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Chiasmus
in the Book of Mormon

JOHN W. WELCH*

Practically since the day the Book of Mormon rolled off the press in 1830, those who believed in the book asserted that it obviously read like a Hebrew text. Those who were not so credulous insisted that it obviously read like anything but a Hebrew text. Actually, the only thing that became obvious was the fact that neither the believers nor the unbelievers were citing very many specific examples. However, a recently recognized phenomenon in the Book of Mormon has now made it possible for us to cite many specific examples of passages in the Book of Mormon which bear the distinct stamp of an ancient Hebraic literary form. The phenomenon which makes that possible is the presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon.

WHAT IS CHIASMUS?

Chiasmus appears to have begun as a structural form which then developed into an intriguing rhetorical device which has been used sporadically in prose and poetry by many authors for nearly three thousand years. Nevertheless, the awareness of such a form, except in isolated cases, remained a part of the intellectual subconsciousness of modern Western Europe until frequent chiasmal passages were discovered in the Bible. Since that time in the mid-nineteenth century, there have been several reputed scholars, mostly theologians, who have published on the subject. Their works indicate that, although some chiasms appear in Greek, Latin and English, the form was originally Hebrew and dates at least to the eighth and tenth centuries B. C. in Isaiah and in the Psalms.

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69

70

The name chiasmus is descriptive of the form itself. The name was derived from chi (X), the twenty-second letter in the Greek alphabet, and the Greek *chiazein* (to mark with an X), for the following reasons. Two lines of poetry are said to be parallel if the component elements of one line correspond directly to those of the other, so to speak, in a 1:1 relationship. There are numerous examples of direct parallelisms among the Proverbs, e.g.

> A soft answer turneth away wrath:
> But grievous words stir up anger.
> (Proverbs 15:1)

If the second line of a parallelism is inverted, that is to say, if its last element is placed first and the first, last, then a chiasm is created. As an example is the following verse:

> For *my* thoughts are not *your* thoughts
> Neither are *your* ways *my* ways, saith the Lord.
> (Isaiah 55:8)

And from the New Testament:

> He that *findeth* his life shall *lose* it;
> And he that *loseth* his life for my sake shall *find* it.
> (Matthew 10:39)

Formulating this empirically, the simple chiasm takes on the apparent form of an X:

$$
\begin{array}{cc}
a & b \\
b & a
\end{array}
$$

Thus, once the term chiasmus had been coined, it appropriately stuck.

And just as the name stuck, the idea of chiasmus also has stuck in the back of Western minds. Heraclitus, one of the early pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, used chiasmus to accentuate his notion of eternal flux and opposition:

> Cold things grow warm,
> What is warm cools;
> the moist dries,
> the dry dampens. (Fr. 39)
> Immortals are mortal,
> mortals are immortal,
> each living the others' death
> and dying the others' life.   (Fr. 67)

Several centuries later Cicero used chiasmic lines as a rhetorical device for placing emphasis:

> Matrem habëmus, ignoramus patrem.   (Rep. 2:33)

Some English authors, who had been thoroughly trained in the classics, naturally turned to chiasmus as a poetical form. Thus in Pope's "Essay on Man" this short chiasm appears:

> . . . flame lawless through the void,
> destroying others, by himself destroyed.

Even in our modern nursery rhymes and maxims, the natural rhythm and immediate appeal of chiasmic lines is apparent. Thus, "Old King Cole was a merry old soul, and a merry old soul was he," is charming; and "He who fails to prepare, prepares to fail," sounds solid and convincing. The reader, however, will notice that all these chiasms contain only two elements whose order is then reversed. This is a significant factor in differentiating the chiasmus known for some time in the West from the chiasmus characteristic of ancient Hebrew.

Whereas in Greek, Latin and English, chiasms are rarely, if ever, composed of more than two elements, in Hebrew there appears to be no limit to the number of terms or ideas that can be employed. A chiasm in Hebrew may be expanded to include any number of terms written in one order and then in the exact reverse order, i.e.

$$a\text{-}b\text{-}c\text{-}d\text{-} \ldots \text{-}x\text{-}x\text{-} \ldots \text{-}d\text{-}c\text{-}b\text{-}a$$

These structures may be several verses or several chapters long. A simple illustration of this, which uses five elements in an inverted parallelism, is found in Psalms 3:7-8:

> Save me
>   O my God,
>   For thou hast smitten
>   All my enemies
>   On the cheek-bone.
>   The teeth
>   Of the wicked
>   Thou hast broken.
>   To Yahweh
> The salvation.

