 10:19)

*And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you.*

(3 Nephi 18:7)

Arm
And I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.
(Exodus 6:6)

And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.
(Deuteronomy 5:15)

Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel.
(1 Nephi 22:11)

Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph.
(Jacob 2:25)

And while his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of the day, harden not your hearts.
(Jacob 6:5)

Mouth

And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.
(Joshua 9:14)

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it.
(1 Kings 8:15)

O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled.
(2 Nephi 9:17)

Face

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.
(Genesis 32:30)

Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.
(Psalm 80:19)

And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins.
(2 Nephi 9:38)

And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told
me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things.
(Ether 12:39)

Behold, my heart cries: Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face!
(Moroni 9:15)

Eye

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.
(Psalm 33:18)

And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth.
(Ezekiel 7:9)

I pray the God of my salvation that he view me with his all-searching eye.
(2 Nephi 9:44)

But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God.
(Jacob 2:10)

Hand

O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?
(Deuteronomy 3:24)

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David.
(2 Chronicles 6:4)

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.
(Isaiah 49:22)

Yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.
(1 Nephi 5:14)

Nevertheless, after they shall be nursed by the Gentiles, and the Lord has lifted up his hand upon the Gentiles and set them up for a standard.
(1 Nephi 22:6)
Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the **hand** of the Lord.

(2 Nephi 1:6)

Bowels or Liver

Mine eyes to fail with tears, my **bowels** are troubled, my **liver** is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

(Lamentations 2:11)

Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his **bowels** of mercy are over all the earth.

(Alma 26:37)

Voice

*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my **voice**.*

(Genesis 22:18)

But behold, the **voice** of the Lord came unto him, that he should return again, and prophesy unto the people whatsoever things should come into his heart.

(Helaman 13:3)

Finger

*And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the **finger** of God.*

(Exodus 31:18)

*And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the **finger** of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear.*

(Ether 3:19)

God the Father and Jesus Christ also possess the same affections and feelings as man, as shown in the following examples:

Love

*I love** them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.*

(Proverbs 8:17)

*And he loveth those who will have him to be their God. Behold, he loved our fathers, and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

(1 Nephi 17:40)

Comfort
In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy **comforts** delight my soul.

(Psalm 94:19)

O Lord, wilt thou **comfort** my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me. . . .

Yea, wilt thou **comfort** their souls in Christ.

(Alma 31:32)

**Mercy**

*For the Lord your God is gracious and **merciful**, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.*

(2 Chronicles 30:9)

And now, behold, I say unto you, and I would that ye should remember, that God is **merciful** unto all who believe on his name.

(Alma 31:32)

**Thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people.**

(Ether 3:3)

**Favor**

*For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with **favour** wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

(Psalm 5:12)

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly **favored** of the Lord in all my days.

(1 Nephi 1:1)

Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be **favored** of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured.

(1 Nephi 3:6)

**Long-Suffering**

*The Lord is **longsuffering**.*

(Numbers 14:18)

Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and **long-suffering** towards them?

(Alma 5:6)

**Goodness**

*He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the **goodness** of the Lord.*

(Psalm 33:5)
Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!
(1 Nephi 1:14)

Kindness

Blessed be the Lord: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.
(Psalm 31:21)

Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.
(1 Nephi 19:9)

Anger

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.
(Numbers 12:9)

And I, Nephi, began to fear exceedingly lest the Lord should be angry with us, and smite us because of our iniquity, that we should be swallowed up in the depths of the sea.
(1 Nephi 18:10)

Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ.
(Jacob 1:8)

Gives Counsel

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
(Psalm 33:11)

Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.
(Jacob 4:10)

I find it fascinating that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only Christian church that teaches the great eternal truth that God and Jesus Christ each have bodies of flesh and bones. I testify that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and it is life eternal to know the Father and the Son (see John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

Now that you are aware of this Hebrew form, you are equipped to seek out examples of it on your own. There are many.
Old Testament examples of anthropopatheia include the following: Psalms 16:11 (in thy presence [literally in front of thy face] is fulness of joy); 17:2 (let my sentence come forth from thy presence [literally in front of thy face]); 32:8 (I will guide thee with mine eye); 34:16 (the face of the Lord is against them that do evil).

