

"Not Cast Off Forever" - Imagery

Moroni may be thinking imagistically when he says that through knowing the covenants the Lamanites can be assured "they are not cast off forever" (title page). The literal meaning of "cast off" is "being put away or separated from God." But used figuratively, it gains deeper meaning. In reflections that precede the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite, Mormon says, "We read that in the great and last day there are some who shall be cast out, yea, who shall be cast off from the presence of the Lord" (Helaman 12:25). Samuel's words give force to that concept by comparing an unrepentant person to an unproductive tree: "Whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire; . . . for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness" (Helaman 14:18). In saying this, Samuel may be quoting from Zenos's allegory of the tame and wild olive trees: "the trees of my vineyard are good for nothing save it be to be hewn down and cast into the fire" (Jacob 5:42).

Imagery in a literary sense is "a picture made out of words."¹ It "refers to images produced in the mind by language, whose words and statements may refer to experiences which could produce physical perceptions were the reader actually to have those experiences, or to the sense-impressions themselves."² As Tremper Longman explains,

In order to describe a person, object, or event, the [writer] will explicitly or implicitly compare the item with something or someone else that is similar in some way but that is also different. The difference between the two causes the reader to recognize the presence of an image and stimulates him or her to search for the similarity within the difference that the image conceals.³

Though imprecise, Longman says, images are vivid and memorable, present old truths in new ways, and speak directly to the heart.⁴

The vividness and clarifying power of imagery are illustrated in Ammon's response to his and his brothers' missionary labors. He has been successful in helping the Lamanites know their true identity, acknowledge Nephite spiritual leadership, and accept covenants that keep them from being cast off from God forever. At the completion of this missionary service, Ammon tries to convey to his brothers his feelings. He is limited, though, in expression: "I cannot say the smallest part which I feel," he acknowledges (Alma 26:16). Nevertheless, the feelings he does communicate are presented indirectly but effectively through imagery. The Lamanites were "in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God!" (Alma 26:3). Thousands have been brought "into the fold of God" (Alma 26:4) through missionary shepherds. Then comparing himself and his brothers to harvesters and their converts to sheaves, he says:

The field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted. Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them. But behold, they are in the hands of the Lord of the harvest, and they are his; and he will raise them up at the last day. (Alma 26:5-7)

Continuing to convey his feelings with figurative language, Ammon compares his heart to a cup: "My heart is brim with joy" (Alma 26:11). The converts have been brought to "sing redeeming love" (Alma 26:13); they have been

loosed “from the chains of hell” (Alma 26:14); and having been “encircled about with everlasting darkness,” they now are brought into God’s “everlasting light” (Alma 26:15). Reflecting on his and his brothers’ own experience of conversion, Ammon wonders why God did not let the “the sword of his justice” fall on them (Alma 26:19). Instead, he brought them over “that everlasting gulf of death and misery” to the salvation of their souls (Alma 26:20). He has been mindful of them as part of “a branch of the tree of Israel . . . lost from its body in a strange land” (Alma 26:36). Thus, through use of appropriate imagery, Ammon calls on his auditors to enrich the meaning of his words by making associations from their experiences, just as Jesus did with his parables.

In a similar way, Mormon uses a series of metaphors to show the movement through peril to safety of those who covenant by baptism:

Thus we see that the gate of heaven is open unto all . . . who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ. . . .
Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked— and land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven.
(Helaman 3:28–30)

In this rapid shift of comparisons, Mormon uses pairs and triplets to intensify the effect of the images. The word (and sword) of God is “quick and powerful” in dividing “the cunning and the snares and the wiles” of the devil, and the course across the gulf of misery is “strait and narrow.”

Had Abinadi declared, “The life of King Noah shall become of little value,” his message would have lacked force and vitality. With imagery, his message is effective and stirring: the life of King Noah shall be “as a garment in a furnace of fire. . . . as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot. . . . as the blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land” (Mosiah 12:10–12).⁵

Similarly, Helaman’s instructions to his sons would have been weak and colorless had he said, “Remember to establish your lives on Christ, the Son of God, that when the devil causes trouble, he shall have no power over you because of the way you have lived.” Instead, he expresses this idea memorably and with intensity by comparing his sons’ faithful actions to building a weatherproof house:

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall. (Helaman 5:12)

Moroni could have blandly said, “The Jaredites faced great difficulty in crossing the ocean.” Instead, he makes the dangerous circumstances of the Jaredites immediate and real by reporting, “They were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind” (Ether 6:6). Again speaking imagistically, Moroni says the Lamanites “are driven about as chaff before the wind . . . or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves, without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her” (Mormon 5:16, 18).

Imagery such as this helps make the Book of Mormon appeal to all our senses, including our spiritual sense. Indeed, some of our deepest responses to truth are through feelings. By stepping back and looking at imagery in the Book of Mormon as a whole, we can discover patterns hidden beneath the surface that increase the meaning and force of the book.

Imagery patterns in the Book of Mormon are important indexes to deep meanings. That is true especially in such repeated basic images as trees, rivers, and fire—things that to people like those in Lehi’s group would be closely connected to survival. Images such as these are archetypes; that is, in the words of biblical scholar T. R. Henn, they

are often linked to basic, recurrent and apparently universal symbols, which suggest conscious or subliminal meanings in many literatures. . . . For a people at first nomadic and then agricultural, cave, desert, river, well and fountain, storm and rain and drought, tower and wall, have a special immediacy. Images of the plough, the seed and the sower, the vineyard and the shepherd, are more germane to the settled life of the New Testament than the Old. The manifestations of God may commonly be perceived in thunder, lightning, in the pillar of fire, or even in the mulberry-trees. . . . Gold and silver, metals that are purified by smelting, serve to set forth the immortal character of the soul.⁶

Another well-known biblical scholar, Mircea Eliade, affirms that in primitive societies the importance of an object or an act is that it “imitates or repeats an archetype.”⁷

