



7-31-1997

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David E. Sloan

Van Cott, Bagley and Cornwall, Salt Lake City

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Sloan, David E. (1997) "Nephi's Convincing of Christ through Chiasmus: Plain and Precious Persuading from a Prophet of God," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 6 : No. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol6/iss2/5>

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Author(s) David E. Sloan

Reference *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 67-98.

ISSN 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

Abstract One of the principal themes of Nephi's writings on the small plates is his desire to convince others of Christ. A second, related theme is his desire to write plain and precious things on those plates. Some of the most plain and precious writings of Nephi are those instances in which he used the name *Christ* in chiasmus or other forms of poetry. Perhaps more than any other portion of his words, Nephi intended these plain and precious writings to convince both Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the one true Messiah.

convince both Jew and gentile that Jesus Christ is the one true Messiah (see 2 Nephi 28:17), and to convince them "that the words of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true" (1 Nephi 13:39).²

The convincing power of Nephi's writings is in part due to those things reported in them which have been lost from the Bible. The most plain and precious of all truths lost from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, are the clear and unambiguous declarations of the Old Testament that Jesus Christ is the one true Messiah.

Nephi's Convincing of Christ through Chiasmus: Plain and Precious Persuading from a Prophet of God

David E. Sloan

Abstract: One of the principal themes of Nephi's writings on the small plates is his desire to convince others of Christ. A second, related theme is his desire to write plain and precious things on those plates. Some of the most plain and precious writings of Nephi are those instances in which he used the name *Christ* in chiasmus or other forms of poetry. Perhaps more than any other portion of his words, Nephi intended these plain and precious writings to convince both Jew and gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the one true Messiah.

Introduction

The Lord commanded Nephi that "the ministry and the prophecies, the *more plain and precious parts* of them, should be written upon [the small] plates" of Nephi (1 Nephi 19:3).¹ The related characteristics of plainness and preciousness are fundamental to Nephi's writings on the small plates. One of Nephi's primary purposes in writing plain and precious things was to persuade (see 1 Nephi 6:4), prove to (see 2 Nephi 11:4, 6), and

¹ This suggests both qualitative and quantitative differences between the large and the small plates. Also, although Nephi only wrote "sacred" things on the small plates (1 Nephi 19:6), it is the premise of this paper that certain parts are more "plain and precious" than others.

convince both Jew and gentile that Jesus Christ is the one true Messiah (see 2 Nephi 26:12), and to convince them "that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true" (1 Nephi 13:39).²

The convincing power of Nephi's writings is in part due to those things recorded in them which have been lost from the Bible. "The most plain and precious of all truths lost from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, are the clear and unequivocal declarations of the mission of Jesus Christ."³ In contrast, Book of Mormon "plainness often focuses on central matters, such as the Lordship of Jesus."⁴ Some of the most *plain* parts of Nephi's writings are the fifty-three times in which he wrote the name *Christ*.⁵ Some of the most *precious* parts of Nephi's writings are those in which he used poetry ("the best words in the best order")⁶ in general and chiasmus in particular. Based on these assumptions, Nephi's paradigm of plain and precious writing may have been the use of the name *Christ* in chiastic or other poetic forms. Richard Dilworth Rust writes: "The interconnection of beauty with truth and goodness invites us to Christ. That is, literary elements such as form, imagery, poetry, and narrative help teach and motivate us in ways that touch our hearts and souls as well as our minds."⁷ Thus "with content often determining form and

² Nephi saw in vision that the Book of Mormon and other records would "establish the truth" of the Bible, would "make known the plain and precious things" taken away from it, and would "make known . . . that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world" (1 Nephi 13:40). A proposed chiastic structure for 1 Nephi 13:39-42 can be found in Donald W. Pary, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 23-24.

³ Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 6.

⁴ Neal A. Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 41.

⁵ Although *Christ* is a title, in the Book of Mormon it is commonly referred to as a name. This paper focuses primarily on the name *Christ*, secondarily on the title *Messiah*, and only incidentally on other names or titles Nephi used for Jesus.

⁶ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), x.

⁷ Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS: 1997), 2-3.

form revealing content, profound concerns are presented in ways that reach us deeply."⁸ The purpose of this paper is to analyze Nephi's use of plain and precious writing, especially chiasmus, to convince us "that Jesus is the Christ" (2 Nephi 26:12).

The Words of Three Witnesses of Christ

Before proceeding, it should be noted that to prove the coming of Christ, Nephi completed his writings with the words of three special eyewitnesses of the "Redeemer" (2 Nephi 11:2-4).⁹ Nephi began with Jacob's words in 2 Nephi 6-10,¹⁰ continued with Isaiah's words in 2 Nephi 12-24, and concluded with his own words in 2 Nephi 25:7-33:15.¹¹ Elder Jeffrey Holland writes: "Standing like sentinels at the gate of the book, Nephi, Jacob, and Isaiah admit us into the scriptural presence of the Lord."¹² It is

⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁹ John W. Welch notes an overall chiastic pattern in 2 Nephi in which "central emphasis is given here to the words of Isaiah, which are seen by both Jacob and Nephi as containing much which could be likened unto the future of Lehi's group." John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 201.

¹⁰ According to John Welch, Jacob's speech in 2 Nephi 6-10 is a "temple text," and the "primary mission" of such texts in the Book of Mormon is "the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ." John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 300.

¹¹ In contrast to the preceding chapters, which include an abridgment of his father's record and a narrative of their journeyings in the wilderness (see 1 Nephi 19:1), Nephi provided little, if any, historical context for this portion of his writings. Also, although Nephi probably began making the small plates about thirty years after leaving Jerusalem, the writing of this final portion was most likely begun at least ten years later (see 2 Nephi 5:33-34).

¹² Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 36. He also asserts: "One could argue convincingly that the primary purpose for recording, preserving, and then translating the small plates of Nephi was to bring forth to the dispensation of the fulness of times the testimony of these three witnesses." Ibid., 35. For a discussion of the christological passages found in the writings of the three witnesses, see Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 33-94.

significant that all fifty-three instances of *Christ* in Nephi's writings are found in these chapters.¹³

Significantly, Nephi used two chiasmic passages (see 2 Nephi 11:2–8 and 25:1–6, discussed below) as literary devices to simultaneously separate the words of the three witnesses and unite their testimonies of Christ.¹⁴ According to John Welch, "Whenever one reads a text, especially a text with ancient origins, one ought to be mindful of the text's division into segments or units, and that chiasmus afforded a seriously needed element of internal organization in ancient writing."¹⁵ The remainder of this paper analyzes Nephi's use of the titles *Christ* and *Messiah*, especially where they appear in chiasmic or other poetic form.

¹³ Excluding the words of Isaiah or Jacob, but including words which may have been spoken by the Lord or others, Nephi wrote approximately 9,790 of his own words in this portion of the Book of Mormon. Based on fifty-one occurrences, Nephi's normalized use-rate for the name *Christ* in this section is approximately 3.61, over 3 1/2 times the average Book of Mormon use-rate. Two instances of the name appear in Jacob's words in 2 Nephi, but none appear in Isaiah's. For an explanation of the statistical methodology involved in this calculation, see Roger R. Keller, *Book of Mormon Authors: Their Words and Messages* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1996), 5–7. Keller divides the words of Nephi (including 1 Nephi), Mormon, and Mormon's son Moroni into "narrative" and "sermonic" portions. The normalized use-rate of *Christ* in the sermonic materials of these three authors is approximately 6.3 times normal for Mormon, which appears to be the highest in the Book of Mormon; 4.9 times normal for Moroni, which appears to be the next highest; and 1.9 times normal for Nephi (it appears that the normalized numbers provided in *Book of Mormon Authors*, 16 n. 24, are actually nonnormalized numbers).

