

Earl Wunderli Responds

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Throughout their response, Boyd and Farrell Edwards reassert their conclusion that their statistical analysis shows a high probability that Alma 36 as an extended chiasm was intentional and not inadvertent. They also challenge my application of Welch's criteria in several particulars. I will address these points in this order.

Statistical Analysis

Their statistical analysis is based only on the order of words and ideas without regard for the literary merit of the chiasm. It assesses the likelihood that the elements in the chiasm would fall into a chiastic order by chance, that is, if they were drawn randomly from a hat.

Their method is illustrated where they challenge my objections to their including multiple occurrences of key ideas within a chiastic section. (A chiasm typically consists of short paired "elements," but the Edwardses' chiasm divides the entirety of Alma 36 into paired "sections.") They proceed to prove mathematically that such multiple occurrences represent a *higher* degree of organization than a chiasm without multiple occurrences. Their mathematical proof is simple. Given two elements *a* and *b*, for example, each repeated once, there are six ways to order them, only two of which are chiastic, viz., *abba* and *baab*, so that the likelihood of a random ordering of these two elements creating a chiasm is two chances in six, or one-third. Given an extra *a*, there are ten ways to order them, three of which are chiastic, viz., *aabba*, *abbaa*, and *baaab*, so that the likelihood of a random ordering creating a chiasm is three in ten, or thirty percent. Since the likelihood of a random ordering creating a chiasm decreases with the extra *a*, the chance of its being random decreases, and the chance of its being intentional correspondingly increases.

As applied to a paradigmatic, two-element chiasm such as "the *first* (*a*) shall be *last* (*b*) and the *last* (*b*) shall be *first* (*a*)," their method would

seem to work. Even repeating an *a* would not necessarily destroy the chiasm and might even strengthen a chiastic element, e.g., “the *first*, yea, even the *first* shall be *last* and the *last* shall be *first*” equals *aabba* and might, as the Edwardses argue, represent an even higher degree of organization than the simple *abba* form. There is even an example of such a repeated idea in Alma 36. In verses 20 and 21, Alma rhapsodizes about his joy, referring to it three times. These two verses together might be a sound chiastic element (or section) even though *joy* is repeated. There is, however, no chiastic match for these two verses, and the Edwardses ignore them in their chiasm.

Repeated key ideas in a more typical Alma 36 chiastic section, however, do not seem to represent a higher degree of organization. For example, the Edwardses’ section **F’**, the section I objected to which they challenge in their response, contains three occurrences of *born of God*. (**F’** comprises verses 23b–26a [120 words], which they pair chiastically with **F**, consisting of the first twenty-one words of verse 5 with one *born of God*.) Did Alma repeat *born of God* in **F’** to strengthen this chiastic section? It seems doubtful. The first usage, in verse 23, is about Alma’s being born of God and does indeed pair well with *born of God* in verse 5 (**F**) because it, too, is about Alma’s being born of God (the *born of God* in verse 23, however, is not the one Welch uses in his chiasm). Then the account continues in verse 24 with Alma’s laboring to bring souls to repentance (which is used by Welch in his chiasm but ignored by the Edwardses), so that others might taste of Alma’s joy (which is a nonchiastic match for the three *joys* in verses 20 and 21 and ignored by both Welch and the Edwardses) and be born of God (which is also not the *born of God* used by Welch) and be filled with the Holy Ghost (which is ignored by both Welch and the Edwardses). In verse 25, Alma then expresses the joy he has received in the fruit of his labors (a fifth *joy* that both Welch and the Edwardses ignore). Finally, in verse 26, Alma proclaims that because of the word he has received, many have been born of God (this is the *born of God* that Welch uses).

In short, because Alma is born of God, he goes to work so that others might be born of God, and indeed, at the time of his telling his story to Helaman, many had in fact been born of God. This is straightforward narrative that uses *born of God* three times. The Edwardses consider this narrative to be a chiastic section, although it begins with a dependent clause, is nearly six times longer than its chiastic counterpart, and contains extraneous language like Alma’s laboring to bring souls to repentance, and

non-chiastic pairings like Alma's *joy*, which is all ignored. The Edwardses's statistical analysis permits this and would apparently consider the three *born of Gods* to represent an even higher degree of organization than a single *born of God*. From a literary standpoint, their section **F** seems hardly to have the makings of an element (or section) of a chiasm.

