



At this point it might be well to pause and consider some of the implications of the statements in the above paragraph. It is clear that there are numerous examples of inverted parallel structures in the Doctrine and Covenants that satisfy all of the criteria proposed by Lund and Welch to define chiasmus. It is equally clear that some of the passages that show inverted parallel arrangements of concepts violate one or more of these criteria, and it may be inappropriate to refer to them as chiasms. Since the present work is intended to enhance understanding of the scriptures, emphasis was placed on concepts, rather than words. To avoid confusion, the term "inverted parallel" will be used, rather than "chiasmus".

The appearance in the Doctrine and Covenants of extensive parallel forms typifying old Hebrew writings sheds an entirely new light on the origins of these forms. In his article on chiasmus in the Pearl of Great Price, Peterson states "When we keep in mind the statements of the experts, that where chiasmus is present there was once a Hebrew writer, we can safely conclude that the Pearl of Great Price contains authentic Hebrew scriptures".[20] There obviously was no Hebrew writer involved with the Doctrine and Covenants. Although Joseph Smith was later tutored in Hebrew, the Book of Mormon and most of the Doctrine and Covenants were written before that began. The possibility that he was even aware of the writings of Jebb and Lowth must be regarded as remote in the extreme. He might have noticed chiasmus in the Bible or the Book of Mormon, but the earliest inverted parallel passages in the Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 3 and 10, were written even before the translation of the latter was well under way.

Even if Joseph Smith had known about chiasmus, as improbable as this is, it is highly unlikely that its appearance in either the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants could have been his doing. For one thing, it is not uniformly applied in the former.[21] More importantly, it is extremely difficult to write even a simple chiasm. The skeptic is invited to try. Yet the Book of Mormon was dictated to scribes over a short period of time, and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants also were largely dictated to scribes, apparently without the advantage of the extensive thought beforehand that usually would be required to write in such highly organized patterns. The Lord's challenge in D&C 67:4-9 (itself possessing inverted parallel structure!) still stands.

We observe, in both books, rich and varied tapestries of detailed and extensive forms of "Hebrew" parallelism, often woven together in multiple layers, many with very subtle relationships between matching elements, and all so un-obvious that it largely has escaped detection, particularly in the Doctrine and Covenants. There are examples of successive inverted parallel systems in which the last element of one is the first of the next, with all of these outer elements referring to the same thing (heirs of the Celestial kingdom in 76:50-70 and Joseph Smith in 122). The relationships between matching elements often is quite subtle, such as in the three parallel parts of C, Section 122, verse 5, and its partner in verses 6 and 7. Here there are parallels between "false brethren" and "enemies", "robbers" and "murderers", and "perils by land or by sea" and "billowing surge". Yet the basic ideas in all cases flow in consecutive order, with little obvious retracing of concepts or ideas. This would have to be extremely difficult for a person of any level of intellectual prowess, let alone a frontier farmer's son, to accomplish well.

One is almost forced to conclude that chiasmus and the other parallel forms had their origin not in Hebrew poetry, but in the revelations from the Lord, and that Hebrew poetry had its origins in those revelations; cultural diffusion could account for its occurrence in other ancient literature. The prevalence of these forms in all books of ancient and modern scripture attests to this conclusion. It thus is not surprising to find parallelism in the revelations written by John Taylor (Section 135), Brigham Young (Section 136), Joseph F. Smith (Section 138) and Wilford Woodruff (Excerpts From Three Addresses...), as well as those dictated and written by the Prophet Joseph. As the beauty of these writings unfolds, we can well agree with the Prophet, "...the heavens declare the glory of a God...and he that can mark the power of Omnipotence, inscribed upon the heavens, can also see God's own handwriting in the sacred volume: and he who reads it oftenest will like it best, and he who is acquainted with it, will know the hand wherever he can see it..."[22]

As abundantly evidenced by the lack of awareness of chiasmus, it is difficult to find parallel forms in the scriptures as printed. Fortunately, the computer greatly simplifies the task. The present work was

accomplished largely through the use of the Computerized Scriptures.[23] First, a given section was printed double spaced for marking up. Parallel words, phrases or ideas were encircled, and lines were drawn connecting these parallel elements, revealing the structure. A word processor was utilized to reformat the material to display the structure. It was quickly discovered that verse numbering had little to do with the structure, and consequently the numbers were moved to the ends of the previous lines.

In the pages that follow, the parallelisms are indicated by equal levels of indentation. Capital or lower case letters were added in front of the elements of the more extensive systems to guide the eye. Within a given element, so marked by a letter, sub-elements are indicated by further indentation, as seen, for example, in the **C** elements of 122:5-7 referred to above.

The most common parallel forms found in this work are inverted parallel (element sequence of **A B C C B A**), and direct parallel (**A B C A B C**), although many of the other poetic parallelisms described by Parry[24] are observed. Approximately 63% of all identified systems, large and small (875 in number), are inverted parallel, while about 33% are direct parallel. Approximately 2% of the systems are of climax form (**AABBCCD**).