To consider just one example of an archetype, crossing a river or an ocean is a widely accepted symbol for going from one life to another, for rescue, and for salvation. Literal, figurative, or prophetic crossings in the Book of Mormon develop salvation as a significant concern. Nephi sees the Gentiles going “forth out of captivity” “across the many waters” (1 Nephi 13:29). Once Lehi and his family have the Liahona, they begin the extensive part of their journey into the wilderness by first crossing the river Laman (1 Nephi 16:12). God tells Nephi to construct a ship so that “I may carry thy people across these waters” (1 Nephi 17:8). The Mulekites “were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters” (Omni 1:16). The Lord miraculously provides light for the Jaredite barges and brings the people across the “raging deep” into the promised land (Ether 3:3). By contrast, some of those in Lehi’s vision who do not hold fast to the iron rod are drowned in the river of filthy water; in the upheavals before Christ’s coming, many notable cities are sunk into the sea, drowning their inhabitants. Commenting on the connection between water and death, literary critic Northrop Frye says water “traditionally belongs to a realm of existence below human life, the state of chaos or dissolution which follows ordinary death, or the reduction to the inorganic. Hence the soul frequently crosses water or sinks into it at death.”⁸

Principal Archetypes in the Book of Mormon

The most dominant images in the Book of Mormon are also the simplest and most basic. Either literally or figuratively they pertain to fire, light and darkness, captivity and deliverance, wilderness or wandering, trees and waters of life, and dust. We may think in this respect of the medieval division of life—both as microcosm and macrocosm—into earth, air, fire, and water. Overall, these images confirm the truth of Lehi’s understanding that “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) and that opposition ultimately can be beneficial to the righteous.⁹

With some of these images, the opposition is obvious, as in the contrast between light and darkness or between captivity and deliverance. But even the single images, like fire, are used to emphasize opposition. Fire accompanied Lehi’s call to be a prophet just as it announced Moses’ call at the burning bush. Whereas the righteous will be saved by fire, the wicked will be destroyed by it (1 Nephi 22:17). To approach the tree of life is to risk wandering into mists or death by drowning. For some of Lehi’s family, salvation comes through departing into the wilderness

with their tents, yet the rebellious sons see it in reverse: from their perspective, Lehi has led them out to “perish in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 2:11). Thus, as with essentially all of the Book of Mormon images, though there is a risk of loss or death associated with an image such as fire or water, there are also great rewards that come from going through or over water, being enveloped in flames, coming out of dust, breaking the chains of bondage, wandering through the wilderness, and the like.

This two-sidedness will become clearer as we look closely at the six principal images.

Fire

Lehi’s dream showed that the justice of God dividing the wicked from the righteous is like a flaming fire (1 Nephi 15:30). From that point on to the end of the Book of Mormon, fire operates in both helpful and destructive ways. At the extremes, the righteous will be “visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost” whereas their enemies will be destroyed by fire (3 Nephi 12:2; 1 Nephi 22:17).

Nephi’s firelike strength in 1 Nephi 17 is a sign of his having the Lord’s power but is a threat to his brothers, who would wither as dried reeds if they touched him. Quoting Isaiah, Nephi considers fire by night as blessing the righteous in being a sign of the Lord’s presence, and he prophesies of terrors to the wicked through destructive fires at both the first appearance of Christ among the Nephites and before his second coming (2 Nephi 14:5; 26:6, 27:2). As for himself, Nephi says that God has “filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh” (2 Nephi 4:21).¹⁰

Fire dominates the martyrdom of Abinadi. Eventually King Noah and his wicked priests are also consumed by fire, but their destruction is that of the wicked and foretells their spiritual torment, which will be like a lake of fire and brimstone. On the other hand, the martyrdom of Abinadi serves as a testimony against the wicked. Further, as Alma perceives concerning the innocent Nephite martyrs at Ammonihah, “the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory” (Alma 14:11).

Fire plays an unexpected role in the experience of the brothers Nephi and Lehi in prison. When they are about to be put to death, these prophets are encircled about by fire—which instead of destroying them leads to their release from prison. Likewise, their Lamanite captors, who had been imprisoned within the walls of their hatred and error, are set free when they repent and are encircled by a pillar of fire. Then all are “filled as if with fire” (Helaman 5:45) by the Holy Ghost. Although the Lamanites at first are immobilized by a cloud of darkness (typifying their spiritual condition), their eventual faith brings light out of darkness. Shaken by the tremors under the prison, the Lamanites are pierced to the soul by “a still voice of perfect mildness” and later hear “a pleasant voice” whisper peace unto them (Helaman 5:30, 46).

As part of the cataclysmic events in the New World associated with the crucifixion of Christ, the “refiner’s fire” destroys the most wicked cities, such as Zarahemla and Jacobugath. Conversely, in the most holy scenes in 3 Nephi, fire comes out of heaven and encircles the little children and those who have been baptized (3 Nephi 9:3, 9; 17:24; 19:14). In like manner, Mormon says the righteous are to be baptized, “first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost,” while the holiness of Jesus Christ “will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire” upon the wicked (Mormon 7:10; 9:5). Thus, though the source of fire is ultimately the same, its effect of punishment or of glorification depends on the spiritual condition of the recipient.

Light and Darkness

As Christ is a fire, so is he a light in the wilderness (1 Nephi 17:13). In vision, Lehi saw the Son of God as glowing brighter than the sun (1 Nephi 1:9). He also saw Christ's apostles dressed in startlingly white garments (1 Nephi 1:10, 12:10; see also 3 Nephi 19:25). Both actually and figuratively, light and whiteness are associated with truth, purity, and divine guidance, just as darkness is associated with unbelief and error (see, for example, Alma 40:14).

Moving from darkness to light gives concrete meaning to the process of redemption. In his dream-journey, Lehi travels in darkness for many hours before being brought, through the mercy of the Lord, to the tree of life with its white fruit of the Savior's atonement and love (1 Nephi 8:8–11; 11:8–24). While unconscious, Lamoni enters into a dark condition but arises from it enlightened. Ammon

knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the *dark* veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the *light* which did *light* up his mind, which was the *light* of the glory of God, which was a marvelous *light* of his goodness—yea, this *light* had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of *darkness* having been dispelled, and that the *light* of everlasting life was *lit* up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God. (Alma 19:6)

Alma's conversion is similarly framed in terms of his emerging from darkness into light. This experience prepares him to understand and prophesy about a stone or "interpreters" that the Lord will prepare for a future prophet. These interpreters (or Urim and Thummim) "shall shine forth in darkness unto light" in bringing "forth out of darkness unto light" the secret works and abominations of the Nephite people and make them known "unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land" (Alma 37:23–25).