A second example of this, which is even longer, comes from Isaiah 60:1-3:

72

Arise,
 Shine,
  For thy light is come,
   And the glory
    Of Yahweh
     Upon thee is risen.
      For behold, dimness shall cover the earth
      And gross darkness the peoples.
     But upon thee will arise
    Yahweh
   And his glory shall upon thee be seen
  And nations shall come to thy light
 And kings to the brightness
Of thy rising.

There are plenty of good reasons why a literary form of this peculiar type was attractive to the ancient Hebrew mind. First, chiasms are easy to memorize. The Hebrew tradition, unlike the written Greek tradition, was oral. Not only were manuscripts and scrolls scarce, but there were also few who could read them. Therefore, the tales of early Israel and the songs of her prophets were handed down through the family generations by word of mouth and long passages of the Torah were committed to memory.[1] In their memorizing and reciting, the Hebrews were surely aided by chiasmic groupings and repetitions. Second, chiasmus was simply in vogue. Each age and culture has been characterized by a dominant form of writing: sixteenth-century England was very fond of the sonnet, and fourth-century Greeks, especially Plato, are noted for their frequent usage of the dialectic. Chaismus remained a common literary form in the Hebrew world until the first century after Christ, when it and most Jewish institutions were destroyed.

The rediscovery of chiasms in the Bible can be credited to three theologians of the nineteenth century: Robert Lowth, John Jebb and John Forbes. Lowth,[2] the Bishop of London, and Jebb,[3] the Bishop of Limerick, both wrote 300-page volumes describing Hebraisms in the holy scriptures. But their emphasis is almost entirely placed on poetical imagery and direct parallelisms, and only Jebb pays much attention to epanodos (the

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[1]Paul Gaechter, *Die literarische Kunst im Matthäus-Evangelium.* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1965), p. 6.

[2]Robert Lowth, *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum Praelectiones Academicae.* (Translated by G. Gregory. Andover, Mass., 1829.)

[3]John Jebb, *Sacred Literature.* (London, 1820.)

name he used for chiasmus). In 1854, however, John Forbes[4] completed a much more extensive study, *The Symmetrical Structures of Scripture*. With the publication of this book, it is possible to begin speaking of relatively widespread awareness of chiasmic forms in the Bible. A wave of other writers followed Forbes, and in 1860 a section on chiasmus was finally added to T. H. Horne's famous encyclopedic *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*.[5] This marks the recognition of the form as genuine and significant.

CHIASMUS IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The best way to establish the antiquity and the Hebraic characteristics of chiasmus is to observe it in the Bible. The Old Testament represents some of the oldest extant written documents in the world history. When peculiar word patterns consistently reappear in this text, it can be concluded that these patterns represent deliberate attempts of the ancients at a form of artistic prose. Concerning the Hebraic characteristics of chiasmus, Nils Lund has formulated seven rules of chiasmal passages.[6] The most interesting ones for this study are the first, the third, and the seventh. The first states that the center is always the turning point. The third notes that the ideas will often be distributed so as to occur at the beginning, the middle and the end of chiasm but nowhere else. And the seventh claims that there may be a mixture of directly parallel and inverted parallel lines in the same unit. These characteristics are readily apparent in the following biblical passages:[7]

And all flesh *died* that moved upon the *earth,*
    Both birds,
        And cattle,
            And beasts,
                And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth,
                And every man:

                    All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit
                    of *life*
                        Of all that was on the *dry land*

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[4]John Forbes, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture*. (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1854.)

[5]T. H. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*. (3 Vols., 11th Edition: London, 1860.)

[6]Nils Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942.), pp. 40-41.

[7]Many chiasms have not survived the King James translation although they may be crystal-clear in the Hebrew. These examples are often verbatim translations from the Hebrew or Greek.