¹⁴ Similarly, Isaiah chapters 48 and 49, recorded by Nephi in 1 Nephi 20 and 21, are separated from Nephi's words by the poetic forms anabasis and cycloides in 1 Nephi 19:24 and chiasmus in 1 Nephi 22:1–3. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 40, 45–46. Furthermore, 1 Nephi 19:23–24 even evidences some degree of chiasmity, seen as follows: written, the prophet, liken all scriptures unto us, hear ye the words of the prophet—house of Israel, hear ye the words of the prophet—house of Israel, liken them unto yourselves, the prophet, written.

¹⁵ John W. Welch, "What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?" in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 205. Welch also writes that "the design and depth of the Book of Mormon often comes to light only when the book is studied with chiasmic and other ancient literary principles in mind." *Ibid.*, 222.

2 Nephi 10:3, 9

Jacob, who is the first of the three eyewitnesses, used the title *Messiah* twice during a sermon, as recorded in 2 Nephi 6:13–14.¹⁶ That night, after the sermon, an angel taught Jacob about the Messiah, revealing that “Christ . . . should be his name” (2 Nephi 10:3).¹⁷ Jacob also used the name *Christ* a few verses later in 2 Nephi 10:7. Although *Christ* does not appear here in poetic form, as will be shown below, Nephi’s transition from the more general *Messiah* to the very specific *Christ* is accomplished with the assistance of chiasmus and is an important aspect of his convincing others of Christ.¹⁸

The Original Words for *Messiah* and *Christ* in the Book of Mormon

Before making too much of the transition from *Messiah* to *Christ*, we should consider the possibility of a similar transition in the untranslated original text. This issue arises because *Messiah* and *Christ* are English transliterations of, respectively, Hebrew and Greek words meaning “anointed one.” Although it seems reasonable to conclude that the Hebrew word *mashiach* was the original for the Book of Mormon word *Messiah*, the original word for *Christ* is not clear.¹⁹ Some even consider the use of *Christ* at this stage of the Book of Mormon to be anachronistic.²⁰

¹⁶ *Messiah* occurs twenty-nine times in Nephi’s writings on the small plates. The first eighteen instances, beginning with 1 Nephi 1:19 and ending with 2 Nephi 3:5, are found in Nephi’s record of the visions and teachings of Lehi. After Jacob’s sermon, *Messiah* does not appear again until 2 Nephi 25:14, when Nephi used it for the first time independently of his father and brother.

¹⁷ This assumes that “in the last night” refers to the immediately preceding night (2 Nephi 10:3).

¹⁸ This transition is effective throughout the entire Book of Mormon, for *Messiah* is only used three times outside of Nephi’s writings, while *Christ* appears 333 times in that same material. According to Hugh W. Nibley, “*Messiah* is the more general term, *Christ* the more limited and particular.” *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 168.

¹⁹ Persuasive evidence exists for the proposition that the original Book of Mormon text consisted of Hebrew words transliterated into reformed Egyptian characters. See John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, “Jewish and Other Se-

However, the words "this *should be* his name" suggest that the angel actually revealed a future name of Jesus other than *mashiach* (the name most likely known to Jacob at that time) which Joseph Smith translated as *Christ*. One possibility for this future name is the Greek *Christos*.²¹ "Greek was in common use throughout Palestine in the first century A.D." (some scholars even suggest "a special 'Jewish' Greek dialect"), and most of the New Testament was originally written in Greek.²² Also, "the language of the Jews" was influenced by the "frequent hearing and reading" of the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, or LXX, the translation of which was completed more than one hundred years before Christ's birth.²³ In fact, "the general view is that the LXX is largely responsible" for the influence of the Old Testament on the "religious vocabulary" in use when

mitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 156-63.

²⁰ Addressing this charge of anachronism, Nibley compares the ambiguity arising from the use of the words *Christ* and *Messiah* in the Book of Mormon to the same ambiguity existing in the New Testament account of the Samaritan woman's words at Jacob's well: "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ" (John 4:25). Nibley writes: "She must have used two different words. Yet she was an ignorant woman who spoke no Greek but a language very close to Hebrew—what word could she possibly have used for 'Christ' to distinguish it from Messiah? We must ask the same question of the Book of Mormon rather than hastily condemning it as an anachronism." *Since Cumorah*, 168; compare John 1:41.

²¹ Revealing that *Christos* would be the Messiah's future name would have been no more difficult than revealing that Mary would be the name of the Messiah's mother (see Mosiah 3:8).

²² See James W. Voelz, "The Language of the New Testament," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 2:25.2, pp. 894, 926; see also Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 3 (referring to portions of the New Testament "which probably rest on an Aramaic original"). Because "Jesus spoke Galilean Aramaic" during his ministry, the Aramaic *Messias*, which appears twice in the New Testament, is also a possibility for the Messiah's future name. See Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke, rev. ed. (New York: SCM, 1963), 25. However, the lasting significance of the Greek *Christos* makes it a more likely choice.

²³ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 3.

the New Testament was written.²⁴ As a result, many terms "drawn from the LXX" by the Jews were "widely used in religious texts and speech."²⁵ If *Christos* were one such term, then it is possible that before the birth of Christ, Israelites in both the Old World and the New World waited for a Messiah whom they knew by the name or title *Christos*.²⁶

In summary, although the original Book of Mormon word for *Christ* is unknown, there is reason to believe that it was not the same as the original for *Messiah*. In addition, regardless of that original word, the appearance of the name *Christ* in the Book of Mormon before the appearance of the resurrected Christ is not anachronistic to those who believe in revelation and the foreknowledge of God.²⁷

2 Nephi 11:2-8

After Jacob's two references to *Christ* in 2 Nephi 10, the name is next used by Nephi four times in 2 Nephi 11. Significantly, Nephi placed his first four references to *Christ* as parallel elements in two chiasms, as shown below:²⁸

²⁴ Voelz, "The Language of the New Testament," 928.

²⁵ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 3. "The LXX established Greek equivalents of Hebrew vocables, and these, laden with their (new) Hebrew meanings, were taken up and used by NT authors." Voelz, "The Language of the New Testament," 928. Such borrowing from the Septuagint may have occurred because "the language of the LXX appeared to be very appropriate to a solemn and dignified style." Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 3.

²⁶ Whether or not the woman at Jacob's Well spoke Greek, Jacob's angel certainly could have spoken it. Thus the following hypothetical situation is possible: a Hebrew-speaking angel taught Jacob the Greek word *Christos*; Nephi transliterated that term into Reformed Egyptian characters; and Joseph Smith translated it into the English word *Christ*. For a different view, see John Tvedtnes, review of *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*, by Wesley P. Walters, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 230-31: "There is no hint here that the Book of Mormon contained a Greek word or that the term rendered 'Christ' by Joseph Smith was foreign to pre-Christian Israelites."

²⁷ Not only is the Book of Mormon not anachronistic in this regard, but it anticipated the relatively recent conclusion of many scholars that bilingualism in Palestine was widespread at the time of Christ.

²⁸ The following passage in the text contains four subchiasms within a main chiasm. Capital letters are used to designate the separate elements of each chiasm, with a subscript number ₁₋₄ being attached in the case of the subchiasms.