The Edwardses's statistical analysis seems valid for truly random orderings of words, but the words an author uses are not put in a jar, shaken, and then withdrawn randomly. They appear in some order, but whether that order is chiastic must be determined by literary analysis, for which Welch's fifteen criteria are helpful. The story of Alma's conversion in verses 6–24 proceeds chiastically, from his rebellion against the church to his epiphany and his embrace of the church. It should be easy to find contrasting elements in such a story, and Welch and the Edwardses find some. What is surprising is that given this splendid opportunity to create a real chiasm, Alma failed to do so.

Welch's Criteria

With respect to the literary merits of Alma 36 as a chiasm, I made a "careful literary analysis" of it in 1983, as Welch invites readers to do, long before he proposed his criteria for use in evaluating the presence of chiasmus and invited "further refinement and possible use" of them.² Although Welch's criteria are useful, they are explicitly neither finished nor authoritative and should not be made the issue as the Edwardses repeatedly do.

Balance Criterion

The Edwardses do not challenge any of my data but only my misapplication of Welch's proposed criteria. With respect to Welch's *balance* criterion, they charge me with redefining it by applying it to the paired sections in their chiasm rather than to just the first and second halves of a chiasm. Their charge is understandable given that their paired sections are so imbalanced. But Welch's *balance* criterion provides that "the elements on both sides of the proposed focal point should be nearly equal, in terms of number of words,"³ which seems to say that the paired elements (or sections) should be comparable in size. This seems sensible to me. The author of a chiasm would presumably want the individual elements balanced in size if for no other reason than that the chiasm would be more easily recognized.⁴ The *balance* criterion says nothing about comparing only the first and second halves of a chiasm, and while Welch illustrated

his criterion by applying it to the two halves of his Alma 36 chiasm, which was a clear example of balance, he may well have applied his *balance* criterion to the individual sections had they been balanced.

Boundaries Criterion

Welch's *boundaries* criterion provides that the proposed chiasm should not unnaturally chop sentences in half.⁵ The Edwardses again charge me with redefining this criterion by applying it to divisions within chiasms rather than to just the beginning and ending of the chiasm as a whole. And again their charge is understandable given that they unnaturally chop sentences in half between their sections. For example, the Edwardses gerrymandered their section **F** by beginning it with a dependent clause so that all three occurrences of *born of God* are contained in this section to avoid a maverick. They seem to argue that since Welch's *boundaries* criterion does not apply as explicitly to internal divisions as it does to the beginning and ending of a chiasm as a whole, it's okay to unnaturally chop sentences in half within the chiasm. This seems not only to disregard commonsense literary analysis but also to violate at least the spirit if not the letter (and it may violate the letter) of Welch's *boundaries* criterion.

They claim that each of the three ancient chiasms I quoted in my paper from Welch as well as Leviticus 24:13–23 cited in theirs “divides sentences in half.” But they omit the key word “unnaturally.” Some mid-sentence divisions are not unnatural and may be a function of punctuation. All of the biblical examples are of this type. None of them *unnaturally* chops a sentence in half.

They charge me with claiming that “no boundary or literary division exists between Alma 36 and 37.” What I wrote was not that the original chapter XVII in the first edition of the Book of Mormon could not be divided into two chapters where it is in the current edition but that Alma 36 considered apart from Alma 37 arguably misses what Alma was trying to accomplish and therefore Welch's Alma 36 chiasm may not operate “across a literary unit as a whole,” viz., Alma 36 and 37 together. The Edwardses rightly argue that a chapter break is not necessary for a chiasm to be found within a larger textual unit. What is required is only “some kind of clear literary boundary marker,” which they find “between the end of chapter 36, ‘Now this is according to his word’ (Alma 36:30), and the beginning of chapter 37, ‘And now, my son Helaman, I command you that ye take the records that have been entrusted with me’ (Alma 37:1)” [em-

phasis theirs]. *Now* and *And now* are certainly not literary boundary markers unique to this chapter division. No particular weight should be given to them to differentiate Alma 36 from Alma 37. In addition to its 166 uses with “it came to pass,” *now* is used 1062 times in the Book of Mormon, typically to begin a sentence with or without *And*. This idiom is used throughout the Book of Mormon, including Alma 36 and 37. *Now* begins sentences at Alma 36:5, 18, and 30; and 37:6 and 11. *And now* begins sentences at Alma 36:3, 16, 19, and 25 (“Yea, and now behold”); and 37:1, 5, 8, 14, 15, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 32, 38, 43, 45, and 47. Alma’s addressing Helaman as “my son” or “my son Helaman” adds no weight to these literary markers. He addresses Helaman as “my son Helaman” at Alma 36:3 and 37:1, 13, and 20, and as “my son” without “Helaman” at Alma 36:1, 21 (twice), 25, 30; and 37:14, 24, 26, 27, 32, 35, 38, 43, 46, 47 (twice).⁶

