

Foundation for Research

on
Ancient
America



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NEWSLETTER NO. 37, September 29, 1981

Dear Members and Friends,

It is our privilege to announce a special meeting of the Foundation for Research on Ancient America at 3:00 p.m., October 18, 1981, in Partridge Hall of the Stone Church.

The speaker will be Dr. Richard A. DeLong, whom you will remember for his outstanding illustrated lectures on the Book of Mormon on numerous occasions in the past. FRAA is bringing Dr. DeLong from his home in Estes Park, Colorado, especially to address us at this forthcoming meeting. His subject will be "Chiasms and Wordprints, Evidence for a Direct Translation of the Book of Mormon."

Appropriately, we are able to present in this newsletter an article by Dr. DeLong on this same subject, which we believe will whet your appetite for more information on this particular phase of support of the Book of Mormon. We are confident that you will not want to miss Dr. DeLong's presentation on the 18th.

-- T.D.S.

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CHIASMUS, INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF BOOK OF MORMON AUTHORSHIP

By

Dr. Richard A. De Long

Who wrote the Book of Mormon? Opponents of the book have claimed that Joseph Smith wrote it himself or received it from Solomon Spaulding or Sidney Rigdon. Defenders of the book support the opinion that it is a sacred record written on metal plates by many ancient authors and translated by Joseph Smith with divine assistance and direction.

In the Book of Mormon there exists internal evidence supporting the claim that it was written in Hebrew style by many authors. These authors used an ancient Hebraic literary form, chiasmus. The word, chiasmus, is of 19th century origin, about 1871, and derives from the Greek letter Chi or X. The letter is suggested by a diagram of a two element chiasm:

- a They were made manifest unto the prophet,
- b by the voice of the Spirit
- b' for by the Spirit
- a' are all things made known unto the prophets.

I Nephi 7:3,4

This chiasm would be diagramed a b' and hence the Greek letter X (Chi).

b a'

We may question why Nephi and other scribes used the repetitious chiasmic form? First, chiasmus was easy to memorize. The Hebrews found it useful for long passages committed to memory. Second, chiasmus was in vogue and remained a common literary form in the Hebrew world until the first century A.D. when the Romans destroyed most Jewish institutions.

It is doubtful that Joseph Smith could have learned of the chiasmic style through academic channels. No one in America fully understood chiasmus in 1829. A book on the subject, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scriptures*, by John Forbes, was published in 1854, ten years after Joseph Smith's death. Even more unlikely is the possibility that Joseph Smith noticed chiasmic forms in the Bible, since most biblical passages containing inverted word orders had been rearranged into natural word orders in the King James translation.

According to Larsen, Rencher and Layton (1980), distinct authorship styles can be readily distinguished within the Book of Mormon. These styles do not resemble Joseph Smith's nor any of his 19th century contemporaries. Repetitions and other clumsy grammatical constructions which have been accused of being ignorant and redundant suggest something about the translation process. It may have been both direct and literal with each author's style preserved. The information was transferred but the imprint of the original language with its certain awkward expressions and chiasmic structures remained.

Chiasmus may be found anywhere in the Book of Mormon, although they typify the style of the first half of the book. Welch (1969) cites the following examples:

Example 1-

And the Jews
shall have the words
of the Nephites
and the Nephites
shall have the words
of the Jews.

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.

II Nephi 12:71,72

Example 2

Men will drink damnation to their souls unless
they humble themselves
and become as little children
believing that salvation is the atonement 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 1:118-120

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 3:13-16

Examples 2 and 3 are just two small parts of the very complex structure of King Benjamin's entire speech. He carefully and painstakingly prepared his thoughts beforehand and they were "written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice" (Mosiah 1:37). Joseph Smith might have unknowingly used simple chiasms like those in Example 1, but to have planned and written King Benjamin's speech with complex chiasmic verses as well as the chiasmic outline of his speech, would have required a six million dollar mind. An unpublished outline by Robert F. Smith of King Benjamin's speech displays the following chiasmic organization:

A Introduction

God as the Heavenly King and Man's obligations thereunder
God has physically created you.
Covenant peoples are servants of God
The hope of exaltation after death

B Coronation proclamation

C For obedience to the laws of the Lord and King
impart victory and prosperity (c.f. Leviticus 26)

D Prohibition of contention

E The angel's declaration of Christ's atoning
mission for the salvation of mankind

F The present state of man and the point
of his conversion

G The possibility of reconciliation

G' The alternative of damnation

F' The people fall to the ground, confess their
iniquity, and are forgiven of their sins.