- A a And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah,
 b for my soul delighteth in his words.
 c For I will liken his words unto my people,²⁹
 A₁ and I will send them forth unto all my children,
 B₁ a for he verily saw my Redeemer,
 b even as I have seen him.
 B₁'a And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him
 b as I have seen him;
 A₁'wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children
 A₂ to prove unto them that my words are true.
 B₂ Wherefore, by the words of three,
 C₂ God hath said,
 C₂'I will establish my word.
 B₂'Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses,
 A₂'and he proveth all his words.
 B Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people
 A₃ the truth of the coming of Christ;
 B₃ for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given;
 B₃'and all things which have been given of God from
 the beginning of the world, unto man,
 A₃'are the typifying of him.
 C And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the
 Lord which he hath made to our fathers;
 C' yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice,
 and power, and mercy in the great and eternal plan of
 deliverance from death.
 B' And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people

Lowercase letters indicate parallel elements that are not in inverse form. Italics are used to highlight parallels between elements in the main chiasm but not in the subchiasms. A different chiasmic outline of this passage is found in Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 76. According to Welch, "Defining literary units and determining their beginning and end . . . often involve subjective judgment, as does deciding which terms form significant matches in the two portions." John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 3.

²⁹ A a, b, c form a chiasmic extended alternate with A' a, b, c, below. Lund refers to this form as "a combination of alternating and chiasmic sections." Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 61. For a definition of "extended alternate," see Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, xiii.

- A₄ that *save Christ* should come all men must perish.
 B₄ For if there be no *Christ*
 C₄ there be no God;
 D₄ and if there be no God we are not,
 D₄'for there could have been no creation.
 C₄'But there is a God,
 B₄' and he is *Christ*,
 A₄' and he cometh in the fulness of his own time.
 A' a And *now I write* some of the *words of Isaiah*,
 b that whoso of my people shall see these *words* may *lift up their hearts and rejoice* for all men.
 c Now these are the *words*, and ye may *liken them* unto you and unto all men.

In this passage, the first two instances of the name *Christ* are found as parallel elements in B and B'. By using *him* instead of *Christ* in the third subchiasm, Nephi made it possible for this first parallel of the name to be accomplished in the structure of the main chiasm instead of a subchiasm. The other two instances of the name occur as parallel elements in the fourth subchiasm, which is also found in B'. According to Nils Lund, the "symmetrical distribution of divine names . . . recurs frequently in the psalms, and there are many examples of this form of literary art in the New Testament."³⁰ It is noteworthy that in the preceding passage, the name *Christ* is clearly used symmetrically, but, with the exception of *God* in the fourth subchiasm, the terms *Redeemer*, *Lord*, and *God* are not.

The main chiasm has six elements, the first five of which contain the phrase *my soul delighteth in* at the beginning.³¹ The sixth element contains the words *lift up their hearts and rejoice*. The delight of Nephi's soul in the words of Isaiah parallels the rejoicing in his people's hearts at those words.³² Although the chiastic

³⁰ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 98. Lund also identifies the following three "classes" of psalms: (1) simply chiasm, (2) alternating, and (3) a combination of both these forms. *Ibid.*, 94.

³¹ The phrase *soul delighteth* appears only eleven times in the Book of Mormon, all in 2 Nephi, and usually within a chiasm.

³² *Soul* and *heart* are a parallel word pair in the Book of Mormon; see Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 15, 51-54. Nephi

center does not contain the name *Christ*, it does focus on "the covenants of the Lord," who is Christ, and "the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death," which is made possible through him.³³

Although an apparent lack of density and balance exists between A, with its two subchiasms, and A', greater balance and density is present between these two parts than at first meets the eye. Nephi used the two subchiasms of A (identified by subscripts ₁ and ₂) to develop two of the principal parallel points of A and A' (*words* and *see*). For example, *words* or *word* appears eleven times in the main chiasm, with the eight occurrences in the first half all in A, and the three occurrences in the second half all in A'.³⁴ Similarly, forms of the verb *see* only appear in these two elements, four times in A and once in A'. Taking the four subchiasms into account, very few extraneous words appear in this passage, and the tightness and high density of Nephi's writing become all the more impressive.³⁵ It is as if Nephi followed a rule that permitted dropping down a literary level into a subchiasm and then exiting back to the same place in the larger structure.³⁶

frequently used the words *heart* and *soul* in parallel, for example, seven times in 2 Nephi 4:15-30. He also wrote "my *soul* will rejoice in thee, my God" (2 Nephi 4:30). Jacob wrote: "Behold, my *soul* abhorreth sin, and my *heart delighteth in righteousness*" (2 Nephi 9:49). *Delight* and *rejoice* are synonymous (see, e.g., Proverbs 2:14).

³³ On the title page, Moroni gives two principal purposes of the Book of Mormon: making known "the covenants of the Lord" and "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God." Thus Elder Holland writes: "In the course of coming to such conviction about Christ, all who receive this record will also be convinced of 'the covenants of the Lord.'" Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 4.

³⁴ The repetition of *words* could be seen as random, thereby lessening the degree of chiasmaticity of the passage. Welch, "Criteria," 7. However, *words* appears once each in A a, b, c, and A' a, b, c, in every case referring to the words of Isaiah. No other references to Isaiah's words alone appear in the main chiasm. This exact matching, and the allocation of *words* to the endpoints only, demonstrate that the repetition is not random.

³⁵ "The more compact the proposed structure, or the fewer irrelevancies between its elements, the higher the degree of chiasmaticity. Tightness in the text is indicative of greater craftsmanship, rigor, focus, intention, and clarity." Welch, "Criteria," 6-7.

³⁶ In computer logic terms, Nephi's writing is recursive, and the subchiasms are nested within the main chiasm; he pushes down a level and then

However, more important than the chiasm's literary tightness is its "doctrinal density."³⁷ Beginning with Isaiah, a single witness of Christ, the testimonies increase as Jacob, Nephi, and "more witnesses" (including the law of Moses and "all things which have been given of God . . .") are added. The theme of the passage is proving both the existence and the coming of Christ through the "words" of the three principal witnesses.³⁸ The center of the first subchiasm focuses on Isaiah and Jacob both having seen their Redeemer, with Nephi having seen him twice repeated to form a simple alternate parallelism.³⁹ This creates a chiasmic contrast in the main chiasm between these three expert witnesses, each of whom saw Christ, and Nephi's people, who presumably only saw the written words of the witnesses.

The parallel nature of the center of the second subchiasm—"God hath *said*, I will establish my *word*"—may have been more clear in the original language. Assuming that transliterated Hebrew was the underlying language, it is likely that for *word*, Nephi used *dabar*, meaning "a word, matter, thing" (as is the case in 2 Nephi 12:1). *Dabar* can also be translated as "said."⁴⁰ The endpoints of the first subchiasm create a chiasmic link between the words of Isaiah and the words of Jacob. Also, in the second subchiasm, just as Nephi used the words of the first two witnesses to prove his own, God uses those of all three witnesses and others to establish his words. The proof of Nephi's words is chiasmically

pops back up to where he left off. For examples of this pattern in language and music, see Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 127–31.

³⁷ Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things*, 14.

³⁸ Referring to the Book of Mormon, the New Testament, and the records of the ten tribes, Elder Maxwell writes that "eventually, by three scriptural witnesses, the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth will be finally established." Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things*, 12.

³⁹ Nephi's use of the word *Redeemer* with respect to Isaiah is interesting here as well as in 1 Nephi 19:23. Although Isaiah only used the term *messiah* or *anointed one* with respect to Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1, he used the term *gaal* or *Redeemer* at least thirteen times.

⁴⁰ *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1982), 1068–69, 831. Compare David's prayer of thanksgiving in 2 Samuel 7:25: "And now, O Lord God, the *word* [*dabar*] that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant . . . *establish* it forever, and do as thou hast *said* [root is *dabar*]."

linked to the proof of God's words by the endpoints of the second subchiasm.