Objectivity, Centrality, and Length Criteria

The Edwardses charge me with ignoring “evidence of intentionality provided by Welch’s criteria of objectivity, centrality, and length.” They address these three criteria in reverse order, beginning with *length*, noting that “the number of chiasmic elements in Alma 36 is large compared with Biblical chiasmus, which rarely have more than seven elements. Thus, Welch’s length criterion provides strong evidence of intentionality.” They fail to note that Welch stated regarding this criterion that “having a large number of proposed elements, however, is not alone very significant, for all the elements must bear their own weight. An extended chiasm is probably not much stronger than its weakest links.”⁷ Welch’s chiasm suffers from many weak links. Indeed, nearly every element can be challenged as being arbitrarily selected to create symmetry, ignoring equally important text, combining different clauses to create elements, being out of sequence, relying on a word for a match and ignoring the substance, adding words to create a better match, or ignoring better matches for elements that are out of sequence.

The Edwardses argue that the turning point in Welch’s chiasm—Alma’s appeal to Jesus Christ—coincides with the turning point in Alma’s life, which is strong evidence of intentionality under the *centrality* criterion. This is true if the proper literary unit is Alma 36 alone and not Alma 36 and 37 together, but how much mileage can be gotten from this one fact? I noted in my paper published in *Dialogue* that Welch has difficulty defining the turning point, and that scholars disagree whether

the turning point or the first and last elements of a chiasm are the more important. Certainly the first and last elements in Welch's chiasm pair uneasily and are not particularly important; the Edwardses even ignore them in their construction of a chiasm. Alma's reference at the turning point to his being in the "gall of bitterness" seems to have been borrowed from Peter's comment to Simon at Acts 8:23, which would not have been available to Alma for borrowing. This apparent anachronism suggests that the question is not whether Alma intended Alma 36 as a chiasm but whether Alma even composed Alma 36.

The Edwardses charge me under Welch's *objectivity* criterion, which, as they condense it, "rewards strong ties between paired chiasitic elements," with arguing weakly that Welch has labeled two pairings creatively to convey more precision than is present in the text. The first pairing is Welch's **e-e'**, which is the Edwardses's **c-c'**. Welch's creativity seems evident. As I noted in my paper, in element **e'** Welch italicizes *bondage* but not *captivity* in the two occurrences of *bondage and captivity*, apparently because *bondage* is the key word in element **e** with which **e'** is paired, but *captivity* occurs in element **d'**, with which **e'** is not paired. This gives Welch's chiasm the appearance of more precision than in fact exists. The Edwardses "contrasting view" to my "weak argument" is based on their own construction of the chiasitic sections that reflect their statistical, but hardly literary, approach. Their "God delivered our fathers from bondage" pairing matches a thirty-six word **c** (verse 2b) with a ninety-two word **c'** (verses 28b–29a), which, like Welch's **e'**, selects *bondage* from the two appearances of *bondage and captivity* to avoid using *captivity* because *remembering their captivity* is what the adjacent **b'** is about. The longer **c'** ignores Alma's praising God; God's bringing their fathers out of Egypt, swallowing up the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and leading their fathers into the promised land; and God's bringing their fathers out of Jerusalem. The Edwardses explain that Alma is simply "bringing out additional meaning" in his experience, which seems like a "weak" explanation for ignoring so much text. Their statistical approach permits this, however, since it ignores literary elements that appear at least twice—such as the two occurrences of "he has brought our fathers out of" Egypt or Jerusalem—but which they determine do not form part of the chiasitic structure.