The most dramatic opposition of light and darkness is connected with the appearance of Jesus Christ. Samuel the Lamanite predicts that there will be great lights in heaven at the Savior's birth, but he prophesies also that darkness will attend the Savior's death (Helaman 14:3, 20). In the first part of Samuel's prophecy, light and order are associated with the Creator and creation (a new star). On the other hand, the chaos of things splitting apart as well as intense darkness—the opposites of creation—are associated with the death of the Creator. Samuel the Lamanite says the earth shall shake and tremble and rocks shall be broken and torn in two, just as in Christ's death there is a division of body and spirit.

The Savior's coming to the Nephites out of darkness and great destruction is to them a great miracle of light. After the earth comes together again, a "Man" descends out of heaven clothed in a white robe and declares, "I am the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 10:10; 11:8, 11).¹¹ In a series of unforgettable instructions, the Savior teaches the gathered multitude to be "the light of this people" (3 Nephi 12:14), to realize that "the light of the body is the eye" (3 Nephi 13:22), and that "I am the law, and the light" (3 Nephi 15:9). They are also instructed to hold up their light "that it may shine unto the world" (3 Nephi 18:24). Then he causes the "light of his countenance" to shine upon his disciples, "and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus" (3 Nephi 19:25).

The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is itself an experience of light. Calling on the power of light imagery, Moroni poetically declares:

And blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God. (Mormon 8:16)

Captivity and Deliverance

Joseph who saved his family in Egypt foretold that the Messiah would bring latter-day Lamanites “out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom” (2 Nephi 3:5). Here we see the contrast between darkness and light linked with captivity and deliverance. Both sets of images communicate to us a process, a movement, a rebirth, through which humans become whole by coming to a physical or spiritual promised land or condition.

Again and again, individuals or peoples in the Book of Mormon are delivered from captivity. Sometimes they are physically enslaved; other times the captivity is of the mind and spirit; or the two may be connected. In the wilderness, Nephi bursts the cords his brothers use to tie him up. Later, on board the ship, he is freed by a miracle from the ropes binding him. The first case of physical deliverance is followed by Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, which promises spiritual deliverance; after the ship incident, the group is physically delivered and arrives at the land of promise.

Other individuals put into bondage, especially through being cast into prison, are Abinadi, Alma and Amulek, Ammon and his brethren, Nephi and Lehi, and the Three Nephites. What happens to them parallels the freeing of Moses and the Israelites by God’s intervention, just as God takes direct action to save Lehi and his family (the two groups are often linked together, as in 1 Nephi 4:2 and Alma 36:28–29), Limhi and his people, and Alma and his followers. In each case, bondage is associated with the powers of Satan—with his prisons of death and hell—whereas deliverance comes through the power of God.

Bondage often seems to be necessary to prepare a person for conversion or salvation. After Aaron is freed (Alma 21:14–17), he and his brothers are tremendously successful. It is as though they somehow need to go through the experience of physical bondage in order to deliver others from spiritual bondage. Further, the captivity suffered by such peoples as Alma’s group is beyond what humans can solve, requiring the power of God to be shown directly: “They were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God” (Mosiah 24:21).

In like manner, oppressive spiritual bondage is miraculously overcome by the power of God. That is the core of the testimony of Alma the Younger, and it is also the experience of the Lamanites taught by Ammon and his brethren. They are moved out of Satan’s bonds of “everlasting darkness and destruction” into the refuge of God’s “everlasting light” and “the matchless bounty of his love” (Alma 26:15).

As one who has experienced personal bondage, Alma bases his sermon to the people of Zarahemla on the captivity/deliverance theme while touching as well on the other images treated here. He appeals to the people to remember their fathers’ captivity and says a merciful God has “delivered their souls from hell.” The fathers were awakened “out of deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word.” Though they have been like sheep who have gone astray into the wilderness, they are encouraged to bring forth good fruit. Otherwise, the ax is poised at the root of the tree and the unrepentant shall be “hewn down and cast into the fire” (Alma 5:6, 7, 56).

Wilderness or Wandering

When God frees people from bondage, leading people out into and then through a wilderness often seems to be the way he does it. The pattern of escape into a wilderness is that of the Exodus under Moses. With many references to the children of Israel being led out of Egypt, miraculous escape is found in the stories of Lehi, Nephi, Mulek, Mosiah, Limhi, Alma, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, Jared, and King Omer.

With the righteous, the wilderness can be a place of refuge and concealment; for the wicked or benighted, such as the people of Amulon or the Gadiantons or many of the Lamanites, the wilderness is a hideout or a permanent place of habitation. It can be a place of escape or a place of danger.

Responses to the wilderness are dramatically different. For righteous Nephi, the wilderness is a place of receiving revelation, but Laman and Lemuel fear perishing in it. Nephi's experience in the wilderness teaches faith, the rewards of obedience, and gratitude to God: "He hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness" (2 Nephi 4:20). For Laman and Lemuel and their posterity, it is a place where they become a "wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, . . . dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven" (Enos 1:20).

The essential difference is that the Lord intends his people to go through the wilderness (the command to Lehi) or else to civilize it (as in the case of Alma in the land of Helam), not simply to remain in it, as do the priests of Noah. Living in a tent is necessary for a time, but the permanence of building a temple is preferred. Even the most righteous Saints may wander through the land for a while (Jacob 7:26; Alma 26:36), but an aimless wandering is "losing one's way"—a root meaning of "wander." That is the spiritual condition of many of the descendants of Laman and Lemuel (Mormon 5:18). The way out is to have the word of Christ as guide, like a Liahona, to point "a straight course to eternal bliss" and to show that man's final destination is no spot in any earthly wilderness but the heavenly promised land (Alma 37:44, 45).

Trees and Waters of Life

In accordance with the Book of Mormon's system of opposition, it is fitting that in his dream Lehi must go through "a dark and dreary wilderness" to reach the tree "whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:4, 10). This tree of life is a rich, complex symbol. In different parts of the Book of Mormon it is linked with water, vineyards, and olive trees.¹² Its fruit stands for God's love, and faith in Christ is described as "a tree springing up unto everlasting life" (1 Nephi 11:22; Alma 32:41). Approaching the tree is a sacramental experience: "Come unto me," Alma quotes the Lord as saying, "and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; Yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely; yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness" (Alma 5:34–35).¹³ On the other hand, those who refuse will be like dead trees that are "hewn down and cast into the fire" (Alma 5:34–35). Both alternatives depict Christ as the tree of life and the refiner's fire.