Numerical Parallelism

When specific numbers are designed into a text in a sequential, repetitious manner or are used poetically or to show the improbability or impossibility of a certain event by means of exaggeration, the author-prophet has applied a fairly rare Hebrew form known as parallelism of numbers. On the other hand, if he uses numbers to signify an exact amount, with no other attending or parallel number, then the author is almost certainly not using the numerical form. He is simply helping his writings become more interesting and exact.

Numerical parallelisms often communicate the significance or insignificance of an event, problem, or situation. One example is Genesis 4:24:

*If Cain shall be avenged *sevenfold*, truly Lamech seventy and seventy.*

In this verse, no question is left that Lamech will be avenged much more than Cain. A Book of Mormon example is found in 1 Nephi 3:31:

*How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?*

Numerical parallelism is a variant of synonyms and pairs. It is found in many other books of scripture.

In the Old Testament we find the form used often. Moses inscribes these words to explain the power of God:

*How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight*  
(Deuteronomy 32:30; see D&C 133:58)

This is a clear embellishment making a significant point. Another simple example:

*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not*  
(Job 33:14)

In the following example, the numbers two, three, and four form a numerical parallelism:

*The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, Yea, four things say not, It is enough.*  
(Proverbs 30:15)

“In Hebrew and other Semitic languages, numbers have no synonyms, with the exception of twenty/score. Equivalents in English like twelve/dozen and fractions like half a hundred/fifty do not exist,” writes Donald Parry. In 1 Nephi 4:1, Nephi compares the strength of the Lord (“mightier than all the earth”) to the might of Laban, which is
represented with a numerical parallelism ("Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands"). Even if Laban did not command tens of thousands, the number impresses upon us his importance among men. This power, however, is little in comparison with one who is "mightier than all the earth."

In the Book of Mormon, we find numerical parallelism used four times with thousands and tens of thousands, impressing upon the reader the extensiveness of the events concerned:

And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world.
(Alma 3:26)

Yea, will ye sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with thousands of those, yea, and tens of thousands, who do also sit in idleness, while there are thousands round about in the borders of the land.
(Alma 60:22)

Other places in which this number is used are 3 Nephi 3:22 and 4:21.

In Alma 28:11—12 we read one of the most explicit examples of all, written in a complete simple alternate form:

A the bodies of many thousands
B are laid low in the earth,
A while the bodies of many thousands
B are moldering in heaps upon the face of the earth;

A yea, and many thousands
B are mourning for the loss of their kindred. . . .
A While many thousands of others
B truly mourn for the loss of their kindred

Luke uses numerical parallelism for emphasis in the New Testament:

For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.
(Luke 12:52)

Another chiastic numerical parallelism that describes a vital moment in Jewish history is found in 1 Samuel 18:7—8 (see 1 Samuel 29:5):

The women answered one another as they played, and said,
A Saul hath slain his thousands,
B and David his ten thousands.
X And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said,
B They have ascribed unto David ten thousands,
A and to me [Saul] they have ascribed but thousands

A rather interesting numerical parallelism, or literary use of numbers, also comes from the physician Luke. Wanting to make the point of God’s concern for each of us, he writes:
Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

(Luke 12:6—7)

Incidentally, Luke also writes in the first verse of the twelfth chapter of his Gospel:

There were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people.

In this verse he uses a number hyperbole to impress us with the size of the crowd. Large congregations have often been counted in holy writ, so it was well within the organizational ability of the Twelve and others to estimate the size of a large crowd, but the use of such hyperbole stands sharply and effectively in contrast to their typical, number-using writing style. It is much like the Lord’s description of the descendants of Abraham as being as numerous as the sands of the sea (see Abraham 3:14; D&C 132:30; Moses 7:30).

One of the Savior’s most significant miracles is reported by using an alternating numerical parallelism in its structure, summarized as follows:

A Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient
B There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves
A and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?
B So the men sat down, in number about five thousand
A and filled twelve baskets
B with the fragments of the five barley loaves

(John 6:7—13)

In outline form we see this passage as follows:

A two hundred pennyworth
B five barley loaves
A two small fishes
B five thousand men
A twelve baskets
B five barley loaves

In this fascinating example, we see the interaction of two numbers, especially because twelve (dodeka) can be considered a variation of two (duo): two, five, two, five, twelve, five.