Nephi made extensive use of amplification in this passage, frequently taking ideas introduced in the first half of the main chiasm and the subchiasms, and then restating them more powerfully with their parallel elements in the second half.⁴¹ For example, Nephi's personal delight in A b expands to the rejoicing of his people in A' b. Likening Isaiah's words to his people in A c is amplified to likening them to all people in A' c.⁴² Proving the coming of Christ in B becomes proving that if Christ did not come, all men would perish in B'. The third subchiasm moves from the law of Moses to all things given from God as types of Christ. In the fourth subchiasm, the hypothetical nonexistence of God and Christ is amplified by the affirmation that there is a God and that he is Christ. In that same subchiasm, the phrase *we are not* is amplified by the statement for *there could have been no creation*. Finally, the covenants of the Lord made to "our fathers" in C become "the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death" in C'.

The effect of the chiastic enclosure of these various proofs and witnesses of Christ between the endpoints "the words of Isaiah" is to create an association in the mind of the reader between those words and the reality of Christ and his first and second comings. This association affects the way we read the thirteen Isaiah chapters that follow.⁴³

⁴¹ Amplification, or intensification, is the movement between two parallel ideas, the second intensifying the first. See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 10–14.

⁴² In the first subchiasm, sending forth Isaiah's words expands to include Jacob's words as well. In the second subchiasm, Nephi's desire to prove his words is intensified by the statement that God will prove his own words.

⁴³ Although this paper does not analyze Isaiah's prophecies of Christ, much could be written on that subject. According to Elder Holland, "Isaiah is by every standard *the* messianic prophet of the Old Testament. . . . Surely it is because of this consuming messianic focus—messianic preoccupation, we might more properly say—that Isaiah was of such interest and importance to Nephi." Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 75–76, emphasis in original. He also writes that of the 433 verses of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon, "no less than 391 of those verses refer to the attributes, appearance, majesty, and mission of Jesus Christ." *Ibid.*, 76, citing Monte C. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 7.

2 Nephi 25:1-6

Nephi also used a chiasmic passage to separate the words of Isaiah from his own concluding prophecy. Although this passage contains neither the name *Christ* nor the title *Messiah*, it does contain similar themes to the first chiasm and is therefore shown below in abbreviated form:⁴⁴

- A the words which *I have written*
- B spoken by the mouth of Isaiah—*Isaiah spake*
- C a hard to *understand*—*prophesying* among the Jews
- b *I, Nephi*—*have not taught*—*manner of the Jews*
- c I write unto *my people*—*the judgments of God*—
 come upon all nations
- D the words of *Isaiah*
- E are not *plain* unto you
- F nevertheless they are *plain*
- G unto all *those*
- H that are *filled*
- I with the *spirit*
- J of *prophecy*
- J' But I give unto you a *prophecy*
- I' according to the *spirit*
- H' which is *in*
- G' *me*
- F' *prophecy* according to the *plainness*
- E' my soul delighteth in *plainness*
- D' my soul delighteth in the words of *Isaiah*
- C' a Jews—*understand*—*things of the prophets*—
 understand
- b *I, Nephi*—*have not taught*—*manner of the Jews*
- c I have made mention unto *my children*—*judg-*
 ments of *God*—*come to pass* among the Jews
- B' that which *Isaiah hath spoken*
- A' *I do not write them*

⁴⁴ I have attempted to break the elements in this passage down to the "lowest common denominator." There are a number of alternative ways in which the elements found in G—J and J'—G' could be combined.

Immediately preceding and following this chiasm are, respectively, the words of Isaiah and the prophecy of Nephi. Therefore, like 2 Nephi 11:2–8, the boundaries of the chiasm are clear, and “it operates across a literary unit as a whole.”⁴⁵ A number of other similarities are apparent between this passage and the chiasm in 2 Nephi 11:2–8. In both chiasms, Nephi expresses that his “soul delighteth” in the words of Isaiah. Both begin “Now I Nephi,” and the endpoints of each refer to Nephi’s writings. Both contain “the words of Isaiah” as parallel elements, with the second passage also including parallel references to that which has been “spoken” by Isaiah.⁴⁶ Finally, this passage also contains a potential subchiasm in C’ a and b.⁴⁷

The passage answers the question why Nephi, who felt so strongly about writing in plainness, would occupy so much of his limited small plates with the words of a prophet who “spake many things which were hard . . . to understand” (2 Nephi 25:1). Nephi’s response is that although Isaiah’s words are not plain to

⁴⁵ Welch, “Criteria,” 6.

⁴⁶ According to one commentator, a “governing structure” relating to chapters 1 through 36 of the book of Isaiah is “*destruction or judgment of the wicked.*” Avraham Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 11, emphasis in original. Given such a structure and his inclusion of Isaiah chapters 2 through 14, Nephi was right on target in referring to the “judgments of God,” which are “according to all that which Isaiah hath spoken.”

⁴⁷ This subchiasm is outlined as follows:

A₁ for I came out from Jerusalem,

B₁ and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews,

C₁ and I know that the Jews

D₁ do understand the things of the prophets,

E₁ and there is none other people

D₁' that understand the things which were [of the prophets]

C₁' spoken unto the Jews like unto them,

B₁' a save it be that they are taught

b after the manner of the things of the Jews.

a But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children

b after the manner of the Jews;

A₁' but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem. (2 Nephi 25:5–6)

The bracketed text was found in the printer’s manuscript but was deleted in the “corrected” printer’s manuscript and has not appeared in the Book of Mormon since then. See *Book of Mormon Critical Text* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1987), 243.

all, "they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:4).⁴⁸ Nephi not only had the spirit of prophecy himself, but like his descendant Alma, probably knew that that spirit is "according to the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Alma 6:8).⁴⁹ Thus, although Isaiah's writings do not contain the name *Christ*, nor does the chiasm, the center of the chiasm reveals the key to finding Christ in the book of Isaiah.

Immediately following this chiasm, Nephi concluded his second book with his own words as the third witness of Christ: "But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which I know that no man can err" (2 Nephi 25:7). By commenting upon his own plain writing, Nephi did not intend to discount the writings of Isaiah, the second witness of Christ. Instead, he wrote that "in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass. Wherefore, they are of worth unto the children of men" (2 Nephi 25:7-8). In fact, his inclusion of Isaiah's words is an endorsement that he considered them to be plain and precious.⁵⁰

Nephi also asserted that he would "confine" or limit the words he wrote to his own people and instead direct his remaining plain prophecy to those living in the last days who "supposeth" that the words of Isaiah are not of worth: "for I know that they [the words of Isaiah] shall be of great worth unto them in the last

⁴⁸ For this reason Nephi could write: "but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23).

⁴⁹ Nephi had previously seen a vision similar to that seen by John the Revelator, who also testified that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10; 1 Nephi 14:24-28).

⁵⁰ Perhaps because he saw in vision that many plain and precious things would be taken from the "record of the Jews" by the "great and abominable church," Nephi desired to preserve Isaiah's words in his own record (1 Nephi 13:20-29). However, the earliest Isaiah scroll (first or second century B.C.) predates the formation of the great and abominable church (see 1 Nephi 13:26) and is substantially similar to Nephi's Isaiah and to the Masoretic text. See *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper, 1985), 426; compare John Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1985). Ironically, this preservation of plain and precious things in Isaiah's writings may actually be due to the fact that his writings are so hard to understand without the Spirit.

days; for in that day shall they understand them; wherefore, for their good have I written them" (2 Nephi 25:8). This desire to convince us not only of Christ, but also of Isaiah's testimony of him, creates the context for the remainder of 2 Nephi, which includes more than ninety percent of the instances in which Nephi (exclusive of Jacob) used the name *Christ*.