With Christ as its central focal point, the tree of life symbol in the Book of Mormon supports a number of the meanings attributed to this rich symbol over time. In Lehi's dream it is juxtaposed against a dark and dreary wilderness and mists of darkness, its fruit is of an exceeding whiteness, and only a few reach it (1 Nephi 8). Nephi considers it synonymous with "living waters" (1 Nephi 11:25) and sees it identified with the birth, life, mission, and death of Christ (1 Nephi 11:7–33).

In ancient Mesoamerica, according to Irene Briggs, the tree of life was depicted in the shape of a cross and also conventionalized as a maize plant—the staple food plant and therefore the "bread" of life.¹⁴ Indeed, the Nahuatl word for cross, according to Constance Irwin, is *tonacaquahuitl*, meaning "tree of life."¹⁵ As for the darkness and "living waters," Joseph Campbell says that in the monomyth, the tree of life (representing the "universe itself"), growing from the World Navel, "is rooted in the supporting darkness; the golden sun bird perches on its peak; a spring, the inexhaustible well, bubbles at its foot."¹⁶ The whiteness of the fruit of the tree is related to E. A. S. Butterworth's finding that in the archetypal World Tree, "sometimes the sap is white and milk-like, but the liquid is

found as often in the spring beneath as in the tree itself.”¹⁷ The journey to the tree is associated with legends; it is reported by Thomas Barns that the fruit of the sacred tree was to be taken only by the initiated.¹⁸ The fruits of the tree, says Arnold Whittick, “especially bright fruits, are associated with the tree of wisdom and knowledge.”¹⁹ E. O. James finds that in St. John’s Apocalypse, “the fruit of the Tree of Life was reserved for those who had overcome in the strife, and whose names were written in the Lamb’s book of life.”²⁰ And in many ancient cultures—as evidenced by the myths of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece—the tree of life was associated with both birth and rebirth.²¹

Water and agricultural images work both ways. The fountain of living waters in Lehi’s dream is opposed by the river of filthy waters. Compared to a ripe field, converted Lamanites have become sheaves gathered into garner, not to be beaten down by the storm at the last day; “they are in the hands of the Lord of the harvest” (Alma 26:5–7). On the other hand, the wicked condemned by Abinadi are as a “dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot”; they are as thistle blossoms blown across the land (Mosiah 12:11–12). The tree of life even has its opposite in the tree of death upon which the Gadianton leader Zemnarihah is hanged (3 Nephi 4:28–29).

Though the sea is a place where Lehi and his family come close to being swallowed up, the Lord also makes the sea their path (2 Nephi 1:2, 10:20). The Jaredites are “buried in the depths of the sea,” yet eventually are brought through the “mountain waves” and “terrible tempests” to a chosen land set apart from the rest of the world by those very elements (Ether 6:6, 12).

The primary elements of water, fire, and earth are involved in the destruction of the Nephite and Lamanite cities recorded in 3 Nephi 8 and 9. Cities are sunk in the sea, burned, and covered with earth. Yet after the destruction, uplift and even salvation are said to come through those same three elements. For “the more righteous part of the people who were saved” from drowning, water becomes a medium for baptism (3 Nephi 10:12, 12:1–2). Spared from being burned in a city such as Zarahemla, the people gathered at the temple learn from the Savior that for them fire will bless, not curse, as they are baptized “with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:1). Their little children are visited by angels and “encircled about with fire” (3 Nephi 17:24). And rather than being “buried up in the depths of the earth,” these people are built upon Christ’s rock (3 Nephi 9:8, 11:39).

Dust

The opposite of water and fruitfulness is dust. This image is associated in the Book of Mormon with mortality, humiliation, captivity, obscurity, destruction, and death.²² The wicked, Nephi prophesies, will be “brought low in the dust,” and the Jaredite prophets warn that the Jaredites, unless they repent, will be destroyed and their bones should become “as heaps of earth upon the face of the land” (1 Nephi 22:23, Ether 11:6).

Yet out of the dust can come life and blessings. The Book of Mormon itself is prophesied to come “out of the dust” (2 Nephi 26:16). Echoing Isaiah, Moroni cries: “Arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments” (Moroni 10:31). Lehi exhorts Laman and Lemuel to “arise from the dust” (2 Nephi 1:14). After the Lamanites have been “brought down low in the dust, . . . yet the words of the righteous shall be written” and in the last days “shall whisper out of the dust” (2 Nephi 26:15–16).

At the very core, the six principal images in the Book of Mormon appeal to the senses in helping us *feel* the atoning power of Christ, which our minds cannot rationally grasp. The Lord is a refiner’s *fire*, the *light* of Israel, *deliverer* of those who wander in the *wilderness*, the fountain of living *waters*, creator of humans from the *dust* of the earth, and

the one who will retrieve us from dust again at the last day. Imaged forth is the purpose of the book itself, found in the title page, to “show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers” and to point the way for them to “be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.”

“Affixed Opposite”: Six Other Important Image Clusters

Other image clusters as well develop an “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) of the sort Lehi addressed. The Book of Mormon shows extremes in wickedness and holiness, life and death, happiness and misery, the sweet and the bitter (2 Nephi 2:11, 15). A cosmic truth it affirms time and again is that of God’s children from the fall of Adam forward having choices between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience, with “a punishment . . . affixed opposite to the plan of happiness” (Alma 42:16). Linked loosely with darkness and light as well as with captivity and deliverance in sustaining these oppositions are the image pairs sleeping and waking, and heights and depths. Three significant structures—temples, tents, and palaces—compose a third set. Clothes imagery is next. A fifth set, connected with remnants of clothes and of rocks, has to do with wholeness or rending, quaking, or crumbling. Swords and other weapons are a sixth set.