74

Died;
And was destroyed

Every *living* thing
That was upon the face of the *ground*

Both man,
And creeping things,
(And beasts),
And cattle,
And birds of the heavens,
And they were *destroyed* from the *earth*.   (Genesis 7:21-23)

Seek ye me, and ye shall *live*.
But seek not after *Bethel,*
Nor enter into *Gilgal,*
And pass not to Beer-sheba:
For *Gilgal* shall surely go into captivity,
And *Bethel* shall come to naught.
Seek Yahweh, and ye shall *live*.   (Amos 5:4b-6a)

Do ye indeed, *O gods,* speak *righteousness?*
Do ye *judge* uprightly, O ye sons of men?

Nay, in the heart ye work *wickedness*
Ye weigh out the *violence* of your hands in the earth.

The wicked are estranged from the *womb*
They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

Their poison is like the poison of a *serpent*
Like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear,
Which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers,
The most cunning binder of spells.

O God,
Break
Their teeth in their mouth;
The great teeth of the young lions
Break out
O Yahweh.

They shall melt away like waters,
They shall go away for them,
Like tender grass which wilts away.
Like a *snail* will melt as it goes along.

Abortions of a *woman*
That not have beheld the sun!

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the *vengeance*
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the *wicked.*

And men shall say, surely there is a reward for the *righteous*
Surely there is a *God* that *judgeth* the earth.   (Psalm 58)

Therefore I speak to them in *parables*:
  Because they seeing *see* not; and hearing they *hear* not.
    In them is fulfilled the *prophecy* of Esaias which sayeth
      By hearing ye shall *hear* not; and seeing ye shall *see* not
        For this people's *heart* is waxed gross
          And their *ears* are dull of *hearing*
            And their *eyes* they have closed
              lest at any time they should *see*
            With their *eyes*
          And *hear* with their *ears,*
        And should understand with their *heart* and be converted.
      Blessed are your eyes, for they *see* and your ears, for they *hear*
    Many *prophets* and righteous men
  Have longed to *see* what you see and *hear* what you hear and have not.
Hear ye therefore the *parable* of the sower: (Matthew 13:13-18)

CHIASMUS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Now comes the question of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon in 1830 in western New York. The first page of the book claims that it was written "in the language of the Egyptians" but "according to the learning of the Jews." That is, it was written with Egyptian characters but in Hebraic style. If the Book of Mormon truly is direct translation of a text whose formalistic rhetorical basis is Hebraic, chiasmus should be found as an integral part of its literary style and should be helpful in interpreting and understanding the total book's design.

If chiasmus can be convincingly identified in the Book of Mormon, then specific Hebraisms will testify of its origin, because there exists no chance that Joseph Smith could have learned of this style through academic channels. No one in America, let alone in western New York, fully understood chiasmus in 1829. Joseph Smith had been dead ten full years before John Forbes' book was published in Scotland. Even the prominent scholars today know little about chiasmic forms beyond its name and a few passages where it might be found. The possibility of Joseph Smith's noticing the form accidentally is even more remote, since most biblical passages containing inverted word orders have been rearranged into natural word orders in the King James translation. And even had he known of the form, he would still have had the overwhelming task of writing original, artistic chiasmic sentences. Try writing

a sonnet or multi-termed chiasm yourself: your appreciation of these forms will turn to awe. If the Book of Mormon then is found to contain true chiasmal forms, should it not be asserted without further qualification that the book is a product of ancient Hebrew culture?

Secondly, chiasmus will greatly enhance interpolation of Book of Mormon scriptures. If the ancient authors of the Book of Mormon consciously set particular elements parallel to each other, then these elements must be considered together in order to be fully understood in their complete context. Moreover, the thoughts which appear at the center must always be given special attention, and any antithetical ideas introduced at the turning point must be contrasted with their properly corresponding ideas. Other questions will be answered and interesting observations will be made. Questions of structure within shorter passages and of unity within whole books will be clarified.[8] For example, why Nephi divided his writings into two books, instead of leaving them all in one, will be explained by chiasmus. Questions of style, especially concerning the repetitions which have so often been accused of being ignorant and redundant, will be appreciated in the light in which they originally shone.

Chiasms may appear anywhere in the Book of Mormon, although they predominantly typify the style of the first half of the book. In the first half those who make the greatest use of the form are Nephi, Benjamin and Alma the Younger. They use chiasms in practically every possible context, ranging from passages of straight narration or argumentation to ones of beautiful poetic eloquence. The following examples of this speak for themselves and require little further explanation.

