PREFACE

The present work had its inception in 1988 when I was undertaking a detailed study of the scriptures of the atonement. On 15 May I discovered an inverted parallel structure in D&C 88:14-16. I had read Welch's works on chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, but was unaware of Kroupa and Shipp's discovery of chiasmus in the Doctrine and Covenants.[1][2] In the exciting days and weeks that followed I discovered that most of the scriptures of the atonement were highly structured.[3] I then undertook to find the structure in the doctrinal discourses of the Book of Mormon, the scriptures of Christmas,[4] the Doctrine and Covenants,[5] the Pearl of Great Price,[6] Hebrews, The Gospel of John, 2 Peter, and some other Bible chapters. The Doctrinal Discourses of the Book of Mormon is a selection of those chapters and books that emphasize doctrine, rather than history, except I have included all of 1 and 2 Nephi (which really are doctrinal discourses). The first draft was completed in 1989.

After the first draft was completed, Parry published his "Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns"[7] While I had found many more inverted systems than he shows, he found a number I had missed. These I added, attributing each change made from his work by an endnote citing "DWP". I did not make any notation when his format agreed with what I had already found since they were independent discoveries. I also noted chiasms extracted from Welch's publications, again not citing those I had discovered independently. For instance, my version of Alma 36 is only slightly different from his.

In the pages that follow, the parallelisms are indicated by equal levels of indentation. Capital or lower case letters and Roman numerals were added at the beginning of the elements of the more extensive units to guide the eye, while simple structures often are shown only by indentation, without guide letters. Within a given element, so marked by a letter, sub-elements are indicated by further indentation. Subscripts are used to indicate direct parallelism of sub-elements within larger structures. Verse numbers were appended to the ends of previous verses so they would not appear at the beginning of a line. A given element begins with a guide letter and ends just before the next similar letter, or sometimes at an un-marked inter-structural passage.

The most common parallel forms are the inverted parallel or chiasm (element sequence of **A B C ... C B A**; the inner-most element may by doubled or tripled), and direct parallel (**A B C A B C**). The innermost element of an inverted systems usually is a point of emphasis or turning of thought. Often direct parallel systems include an unparalleled element which is a point of emphasis (**A B C A B C D** or less frequently **A B C D A B C**). A less common form is the climax (**AA BB CC D**). There are a few occurrences of a unique structure in which each element of the first set is repeated exactly once (except perhaps the point of emphasis), but not in any particular order; this can be thought of as random parallelism. There are a small number of systems in which substantial parallelism exists, but none of the above forms obtains. Finally, there are lists of similar or otherwise related items. No attempt was made to identify the other poetic parallelisms described by Parry.[8]

Parallel elements within a given structure are associated with each other either as being similar, opposite, or otherwise related. Sometimes an element helps explain, or otherwise elaborates upon, its partner. As an example, consider the inverted system in 1 Nephi 11:1-6. The **A**s speak of Nephi's desire to see, the **B**s of believing in the Lord, (I'll come back to the **C**s) the **D**s of the Spirit speaking, the **E**s of Nephi's speaking, and the **F**s of Nephi's belief in the words of his father. As usual, the innermost elements are a point of emphasis–Nehpi's belief in the words of his father was crucial to his receiving what he sought.

The **C**s of this inverted system exhibit a subtle relationship that can lead to new insights. In the first, Nephi is caught up into an exceedingly high mountain, in the second it is said that the Lord is the most high God, even above all. By standing on exceedingly high mountain Nephi is above all the earth to commune with the most high God, who is above all.

This is an example of what I like to call "teaching asymmetries." There are many such cases in inverted parallel systems where elements that are forced into parallelism by the surrounding structure do not at first appear to be related, but are found to be so on further consideration. In other cases the structure is far from balanced, with one arm elaborating, element by element, on the other (see 3 Nephi 12). It is in the asymmetries and imbalances that the structure has the greatest benefit in leading to insights into the meaning

of the scriptures. These structures would not review well as chiasms according to Welch's criteria, so I refer to them as "inverted parallel" instead to avoid confusion and controversy. No attempt has been made to evaluate the inverted parallel systems with respect to Welch's criteria, since the finding of chiasmus is not my objective.

Of the 1363 systems identified here, 815 (59.8%) are inverted, 481 (35.3%) are direct, 41 (3.0%) are climax, 7 (0.5%) are random, and 19 (1.4%) are irregular. A cursory examination fails to disclose any consistent ratio of type of parallelism employed by the different authors. For instance, Nephi varies from 49% (2 Nephi 28-33) to 68% (1 Nephi 1-10) inverted. Jacob uses 49% inverted in 2 Nephi 6-10 and 84% in Jacob 2-6.

One of the differences between this and previous work, other than the much broader coverage, is the discovery of concurrent overlapping systems. These may extend over several chapters, as in 2 Nephi 12-15, where there are actually two levels of such structure. These elements are marked with outdented double capital letters (**AA**, **BB**, etc.) and Roman numerals. (These really should be written on a scroll so they could be laid out for easy viewing!) Often the elements of the overall structure have no obvious relationship to the smaller units within. However, a major point of emphasis is to be found at the central element, just as in the smaller ones. The most complex example in all of scripture is found in 3 Nephi 20:11-23:3, Christ's commentary on Isaiah.[9] Here a single inverted system covers the entire text, while the same text is also subdivided into smaller systems at several levels. Four inverted systems begin with "Ye remember that I spake unto you, and said that when the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled–" (20:11).

I must state that this study is only one man's opinions. There often is more than one way to represent a particular passage, and different people may prefer different forms. Above all, one must not lose sight of the messages of the scriptures through arguing the structure. I might attempt to explain my reasoning on any of the structures given, but will never try to defend them. This work should not be considered as authoritative or final. The reader is invited to consider these examples, improve upon the representation of the structure, and search for others. If some insight is gained, the exercise will have been worthwhile for us both.

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1.   Charles G. Kroupa and Richard C. Shipp, "From the Mind of God", Salt Lake City: Shipp Bros. Printing, 1972.

2.   Richard C. Shipp, MA Thesis, BYU, 1975.

3.   D. Lynn Johnson, Scriptures of the Atonement, Unpublished, 1988.

4.   D. Lynn Johnson, The Scriptures of Christmas, Unpublished, 1989.

5.   D. Lynn Johnson, Patterns in the Doctrine and Covenants, Unpublished, 1990, revised 1998.

6.   D. Lynn Johnson, Patterns in the Pearl of Great Price, Unpublished, 1989.

7.   Donald W. Perry, "Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns", F.A.R.M.S., 1992.

8.   Donald W. Parry, "Poetic Parallelisms of the Book of Mormon", F.A.R.M.S., 1988, and Ensign, October 1989.

9.   D. Lynn Johnson, "Symmetry and Balance in 3 Nephi 20-22", Unpublished, 1992, revised 1998.