There are nine occurrences of a unique structure in which each element of the first set is repeated exactly once (except perhaps the turning point), but not in any particular order; this can be thought of as a random parallel system. A particularly beautiful example is the prayer offered by Joseph Smith in the Liberty jail, recorded in 121:1-6. Here, elements **A** through **G** are questions to God. The turning point, **H**, is a statement of the greatness and power of God, and the balance of the prayer is petitions that match the questions precisely. It is intriguing to note that the passage can be rearranged to read as a powerful inverted parallel system (**A B...G H G...B A**). One can speculate about why it was not written as such. Perhaps the Prophet had discovered the fact that the Lord often uses parallelism, but hadn't noticed the inverted form. On the other hand, the prayer may have been given by revelation. The Lord's answer is in an inverted pattern, including the deepest system discovered in this work (verses 12-25). Other examples (for instance 42:1-3, 45:66-69 and 77:8) cannot be rearranged and the individual elements are integral parts of their respective revelations as written. Welch has shown that the Epistle of James is similarly structured.[25] There are six systems in which parallelism is present but none of the above patterns apply.

The system in 121:12-25 exhibits some of the subtleties found. The first **D** includes "shall be swept from under heaven", which implies the same sense of speed as "swift judgment" in the second. The second **E** defines the curse spoken of in its partner. Both **Bs** refer to time. The **Js** relate the priesthood to the ordinances of the temple.

In many instances there are direct parallels in matching elements of inverted parallel systems. A particularly beautiful example is Section 89, in which most elements include multiple part direct parallels. Thus the first **A** speaks first of temporal salvation and then of a principle with promise. The second **A** gives four aspects of temporal salvation, and then a promise. The first **B** tells us that it is adapted to the capacity of the saints, and then gives the prohibitions (that so often are the only aspect of the Word of Wisdom we consider), while the second mentions the saints and then the commandments (which would include the prohibitions listed in the first). The direct parallels in the **Ds** are particularly interesting. This section is an example of how additional insights can be gained by noticing the structure of the scriptures.[26]

Another example of direct parallelism within inverted is found in the **A** elements of 88:5-33. The first **A**, verses 5-10, mentions the sun, moon, stars and earth, with light attributed only to the first three. The last **A**, verses 20-33, cites the three degrees of glory in order three times each, and the degree not of glory twice, thus paralleling "light" in the first **A** with "glory" in the second.

In a few sections there are major structures that span several smaller systems. These are identified by Roman numerals or double capital letters (**AA BB CC**). Section 76 is most notable in this regard. The entire section has an inverted structure labeled with Roman numerals, with several levels of sub-structure. Table 1 shows

this overall pattern. In the vision of the celestial kingdom, 76:50-70, the five inverted parallel systems are overwritten by a larger inverted parallel system (see Table 2). In my opinion, the structure in Section 76 is on a par with Isaiah or Nephi at their best.

There is an additional feature of the Doctrine and Covenants that became apparent in this study, namely, the frequent occurrence of lists. A prominent example is found in 1:17-33, in which there are no fewer than four lists, some of them showing parallelism. The number of elements in these lists often bears interesting relationships to biblical number symbolism as discussed by Bullinger.[27] For instance, the twelve members of the list in 43:25 constitute a referral to the priesthood.

It needs to be said that the proposed occurrence of ancient literary forms in the Doctrine and Covenants is controversial. Welch has told me on more than one occasion that he has searched for chiasmus there and has found little if any. The presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon has been touted as an evidence of its authenticity. Finding similar structural forms in the Doctrine and Covenants would weaken that argument, since both books were dictated by the Joseph Smith, and he could have given the structure to both. However, much of the Book of Mormon, specifically the parts describing historical events, has little if any structure. The doctrinal discourses are all structured, but not all in the same way nor to the same degree.[28] The most complex is the Lord's discourse on the writings of Isaiah, 3 Nephi 20-22.[29] In fact, this discourse possesses the most complex structure I have found in all four Standard Works. Perhaps Welch is right according to his strict definition of chiasmus. However, there can be little doubt that extensive inverted parallelism exists in this book.

One wonders why the Lord chose to couch so many of the latter-day revelations in these forms. Various scholars have speculated about this question with regard to the other scriptures, including ease of memorization, poetic form, and so forth. Brown suggests that "Parallel form may have a greater influence on the human soul than we realize." [30] The following points might be considered:

- \* The Lord teaches by repetition in ways that don't appear to be repetitious. The matching elements of chiasmic or direct parallel structures support and help define each other, with the result that the meanings are made more clear without additional words of explanation. In fact, an understanding of the structure is an important aid in understanding the original intent of the author.[31]
- \* One is almost forced to consider the scriptures more carefully, with more pondering in depth. New insights are gained, particularly when matching elements do not at first appear to match, but their placement is forced by the structure. Further consideration often reveals previously un-noticed relationships and deeper understanding. The reader will find many examples.
- \* The context of a passage is more easily discerned.
- \* The language carries a power and impact that derives, in part, from the structure.
- \* The Lord uses these forms as a pattern to help His children recognize the revealed scriptures.[32] As mentioned above, they are difficult to imitate, yet the modern scriptures came forth before even the scholars were aware of the pattern.

It must be stated that the study of parallel forms in the Doctrine and Covenants is in an early state of development. It must be emphasized that 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. The work that follows is presented only as one man's view, and represents the excitement that warmed his early mornings for the better part of a year.

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