The second pairing is Welch's **n-n'**, which is the Edwardses's **H-H'**. Again, Welch's creativity seems evident. To create element **n**, Welch ignores verses 11, 12, and 13 and boils verses 14 and 15 down to "fear of be-

ing in the *presence of God*,” even though *fear* does not occur in either verse but *presence of God* occurs twice; and for **n'** he ignores verse 21 and boils verse 22 down to “long to be in the *presence of God*,” even though *presence of God* does not occur in this verse and so he adds it, which gives Welch’s chiasm the appearance of a literal match. There is no commonality of language at all in verses 14-15 and 22 from which **n-n'** are constructed except *soul*, which is ignored by Welch in his chiasm in all six verses where it occurs: verses 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 22;⁸ and *God*, which is not hard to match since it occurs by itself twenty-one times in sixteen verses throughout Alma 36, not to mention other references to deity. The Edwardses’s contrasting view has as little literary merit, although their **H** (verses 14b-15) is only fifty percent longer than their **H'** (verse 22). Still, the sixty-four word **H** is pared down to “I feared to be with God,” even though *feared* does not occur in verse 14 or 15. The thirty-nine word **H'** is reduced to “I longed to be with God,” ignoring entirely Alma’s introductory reverie, “Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God.” Their statistical analysis enables them to ignore Alma’s reverie and all other ignored text without affecting their calculations, which distinguishes their statistical approach from Welch’s literary approach, which prescribes density, or the amount of ignored text between elements, as one of the criteria by which to judge the presence of chiasmus. The absence of any common language in verses 14-15 and 22 (except *soul*, which, like Welch, the Edwardses ignore throughout their chiasm) would seem to fail their own Rule 2, which states that “two or more appearances of a single literary element must share the same essential word or words.”⁹

Applying this Rule to their sections **H** and **H'**, it is not clear what the shared essential word or words are in their literary element “I feared (longed) to be with God.”

The Edwardses identify two other “remarkable contrasting pairings.” The first is “the pair contrasting Alma’s pain before appealing to Jesus Christ with his joy afterward.” It is unclear which chiastic sections the Edwardses have in mind since none of their sections do this. They may be referring to verse 20, in which Alma explicitly contrasts his joy with his pain and which is the one verse in addition to the turning point that Welch has highlighted in each of his four papers on Alma 36 as making just this contrast,¹⁰ although it is unclear why Welch does not also iden-

tify verse 21, in which Alma makes this same explicit contrast. If both or either of these verses is what the Edwardses are referring to as a remarkable contrasting pairing, what is remarkable is that the Edwardses could not use either verse 20 or 21 in their chiastic construct and they ignore both verses.

The second “remarkable contrasting pairing” is their *G* and *G'*, “I fell (stood) and lost (regained) the use of my limbs.” *G* comprises verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, in which Alma falls, stands up, and falls again. The Edwardses ignore that Alma not only lost the use of his limbs but could not open his mouth. They ignore that Alma refers to his seeking to destroy the church three times, as many times as he mentions his falling. They ignore that an angel visited Alma and the sons of Mosiah. These all seem to be at least as important as Alma’s falling and losing the use of his limbs. But then *limbs* is the only common word in this “remarkable pairing” of this 213 word section *G* with the fifteen word *G'*.

Finally, and apart from Welch’s criteria, the Edwardses attempt to answer my question as to why *joy* in two unpaired sections (*I'* and *F'*) does not violate their Rule 4, which permits non-chiastic elements to appear more than once within a chiastic section if they do not appear outside the section. As I noted in my paper, their Rule 4 thus permits any amount of extraneous language in a chiastic section so long as it stays within the section, which may be okay for their statistical analysis but is problematical under Welch’s *density* criterion. For example, *joy* occurs twice in verses 24 and 25. These verses are included in *F'* but both *joys* are ignored in Edwardses’ chiasm and are thus nonchiastic elements. Their Rule 4 permits this so long as *joy* does not appear elsewhere. But *joy* also occurs three times in verses 20 and 21, which are included in section *I'* also as nonchiastic elements. This would seem to violate their Rule 4.

The Edwardses answer that this is acceptable because their smallest chiastic element is a complete idea so that “individual words such as ‘joy’ and even short word pairs such as ‘exceeding joy’ do not violate the statistical independence of chiastic elements, and need not be accounted for in the analysis.” While their statistical analysis thus discounts extraneous language, a literary analysis cannot. It seems unlikely that Alma would rhapsodize about his joy five times and not intend his rhapsodies to be part of his literary construct, and yet they are all ignored by the Edwardses. The Edwardses do, however, explicitly recognize that if complete ideas in *I'* matched complete ideas in *F'*, it would have violated their Rule 4.

