

The Chiastic Arrangement of the Lukan Temptation Narrative

Caleb T. Louden

caleb.louden@uss.salvationarmy.org

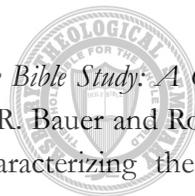
Abstract

What constitutes a chiasm is a debated area of research and more often neglected within biblical studies. In response to this, Craig Arnold Smith has produced a work that provides new insights into how to determine whether an author intentionally employs a chiasm. Working from Smith's method, this paper argues that the Lukan temptation in the wilderness narrative is structured as a chiasm. It also demonstrates how the temptation functions to emphasize certain Lukan themes. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the chiasm of Luke 4:1–14a enhances the interpretive significance of the passage by revealing a literary function that has consequences for the reading of the entirety of Luke-Acts. These functions in turn validate the chiasm of Luke 4:1–14a, illustrating the value of Smith's methodology.

Key Terms: chiasm, temptation, Luke, Luke-Acts, Pneumatology, Salvation-History, Lukan Themes, Gospels, Synoptic Gospels, Israel

Introduction

In their book, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*, David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina provide a list of several emphases characterizing the Inductive Bible Study (IBS)



method.¹ The second emphasis is literary form, which relates to describing the text in terms of structure and genre.² They explain, “This emphasis upon structure and genre is supported by the consideration that communication never comes as pure content but that form and content are always inextricably bound together in the communicative process.”³ That is, a text’s form inherently contributes to the meaning of a text. By extension, the structure of a pericope can significantly impact the conclusions of an interpreter.

One such structure is chiasm or chiasmus, a list of elements immediately followed by a list of those same elements in reverse order, (e.g., A-B-B’-A’). Chiasm can significantly impact how a reader should understand a passage in a few ways. First, it invites the reader to consider each element in view of its corresponding element (A/A’ to B/B’, etc.). Second, it often highlights the relationship of the first and last elements. Finally, with the concentric chiasm (e.g., A-B-C-B’-A’), the focus rests on the central element (C in this case).

Part of the reason for debate over chiasmic structures relates to the often-exaggerated claims that chiasms are identified where no such structure exists. There are a variety of potential reasons to explain this. For instance, a chiasm provides an interpreter who desires to challenge the consensus view of a text an opportunity to do so with “hard data” since portions of a segment several verses apart may be linked in ways previously unnoticed. However, chiasmic arguments frequently fail to convince many scholars due to the subjective criteria involved in identifying a chiasm. Thus, interpreters should take great care when assessing the validity of a chiasm previously unobserved and rely upon a rigorous methodology that curtails the risk of misconstruing the meaning of a text.

¹ David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 2.

² Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 4.

³ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 4.

In response to this problem, Craig Arnold Smith has recently provided such a method to objectively distinguish between chiasms of design from accidental or false chiasms.⁴ He draws comprehensively on prior scholarship on chiasms to produce a synthetic group of criteria and a method for determining a “chiasm of design.”⁵ The aim of this present study is to apply Smith’s methodology to identify a previously unobserved chiasm of design in the gospel of Luke.⁶

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt 4:1–11//Mark 1:12–13//Luke 4:1–14). Mark records a comparatively terse account without mentioning the specific temptations that Matthew and Luke recount. The temptation narratives of Matthew and Luke also differ in numerous ways⁷—the most notable is their sequence. Matthew begins with the devil’s challenge that Jesus command stones to become bread to satisfy his hunger. Luke also begins with this temptation but the ordering of the second and third temptations are reversed. Whereas Luke ends with Jesus at the highest point of the Temple, Matthew ends with Jesus on a high mountain.

Most scholars have assumed Matthew’s order to be original, usually explaining the reversal by highlighting the importance of the Temple or Jerusalem in Luke—especially given Jesus’s final test on the cross.⁸ While scholars have rightly observed the importance of

⁴ Craig Arnold Smith, “Criteria for Identifying Chiasm of Design in New Testament Literature: Objective Means of Distinguishing Chiasm of Design from Accidental and False Chiasm” (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 2009). I am grateful to Fredrick J. Long for bringing this resource to my attention.

⁵ Smith, “Criteria,” 17. A chiasm of design means that the author of the pericope intentionally structured in this way.

⁶ To my knowledge, this chiasm has not been addressed in any major commentary or academic journal.