Incidentally, one of the largest numbers in all scripture is found in Genesis 24:60, in which Rebekah is blessed to become the mother of “thousands of millions.” Another is in Revelation 9:16: “two hundred thousand thousand.” The book of Revelation is saturated with the use of numbers. Many of them may be elements in numerical parallelisms. It appears, however, that the largest number intimated in the holy scriptures is found in chiastic form in Moses 7:30:

A And were it possible that man could number the particles
B of the earth,
The Hebrews also designed some of their poetry and writings according to the N/N+1 pattern. The N/N+1 pattern is essentially the equivalent of and so on or or more. Study the following examples:

1/2 Judges 5:30; Psalm 62:11; Job 33:14; 40:5
2/3 Deuteronomy 19:15; Hosea 6:2; Proverbs 30:15
3/4 Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; Proverbs 30:18, 21; Daniel 11:2; 2 Nephi 26:9
4/5 Isaiah 17:6; Helaman 3:2 (44/45)
5/6 1 Kings 6:6
6/7 Job 5:19; Proverbs 6:16
7/8 Micah 5:5; Ecclesiastes 11:2
9/10 Nehemiah 1:1

The Nephites used the N/N+1 pattern almost exclusively as they moved from year to year in their historical recollections. They seem to me to have developed this idea quite separately from their Old World counterparts, because they used the same N/N+1 formula but with years or numbers of people or events rather than as the equivalent of or more. The results, however, are nearly identical.

"An application of the process known as ‘break-up of a stereotype phrase’" is the logical purpose for the N/N+1 pattern. To break up a stereotype phrase is to “break up the components of set phrases,” a tactic poets used to create parallel word pairs. This allowed them to create new poetry while still eliciting the associations present in the original construction. It is interesting to note that sometimes ancient writers multiplied certain numbers by ten or eleven (see, for example, Genesis 4:24).

It is also interesting to note that neither the word hundreds nor hundredfold is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, yet hundred is inscribed seventy times. When more than a single hundred is needed, hundred remains singular with a number or the word many preceding it, a figure that Jacob uses twice and Mormon, once.

Other examples of numerical parallelism include Leviticus 26:8; Deuteronomy 33:17; 1 Samuel 21:11; Psalms 68:17; 90:4; Micah 6:7; 1 Nephi 4:1; Mosiah 11:19; Helaman 3:26; Ether 15:2.

Exergasia: Working Through for Heightened Understanding

In ancient Greek literature, exergasia literally meant “working out,” or in other words “to work through for understanding.” Exergasia involves saying the same thing another way so that the point is clarified and more fully developed. "The Latins called it expolito, a polishing up, because by such repetition the meaning is embellished as well as strengthened and not merely explained or interpreted as in other repetitions." It was used to make a concept, principle, or condition more clearly understood in its importance.
Bullinger defines exergasia this way: "In this figure the same thought, idea, or subject is repeated in other words, and thus worked out and developed." He further writes, "Words of the same signification are repeated to make plainer the previous statement: or to illustrate the sense of what has been mentioned before." The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that it means "to work out, perfect."

Because of its extensive use, exergasia often overlaps with other similar forms; indeed, it is not unusual for a single passage to exemplify both exergasia and another form such as climactic parallelism, antimetabole, anabasis, or catabasis. Incidentally, this is true of many verses that have several Hebrew writing forms included within them. Thus it helps to place the separate repetitions in parallel lines to follow the steps that lead to the desired understanding. An easy-to-identify biblical example is found in Psalm 18:1–2:

> I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.  
> The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;  
> my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;  
> my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

It is often difficult to differentiate between cycloides, exergasia, and other writing forms in which both repetition and a strong parallel structure are found. However, in my view exergasia seems to involve far more personal pronouns than do other similar forms. Furthermore, exergasia does not necessarily build to a climax, nor is it always found in parallel form. Although such forms may cause a working through in many ways, they all configure their elements in such a way that one word builds on the other, or one element plays off the previous element. An example of exergasia that is not climactic or parallel is Psalm 35:1–3:

> Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me:  
> fight against them that fight against me.  
> Take hold of shield and buckler,  
> and stand up for mine help.  
> Draw out also the spear,  
> and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

To further clarify, we continue with verses 4—9:

> Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul:  
> let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.  
> Let them be as chaff before the wind:  
> and let the angel of the Lord chase them.  
> Let their way be dark and slippery:  
> and let the angel of the Lord persecute them.  
> For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit,  
> which without cause they have digged for my soul.  
> Let destruction come upon him at unawares;  
> and let his net that he hath hid catch himself:  
> into that very destruction let him fall.  
> And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation.
I call these verses the “let scriptures” because that element is used nine times. The writer of these verses is originally in a defensive mode because he has been attacked. He then works through an offensive stance by asking the Lord to plead his cause, fight against his enemies, and take up the shield and stand up to help (see verses 4—6). In verse 7 we see a defensive tactic: the writer wants the Lord to remove the net that his enemies “hid for me . . . in a pit.” In verse 8 the writer moves to a stronger offensive mode when he asks, “Let destruction come upon him, . . . let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.”

Jonah 2:2—4 also provides us with an example of exergasia:

\[
\begin{align*}
I & \text{ cried by reason of} \\
nine & \text{affliction} \\
unto & \text{the Lord,} \\
and & \text{he heard me;} \\
out & \text{of the belly of hell} \\
cried & \text{I,} \\
and & \text{thou hearest my voice.} \\
For & \text{thou hadst cast me} \\
into & \text{the deep,} \\
in & \text{the midst of the seas;} \\
and & \text{the floods encompassed me about:} \\
all & \text{thy billows} \\
and & \text{thy waves passed over me.} \\
Then & \text{I said, I am cast out of thy sight;} \\
yet & \text{I will look again toward thy holy temple.}
\end{align*}
\]

In the New Testament, a good example of this form is found in Luke 15:11—32, in which a son asks for his inheritance, takes it, wastes it, and finally returns home as the prodigal to a loving father and dissatisfied brother. All works out in the end as the father teaches love and forgiveness to the obedient son.

In the Book of Mormon an interesting example of exergasia is found in 1 Nephi 4:7—27. Here Nephi finally slays Laban, working through a series of circumstances that seem to render the obtaining of the plates impossible.

With these last two examples, you will likely have noticed that I have taken the form exergasia and expanded its definition to include experiences found in scriptures that need to be worked through and cannot be left standing at midpoint.

Nephi inscribes some lines using exergasia in 1 Nephi 8:1:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind,} \\
\text{both of grain of every kind,} \\
\text{and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.}
\end{align*}
\]

Another Book of Mormon example follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And now, behold, the Lamanites could not retreat either way,}
\end{align*}
\]
neither on the north,  
nor on the south,  
nor on the east,  
nor on the west,  
for they were surrounded on every hand by the Nephites.  
(Helaman 1:31)

A religious application of the idea of exergasia is found in Alma 42:4, where one of the great reasons for earth life—working out our salvation—is explained:

And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto man to repent,  
yea, a probationary time,  
a time to repent and serve God.

Another exergasia is located near the end of the Book of Mormon:

And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God,  
and say that they are done away,  
that there are no revelations,  
nor prophecies,  
nor gifts,  
nor healing,  
nor speaking with tongues,  
and the interpretation of tongues  
(Mormon 9:7)

In all communication there periodically comes a time when a concept or idea needs to be worked through. That is what the ancients did when they clarified points of doctrine by using exergasia.


Ellipsis: Being Left Out

The word ellipsis comes from a Greek word that means "a leaving out." Bullinger explains, "The figure is so called, because some gap is left in the sentence, which means that a word or words are left out." That is, words are omitted that the sentence would ordinarily include but that are not necessary for the sentence to be understood. Bullinger further states that the words left out in an ellipsis are "words which are necessary for the grammar, but are not necessary for the sense." Further, it is "a figure of speech in which one or more words are omitted in order to emphasize the idea or theme."
Ellipsis means an omission of a word or words that would be logically necessary to the sentence construction, but whose absence does not greatly obscure the meaning. It is “the omission of one or more words in a sentence, which would be needed to complete the grammatical construction or fully to express the sense.” Similarly, it can be defined as “the omission of a particle, word or group of words within a poetic or grammatical unit, where its presence is expected.” It is a form of shortened writing. The author assumes that the reader can discern from the context the full intent of the message. Especially in parallel lines, an element may be dropped the second time, because it can easily be implied by clear allusions to that which was left out. Even pronouns can function elliptically, when their antecedents are not immediately obvious.