The image clusters also use wordplay and multiple meanings to show transitions between the earthly or temporal and the spiritual. “The world is emblematic,” Emerson said regarding relationships of this sort; “the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind.”²³

Sleeping and Waking

In several crucial encounters between the Nephites and the numerically superior Lamanites, the Lamanites simply fall asleep. Alma the Elder and his people are able to escape during the day because “the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon the Lamanites” (Mosiah 24:19); Teancum is able to kill the dictator Amalickiah because sleep overpowers the fatigued Lamanites (Alma 51:33); Moroni captures the city Gid without loss of life “while the Lamanites [are] in a deep sleep and drunken” (Alma 55:16).

Physical sleep also symbolizes a type of spiritual darkness.²⁴ Anticipating his eldest sons’ problems, Lehi challenges them (and their posterity) to “awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell” (2 Nephi 1:13). Spiritually benighted Nephites also are awakened by the Lord “out of a deep sleep, and they [awake] unto God” (Alma 5:7). An example of this change is the story of the Lamanite king Lamoni. On believing the words of Ammon, Lamoni falls to the earth as though dead. After two days and two nights, Ammon tells Lamoni’s queen that her husband “sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again” (Alma 19:8). His rising is like a resurrection and redemption. Indeed, according to Moroni, the resurrection brings “a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound” (Mormon 9:13).

Heights and Depths

As waking comes out of sleep, so heights are reached out of the depths. This again gives concrete meaning to the process of redemption.²⁵ When the Jaredites go through submersion in the depths of the ocean to reach the promised land, it is both a literal process and a symbol of salvation. The redeemed Alma declares, “I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God” (Mosiah 27:29).

High places are usually holy but can at times be unholy. Nephi is caught up to “an exceedingly high mountain” (1 Nephi 11:1) to receive an expansive revelation; later, he is directed by the Liahona to go to the top of the mountain for game, for instructions on building a ship, and to pray. On the other hand, the total wars of the Jaredites and the Nephites-Lamanites culminate at a mountain (Ramah/Cumorah). While expressing deep humility, King Benjamin

speaks to his people from the top of a tower. Yet the prideful Zoramites go one by one to the top of their Rameumptom, or “holy stand” (Alma 31:21), to express their vaunting prayer.²⁶

Literally or figuratively, rising or falling in the Book of Mormon shows the relation of humans to God. Sherem, the antichrist who challenges Jacob, dramatizes the fall of man. He says his will, not God’s, should be done. He boasts about himself and denies the atonement of Christ. Jacob is just the opposite. He calls for God’s will, not his own, to be done, humbles himself, and affirms the atonement of Christ. When Sherem continues to deny the power of God, “the power of the Lord [comes] upon him, insomuch that he [falls] to the earth” (Jacob 7:15). This is a damning fall of man, not one with potential salvation. After the people see Sherem die, confessing his sins, they in turn fall to the earth (Jacob 7:21). This fall, though, leads the way to their having “peace and the love of God” restored (Jacob 7:23).

The Nephite people, who had reached such heights in their civilization, fall to the lowest depths. Their fall brings Mormon’s great cry of the heart: “O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected . . . Jesus . . . ! Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss” (Mormon 6:17–18). Mormon has hope for his son, though, and counsels him not to let “the things which I have written grieve thee, to *weigh thee down* unto death; but may Christ *lift thee up*, and may his sufferings and death . . . rest in your mind forever” (Moroni 9:25; see also 3 Nephi 27:4). This points to a central irony in the Book of Mormon concerning ascent and descent: It is only through the condescension of the Savior—his descending to the level of humanity and then suffering ignominy on the cross—(1 Nephi 11:16–33) that his people can be lifted up.

Temples, Tents, and Palaces

Wealth and poverty are a number of times connected in the Book of Mormon with three primary kinds of buildings: temples, tents, and palaces. In Lehi’s vision, the palace is a “great and spacious building,” symbolic of the wisdom and pride of the world, filled with people whose “manner of dress was exceeding fine” (1 Nephi 8:26–27). Later in the Book of Mormon this structure is made specific in the “spacious palace” wicked King Noah has built and ornamented “with gold and silver and with precious things” (Mosiah 11:9).

By contrast, father Lehi abandons his fine home with its treasures to depart into the wilderness. Nephi understates this sacrifice with the simple but meaningful declaration, “And my father dwelt in a tent” (1 Nephi 2:15). A temporary structure, a tent symbolizes Lehi’s willingness to go wherever the Lord dictates; further, there are scriptural parallels that identify tents with temples.²⁷ There is force in Nephi’s repeated references to Lehi’s tent—as though it stands for sacred space in contrast with the corrupted Jerusalem they have left behind. After he relates Lehi’s vision of the mists of darkness, the great and spacious building, and the tree of life (another symbol of the temple), Nephi says, “And all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent” (1 Nephi 9:1). Again, “All these things, of which I have spoken, were done as my father dwelt in a tent” (1 Nephi 10:16; see also 1 Nephi 16:6). As a location in which he receives and declares revelation, Lehi’s tent is also a sanctified place.

After Lehi’s family reaches the promised land, the Lamanites are noted for continuing to live in tents in the wilderness. The Nephites, though, build more permanent structures, particularly temples. The temple then becomes a positive gathering place, especially for the crowds who respond to King Benjamin’s address and for those who behold Christ descend from heaven.²⁸

Clothes

Wealth and poverty are also connected with clothes or the absence of clothes. Pride, the prevailing sin of Book of Mormon peoples, is presented imaginatively in the silks and fine-twined linens prosperous Nephites find so attractive. By contrast, humility is suggested in the white robe worn by John the apostle and by Christ. And we are reminded several times of the paradox that the Saints' garments are made white in the blood of Christ (for example, 1 Nephi 12:10; Alma 5:21; 13:11).

Jacob opposes prideful sinfulness by taking off his garments and symbolically shaking them free of the iniquities of his auditors (2 Nephi 9:44). Alma enjoins his listeners at Zarahemla to be stripped of pride and envy just as they might remove pretentious clothing (Alma 5:22–29). Moroni says his audience loves money and fine apparel more than they love the poor and the needy. He then challenges them: “Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?” (Mormon 8:39).

The naked are frequently portrayed as spiritually humble as well as physically poor, and the Book of Mormon prophets constantly exhort their listeners—and readers—to clothe the naked and recognize their own symbolic nakedness before God. On the other hand, the Lamanites, who have stripped off their clothing intentionally (Enos 1:20; Alma 3:5; 43:20), are portrayed as reverting to savagery when they reject the Lord.