⁷ For example, the length of the quotation from Deut 8:3 is shorter in Luke’s account, both accounts possess unique content, certain words are changed or omitted, and the devil tempts Jesus with a single stone in Luke whereas it is several in Matthew.

⁸ Robert H. Stein observes that Matthew preferred the mountain motif, whereas “Luke was deeply concerned for Jerusalem” (*Luke*, NAC 24 [Nashville:

geography to Luke’s message, the concentric chiasm of this temptation narrative highlights another key emphasis within the passage that has repercussions for the entirety of Luke-Acts.

The Chiasm of Luke 4:1–14a

Smith’s method considers the following conditions for identifying a chiasm of design: (1) coherence with other structures, (2) significant correspondence, (3) significant symmetry, (4) discernible function, and (5) discernible authorial affinity.⁹ Applying each of these conditions to Luke 2:1-14a reveals that Luke constructs the temptation narrative as a concentric chiasm.

Broadman, 1992], 145). I. Howard Marshall suggests that it is likely that Luke has altered the original order preserved by Matthew given that Luke’s order concludes at the Temple (*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Exeter: Paternoster, 1978], 167). According to Luke Timothy Johnson, the order change in Luke reflects his geographical concern for Jerusalem and an “even more delicate spiritual sensitivity” (*The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina 3 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991], 76). Johnson explains that the third testing is the most severe, subjecting Jesus to a kind of “spiritual vertigo.” This spiritual vertigo proves Jesus’ authentic faith, a faith which will ultimately lead to the cross, where Jesus from the high place will leap and cry His own words from Psalm 30, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Johnson, in highlighting this “delicate spiritual sensitivity,” points to another factor that many scholars say supports and explains a Lukan redaction.

According to John Nolland, Robert C. Tannehill, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, the Lukan sequencing is indicative of the writer’s desire to foreshadow through the final temptation Jesus’ ultimate climactic scene. Fitzmyer writes that the most plausible explanations treat the difference between Matthew and Luke’s temptations “in terms of the climactic scene”; Matthew preferring a climax in which Satan-worship is rejected and Luke preferring to finish in Jerusalem where Jesus will be crucified (*The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX)*, AB 28 [New York: Doubleday, 1981], 507). Tannehill also notes this correspondence between the Temple temptation and Jesus’ ultimate testing at the cross (*The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 1:60). Again, Nolland agrees with Fitzmyer and Tannehill, however, he also notes that the sequence may also better function as a polemic against Hellenistic magic as Luke’s sequence finishes with another instance of Jesus’ rejection of the performance of a sign (*Luke*, WBC 35 [Dallas: Word, 1989]).

⁹ Smith, “Criteria,” 2. NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

Coherence with Other Literary Structures

According to Smith, “coherence with other structures”¹⁰ means that a chiasmic structure must not violate the implicit structure that scholars widely agree upon. Thus, if a clear section break exists, then a chiasm should not require the redrawing of agreed upon segment boundaries to accommodate the proposed chiasm.¹¹ Luke 4:1–14a meets this condition with one caveat: many scholars¹² and both the NA²⁸ and UBS⁵ conclude the unit at v. 13. At issue is the question of where exactly the transition occurs from Luke’s wilderness narrative to Jesus’s Galilean ministry.

Not only is it a minor change to include 4:14a with the temptation narrative, but the function and placement of Luke 4:14–15 is not clear. The temptation scenes occur at the end of the preliminary chapters of Luke 1–4, while the Galilean ministry begins with Luke 4:16. In fact, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and I. Howard Marshall both see 4:14–15 as an introductory summary to the Galilean ministry.¹³ Yet, they also note the peculiarity of this “introduction” when compared to those found in Mark and Matthew, both of which associate the imprisonment of John the Baptist with the beginning of Jesus’s ministry. This peculiarity has even led some to speculate that Luke is working from an independent tradition for the beginning of Jesus’s Galilean ministry.¹⁴ Fitzmyer concludes that these verses are an editorial summary from Luke that mimics those found elsewhere in Luke and Acts (cf. Luke 4:31–32, 40–41; 6:17–19).¹⁵

¹⁰ Smith, “Criteria,” 2; Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 120.

¹¹ Smith, “Criteria,” 121.

¹² E.g., Johnson, *Luke*, 77; Marshall, *Luke*, 174; Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 518; François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 147.

¹³ Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 521; Marshall, *Luke*, 176.