Example 1

And the *Jews*
Shall have the *words*
Of the *Nephites*
And the *Nephites*
Shall have the *words*
Of the *Jews*.

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[8]The first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed in standard paragraph form without verses. Arbitrary chapter divisions appear in the 1830 edition (1 Nephi with seven, 2 Nephi with fifteen, etc.). The current chapter divisions and versification were made by Orson Pratt in 1879. Therefore, there is no need to take chapter and verse into account when studying a passage's structure. In fact, many chiasms which are difficult to spot on the columned pages of the modern editions are obvious on the regular pages of the first edition.

And the *Nephites* and the *Jews*
Shall have the *words*
Of the lost tribes of *Israel*
And the lost tribes of *Israel*
Shall have the *words* of
The *Nephites* and the *Jews*.
(2 Nephi 29:13)

Example 2

Men will drink damnation to their souls unless
They *humble* themselves
and become as little *children*
believing that salvation is in the *atoning blood of Christ;*
for the *natural man*
is an enemy to *God*
and *has been* from the fall of Adam
and *will be* forever and ever
unless he yieldeth to the *Holy Spirit*
and putteth off the *natural man*
and becometh a saint through the *atonement of Christ*
and becometh as a *child*
submissive, meek and *humble.*   (Mosiah 3:18-19)

Example 3

And now whosoever shall not take upon them the *name of Christ*
must be *called* by some other name;
therefore he findeth himself on the *left hand of God.*
And I would that ye should *remember* that this is the name
that should never be *blotted out*
except it be through *transgression*:
therefore
take heed that ye do not *transgress*
that the name be not *blotted* out of your hearts.
I would that ye should *remember* to retain this name
that ye are not found on the *left hand of God,*
but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be *called*
and also the *name* by which he shall call you.   (Mosiah 5:10-12)

Needless to say, the word order in these last two examples is amazing. These passages are just two small parts of the very complex chiasmic structure of King Benjamin's entire speech. The fact that King Benjamin uses chiasmus is not illogical. At the time that he delivered his famous speech, he was acting in a traditional coronation and would naturally be using the most traditional and convincing rhetoric at his command. Benjamin's thoughts had been carefully prepared before-

78

hand and had even been "written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice." This degree of painstaking deliberation in writing was the rule, rather than the exception, among the Book of Mormon prophets.

Example 4

And they said unto me, we have not; for the Lord *maketh* no such thing *known unto us.*

Behold I said unto them, how is it that ye do not keep the *commandments* of the Lord?

How is it that ye will *perish*

because of the *hardness of your hearts?*

Do ye not remember the things which the *Lord* hath said?

If ye will not *harden your hearts*

and ask me in *faith,* believing that ye shall receive,

with diligence in keeping my *commandments,*

surely these things shall be *made known unto you.*
(1 Nephi 15:9-11)

A chiasm may also appear as a logical device, for its completeness rounds out a thought forcefully and ties in all loose ends tightly. Nephi so successfully used this line of reasoning against his rebellious brothers, that as he later recorded the events of his family's twelve-year expedition, he could still proudly recall his clever rebuttal. The turning point of the argument is a piercing question: "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?" The same thought, concerning that which the Lord has said or will say, appropriately appears at the extremes as well as in the middle of this chiasm. Notice also that the first half of the chiasm contains the words of Nephi, but the second half is built from the words of the Lord, which comprises a deft shift at the center. What better debate partner could Nephi have in his parallelism than scripture? Actually the only two terms in the passage which are not identically parallel are *perish* and *ask in faith.* Perhaps Nephi is contrasting the living strength of true faith with the ominous fear of death which accompanies any traveler through the wilderness.

Example 5

Behold, the Lord hath created the *earth*

A   that it should be inhabited,

And he hath created his children

    that they should possess it.

     And he raiseth up

           a righteous

B   nation,

    And he destroyeth

         the nations

       of the wicked,

     And he leadeth away

       the righteous

B′   into precious lands,

     and the wicked

    he destroyeth

         and curseth the land unto them.