Does *joy*, then, form part of a complete idea? “I have experienced exceeding joy” is a fair summary of verses 20 (I’) and 24–25 (F’). Granted, *experienced* does not occur in these verses, but then the Edwardses’ complete idea for E-E’ is “I received knowledge of God” and yet *received* does not occur in verses 4 or 5 (E) or 26 (E’); their complete idea for H-H’ is “I feared (longed) to be with God” and yet neither *feared* nor *longed* occurs in verses 14 or 15 (H) or *feared* in verse 22 (H’); and their complete idea for J-J’ is “I remembered (appealed to) Jesus Christ, son of God,” and yet *appealed to* does not occur in verse 17b (J) and neither *remembered* nor *appealed to* occurs in verse 18 (I’). If there were a chiastic match for *joy*, they could easily have formed *joy* into a complete idea and had another chiastic pairing.

While the Edwardses agree that there is some flexibility in rendering Alma 36 as a chiasm, they defend its intentionality with their statistical analysis, whatever its rendering. As I have shown, however, I question the applicability of their statistical analysis and challenge Alma 36 as an extended chiasm based on literary analysis.

Notes

1. Earl M. Wunderli has degrees in philosophy and law from the University of Utah. He retired as Associate General Counsel of IBM in Connecticut in 1993 and returned to his native Utah. He has long made an avocation of studying the internal evidence in the Book of Mormon.

2. John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 13, 14. After being introduced to chiasmus in 1983 through Welch’s article, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds (Religious Studies Center, BYU 1982), I analyzed and challenged all eight of Welch’s examples and sent him my analysis by letter dated December 1983. My analysis has not otherwise been published.

3. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” 8.

4. The Edwardses agree that no one knows for sure what governed ancient authors in composing chiasms but note that under my extended balance criterion, “standard chiasms in the Bible would fail. For example, element d in Leviticus 24:13–23 has 57 words, and element d’ has 26. This imbalance does not tarnish scholarly regard for this passage as a deliberate application of the chiastic form.” They lay out Leviticus 24:13–23

chiastically in Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, "Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?" in *BYU Studies* 43, no. 2 (2004): 120–121.

I am aware of one scholar, David Wright, who writes, that "the chiasmic structure in Leviticus 24:13–25 [sic 13–23] is questionable, despite the fact that this basic structure was recognized over 175 years ago." With respect specifically to the Edwardses' elements d-d', Wright notes that "the d-members (d=24:15b-16; d'=24:22) are thematically unequal. True, they both say that the resident alien and citizen are to be treated the same legally, but d contains the law about blasphemy, which is not found in d'. The law of blasphemy, the central issue in the passage, thus amazingly has no counterpart in his structure." Wright concludes that "if there is a chiasmic structure in Leviticus 24, it is limited to the striking laws, where vv. 20b–21 [Edwardses' elements g', f', and e'] summarize in reverse order the laws of 17–20a [Edwardses' elements e, f, and g]. This does not seem to arise from grand compositional considerations, but may have come about in an *ad hoc* manner to reinforce the previous points: the author chose to repeat the most recent element in the list of laws in vv. 17–20a . . . and then, having started this summary, he reiterated the other laws . . . in reverse order" [David P. Wright, "The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structures Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus. 20:23–23:19)," in *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 10 (2004): 163–164, n. 37].

5. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," 6.

6. The Edwardses accuse me of ignoring entirely Mosiah 27 and Alma 38, which have been advanced by Welch as offering significant evidence of intentionality behind the structure of Alma 36. In Mosiah 27, Alma tells his conversion story in short antithetical parallelisms. In Alma 36, Alma uses the same phrases, but he splits these parallelisms so that their first elements appear in the first half of Alma 36 and their second elements appear in the second half of Alma 36. Changing from antithetical parallelism to introverted parallelism seems to be a clear, deliberate choice. Then, in Alma 38, speaking to Shiblon, his second son, Alma includes only the first half of the account in Alma 36 which he gave to Helaman, his first son. In Alma 38:8, Alma comes right up to the turning point of Alma 36, and there he stops; he does not chiastically work his way

back out of the story as he does in Alma 36. This gives evidence that Alma consciously saw that point as a literary focal point.