¹⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, 176. He cites H. Schürmann as the source of this theory.

¹⁵ Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 522.

This is sufficient justification to suggest that 4:14a should be treated with the preceding material rather than starting the subsequent section as the literary unit of the temptation narrative ends with Luke 4:15. In fact, Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall treat 4:1–15 as a segment,¹⁶ arguing that the shared language between Luke 4:1 and 4:14 indicates an inclusio.

Because of the summarizing statements made in Luke 4:14b–15 and their peculiarity when compared with these sections in Matthew and Mark, I argue that Luke 4:14b–15 stand apart from what precedes and proceeds after them. In UBS⁵ and NA²⁸, these verses are treated as transitional between Luke 4:1–13 and 4:16. Since scholars have already noted their peculiarity, this proposal is neither novel nor forced and this proposal does not seriously alter the boundaries of either section. Therefore, the criterion of coherence with other structures is satisfied by viewing 4:1–14a as a chiasm contained within the larger segment of 4:1–15.

Significant Correspondence between Parallel Units

Verbal Correspondence

Smith's next criterion for a chiasm of design is that of significant correspondence. That is, the supposed connection between parallel units must be concretely demonstrated. Smith suggests that this is demonstrable in the following six different levels of correspondence: (1) verbal, (2) syntactical, (3) form, (4) scene, (5) conceptual, and (6) phonetic.

Within this order, the level of objectivity is arranged from greatest to least objective, with the verbal level being the most objective. Correspondence at the verbal level concerns the obvious correspondence or repetition of words or phrases. Again, this level of

¹⁶ Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2010), 121.

correspondence reflects the greatest level of credibility as correspondence is explicitly found in the choice of words made by the writer or redactor. In Luke 4:1–14a, we find the repetition of four elements, comprised of individual words and phrases. The table below illustrates this level of correspondence for the passage at hand, highlighting in red the recurrent words that are repeated verbatim or share the same root.

A	Table 1	4:1	Ἰησοῦς δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου
B		4:1	ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου
C		4:2	πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου
D		4:3	εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ
E		4:5–8	Authority and Glory of the Kingdoms
D'	Table 2	4:9	εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ
C'		4:13	συντελέσας πάντα πειρασμὸν ὁ διάβολος
B'		4:14	ὑπέστρεψεν ... εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν
A'		4:14	ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος

The most preferable kind of correspondence is exact verbal correspondence in which a word is repeated in precisely the same form as its first occurrence. Smith acknowledges that exact verbal correspondence will be rare in Hebrew or Greek because both languages are heavily inflected.¹⁷ Therefore, it is preferential to speak of verbal correspondence in terms of parallel units being formed from the use of identical roots. As displayed in the table above, each parallel unit exhibits verbal correspondence and easily satisfies the

¹⁷ Smith, “Criteria,” 152.

condition that each element of each parallel unit shares the same verbal root. In addition, B/B' and D/D' exhibit verbal correspondence with D/D' also exhibiting syntactical correspondence.

Syntactical Correspondence

Correspondence at the syntactical level is established through the recognition of the repetition of “unusual” or “intricate” syntactical constructions or “the placement of constructions in the first panel that are later modified by constructions in the corresponding units of the second panel.”¹⁸ The Luke 4:1–14a chiasm satisfies this condition. Smith uses “unusual” or “intricate” to mean that a syntactical construction is unusual or intricate within the immediate context of the chiasm in question, not the NT at large.

The most explicit example of syntactical correspondence in this passage is that the verbal construction εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ is repeated in pair D/D' and only found in this pair, indicating significant correspondence between the two elements. We also find significant syntactical correspondence in units A/A' and B/B'. In elements A and B, the syntactical arrangement has πνεύματος (A) followed by ὑπέστρεψεν (B). This order is reversed in table 2 as ὑπέστρεψεν (B') is followed by πνεύματος (A'). This observation may at first seem to be adhering only to the conditions for verbal correspondence, however this reverse arrangement in the syntax is evidence for intentional correspondence. For the sake of clarity, the following chart more explicitly shows this modification:

A–B	Ἰησοῦς δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ὑπέστρεψεν (4:1)
B'–A'	Καὶ ὑπέστρεψεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος (4:14a)

¹⁸ Smith, “Criteria,” 157. TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Finally, one finds syntactical correspondence in unit C/C' of the two phrases composed of the cognates *πειρασμός* and *πειράζω*, both of which are followed by *διάβολος*. Thus, the condition of syntactical correspondence between the parallel units is also met by the concentric chiasm of 4:1–14a.