     He ruleth high in the heavens

A′   for it is his throne,

And this *earth*

    is his footstool.

(1 Nephi 17:36-39)

This passage is an intricate gem. It masterfully combines direct parallelisms with inverted parallelisms. Parts A and A′ each contain two directly parallel thoughts, namely in A the Lord's creation of the earth and the creation of his children, and in A′ the Lord's throne and his footstool. It is interesting how the word *earth* appears in both A and A′. Parts B and B′ are built of four poetical lines, each containing three parts. Two of the three parts are inverted when they reappear the second time, i.e.

    righteous / nations

    nations / of the wicked

    he leadeth away / the righteous

    the wicked / he destroyeth.

Furthermore, these inverted parts come at the *end* of the lines in B but they come at the *beginning* of the lines in B′ This leaves the words *raiseth up* and *destroyeth* at the beginning of B and *precious lands* and *cursed lands* at the end of B′ in direct parallel form. Thus another chiasm is formed between the directly parallel portions of B and B′ and the inverted portions of B and B′, i.e.

80

B′   inverted   direct.
B   direct   inverted

For extra measure, the first line in B and first line in B′ express the same idea, the blessing of the righteous, while the second line in B and the second line in B′ both express the idea of evil being punished. So in the midst of inverted parallelisms, the direct parallelism is also skillfully maintained.

Example 6

And all men are alike unto God,
    both *Jew*
        and *Gentile*
            but behold in the last *days*
X   or in the *days* of the Gentiles,
        all nations of the *Gentiles*
    and also the *Jews*

    A   yea, all these will be *drunken* / with *iniquity*
            when they shall be visited by the Lord.

        B   And all the nations that *fight against Zion*
                shall be as a dream of the night

            C   yea it shall be unto them even as
                    a *hungry* man
                        which dreameth
                            and behold he eateth
                        but he awaketh
                    and his soul is *empty,*

            C′   or like unto a *thirsty* man
                        which dreameth
                            and behold he drinketh
                        but he awaketh
                    and he is *faint.*

        B′   Even so shall the multitude of all the nations be
                that *fight against Mount Zion.*

    A′   For behold all ye that do *iniquity* / . . . shall be *drunken*
            The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep
            sleep,

    For ye have closed your eyes
        Ye have rejected
            the *prophets*
X'   and your rulers
            and the *seers*
        hath he covered
    Because of your iniquities.

(2 Nephi 27:1-5)

Example 7

A   My son, the meaning of the *word restoration* is to bring back
evil for evil
carnal for carnal
devilish for devilish—

w_1 w_2 *good* for that which is *good,*

  x_1 x_2 *righteous* for that which is *righteous,*

   y_1 y_2 *just* for that which is *just,*

    z_1 z_2 *merciful* for that which is *merciful;*

               Therefore my son see that thou art

   z'_1 *merciful* unto your brethren,

  y'_1 deal *justly,*

 x'_1 judge *righteously,*

w'_1 and do *good* continually;

               and if ye do all these things,
ye shall receive your reward, yea,

   z'_2 ye shall have *mercy* restored unto you again,

  y'_2 ye shall have *justice* restored unto you again,

 x'_2 ye shall have a *righteous* judgment restored unto you again,

w'_2 and ye shall have *good* rewarded unto you again.

               For that which ye do send out
shall return unto you again
and be restored;

A'   Therefore the *word restoration* more fully condemneth the
sinner and justifieth him not at all.

(Alma 41:13-15)

The twist here is clever: After listing four pairs of terms, Alma pairs two lists of four terms and reverses their order at the same time. Or to use a chiasm to describe this chiasm: Alma writes a list of pairs and then a pair of lists. In all seriousness, a great play on words.

By far the most subtle use of chiasmus is its role in the structural design for longer passages and books. The Book of Mosiah is one of the longer passages which utilizes a chiasmic structure in its underlying organization.