Wholeness and Rending

Portions of clothes also figure interestingly in the Book of Mormon. Captain Moroni rallies the people to the cause of liberty by tearing a piece from his coat and writing upon it, “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children” (Alma 46:12). He fastens it upon the end of a pole and then goes forth among the people,

waving the rent part of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had written upon the rent part, and crying with a loud voice, saying: Behold, whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them. (Alma 46:12, 19–20)

In response, the people cast their garments at the feet of Moroni and covenant that God “may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at [Moroni's] feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression” (Alma 46:22). Using a remnant of his coat as a title of liberty, Moroni reminds the people that they are a remnant of Joseph and perhaps fulfill a prophecy of the biblical patriarch Jacob concerning a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph that was preserved and had not decayed. “Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved,” Moroni quotes Jacob as saying, “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 46:24).²⁹

Not only clothes are rent in the Book of Mormon. In prophetic vision, Nephi sees rocks rent and “mountains tumbling into pieces” (1 Nephi 12:4). Wicked people, we are told, will at the judgment wish for rocks to hide them from God's presence (Alma 12:14). It is prophesied that at the death of Christ the Rock, “the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up” (Helaman 14:21). In the fulfillment of this prophecy, at the time of the Crucifixion “the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 8:18). On the other hand, in its wholeness a rock is associated with Christ, the rock of salvation (1 Nephi

15:15). We may think of this when reading about Lehi's seeing a pillar of fire upon a rock or about the prophet Ether's hiding in the cavity of a rock. It is upon the rock of the Redeemer and his doctrine we may confidently build (Helaman 5:12, 3 Nephi 11:39–40).

Swords and Other Weapons

The book's paradoxes and wordplay are further illustrated by swords and other weapons. Jaredite swords found by the people of Limhi have blades cankered with rust (Mosiah 8:11). King Lamoni advises his followers to keep their swords bright by hiding them deep in the earth and refusing to stain them with the blood of their brethren. These swords then become "weapons of peace" as their burial keeps the repentant people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi from using them (Alma 24:12–16, 19). Another paradoxical turn on warfare is the method the Lamanites employ to destroy the Gadianton robbers—they preach to them, destroying them by saving them.

Pointing out a lesson from the prosperity of the church at the time of Helaman's sons, Mormon affirms that whosoever wants to can "lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil" (Helaman 3:29).³⁰ Here the *word* of God becomes the *sword* of God, and the dividing asunder brings to mind cutting through a jungle with a sword or machete. In this respect we may think of other scriptural statements that "the sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) and "the word of God is . . . sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

Another play on *word* and *sword* is found in the confrontation between Nehor and Gideon. Because Gideon withstood Nehor "with the words of God," Nehor "drew his sword and began to smite him" (Alma 1:9). For this action, Nehor was condemned to death, and he acknowledged that what he taught was "contrary to the word of God" (Alma 1:15). After that, the people of Nehor did not dare to murder but still persecuted the people of the church of God "and did afflict them with all manner of words" (Alma 1:20).

Word and sword are connected in Alma's experience. Mormon observes that the preaching of the word "had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God" (Alma 31:5).

Wordplay on weapons is developed pointedly by Jacob in Jacob 2. He laments that his words to the women and children will be not "the pleasing word of God" that "healeth the wounded soul," but sharp admonitions to offending men that for their wives and children will be like "daggers placed to *pierce* their souls and wound their delicate minds" (Jacob 2:8–9). Those offenders, Jacob says, are "under the glance of the *piercing* eye of the Almighty God. . . . O that he would show you that he can *pierce* you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!" (Jacob 2:10, 15) In an ironic turnaround, the adulterers who cause many hearts to die, "pierced with deep wounds," are under the piercing eye of God and can be thrust through to their own deaths (Jacob 2:35).

The sharp weapon featured most strikingly in the Book of Mormon is the sword of Laban. It is no ordinary sword. Nephi describes it in detail: "The hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel" (1 Nephi 4:9). Nephi first uses it—at the Spirit's insistence—to keep the descendants of Lehi from perishing in unbelief (1 Nephi 4:13). Then he says that he modeled swords after the sword of Laban so his people would not be destroyed (2 Nephi 5:14). The people loved Nephi greatly, "he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defence" (Jacob 1:10). Another great prophet-king, Benjamin, defensively stands at the head of his armies as their champion, "and he did fight with the strength of his own arm, with the sword of Laban." Afterwards, he leads other

holy prophets in putting down contention and dissensions and in establishing peace by speaking “the word of God with power and with authority” and with “much sharpness” (Words of Mormon 1:13, 17).

This last subtle connection between the effectiveness of the sword of Laban and the sharpness of the word of God suggests the connections found elsewhere between the sword of Laban and the scriptures. Nephi tells of bringing with him to the land of Nephi the plates of brass, the compass (the Liahona), and the sword of Laban. In addition to the brass plates and the plates of Nephi, King Benjamin gives his son the sword of Laban and the Liahona, “which led [their] fathers through the wilderness” (Mosiah 1:16). Subsequent prophets continue to transmit these three items, as confirmed by the experience of the Three Witnesses: They are promised that the sacred items they shall see are the plates, the breastplate, the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, and the Liahona (D&C 17:1). As for the Liahona, Alma teaches his son Helaman (Alma 37) that it is a type of the word of Christ in that both help preserve the people and lead them to the promised land. Just as the sword of Laban is noted for its “exceedingly fine” workmanship (1 Nephi 4:9), so the Liahona is of “curious workmanship” (1 Nephi 16:10; see also Alma 37:39). Handled by an authorized servant of the Lord, each is a means of preserving the people. There will come a time, though, when neither is needed. During the Millennium, under Christ’s reign of peace, swords will be beaten into plowshares (2 Nephi 12:4; Isaiah 2:4); the written word will be added to by direct revelation from the personally reigning Word.

Overview of Image Patterns as a Whole

After looking at single images and groups of images, it is appropriate that we look at imagery in the Book of Mormon as a whole. The work of the eminent literary critic Northrop Frye is helpful in this regard. We can readily apply to the Book of Mormon the kind of unified structure of significantly repeated images Frye finds in the Bible. In *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, Frye places biblical imagery into two major categories: the apocalyptic, which means the ideal world that the human creative imagination envisages; and the demonic. Apocalyptic paradisiacal imagery such as the Edenic tree of life has its demonic counterpart in a wasteland and sea of death; animal imagery such as the lamb in a flock has its demonic counterpart in beasts of prey; vegetable imagery of bread and wine is opposed by the harvest and vintage of wrath; and mineral imagery of a fortified city becomes demonic in the rubble of a destroyed city.