2 Nephi 25:14–16

After 2 Nephi 11, the next instances of *Christ* (twice) and *Messiah* (twice) are in 2 Nephi 25:13–16. Although these verses demonstrate no apparent chiasmity, they do display "a general sense of orderliness or balance," shown as follows: "seen his day . . . the Messiah," "believe in Christ," "believe in Christ," "look not forward . . . another Messiah."⁵¹ Nephi recorded some familiar themes in these verses: "my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name" (2 Nephi 25:13). He also wrote that the Jews would be scattered and scourged by other nations "until they shall be *persuaded* to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind" (2 Nephi 25:16).

2 Nephi 25:18–19

Part of the convincing intended by Nephi is that Jesus Christ is the one true Messiah. He accomplished this by first establishing that there is only one Messiah and by then leading us from that Messiah to Christ through a progression of thought. *Messiah* next occurs six times in two verses (see 2 Nephi 25:18–19). These verses evidence some chiasmity, although not to the same degree as the first chiasm set forth above:

- A Wherefore, he shall bring forth *his words* unto them, which *words* shall judge them at the last day,
- B for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the *true Messiah*, who was *rejected by them*;
- C and unto the *convincing* of them

⁵¹ Welch, "Criteria," 10.

- D that they need not look forward any more for a
Messiah
 E to come,
 E' for there should *not any come*,
 D' save it should be a *false Messiah*
 C' which should *deceive* the people;
 B' for there is save *one Messiah* spoken of by the prophets, and
 that *Messiah* is he who should be *rejected of the Jews*.
 A' For according to the *words of the prophets*, the *Messiah* cometh
 in six hundred years from the time that my father left
 Jerusalem.

Similar to those in the two chiasms discussed above, the endpoints of this passage focus on the *words* of the Lord and his prophets. Although at first the repetition of *Messiah* may appear random, on closer examination it is seen to be carefully structured. The references in B and B' are to the one true Messiah rejected by the Jews; the references in D and D' are to a future false Messiah to whom the Jews look forward. In contrast to the center points, which indicate the period of time during which only a false Messiah would come, the endpoints create a parallel between the terms *six hundred years* and *last day*, the actual times of the first and second comings of the true Messiah.⁵²

Consistent with Nephi's purpose, this passage indicates that the words to be brought forth, including the Book of Mormon, are given for the purpose of convincing the Lord's people of the true Messiah. Although *convince* and *deceive* may not generally be suitable for parallel contrast, in this case they refer to the motivations for believing in either the true or the false Messiah. The scriptures frequently refer to those who are "deceived" and therefore believe in false Messiahs or false Christs (see Matthew 24:5, 24; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; 2 John 1:7; Moses 1:16, 19); in contrast, Nephi wrote here and elsewhere of those who would be "convinced" to believe in the true Messiah and the true Christ

⁵² See Bruce R. McConkie, "Judgment Day," and "Last Day," in *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 404, 431.

(2 Nephi 26:12; see also Book of Mormon title page; Acts 18:28).⁵³

The contrast created between the false and the true Messiah demonstrates the plainness of the Book of Mormon in comparison to the Bible. In the Bible, "'Messiah' could refer to anyone divinely appointed to a task that affected the destiny of the chosen people . . . 'messiah' had no fixed, technical meaning in Jesus' time."⁵⁴ In contrast, *Messiah* has a definite and fixed meaning in the Book of Mormon. In the very first chapter Lehi read a divinely revealed book which "manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19). This book was apparently shown to him by *the* Messiah (see 1 Nephi 1:9-11). Thus "a Messiah" (1 Nephi 1:19; 10:4) quickly progresses to "the true Messiah" (1 Nephi 10:14). Because "there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets"; any other Messiah is "a false Messiah" (2 Nephi 25:18).

The conclusion of the repetition of *Messiah* in this chiasm marks a turning point in Nephi's writings. After verse 19, Nephi used the title *Messiah* only one more time on the small plates (see 2 Nephi 26:3). In contrast, beginning in 2 Nephi 25:19, Nephi's focus shifted to the name *Christ*. Although *Christ* appears only eight times prior to this point, beginning with verse 19 the name occurs sixteen times in thirteen verses, and an additional twenty-

⁵³ The Book of Mormon account of the antichrist named Korihor contrasts this type of convincing and deceiving: "And now Korihor said unto Alma: If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be *convinced* that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then will I be *convinced* of the truth of thy words" (Alma 30:43). After the sign was given in the form of a curse, the chief judge asked Korihor: "Art thou *convinced* of the power of God?" (Alma 30:51). Afterwards, Korihor admitted: "the devil hath *deceived* me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel [a false angel, if not a false Messiah] and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God" (Alma 30:53). As a result of these events, the people "were all *convinced* of the wickedness of Korihor; therefore they were all converted again unto the Lord" (Alma 30:58).

⁵⁴ *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 630. Compare the Dead Sea Scroll, *Rule of the Community*, which appears to refer to two Messiahs. One is the Messiah of Israel, or the kingly Messiah; the other is the Messiah of Aaron, or the priestly Messiah (and possibly the Teacher of Righteousness). André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, trans. Geza Vermes (Gloucester: World, 1973), 112-13.

nine times thereafter in the remainder of 2 Nephi.⁵⁵ To facilitate the transition from *Messiah* to *Christ*, Nephi used a simple alternate parallelism both as a bridge to link the two terms together and as a connector between two chiasms:⁵⁶

- a For according to the *words of the prophets*,
- b the *Messiah* cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem;
- a and according to the *words of the prophets*, and also the word of the angel of God,
- b his name shall be *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God (2 Nephi 25:19).⁵⁷

2 Nephi 25:19–20

Second Nephi 25:19 marks the first time that the name *Jesus* occurs in the Book of Mormon. The name appears only nine more times on the small plates, with eight of those instances found in the remainder of 2 Nephi. Nephi placed the name *Jesus Christ* at each endpoint of a chiasm consisting of several types of Christ included between the two references to his name, as shown below:

- A a His *name*
- b shall be *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God.
- c And now my brethren, *I have spoken plainly*
- d that *ye cannot err*.
- B *And as the Lord God liveth*
- C that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt,
- D a and gave unto Moses *power*
- b that he should heal the nations
- E after they had been bitten by the *poisonous serpents*,

⁵⁵ "The chief purpose for the repetition of individual words is to draw attention to the word being repeated, or to cause the repeated word to become the principal theme of the passage. . . . Such frequent usage tends to join the several expressions of the paragraph into a unified body—the various parts connected by the repeated word." Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, xlvi.

⁵⁶ The second of these two chiasms is outlined in the next section, below.

⁵⁷ Presumably, this is the same angel that appeared to Jacob in the night and revealed the name to him (see 2 Nephi 10:3).

- E' if they would cast their eyes unto the *serpent* which
 he did raise up before them,
 D' a and also gave him *power*
 b' that he should smite the rock
 C' and the water should come forth;
 B' yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, *and*
as the Lord God liveth,
 A' a there is none other *name* given under heaven
 b save it be this *Jesus Christ,*
 c of which *I have spoken,*
 d whereby *man can be saved.*

The extremes (A, A') explicitly emphasize salvation through the name *Jesus Christ*. Using this name to open and close the chiasm reminds us of the Savior's words spoken to the Nephites: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (3 Nephi 9:18). In using the name *Jesus Christ*, Nephi, whose "soul delighte[d] in plainness" (2 Nephi 25:4), spoke "plainly" so that we "cannot err" (A). It is interesting that of the four chiasms outlined so far, the endpoints of the first two focus on the words of the prophet Isaiah; the endpoints of the third focus on the Lord's words through his prophets; and the endpoints of the fourth focus on the prophet Nephi's words. The next two parallel lines (B, B') twice assure us with a sacred oath that Jesus Christ is the only name by which salvation comes.⁵⁸

In (C) and (C'), the delivery of Israel from Egypt and the water from the rock both occurred through the power of God after the rock and Egypt were smitten by Moses' rod. This parallel is almost identical to that found in the endpoints of Lund's outline of Psalm 114, which is also "a combination of the chiastic and the alternating patterns": "A When Israel went forth out of Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange speech," and "A' Who turned the rock into a pool of waters, The flint into a fountain of waters."⁵⁹ In Deuteronomy 8:14-15, these two events are presented together in similar language, along with the episode of the fiery serpents: "Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget

⁵⁸ On the sacred oath, see Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 128-29.