The fact that the ellipsis is used so many times in scripture indicates that perhaps early scriptural students and scholars had such an intense and thorough knowledge of the verses they were learning that the reiteration of every word was not needed. Many examples of this form are found throughout the scriptures. In the Old Testament we read:

*If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he [the creditor] take away thy bed from under thee?*

*(Proverbs 22:27)*

The reader must take a moment to figure out who “he” is because it is not delineated in this verse. Following is an example in the simple alternate form:

\[
\begin{align*}
A \text{ It is not for kings} \\
B \text{ to drink wine;} \\
A \text{ nor [is it] for princes} \\
B \text{ [to drink] strong drink}
\end{align*}
\]

*(Proverbs 31:4)*

Here the phrase *is it* is left out, as is *to drink*. Because both series of words were used earlier in the verse, it is automatic, almost, to add them mentally. Another ellipsis, one of many in the Old Testament, omits the word *Lord*, although we automatically include it as we read:

*Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine [Lord] anger against the rivers? was thy [Lord] wrath against the sea, that thou [Lord] didst ride upon thine [Lord] horses and thy [Lord] chariots of salvation?*

*(Habakkuk 3:8)*

Following are two more ellipses from the Old Testament:

* [You shall receive] sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper [thou false tongue].

*(Psalm 120:4; for implied elements, see verse 3)*

* I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and [I put] a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and [I put] earrings in thine ears, and [I put] a beautiful crown upon thine head.

*(Ezekiel 16:11–12)*

In Psalm 120, the second verse, we add the words in parentheses to determine whether we would have understood the verse without the ellipsis that David used:
Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and [deliver my soul] from a deceitful tongue.

In the remarkable twenty-ninth and thirtieth chapters of 3 Nephi, where so many Hebrew writing forms are found, we observe two ellipses:

Therefore ye need not suppose that ye can turn the right hand of the Lord unto the left [hand of the Lord], that he may not execute judgment unto the fulfilling of the covenant.
(3 Nephi 29:9)

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent [all ye Gentiles] of your evil doings.
(3 Nephi 30:2)

The Book of Mormon, having passed through just one modern-day translator, is usually a little simpler to follow than are the Old Testament verses with their omitted words or phrases. However, there are still many ellipses in the Book of Mormon—instances where the prophet-writers left out words that need to be understood by the reader. For example, Nephi established that his father is prayerful “in behalf of his people”:

And it came to pass as he [father Lehi] prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of re and dwelt upon a rock before him [father Lehi, not the Lord]; and he [father Lehi] saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.
(1 Nephi 1:6)

Following are some further examples of ellipsis in the Book of Mormon:

And it came to pass that he [father Lehi] saw One [the spirit of the Lord] descending out of the midst of heaven, and he [father Lehi] beheld that his [Lord] luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.
(1 Nephi 1:9)

And it came to pass that after many days the Lamanites began again to be stirred up in anger against the Nephites, and they [the Lamanites] began to come into the borders of the [Nephite] land round about. Now they [the Lamanites] durst not slay them [the Nephites], because of the oath which their [Lamanite] king had made unto Limhi; but they would smite them [Nephites] on their cheeks, and exercise authority over them [the Nephites].
(Mosiah 21:2—3)

And we have entered into their [Lamanite] houses and [we have] taught them, and we have taught them [the Lamanites] in their [Lamanite] streets; yea and we have taught them [the Lamanites] upon their [Lamanite] hills; and we [Ammon and his brethren] have also entered into their [Lamanite] temples and their [Lamanite] synagogues and taught them; and we [Ammon and his brethren] have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our [Ammon and his brethren] cheeks; and we [Ammon and his brethren] have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords.
(Alma 26:29)

And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, (and he [Nephi] kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it [this last record] in his [Nephi’s] stead; and he [Amos] kept it upon the plates of Nephi also.
(4 Nephi 1:19)

Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and [why do ye] yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and [yet suffer] the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?

(Mormon 8:39)

Additional examples of ellipsis are numerous in all books of scripture, and they are so easily identified that other references have not been listed.

Eleutheria: Bold Speech

Jesus himself best demonstrated eleutheria in this way: “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world” (John 18:20). This fascinating form is used in many languages and cultures, but it is always most effective when used by a prophet. This is because it is characterized by a “perfect freedom and boldness” of expression, often the hallmark of a prophet preaching the gospel.24 It is the form where those who speak do not mince words.