Seen from this angle, the apocalyptic image in the Book of Mormon of the tree rooted in the soil has a demonic counterpart in the unnatural building elevated above the ground. Further, against the living water near the tree is the stream of filthy water in which wanderers drown. Also in demonic counterpart to the tree of life, which is reminiscent of a mideastern oasis, is the “dark and dreary wilderness” persons must go through to reach the tree (1 Nephi 8:4).³¹ The “great and spacious building” in its prideful elevation in the air (1 Nephi 8:26) is contrasted with Jesus’ teachings on the importance of building on the rock.

After having settled in the promised land, the Nephites become associated primarily with pastoral apocalyptic imagery: they build cities and temples, tend their flocks and their fields, and are rewarded with harvests (except in times of war or drought brought on by wickedness). The Lamanites, on the other hand, are described by Enos as extremely degraded, being “led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey” (Enos 1:20).

The experience of Enos is a parable for the later conversion of many of these ferocious Lamanites. He goes “to hunt beasts in the forests,” presumably for food, when he recollects the words of his father “concerning eternal life” (Enos 1:3). He thus discovers his need for spiritual food: “And my soul hungered,” he says (Enos 1:4).

Recognizing his soul's hunger, Enos fasts and prays all day and into the night. In answer to his prayer, he hears a voice forgiving him of his sins and instructing him concerning the future of the land. Then, in contrast with the idleness suggested in Enos's description of the Lamanites, he prays and labors "with all diligence" on behalf of the Lamanites, "that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation" (Enos 1:12–13). Enos and his compatriots are not successful in their efforts with the Lamanites, but from the time of his conversion he lives an exemplary life as a prophet among the Nephites who, by contrast with the Lamanites, "till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses" (Enos 1:21). Then when the conversion of the Lamanites does come, under the missionary efforts of Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah, the converted people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi follow the pattern implicit in the story of Enos: They give up bloodshed of every kind, settle as farmers and herdsmen in Nephite territory, and are generous in their concern for others.

As for the mineral imagery of the city, the Book of Mormon sets up dramatic contrasts of the apocalyptic and the demonic. The destruction of Jerusalem is the original example of the later destruction of great cities. The wealthy but wicked city of Ammonihah, from which Alma was cast out, is destroyed in a day—and is then called Desolation of Nehors. The divine voice in 3 Nephi 9 declares a list of ruined cities. The first three the voice mentions have been destroyed by the elements of fire, water, and earth:

Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof. And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned. And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them. (3 Nephi 9:3–5)

Following the chaotic destruction of the demonic cities, the apocalyptic—that is, the divine—is asserted in a gathering of people "round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful" (3 Nephi 11:1).

Imagery for the Children of Lehi

The Book of Mormon is full of reversals: Good people rapidly become wicked, disbelievers are converted, those with hard hearts lose knowledge, and the ignorant are enlightened. To descendants of Lehi who might think of themselves as "cast off" from God (title page), there is comfort in Moroni's encouragement to his "brethren, the Lamanites" that they "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:1, 32). That is a principal message of the Book of Mormon as a whole. It is not just stated, however, but shown. Literary devices such as the image patterns can teach and motivate on a level that is apprehended by the senses. Especially the basic images of fire, light and darkness, captivity and deliverance, wilderness or wandering, water or fruitfulness, and dust might well appeal strongly to a living descendant of Lehi.

The Book of Mormon tells us that down through time the Lamanites would be scourged, including by fire. Under other circumstances, however, fire can purify and bless the Lamanites. This concept is demonstrated well in the imprisonment of the brothers Nephi and Lehi. The names of the brothers are particularly appropriate because they represent the "fathers" (title page) to the Lamanites. In their ignorance, the Lamanites at first want to put Nephi and Lehi to death. The Lamanites, however, are unlike the apostates described in Alma 14 who are crushed to death by a collapsing prison after they persist in trying to kill Alma and Amulek. 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). Undoubtedly this was the incident the Savior meant

when he said that the Lamanites at the time of their conversion “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20).

This event is a pattern of conversion. It points back to the spiritual darkness of the Lamanites during their first centuries in the promised land, anticipates the darkness and the thrice-repeated voice from heaven before the Savior’s descent at Bountiful, and shows how Nephi’s predictions are to be fulfilled. Nephi affirmed that latter-day Lamanites will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus

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; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a pure and a delightsome people. (2 Nephi 30:5–6)

With respect to the image cluster pertaining to captivity, the Book of Mormon shows that those who have hardened their hearts to the truth are in spiritual captivity. Lehi specifically refers to this kind of captivity in speaking to the latter-day posterity of Laman and Lemuel: “I have feared . . . that a cursing should come upon you for the space of many generations; and ye are visited by sword, and by famine, and are hated, and are led according to the will and *captivity* of the devil” (2 Nephi 1:17–18). People in that condition may gain heart by the pattern of deliverance imagery in the Book of Mormon.

In like manner, the Book of Mormon provides hope to a people who for many generations have inhabited the wilderness—both physically and spiritually. Through feeling as well as understanding the teachings and emotional emphases of the Book of Mormon, latter-day Lamanites may be brought to the condition of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, an enlightened people who supported themselves by cultivating their lands. They may also be like the Lamanites who greeted the resurrected Christ at the temple.

Lehi challenged his Lamanite posterity in the latter days: “Awake, my sons; put on the armor of righteousness. Shake off the chains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust” (2 Nephi 1:23). Their renewal will come from feasting on the words of life that will come “out of the dust” (2 Nephi 26:16). In other words, latter-day Lamanites shall obtain renewal through repentance from a voice considered dead. Life will come out of death, and words of eternal life will be spoken by the voice out of the dust.