82

Example 8

The Book of Mosiah

A King Benjamin exohrts his sons (1:1-8)
 B Mosiah chosen to succeed his father (1:10)
  C Mosiah receives the records (1:16)
   D Benjamin's speech and the words of the *angel* (2:9-5:15)
    E People enter into a covenant (6:1)
     F Priests consecrated (6:13)
      G Ammon *leaves Zarahemla* for the land of *Lehi-Nephi* (7:1-6)
       H People in bondage, Ammon put in prison (7:15)
        I The BD *gold plates* (8:9)
         J The record of Zeniff begins as he leaves Zarahemla (9:1)
          K Defense against the Lamanites (9:14-10:20)
           L Noah and his priests (11:1-15)
            M Abinadi persecuted and thrown in prison (11-12)
             N *Abinadi* reads the old law to the priests (13-14)
             N' *Abinadi* makes his own prophecies (15-16)
            M' Abinadi persecuted and killed (17:5-20)
           L' Noah and his priests (18:32-20:5)
          K' Lamanites threaten the people of Limhi (20:6-6-26)
         J' Record of Zeniff ends as he leaves the land of Lehi-Nephi
        I' The *24 gold plates* (21:27, 22:14)
       H' People of Alma in bondage (23)
      G Alma *leaves* the land of *Lehi-Nephi* for *Zarahemla* (24)
     F' The Church organized by Alma (25:14-24)
    E' Unbelievers refuse to enter covenant (26:1-4)
   D' The words of Alma and the words of the *angel* of the Lord (26-27)
  C' Alma the Younger receives the records (28:20)
 B' Judges chosen instead of a king (29:5-32)
A' Mosiah exhorts his people (29:5-32)

Obviously the foundation of chiasmic literature has not been reached until its underlying organization has been discovered. The Book of Mosiah serves as a sufficient evidence of this, for it surely has no chronological order and can be very confusing if the wrong organizational scheme is followed. Like the Book of Mosiah, also 1 Nephi, King Benjamin's speech and Alma 36 use a chiasmal framework as a foundation. In 1 Nephi, for example, compare chapters 7 and 16, then chapters 8 and 15, etc. This also will account for the division between 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi.

The shorter passages studied thus far could conceivably have occured inadvertently (cf. Example 1). Passages as complex as the last few examples, however, could not have occurred accidentally.

Example 9

Alma 36

My son give ear to my words (v 1)
  Keep the commandments and ye shall prosper in the land (v 1)
    Captivity of our fathers—bondage (v 2)
      He surely did deliver them (v 2)
        Trust in God (v 3)
          Support in trials, troubles and afflictions (v 3)
            I know this not of myself but of God (v 4)
              Born of God (v 5)
                Limbs paralysed (v 10)

              The Agony of Conversion
                    destroyed (v 11)
                    racked with eternal torment (v 12)
                    harrowed up to the greatest degree (v 12)
                    racked with all my sins (v 12)
                    tormented with the pains of hell (v 13)
                    inexpressible horror (v 14)
                    banished and extinct (v 15)
                    pains of a damned soul (v 16)

                Called upon Jesus Christ (v 18)

              The Joy of Conversion
                    no more pain (v 19)
                    oh what joy (v 20)
                    what marvelous light (v 20)
                    soul filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain (v 20)
                    exquisite (v 21)
                    nothing as sweet as was my joy (v 22)
                    singing and praising God (v 22)
                    long to be with God (v 22)

                Use of limbs returns (v 23)
              Born of God (v 26)
            Therefore my knowledge is of God (v 26)
          Supported under trials and troubles and afflictions (v 27)
        Trust in him (v 27)
      He will deliver me (v 27)
    Egypt—captivity (v 28-29)
  Keep the commandments and ye shall prosper in the land (v 30)
This according to his word (v 30)

Amazing!

Two more points deserve comment: first that the contrast between agony and joy, which Alma would like to make as vivid as possible, is made explicit in verse 20, "my soul was

84

filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain." Second, Alma places the turning point of his life at the turning point of the chapter, i.e., Christ belongs at the center of both.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to introduce one concept of formal analysis into Book of Mormon studies. The form which has proven particularly useful has been chiasmus, a basic element of ancient Hebrew. Even though all knowledge of this form lay dormant for centuries, it was rediscovered in the nineteenth century when formal criticism became popular. But by that time the Book of Mormon had long been in print. Since the Book of Mormon contains numerous chiasms, it thus becomes logical to consider the book a product of the ancient world and to judge its literary qualities accordingly. The book reviewed in this way is moving; it deserves to be read more carefully.