The principle of teaching with boldness and candor was prized by the ancients, as portrayed by this passage:

_The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected._


There were not many that had the courage to call Herod a “fox” or the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites,” “blind guides,” “fools and blind,” “blind Pharisee,” “whited sepulchers . . . full of dead men’s bones,” murderers (“partakers with them in the blood of prophets”), “serpents,” and “generation of vipers.” These are words that Jesus spoke in just one chapter of Matthew (see Matthew 23:13—33). Jesus, as recorded by Matthew, uses eleutheria in its most pure form at this time.

Because the religious atmosphere was such that the people Jesus encountered in the Western Hemisphere were much more receptive to his teachings than the Jews, a chapter like Matthew 23 is not found in 3 Nephi. However, we can find in Helaman 9:21—22 words just as powerful:

_But Nephi said unto them: O ye fools, ye uncircumcised of heart, ye blind, and ye stiffnecked people, do ye know how long the Lord your God will suffer you that ye shall go on in this your way of sin? O ye ought to begin to howl and mourn, because of the great destruction which at this time doth await you, except ye shall repent._

Because the Jews, Nephites, and Lamanites had so hardened their hearts, boldness was vital. Thus we read in Matthew 7:6 (see 3 Nephi 14:6):

_Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine._

Jesus asks, “Why do ye not understand my speech?” (John 8:43). He answers his own inquiry by stating:
Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

(John 8:44; see 1 John 3:10)

The necessity of such open and bold speech is commented on relatively often in scriptures, such as when Jesus speaks openly to Peter, as recorded in Mark 8:32—33:

And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Often prophets find need to speak in great candor, and those that obey are immediately blessed through the power of the prophets’ messages. Paul writes about his boldness of speech (see 2 Corinthians 7:4) and uses eleutheria often (see Romans 1:16). However, Jacob is grieved to use so much boldness:

And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God; . . . Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained . . . to admonish you according to your crimes . . . and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations . . . the truth according to the plainness of the word of God.

(Jacob 2:7—11)

Thus these verses have become one of the greatest examples of eleutheria ever written.

The Book of Mormon prophets, some of which carried with them the direct influences of their roots in Jerusalem, occasionally spoke and wrote using eleutheria:

And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel.

(1 Nephi 14:17)

Another example of eleutheria is found in 2 Nephi 25:28—30, where plainness of speech is powerfully used in both negative and positive ways:

And now behold, my people, ye are a stiffnecked people; wherefore, I have spoken plainly unto you, that ye cannot misunderstand. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you; for they are sufficient to teach any man the right way; for the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law. And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this ye shall in nowise be cast out. And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses.
We read more examples of this interesting, bold form in 2 Nephi 28:9—12, in which strong words warn those who lived then and us today of wicked leaders:

*Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark. And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.*

(2 Nephi 28:9—10)

In 3 Nephi 11:29 and 34, inscribed anciently on metal plates, we learn that the principle of speaking plainly, openly, and with much candor was still with the prophets 550 years after their forefathers came to the Western Hemisphere. As Moroni abridged the writings of Ether, he edited in many additional examples of candor. One of the most clear is Ether 8:23, where these words are written:

*Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.*

It could hardly be clearer. This form of openness, freedom of expression, and candor leaves us knowing what our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want us to do as spoken by their mouthpiece, the prophet. I am thankful for explicit communication.


**Eironeia: An Opposite Expression**

Eironeia is also called irony. This form is so named because the speaker intends the use of irony "to convey a sense contrary to the . . . words employed: not with the intention of concealing his real meaning, but for the purpose of adding greater force." It is also used to communicate contrast or to reveal the foolishness of those who feel there are powers greater than those of Jehovah. Bullinger divides eironeia into five categories:

**I. Divine Irony**

Where the speaker is either the Father or the Son.

**II. Human Irony**

Where the speaker is a human being.

**III. Peirastic Irony**

Where the words are not spoken ironically in the normal sense, but . . . by way of trying or testing.

**IV. Simulated Irony**

Where the words are used by man in hypocrisy.

**V. Deceptive Irony**

Where the words are not only hypocritical, but false and deceptive.

Another example of divine irony is:
Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.
(Judges 10:14)

In this sarcastic statement, God unmistakably implies that these gods cannot rescue the one who is in trouble.