⁵⁹ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 110-11.

the LORD thy God, *which brought thee forth* [yāšāʾ] *out of the land of Egypt*, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, [wherein were] fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where [there was] no water; *who brought thee forth* [yāšāʾ] *water out of the rock of flint.*⁶⁰

Enclosed within the endpoint references to Jesus Christ are a number of types and symbols of the Savior, demonstrating the truth of Nephi's statement that "*all things* which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (2 Nephi 11:4).⁶¹ Most important is the center or focal point of the chiasm (E, E'), which contrasts two antithetical ideas.⁶² Specifically, the one life-giving serpent raised up above the many life-destroying poisonous serpents symbolizes Christ raised up on the cross ("above all things") and his power over death and sin.⁶³ Also, the antithetical relationship of the several poisonous serpents to the single saving serpent is analogous to that of the potentially many false Messiahs to the one true Messiah (see 2 Nephi 25:18–19; see also Words of Mormon 1:15, referring to "false Christs").⁶⁴ This contrast is amplified by the chiasmic

⁶⁰ In the Old Testament, the Hebrew root word generally used for the coming forth of the water from the rock is *yāšāʾ* (See, e.g., Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8, 10–11; Nehemiah 9:15). In the Book of Exodus, Israel's coming forth from or being brought out of Egypt is referred to approximately forty-two times (my own rough count), thirty of which use *yāšāʾ* (see, e.g., Exodus 3:10; 6:27; 7:4; 12:17). However, it should be noted that each time the KJV Exodus refers to Israel being brought *up* out of Egypt (as in 2 Nephi 25:20), the Hebrew root word *ʿālāh* is used instead of *yāšāʾ* (although KJV Exodus 32:7 translates *ʿālāh* as simply "brought out"). Perhaps coincidentally, the meaning of the Hebrew root word *ʿala* is "to suck up" or "to drink." See *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1990), #5966; see also Job 39:30.

⁶¹ Or, in the language of the Doctrine and Covenants, "he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things" (D&C 88:41).

⁶² "Inverting is the essence of chiasmus, so the clearer the reversal at the center point, the stronger the chiasmity of the passage." Welch, "Criteria," 8.

⁶³ These "fiery flying serpents" were sent by the Lord to straiten the people because of their iniquity (1 Nephi 17:41). See also Wallace E. Hunt Jr., "Moses' Brazen Serpent as It Relates to Serpent Worship in Mesoamerica," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 121–31.

⁶⁴ Those who "look forward . . . for a Messiah to come" (2 Nephi 25:18), rather than "look upon the Son of God with faith" as he was "lifted up" upon the cross (Helaman 8:14–15), are like those who were "so hardened that they would

conclusion that "there is none other name" by which salvation comes (A').

On another level, the brazen serpent that was raised up in the air by Moses stands in opposition to "that old serpent, who is the devil" (2 Nephi 2:18), who was cursed to go upon his belly in the dust (see Moses 4:20).⁶⁵ Finally, the numerical value of the Hebrew word for "serpent," *nachash*, is 358, which is identical to the numerical value for *mashiach*, the Hebrew word for *Messiah* or "anointed."⁶⁶ Thus, in surrounding the symbolic *serpent* with the name *Jesus Christ*, Nephi leads us to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus Christ is the one true Messiah.

In addition to the serpent, other types of Christ and his atonement are found in the chiasm. The deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt is a type of the deliverance of the covenant people from spiritual bondage through the atonement of Christ. Also, Jesus was taken into Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matthew 2:15; see Hosea 11:1). Moses himself is a type of Christ. He prophesied that just as the serpent was raised up, "the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet [i.e., Christ] from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me*"

not look" at the serpent "lifted up" before them (Alma 33:20; Helaman 8:14), when they could have easily "look[ed] upon that serpent [and] live[d]" (Helaman 8:15). In both cases, these people were guilty of "looking beyond the mark" (Jacob 4:14).

⁶⁵ Satan is also the epitome of the "false Messiah" in opposition to the true Messiah, as he "transforme[d] himself nigh unto an angel of light" (2 Nephi 9:9) and cried: "I am the Only Begotten, worship me" (Moses 1:19). Incidentally, in the book of Moses, the serpent is separate from Satan, since Satan puts it into the heart of the serpent to tempt Eve (see Moses 4:6).

⁶⁶ See Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah*, 6-7; Helaman 8:13-15. According to Gileadi, "the Jews study carefully the words of the prophets. They analyze even each letter and the significance of that letter according to the Hebrew alphabet. Every letter possesses a numerical value. The word *serpent* [*nachash*], for example, equates numerically with the word *messiah* [*mashiach*]. Thus, the word *serpent* also serves as a symbol for *messiah*." See also Joe Sampson, *Written by the Finger of God: A Testimony of Joseph Smith's Translations* (Sandy: Wellspring, 1993), 79.

(Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:20–22; 1 Nephi 22:20–21; 3 Nephi 20:23).⁶⁷

Furthermore, the rock, and the life-giving waters which flowed from it, saved Israel from physical death in the wilderness, just as Christ is the “spiritual Rock” from which living water flows to save the covenant people from spiritual death in the wilderness of sin (see 1 Corinthians 10:4; Deuteronomy 32:4; see also John 4:14; 7:37). Also, just as water came out of the rock after Moses “smote the rock twice” with his rod, water (and blood) came out of Jesus when he was pierced in the side by a spear while raised up on the cross (see Numbers 20:11; John 19:34).

Speaking of the Old Testament prophets, one commentator has asserted:

When the New Testament shows that the life of Christ is the truth and fulfillment of all that was outlined and typified in the Exodus it is only taking up and continuing the typology outlined by the Prophets. The basic difference does not lie in the typology, but in the fact that what is presented by the Prophets as something yet to come is shown by the New Testament writers as fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁶⁸

What makes the Book of Mormon so unique is that prophets such as Nephi not only drew from the exodus for these types of things to come, but they also showed that those types *would be* fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ Thus “in the matter of bringing

⁶⁷ Even the phrase “he should heal the nations” reminds us of Christ. The only other similar phrase in the scriptures of which I am aware is found in Revelation 22:1–2. After describing the “water of life . . . proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” and through the “tree of life,” the passage continues: “and the leaves of the tree [e.g., D&C 88] were for the healing of the nations.” Nephi’s earlier vision clearly established the tree of life and the waters of life as symbols of Christ (see 1 Nephi 11:4–6, 16–27).

⁶⁸ Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Dom W. Hibberd (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1960), 156–57, quoted in George S. Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981), 251.

⁶⁹ According to Tate, “in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon, the Exodus pattern recurs in greater concentration than in the Bible, and its

together disparate records, it is . . . important to acknowledge what the Book of Mormon does to unite the Old Testament with the New Testament in a way that . . . is, in fact, sometimes seen as impossible in other religious traditions."⁷⁰ "This blending of elements from both the Old and New Testaments is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Book of Mormon."⁷¹ Also, "the ability of the Book of Mormon to unify both testaments of the Bible . . . and its ability to speak to both Jew and Gentile are perhaps two of its most important and yet most often overlooked strengths."⁷² Chiasmus was the perfect tool to help Nephi make this connection.