Form Correspondence

Form correspondence is the “repetition of methods of presenting the material.”¹⁹ Understanding the underlying form, from the oral tradition, may clarify or help identify certain parallelisms. Additionally, the use of OT quotations may constitute a form that helps organize a chiasm as well as author-intended structures or units that are composed of editorial comments.

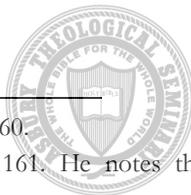
Smith illustrates this kind of correspondence with this structure in Luke 1:57–2:21.²⁰

- A Statement (1:57–58)
- B Scene of circumcision and naming (1:59–66)
- B' Scene of birth (2:1–20)
- A' Statement (2:21)

In Luke 4:1–14a, we find a unity of forms within the lexical parallelisms already addressed. The following table illustrates this correspondence of form:

¹⁹ Smith, “Criteria,” 160.

²⁰ Smith, “Criteria,” 161. He notes that Nolland tentatively suggests this chiasm.

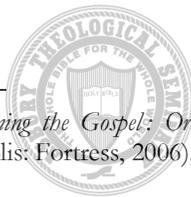


A	4:1	Pneumatological detail
B	4:1	Geographical narration
C	4:2	Statement about the proceeding events
D	4:3	Divine sonship questioned
E	4:5–8	Authority and Glory of the Kingdoms
D'	4:9	Divine sonship questioned
C'	4:13	Statement about the preceding events
B'	4:14	Geographical narration
A'	4:14	Pneumatological detail

This form correspondence strengthens the bonds of the parallels. One might object that most ancient people would have missed a chiasm at the level of form since it spans such a large section. However, when verbal and syntactical correspondences are taken into account with form level correspondence, these reinforce one another as visual (if reading) or aural cues, drawing attention to the deeper associations therein.²¹

Setting Correspondence

Next, Smith suggests that chiasms be evaluated according to their scene or setting. He observes, “character-in-focus, and spatial/temporal settings seem to be the most common elements used for developing correspondence at this level.”²² He uses Blomberg’s proposal that Luke-Acts is organized as a chiastic whole on the basis of geographical indicators to illustrate this.²³



²¹ Holly E. Hearon, in *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 5.

²² Smith, “Criteria,” 162.

²³ Smith, “Criteria,” 163.

Luke	Rome
	Jesus in Galilee
	Samaria-Judea
	Jerusalem
Acts	Jerusalem
	Judea-Samaria
	Throughout the Gentile world
	Rome

The correspondence of this chiasm is primarily based on correspondence of geographical setting. This kind of correspondence, according to Smith’s method, is not the most compelling. Nonetheless, it is a valid condition, one that Luke 4:1–14a satisfies. Here, the writer organizes the chiasm according to the following changes in setting:

4:1a	Galilee (Implicit)
4:1b	Wilderness (place of trial)
4:5	All the kingdoms of the world
4:9	Jerusalem (place of ultimate trial)
4:14a	Galilee

This correspondence of setting follows Jesus as He enters and leaves Galilee to be tested in the wilderness. It can be assumed that Jesus leaves Galilee to be tested because, in Luke 4:14a, he “returned” to Galilee. Following His first temptation, Luke provides less detail as to Jesus’s physical location than Matthew. In Matthew’s temptation account, Jesus is taken to a mountain. Here in Luke we find Jesus is taken to a high place. This less nuanced description is intentional because Luke wishes to emphasize not the high place, but the global scope of the temptation; the devil shows Jesus in an instance all the kingdoms of the world. Whereas Matthew is concerned with mountain motif, Luke chooses to locate Jesus more figuratively.

After the second temptation, Jesus is then taken back to a concrete location, only this time He is at the highest point of the Temple. The wilderness and Jerusalem are correlative in that they both constitute places of trial. Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested. Jerusalem is the location of Jesus's ultimate test as he is condemned and crucified there. The Temple is of course the epicenter of these events, especially in Luke's gospel. Then following the testing at the Temple, Jesus returns to Galilee. Thus, we find correspondence of setting unifying this chiasm.