I have not ignored Mosiah 27 and Alma 38 in my research, and actually addressed Mosiah 27 in an early draft of my paper, but to have gotten into them would have greatly expanded my paper and taken us far afield. For example, I have fashioned Alma's "psalm" at Mosiah 27:24–31, as Welch calls it [John W. Welch, "Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company/Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 151], into a chiasm of six paired elements and a one-line turning point, explaining the pairings imaginatively much as anyone can do to defend a position. The Edwardses themselves recognize that "the human mind can find a logical tie between almost any two ideas" ("Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?" 112).

Also, Alma does not "tell his conversion story" in Mosiah 27 as he does in Alma 36. Whoever wrote Mosiah 27 (this is another question that takes us far afield) had already given a full account of the conversion story at Mosiah 27:8–23, which the sons of Mosiah related to Alma's father in detail (verse 20). When Alma awoke after two or three days, his spontaneous psalm bid those around him to be of good comfort (verse 23) as he occasionally used "short antithetical parallelisms," not to tell his conversion story, but to declare how he had been in the dark and now had seen the light. Alma's psalm at Mosiah 27 is hardly comparable to Alma 36.

Other things about Mosiah 27 take us far afield. For example, the turning point in the chiasm I fashioned is, "My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity," which is borrowed directly from Peter's comment to Simon at Acts 8:23, which would not have been available to Alma for borrowing. Also, the story of Alma's conversion seems to be borrowed from Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. As Saul (known to us as Paul) journeyed toward Damascus, "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he *fell to the earth*, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, *why persecutest thou me?*" (Acts 9:3–4). Similarly, in the Book of Mormon, as Alma was going about with his companions rebelling against God, an angel appeared to them and spoke to them, which so astonished them that they "*fell to the earth.*" And the angel spoke again, saying: "Alma, arise and stand forth, for *why persecutest thou* the church of God?" (Mosiah 27:12–13). And there are curiosities about the story. Alma and Korihor were contemporaries in the

first century B.C. and both rebelled against the church. Yet God sent an angel to convert Alma but punished Korihor, who went from house to house begging for food until he was “run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead” (Alma 30:59). Alma does not appear to have been any better than Korihor, or Korihor worse than Alma, yet God showed mercy in the one case and justice in the other. The same question might be asked about Paul’s conversion, but with Alma, the punishment for sinners was clear. God had just told Alma’s father what should happen to those who, like Alma, would not hear God’s voice, who transgressed against him, and who did not repent of his sins (Mosiah 26:28–29, 32). Indeed, Alma himself warned his son Helaman that if he did not keep God’s commandments he would be cut off from God’s presence (Alma 36:30). And yet Alma, while doing all these things, was saved because God sent an angel to convert him.

As for Alma 38, Alma’s account of his conversion to his son Shiblon covers a short three verses (Alma 38:6–8), the apparent purpose of which was to convince his son to know that whoever puts his trust in God will be delivered as Alma himself was when he finally cried out to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy and received a remission of his sins. Alma does not simply come right up to the turning point of Alma 36 and stop, not working his way chiasmatically back out of the story as he does in Alma 36. His point is made when he concludes: “But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul” (Alma 38:8). And if Alma didn’t create a chiasm in Alma 38, it is unclear why not since Welch insists that Alma did not fashion chiasms in his youth but did so in his later life as “an imaginative and mature artist” [John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, edited by John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981), 206–207].

In short, Mosiah 27 and Alma 38 hardly offer significant evidence of intentionality behind the structure of Alma 36.

7. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” 6.

8. Welch does not ignore the word entirely. The plural *souls* occurs once, in verse 24, which he uses in element I’, “I labored to bring souls to repentance,” which he contrasts with I, “I sought to destroy the church,” which is a condensation of verses 6, 7, 8, and 9, in which *destroy the church* occurs twice, although it also occurs in verse 11, which Welch ignores. Thus, like elements **n** and **n’**, elements I and I’ have no language in com-

mon. Among so much ignored text and in the absence of common wording, it is doubtful that a reader would find a chiastic pattern “clearly evident in the text,” as required by the *objectivity* criterion. Indeed, Welch’s several iterations of his chiasm over the years suggests that it is not “clearly evident.” Welch’s Alma 36 chiasm would also seem to fail his *density* criterion, which looks at the amount of irrelevancy between elements. Over eighty percent of the text in Alma 36 is apparently irrelevant because it is ignored by Welch in constructing his chiasm.

9. Edwards and Edwards, “Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?” 112.

10. John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1969): 83; “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, edited by John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981), 207; “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 50; and “A Masterpiece: Alma 36,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1991), 126.