2 Nephi 25:24–27

Not included in the types of Christ found in 2 Nephi 25:19–20 is one of the greatest types of all—the law of Moses. However, the law and Christ are linked together through random repetition only a few verses later. Beginning with 2 Nephi 25:23, the name *Christ* appears fourteen times and the word *law* appears thirteen times in nine verses. The central part of these verses on Christ and the law is a chiastic passage found in 2 Nephi 25:24–27:⁷³

typology is more conscious because the narrators are understood to possess the Christological key to the fulfillment of the types." *Ibid.*, 257. Furthermore, "in the infinite and eternal matters of the Atonement, as in all other eternal covenants, 'time only is measured unto men' and prophets could speak of events yet to be 'as though they had already come.'" Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 27; see also Mosiah 16:6; Jarom 1:11.

⁷⁰ Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 13. "Again making an Old and New Testament connection—which would be fundamental to the prophesied understanding and reconciliation of the Jews—Nephi noted that the same power that saved ancient Israel from the poisonous serpents and brought water from the rock at Meribah was the power to save eternal souls." *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷¹ Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon," 318.

⁷² *Ibid.* Because "the world of the Book of Mormon is neither Jewish nor Christian, but both," the book "bridges both Jewish and Christian backgrounds." *Ibid.*

⁷³ The structure of this chiasm is taken from Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 99, boldface emphasis changed to italics. See also John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 47, and Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 202.

- A a And, notwithstanding we believe in *Christ*,
 b we keep the law of *Moses*,
- B a and look forward with steadfastness unto *Christ*,
 b until the law shall be fulfilled.
- C For, for this end was the law given;
- D a wherefore the law hath become dead unto us,
 b and we are made alive in *Christ* because of our
 faith; yet we keep the law because of the
 commandments.
- E And we talk of *Christ*,
 we rejoice in *Christ*,
 we preach of *Christ*,
 we prophesy of *Christ*,
- E' and we write according to our prophecies, that our
 children may know to what source they may look
 for a remission of their sins. Wherefore, we speak
 concerning the law that our children may know
- D' the deadness of the law;
 a and they, by knowing the deadness of the law,
 b may look forward unto that life which is in
Christ,
- C' and know for what end the law was given.
- B' And after the law is fulfilled in *Christ*,
- A' that they need not harden their hearts against him when the law
 ought to be done away.

Similar to the chiasmic Psalm 115, the center of this chiasm contains "a profusion of divine names."⁷⁴ In fact, this passage is the only instance in which Nephi actually uses the name *Christ* at the center of a chiasm. This is clearly one of those "Book of Mormon texts, which meld the law of Moses with the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ, as unnatural as that combination might appear to some."⁷⁵ Elder Holland professes that the law of Moses should be viewed "as the unparalleled collection of types, shadows, symbols, and prefigurations of Christ that it is."⁷⁶ In this passage, as in 2 Nephi 25:19–20, Nephi used chiasmus to teach

⁷⁴ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 106.

⁷⁵ Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon," 310.

⁷⁶ Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 136.

the relationship of types, shadows, and symbols to Christ. In language almost identical to the chiasm in 2 Nephi 11:2–8, this passage refers to the end for which the law was given. Much like the chiasm in 2 Nephi 25:1–6, the focal point of this passage is prophecy. The spirit of prophecy is a “Christological key” which makes possible an understanding that eternal life through Christ is the end for which the law was given, and that symbols and types are themselves simply dead ends.⁷⁷ The passage uses a chiastic simple alternate (D a b, D' a b) to contrast the lifeless law with the living Christ.⁷⁸ Thus, although types such as the brazen serpent and the law may point the way, one must ultimately look past the dead type and “look forward with steadfastness unto Christ” (2 Nephi 25:24).

Elder Holland also writes that “the Book of Mormon does more to bridge dispensations and put the law of Moses in its true perspective—that is, to clarify and emphasize its relationship to the gospel of Jesus Christ—than any other book available.”⁷⁹ According to Elder Neal A. Maxwell, “Since the Book of Mormon is to come forward to the convincing of the Jew that Jesus is the Christ, its careful attention to the foreshadowing law of Moses will one day bring considerable fruit among the children of Judah.”⁸⁰ Because “redemptive faith must often be exercised toward experiences in the future—the unknown, which provides an opportunity for the miraculous,” the power of the Book of Mormon to persuade the Jews may partially stem from the faith of its authors,

⁷⁷ See Tate, “Typology,” 257; compare Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3. The Nephites “did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming; . . . the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the *spirit of prophecy*, which spake of those things to come” (Alma 25:15–16). In the words of Jacob, “we also had many revelations, and the *spirit of much prophecy*; wherefore, we knew of Christ and his kingdom, which should come” (Jacob 1:6).

⁷⁸ Similarly, Jesus not only said “Behold, I am the law, and the light” (3 Nephi 15:9), but also said “I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 9:18).

⁷⁹ Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 140.

⁸⁰ Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things*, 24.

who both adhered to the law and anticipated the coming of Christ.⁸¹

2 Nephi 25:28–29

Following the above passage are three additional occurrences of *Christ* which are instances of cycloides⁸² and anabasis:⁸³

for the right way is to believe in Christ
and deny him not;
for by denying him
ye also deny the prophets and the law.
And now behold, I say unto you that *the right way is to believe in Christ,*
and deny him not;
and Christ is the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 25:28–29)

2 Nephi 26:1–9

This passage is another potential chiasm that contains both *Messiah* (once, for the last time in 2 Nephi) and *Christ* (twice). Because of the length of the passage, its lesser relevance to the theme of this paper, and the fact that it is published elsewhere,⁸⁴ the chiastic format is not shown below. However, a few general comments should be made. The endpoints of the passage are “after Christ shall have risen from the dead he shall show himself unto you” and “the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them” (2 Nephi 26:1, 9). Like most of the chiastic passages outlined above, this passage also has the *words* of Christ or his prophets as parallel elements (see 2 Nephi 26:1, 8). Instead of types of Christ, the chiasm focuses on “signs . . . of his birth, and also of his death and resurrection” (2 Nephi 26:3). Finally, similar to 2 Nephi 25:24 (“look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until

⁸¹ Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 18.

⁸² “An identical phrase, expression, or sentence repeated regularly throughout the paragraph.” See Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, xlii, 100.

⁸³ A “staircase parallelism,” or “an apparent stepping up from one sense to another, until at the pinnacle is a culmination of thought”. See *ibid.*, xxi.

⁸⁴ Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 100–101.

the law shall be fulfilled”), the chiasm indicates that the righteous will “look forward unto Christ with steadfastness for the signs which are given” (2 Nephi 26:8).⁸⁵

2 Nephi 26:12

The next two instances of *Christ* highlight Nephi’s desire to convince and are found in a simple alternate parallelism in 2 Nephi 26:12:

- a And as I spake concerning the *convincing* of the Jews,
- b that Jesus is the very *Christ*,
- a it must needs be that the Gentiles be *convinced* also
- b that Jesus is the *Christ*, the Eternal God.⁸⁶

According to Elder Maxwell,

The “convincing” of the Jews concerning Jesus’ Messiahship is surely one of the Lord’s priority purposes in the latter days. (See 2 Nephi 26:12.) Those who have given us the Book of Mormon never lost sight of this central purpose of convincing—nor should we. Moreover, the repeated use of that same, specific word is clearly not accidental.⁸⁷

2 Nephi 30–33

Other than two isolated instances of *Christ* in 2 Nephi 27:11 and 28:14, the remaining occurrences of the name are in the last four chapters of 2 Nephi, where it appears a total of twenty-four

⁸⁵ The phrase *look forward unto Christ* could possibly be included as part of the last endpoint, in which case it would form a parallel with *after Christ shall have risen* at the first endpoint.