Notes

1. C. Day Lewis, quoted by N. Friedman, “Imagery,” *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 363.
2. Friedman, “Imagery,” *Princeton Encyclopedia*, 363.
3. Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Academie Books, 1987), 129–30.
4. Longman, *Literary Approaches*, 131–32.
5. Another interesting example of a simile curse is found in the declaration of the soldier who has taken off the scalp of the Lamanite leader Zerahemnah: “Even as this scalp has fallen to the earth, which is the scalp of your

chief, so shall ye fall to the earth except ye will deliver up your weapons of war and depart with a covenant of peace” (Alma 44:14). This is one of several curses discussed by Mark J. Morrise in “Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon” (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 124–38). Morrise concludes: “The simile curse appears in the same contexts in the Book of Mormon as it does in ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament texts, namely: treaties, religious covenants, and prophecies” (132).

6. T. R. Henn, *The Bible as Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 63–64.

7. Mircea Eliade makes this point in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1949, reprint ed.; New York: Pantheon Books for Bollingen Foundation, 1954) and in *Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 34.

8. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 146.

9. Joseph Smith puts this concept in another context: “‘By proving contraries,’ truth is made manifest” (*History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51] 6:428). Supporting the same point, Carl Jung says in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Bollingen Series 20, vol. 9, pt. 1. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959], 36), “The balanced co-operation of moral opposites is a natural truth.”

10. Henn, *Bible as Literature* (64–65) says: “Fire-imagery, in all literatures, may connote destruction, inspiration, purification (as in the lips touched with fire), inspiration (Ezekiel, and the Cloven Tongues of Pentecost); the intensities of love or lust.” Northrop Frye in *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 161, comments on the ironies and oppositions regarding fire: “Man in his present state cannot live in fire, but, as with water, there is a fire of life and a fire of death. The fire of life burns without burning up; there is light and heat but no pain or destruction.”

11. This is a good example of the linkage between violence and the sacred that René Girard finds in *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

12. The Puritan poet Edward Taylor considered the Living Water and the Tree of Life to be synonymous: “A Well of Living Water: Tree of Life / From whom Life comes to every thing alive” (Donald E. Stanford, ed., *The Poems of Edward Taylor* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960], 1:167). In Charles W. Mignon, ed., *Upon the Types of the Old Testament* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 2:744, Taylor says Christ is “the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Robert Murray, in *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 127, expands this idea: “Just as Christ is now grape, now wine, so he is now fruit of the Tree of Life, now the tree itself, antitype of the tree in Eden.” Bruce W. Jorgensen in “The Dark Way to the Tree: Typological Unity in The Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience* (ed. Neal E. Lambert [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1981], 217–231), sees Jacob’s story of the olive vineyard as a complement of Lehi’s dream. Noting that “in some Jewish legends the tree of life is an olive” (224), Jorgensen finds that “like Lehi desiring the fruit of the tree of life, the vineyard’s Lord also looks toward ‘most precious’ fruit in which he will rejoice, a fruit that Jacob suggests represents the perfected love of man toward God . . . (Jacob 6:5–7)” (225). Ad de Vries in *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (London: North-Holland, 1974), 474, says that in Hebrew tradition the tree of life took forms of a vine branch, an olive tree, or a wheat ear. An extensive treatment of the olive tree is found in Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994). The editors affirm

that Zenos's allegory of the olive tree is "one of the most magnificent allegories in all the sacred literature of the Judeo-Christian tradion" (ix).

13. For an extended treatment of images such as these that serve as symbols inspiring readers to flee degradation and partake of eternal life, see Richard Dilworth Rust, "Taste and Feast: Images of Eating and Drinking in the Book of Mormon," *Brigham Young University Studies* 33, no. 4 (1993): 743–52.

14. Irene M. Briggs, "The Tree of Life Symbol: Its Significance in Ancient American Religion" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1950), 164–65.

15. Constance Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), 166.

16. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 41.

17. E. A. S. Butterworth, *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 7.

18. Thomas Barns, "Trees and Plants," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1922), 12:454.

19. Arnold Whittick, *Symbols, Signs, and Their Meaning* (London: Leonard Hill, 1960), 278.

20. E. O. James, *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 78.

21. C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Tree of Life in Ancient Cultures," *Ensign* 18 (June 1988): 26–31.

22. Henn, *Bible as Literature* (74) says "the dust is the serpent's meat. It is an emblem of misery, degradation, and earth's ultimate reduction of man. It has overtones of the desert and the waste places."

23. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 21.

24. Hugh Nibley in *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 147, says, "Sleep, like water, is one of those things in which reality and symbol meet and fuse. It is both the rest of the body and the freeing of the spirit." Nibley quotes A. Altmann on "the Gnostic idea that sleep represents spiritual death, the 'Forgetfulness of man's divine origin.'"

25. Another angle that has some relevance to what I am saying here is found in Daniel J. Schneider's *Symbolism: The Manichean Vision* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 17. Schneider says, "To ascend a staircase is often (as in Yeats and Eliot) to cast off the flesh and to advance toward a condition of pure spirituality. To move downward, into a pit, marsh, mire, or jungle, is to fall into the corporeal world, usually sinful, often terrifying." However, the Book of Mormon affirms, unlike the Manicheans, that this contrast is necessary to salvation.

26. John L. Sorenson, in *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), considers that Book of Mormon towers were pyramids or "cosmic mountains" (172). "Height, not shape, must be the main criterion" (174).

27. Anciently in a temple-building society, as Hugh Nibley points out in “Tenting, Toll, and Taxing,” *Western Political Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1966): 604–5, the first temples were tents. (This article is reprinted in Nibley, *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991].)

28. For an elaboration of the importance of the temple as an *axis mundi* (center of the earth and a connecting point between heaven and earth), see Steven L. Olsen, “Cosmic Urban Symbolism in the Book of Mormon,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 23, no. 1 (1983): 79–92.

29. Nibley in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 218–20, cites tenth-century Jewish lore about two remnants of Joseph’s garment, one of which remained undecayed.

30. Regarding the importance of metaphors, Northrop Frye in *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 28, asserts that “all intensified language sooner or later turns metaphorical” and that “literature is not only the obvious but the inescapable guide to higher journeys of consciousness.”

31. The power of the oasis imagery in the Bible has relevance here as well. In *The Great Code*, Frye says, “For a people who were originally desert dwellers, the oasis is the inevitable image of providential order, a garden directly created and sustained by God, a habitation that makes sense in human terms without human transformation, the visible form of the invisible divine creation” (142).