E' Benjamin's testimony of the goodness and glory
of God and his salvation

D' Prohibition of contention

C' Stipulation of the law requires men to impart substance
for peace and social order (c.f. Leviticus 25)

B' Covenant proclamation

A' Conclusion

God as Heavenly Father and excommunication upon breach of obligation
God has spiritually begotten you this day.
Covenant people know God by serving him
The hope of exaltation of the people after death

Mosiah 1:38-3:21

The whole Book of Mosiah has an underlying chiastic organization according to Welch's
(1969) example 8:

The Book of Mosiah

- A King Benjamin exhorts his sons (1:1-3)
- B Mosiah chosen to succeed his father (1:15,16)
- C Mosiah receives the records (1:23)
- D Benjamin's speech and the words of the angel (1:36-2:50)
- E People enter into a covenant (3:6)
- F Priests consecrated (4:4)
- G Ammon leaves Zarahemla for the land of Lehi-Nephi (5:4-8)
- H People in bondage. Ammon put in prison (5:9)
- I The 24 gold plates (5:64)
- J The record of Zeniff begins as he leaves Zarahemla (6:1)
- K Defense against the Lamanites (6:14-7:57)
- L Noah and his priests (7:1-15)
- M Abinadi persecuted and thrown into prison (7:69)
- N Abinadi reads old law to priests (7:70)
- N' Abinadi makes his own prophecies (7:105-124)
- M' Abinadi persecuted and killed (9:1-27) (8:1-91)
- L' Noah and his priests (9:100-112)
- K' Lamanites threaten the people of Limhi (9:113-139)
- J' Record of Zeniff ends as he leaves the land of Lehi-Nephi
- I' The 24 gold plates (9:169, 170) (9:140)
- H' People of Alma in bondage (11:54-64)
- G' Alma leaves the land of Lehi-Nephi for Zarahemla (11:65)
- F' The church organized by Alma (11:97-104)
- E' Unbelievers refuse to enter covenant (11:105-120)
- D' The words of Alma and the words of the angel of the Lord (11:116-176)
- C' Alma the Younger receives the records (13:1,2)
- B' Judges chosen instead of a king (13:7-62)
- A' Mosiah exhorts his people (13:7-62)

Similar chiasmic frameworks are noted by Welch (1969) in Alma 17:1-30 and in Wallace B. King's unpublished article on 1 Nephi, chapters 1 through 7.

Consider the following passages (Alma 8:28-34)

Alma 8:28 - Amulek speaks to the lawyers and quotes King Mosiah:

- 28 "Yea, well did he say,
- A 'that if the time should come
 - B that the voice of this people
 - C should choose iniquity;
 - A' that ~~is,~~ if the time should come
 - B' that this people
 - C' should fall into transgression
 - B'' they (i.e., this people)
 - C'' would be ripe for destruction.'

(Three parallel phrases with anterior deletion of A'', that is, if the time should come.)

29 And now I say unto you,
A that well doth the Lord
B judge of your iniquities;
A' well doth he
B' cry unto this people,
C' by the voice of his angels,

(Parallel phrases with posterior deletion of C)

D 'Repent ye, repent ye,
E for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

30 A'' Yea, well doth he
B'' cry (i.e., unto this people)
C'' by the voice of his angels,

FF 'that I will come down
G among my people,
F' with equity and justice in my hands.'

31 Yea, and I say unto you,
A that if it were not for the prayers of the righteous
who are now in the land,
that ye would even now be
B visited with utter destruction;
32 C Yet it would not be by flood,
C' as were the people in the days of Noah,
B' but it would be by famine, and by pestilence,
and the sword.
33 A' But it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared;

now therefore

A if ye will cast out the righteous from among you,
B then will not the Lord stay his hand,
C but in his fierce anger,
B' he will come out against you;
A' Then ye shall be smitten by famine, and by pestilence,
and by the sword;

E' and the time is soon at hand,
D' except ye repent."