⁸⁶ Similarly, the title page of the Book of Mormon gives the purpose of the book: “the *convincing* of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the *Christ*, the Eternal God.”

⁸⁷ Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things*, 10. Elder Holland indicates that the Book of Mormon “was written for the fundamental and eternally essential purpose of ‘convincing . . . the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD.’” Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 4.

times, amounting to almost one-half of Nephi's total usage.⁸⁸ One of the highlights of this portion is Nephi's discourse on the "doctrine of Christ," which he delivered "*plainly, according to the plainness of [his] prophesying*" (2 Nephi 31:2). In fact, with its concentration on *Christ*, this section may constitute the *most* plain part of Nephi's writings. It does not appear that any of these final twenty-four instances of *Christ* occurs in chiasmic form. Nevertheless, Nephi laid the foundation for these culminating, capstone chapters with the chiasmic convincing of Christ in his earlier writings.

Although Nephi did not use *Christ* in chiasmus at the conclusion of his writings, he did use the parallelistic forms anabasis and epibole:⁸⁹

hearken unto these words
and believe in *Christ*;
and if ye believe not in these words
believe in *Christ*.
And if ye shall believe in *Christ*
ye will believe in these words,
for they are the words of *Christ*. (2 Nephi 33:10)

Finally, Nephi ended with a challenge and a prayer in the name of Christ:

And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—
for Christ will show unto you, with power and great
glory, that they are his words, at the last day. . . . And I
pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us,
if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and
last day. (2 Nephi 33:11–12)⁹⁰

Clearly, the words of Jacob, Isaiah, and Nephi, given by the spirit of prophecy, according to the testimony of Jesus, are not just the

⁸⁸ Significantly, Nephi's normalized use-rate for the name *Christ* in these four chapters is approximately six times the average Book of Mormon use-rate.

⁸⁹ See Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted*, 115. Epibole, or random repetition, is "the irregular recurrence of the same expression within a verse or successive verses of scriptures." *Ibid.*, xli.

⁹⁰ An outline of 2 Nephi 33:6–13 in a six-stanza poetic format is found in Rust, *Feasting on the Word*, 82–83.

words of three special witnesses; they actually are the "words of Christ."⁹¹

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis should be a testimony of the truthfulness of Nephi's statement that "we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God" (2 Nephi 25:23).⁹² It is hard to imagine a more diligent and laborious writer than Nephi.⁹³ Speaking of ancient writing and authors, Welch concludes that "literary beauty was synonymous with form. Becoming so fluent in the use of a form that the form itself becomes almost invisible,

⁹¹ In addition to the fifty-three times Nephi wrote the name *Christ*, Jacob wrote it twenty-six times in his book (including the preface) and Enos used it three times in his. However, the Nephites may later have forgotten the name *Christ* in the sense that it fell out of use in their standard religious vocabulary. During the 141 or more years after Enos, none of his descendants used *Christ* until Amaleki, the last person to write on the small plates (see Omni 1:26), and Jarom actually reverted to *Messiah* (see Jarom 1:11). Not counting the Words of Mormon, the name next appears when, in words similar to those of the angel to Jacob, it is announced as if new by an angel to Benjamin: "And he shall be called Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 3:8). (It should be noted that "false Christs" in Words of Mormon 1:15 may have been part of the original book of Mosiah.) Also, in speaking to Noah and his priests (who had not heard Benjamin's sermon), Abinadi first referred to "the Messiah" and then spoke of "Christ—for so shall he be called" (Mosiah 13:33; 15:21). This familiar formula used by Jacob, Nephi (2 Nephi 25:19), Benjamin, and Abinadi suggests that in each case a special revelation of the Lord's name was given to a prophet and was then taught as something new to the prophet's audience. If the name *Christ* was forgotten by the Nephites, then Benjamin's chiasmic counsel to remember the name becomes all the more meaningful (see Mosiah 5:10–12). In the book of Ether, *Messiah* is not used and all instances of *Christ* except one are attributable to Moroni. The exception is Ether 3:14, recording a revelation of the Lord's name to the brother of Jared which was kept from the world: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ" (see Ether 4:1–2; see also Ether 13:4).

⁹² Jacob similarly wrote: "Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest" (Jacob 1:7).

⁹³ Nephi's diligence included writing on the large plates, which although apparently fruitless from our perspective because of the loss of the 116 pages, must have provided an experience similar to Zion's Camp that prepared him for his plain and precious writings on the small plates.

or at least does not draw undue attention to itself, is the mark of a great artist."⁹⁴ This is the case with Nephi's writings. For example, when we read the name *Christ* in 2 Nephi 11:4-7, it is not readily apparent to us that the name is being used symmetrically and simultaneously in both a larger chiasm and a subchiasm. Nor is it obvious in 2 Nephi 25:19 that a simple alternate parallelism is being used to connect the endpoints of two chiasms and to shift from the repetition of *Messiah* to the repetition of *Christ*. Also, after identifying some of the special challenges in writing Hebrew poetry, including "the restrictions of symmetrical distributions of the divine names in strophes or the intricate interweaving of parallel ideas, phrases, or terms in ever-shifting alternating and chiasmic patterns," Lund declares: "That the poetic spirit of the ancient Hebrew could conquer these rigid forms which to us appear to be so inflexible and forbidding is the highest tribute to their genius."⁹⁵ As an ancient Hebrew himself, Nephi is highly deserving of this praise and clearly shows the marks of a great artist in his use of form.

Although Nephi's poetic writing is befitting simply for its beauty as a medium for conveying God's word, the chiasms containing *Christ* accomplish far more than this. The chiasmic enclosure of types of Christ with the name *Christ* (see 2 Nephi 25:19-20; 25:24-27) convincingly combines the old covenant and the new covenant, teaching the connection between the two and bridging the gap between the Old and New Testaments.⁹⁶ Also, the chiasmic association of the spirit of prophecy with the words of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 25:1-6) teaches the key to understanding Isaiah's testimony of Christ. Furthermore, adding to his prophetic narration of the special role and mission of Jesus, Nephi's poetic writings carefully lead us from the more general term *Messiah* to the very specific name *Christ*. The simple alternate parallelism in 2 Nephi 25:19 provides the actual bridge over which Nephi progressed from one term to the other.

⁹⁴ Welch, "What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?" 206.

⁹⁵ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 128.

⁹⁶ Not only does the Book of Mormon bring these two testaments together, but the Bible and the Book of Mormon "shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions" (2 Nephi 3:12).

As proclaimed by Nephi in 2 Nephi 26:12 and by Moroni on the title page, the Book of Mormon is intended to convince both Jew and gentile that Jesus is the Christ. The plainness of Nephi's testimony of Christ may be sufficient to attract the gentiles, but it will probably require the preciousness and beauty of his poetic writings to convince the Jews, who should recognize that he wrote according to the "learning of the Jews" (1 Nephi 1:2) and after "the manner of prophesying among the Jews" (2 Nephi 25:1).⁹⁷

In conclusion, through his use of chiasmus and other forms of parallelisms focusing on Christ, Nephi's plain and precious prophecies provide both Jew and gentile with a persuasive and convincing witness that Jesus Christ is the one true Messiah.

⁹⁷ "Seeing and appreciating its Jewish dimensions helps the book speak to its Jewish audience as well as its Gentile adherents." Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon," 318.