

## PREFACE

There is an unparalleled thrill of making a discovery that suddenly comes into view, unbidden and unannounced. The excitement is hardly tempered by the supposition that surely many have found it before, although no report has been seen. Such an occurrence lead to a study which has immeasurably enhanced my views of the scriptures, their meanings, and their beauty. While engaged in a detailed study of the scriptures of the atonement, I noticed the inverse parallel arrangement of the words "redemption" and "resurrection" in Doctrine and Covenants 88:14-16.

I had been intrigued by several articles on the relatively recent discovery of this ancient literary form, known as chiasmus, in the Book of Mormon, and had found a few minor ones in my own study of that book. A chiasm is characterized by an inverse parallel arrangement of words, phrases or ideas, such that opposite elements are related to each other, being similar, opposite, or in explanation or elaboration of each other. Emphasis usually is placed on the turning point at the center.

If the chiasm in these three verses was an isolated example, it might be passed off as a coincidence. However, further examination revealed that the chiasm stretches both ways to encompass verses 7 through 33. Moreover, the first 75 verses of the Section consist of a series of chiasms. Continued searching revealed more examples in other Sections, and lead to the decision to examine the entire Doctrine and Covenants for the presence of chiasmus. The present volume resulted from that work.

More than 300 major chiasms (of more than 4 lines) were found, along with many smaller systems and a wealth of other parallel literary forms, all woven together in the rich language that has inspired the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since the earliest edition of the book was published in 1833. The literary structure is so subtle that it escaped notice most of that time, and yet that same structure is a major contributor to the impact of the language.

One could speculate as to how much Joseph Smith knew about the chiastic form that permeates all three of the latter-day scriptures that came forth through him. It is clear that few in the world were aware of its existence during his lifetime. Although brief mention had been made earlier, the first extensive treatment of chiasmus was published in 1854, 24 years after the publication of the Book of Mormon and 10 years after the death of the Prophet. The significance of the appearance of this form, so common in old Hebrew writings, in the Book of Mormon at a time when only a very few scholars had noticed it, has been discussed already. Its occurrence there is entirely consistent with the origin of the book with the descendants of the prophet Lehi, since this form of writing was in vogue when he left Jerusalem.

While the presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon attests to the ancient origins of the book, its occurrence in the Doctrine and Covenants is of quite different significance. The chiasms in the Doctrine and Covenants are obviously of modern origin, given before many people in the Western world knew that this literary form existed, given to restore and explain concepts long since lost from that same world. It appears as if the Lord chose to use this form (and direct parallel and other formal literary structures) in communicating with His prophets through the ages. The Prophet of the restoration was no exception, nor was Brigham Young, John Taylor or Joseph F. Smith. One could well ask whether chiastic form originated with the old Hebrews, or whether it originated with the Lord Himself. Its universal appearance in all books of scripture attests to the latter.

After observing the complex and beautiful literary structures of the modern scriptures, I am convinced that the Prophet Joseph Smith received not only the ideas, but at least the basic wording, by revelation. The same can be said of the translation of the Book of Mormon and Abraham, in the Pearl of Great Price, in that the structure of these books was preserved in translation. (In some cases the original chiastic form of the biblical scriptures was damaged or lost in the English translations.)

The doubter might try to write a meaningful chiasm with more than the minimum number of elements. What we find in the scriptures, and particularly those of the latter days, are from the simplest to the most complex

of chiasms of a wide variety of structure. There are examples of a blend of direct and inverse parallel form. There are several examples of consecutive chiasms in which the outer elements are all similar. There are, in the Book of Mormon, chiasms that encompass entire chapters (Alma 36) and whole books (1 Nephi). And all of this is so subtle that it remained undetected for nearly 140 years in the Book of Mormon and longer in the Doctrine and Covenants. All this would have been an extremely difficult achievement for a person of any level of intellectual prowess, let alone a frontier farmer's son. The Lord's challenge recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 67:4-9 still stands!

One can appreciate a little more what the Prophet meant when he said

"...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..." (Joseph Smith, HC vol II, p 14)

Wilmette, Illinois, September 1989

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Note: Of course, it turned out that this was not the first discovery of chiasmus in the Doctrine and Covenants. See Charles G. Kroupa and Richard C. Shipp, "From the Mind of God", Shipp Bros. Printing, Salt Lake City, 1972.