An interesting example of irony is found in Ezekiel 3:24—26, where the Spirit tells Ezekiel, “Go, shut thyself within thine house.” Jehovah then communicates to Ezekiel that the house of Israel will find him even in that place of resort and there “shall put bands upon” him, for they themselves “are a rebellious house.”

The name Lucifer, which was given to Satan, seems still to be identified as “son of the morning,” a significant irony (see Isaiah 14:12; 2 Nephi 24:12).

The Lord speaks prophetically in an interesting manner when he states:

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord.
(Isaiah 2:10)

Little good will it do us to hide, because the Lord knows where we are at all times. A rather gruesome example of irony is found in Isaiah 3:24, where we read:

And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

These words all come after the Lord has described what the daughters of Zion will do to attempt to be beautiful and earn praise for their outward appearance. This is pure eironeia.

It seems to me that Isaiah uses irony perhaps more than almost any other scriptural author. In Isaiah 8:9—10, we learn that no matter how much the people unite against the Lord they “shall be broken in pieces,” a phrase that is repeated three times for emphasis (a perfect cycloides; see pages 33—35).

One language scholar takes an interesting look at the subject by describing a person who uses irony as “a dissembler, one who says less than he thinks or means.” Yet another author comments that when accusations occur, in addition to using satire, “there is more latitude for sarcasm and irony,” which is certainly true in several scriptural passages.

Jesus, in his sermonizing in the Western Hemisphere, unravels a familiar divine irony pertaining to the lost tribes of Israel when he states:

For they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he has taken them.
(3 Nephi 17:4)

Irony is sometimes found when the obvious is stated, as Jesus does here. In that sense, as we all know, the lost sheep were never lost.
A fascinating irony is located in Ether 8:1—9:15, where Moroni writes about Akish, who desires the daughter of Jared to be his wife after she has schemed with Jared to dance for Akish. When Akish asks for Jared’s daughter, Jared says, “I will give her unto you, if ye will bring unto me the head of my father, the king” (Ether 8:12). The Lord warns Omer, Jared’s father, to leave the land. Jared is then anointed king because of the wickedness of Akish and his associates. Ironically, Akish later kills Jared by beheading him. Jared dies the way he hoped his father would die, killed by the person he directed to kill his father. A double irony, also involving poetic justice, eventually develops when Omer is restored again as king.

A human irony is found in Mosiah 17:13—19. Abinadi warns the evil people who dwell where he is preaching that they will be destroyed by fire. Abinadi is burned to death himself. Irony often intensifies a tragic situation. Earlier in his ministry Abinadi taught the ten commandments and other powerful words of the Lord to the children of Israel and their priests, but the priests, of all people, ironically did not understand the law (see Mosiah 12:25—27). The false priests knew the words of scripture but did not know their meaning.

In Alma 30:59—60 is found the highest form of deceptive irony. After Korihor is trampled down and killed, we read:

And thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell.

Satan’s ministry is saturated with eironeia, but his not standing by his evil fellow servants is perhaps the most significant irony of all.

Another passage describes a circumstantial irony in the Book of Mormon:

The armies of the Nephites, when they saw the appearance of the army of Giddianhi, had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he would spare them. . . . when the armies of Giddianhi saw this they began to shout with a loud voice, . . . for they had supposed that the Nephites had fallen with fear.
(3 Nephi 4:8—9)

The irony here is obvious: while the Giddianhites think the Nephites are fearful of them, they have in fact fallen to the ground to pray. After a terrible struggle, the Nephites are victorious (see 3 Nephi 4:12).

Finally, another wonderful example of irony in the peirastic form is found in Alma 55, where the Nephites under Moroni cause the Lamanites who are guarding the Nephite prisoners to become drunk. The Nephites easily liberate those who are incarcerated and are able to retake the city. Later the Lamanites try to get the Nephite guards drunk using the same procedure, but the scheme does not work a second time for obvious reasons.


3. Ibid., s.v. “anthropopathy.”


8. “This is the best definition of infinity that I have seen,” stated H. Clay Gorton, conversation with author, 23 May 1996.


10. Ibid., 329.


13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


18. Ibid.


23. This is especially true in ancient languages that often expressed personal pronouns only through verb conjugations.


25. Ibid., 807.

26. Ibid.