My analysis above of Amulek's speech to the lawyers (Alma 8:28-34) begins with Amulek quoting King Mosiah with three direct parallel phrases, 8:28 (ABCA'B'C'B''C'') with a deletion of A''. Amulek continues his speech with direct parallel phrases, 8:29 (ABA'B'C') with a deletion of C. The Lord speaks through the voice of his angels, 'Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (DE) and 'I will come down among my people with equity and justice in my hands' (FGF'). Amulek follows this with two inverse synonymous chiasms, 8:31-33 (ABCC'B'A') and 8:33-34 (ABCB'A'), and then completes the Lord's chiasmus (DEFGF') with his own words, "and the time is soon at hand, except ye repent" (E'D'). I am convinced that Joseph Smith probably did not notice this complex chiastic structure while translating the continuous narrative. It required several attempts over a period of several months before I analyzed these passages to my satisfaction.

Did the chiastic form survive in the cultures that followed the close of Book of Mormon history? I believe that the evidence indicates that it did. Consider the following from Sejourne (1956), an Aztec midwife's words to the newborn:

"My well loved and tender son

- A Know and understand that thy house is not here . .
- B This house wherein thou art born is but a nest
- C An inn at which thou hast arrived.
- C' Thy entry into this world:
- B' Here dost thou bud and flower
- A' Thy true house is another."

The ruling Aztec elite practiced polygamy and had a polytheistic religion. Their belief in a celestial mother and father in Sejourne's quotation below is similar to the Mormon (L.D.S.) belief that God is literally a procreating father and that he is married to a Mrs. God, or divine mother.

- A "Oh precious stone, oh rich feather
- B Thou wert made in the place
- C Where are the great God and Goddess
(which are above in heavens . . .
- C' Thy mother and father, celestial woman and
celestial man (made and reared thee)
- B' Thou hast come to this world from afar, poor and weary . . .
- A' Our Lord Quetzalcoatl, who is the Creator, has put into this dust
a precious stone and a rich feather."

In a post-conquest work, *The Annals of the Cakchiquels*, a history of the Cakchiquel people of highland Guatemala, chiasmus was extensively used by its unknown author or authors. Concerning the arrival of the Cakchiquels, he wrote:

- A "When we arrived at the gates of Tulan,
- B we received
- C a red stick
- D which was our staff,
- E and because of that
- E' we were given the names of Cakchiquels, oh, our sons!
- C' Let us thrust the points of our staffs

- (A) in the sand
- (B) under the sea
- (C) and we shall soon
- (B') cross the sea
- (A') on the sand

- C' using the red sticks
- B' which we went to receive
- A' at the gates of Tulan.

Within the inverted word order ABCDED'XC'B'A' is included an inverted word order X, i.e., (A) (B) (C) (B') (A') between D' and C'.

The Book of Mormon indicates that its Jaredite, Nephite, Mulekite and Lamanite peoples were of Middle East origin. It is of interest to note that *The Annals of the Cakchiquels* and the Quiche *Title of the Lords of Totonicapan* indicate that their ancestors had "come from the other part of the sea, from Civan-Tulan, on the confines of Babylon." The Quiche account further states that "they came from where the sun rises,

descendants of Israel, of the same language and the same customs . . . they were the "sons of Abraham and Jacob." Anthropologists have attributed the preceding statements to the influence of Spanish Christianity. However, the best evidence that Mesóamericans were of Middle East origin is the Hebraic style of writing that they used, the very conservative form, chiasmus.

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INFORMATION NEEDED

FRAA is interested in maintaining an up-to-date list of church members with training in the various disciplines pertinent to Book of Mormon research. This research includes Old World and New World archaeology, linguistics, Hebrew studies, ancient history of the Near or Far East and related subjects.

If you have training, or know of anyone now preparing or working in any of these areas, please notify us. We are vitally interested in utilizing the various disciplines for furthering Book of Mormon research.

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