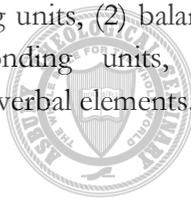
The next condition to consider is the conceptual level, but I will address this when the semantic correspondence and meaning of this chiasm are ascertained.

Phonetic Correspondence

The final level of correspondence is phonetic and this chiasm does not seem to exhibit it. Phonetic correspondence would entail the use of homonyms, alliteration, or other kinds of word play. This condition is *not* satisfied by this chiasm.

Symmetry by Design

The use of chiasm in a given text is also verified according to its symmetry. Balance is an apparent concern for ancient writers, making a high degree of symmetry an important condition for the presence of a chiasm. According to Smith, a chiasm's symmetry can be assessed by concentrating on four loci of symmetry: (1) symmetrical arrangement of corresponding units, (2) balance between panels, (3) micro-variance of corresponding units, and (4) symmetrical distribution of corresponding verbal elements.



Symmetrical Arrangement of Corresponding Units

Assessing the symmetrical arrangement of corresponding units involves answering two basic questions. First, is this arrangement an inverse parallel structure?²⁴ While this is an essential feature of a chiasm, some have suggested that they can appear without an inverse parallel structure and that elements within a parallel unit do not need to occur in the same order (e.g., A-B-C-A'-B'). Smith contends that such chiasms are likely *not* chiasms of design.²⁵ In the case of our text, it is arranged in an inverse parallel structure, which was demonstrated in the previous section.

The more difficult question is the second: What is the likelihood that this arrangement could have been produced *accidentally*? Smith argues that the probability of accidental generation can be calculated by comparing the number of possible arrangements of a passage's constituent units with the number of these arrangements that would be chiasmic. Having calculated the possible number of arrangements and the possible a of chiasmic arrangements for various amounts of parallel units, Smith provided the following table:²⁶

	Parallel Units	Total Units	Chiastic Arrangements	Possible Arrangements	% of Chiastic Arrangements
ABA'	1	3	2	6	33.33%
ABB'A'	2	4	8	24	33.33%
ABCB'A'	2	5	8	120	6.67%
ABCC'B'A'	3	6	48	720	6.67%
ABCDC'B'A'	3	7	48	5040	0.95%
ABCDD'C'B'A'	4	8	384	40320	0.95%
ABCDEE'D'C'B'A'	4	9	384	362880	0.11%
ABCDEE'D'C'B'A'	5	10	3840	3628800	0.11%
ABCDEFE'D'C'B'A'	5	11	3840	39916800	0.0096%
ABCDEFF'E'D'C'B'A'	6	12	46080	479001600	0.0096%
ABCDEFGF'E'D'C'B'A'	6	13	46080	6227020800	0.00074%
ABCDEFGG'F'E'D'C'B'A'	7	14	645120	87178291200	0.0007%

²⁴ Smith, "Criteria," 185.

²⁵ Smith, "Criteria," 186.

²⁶ Smith, "Criteria," 188. He reaches these figures using these equations: *Possible Arrangements (PA)*= $n!$ (where n=number of units), *Possible Chiastic Arrangements (PC)*= $2^n(n!)$ (where n is the number of corresponding unit-pairs).

According to Smith’s calculations, it is unlikely that the Luke 4:1–14a chiasm occurred accidentally because, at four parallel units and one central unit observed, only 0.11% of all possible arrangements of the text are chiasitic.

Balance between Panels

The next criterion of symmetry is a chiasm’s balance between panels.²⁷ Here, one determines whether the panels of the chiasm are relatively equal in size. If one cannot demonstrate significant balance between to panels, then this argues against the text as a chiasm by design. Variance of size between panels can be approached in two ways.²⁸ The first is examining *macro*-variance (*Mv*), which considers the level of difference between the two panels of a chiasm. The second, is examining *micro*-variance (*m*), which measures the level of difference between corresponding units.

Macro-variance can be determined by obtaining the simple percentage differential between the two panels. This figure is the result of dividing the word count of the smaller panel by that of the larger panel and subtracting the resulting figure from 1.²⁹

$$\text{Macro-Variance} = 1 - (\text{word count of smaller unit} / \text{word count of larger unit})$$

Next, the resulting number is multiplied by 100 to arrive at a percentage. Now, determining what constitutes significant enough macro-variance to preclude a chiasm by design is difficult since no body of universally recognized chiasms exists. With this difficulty in

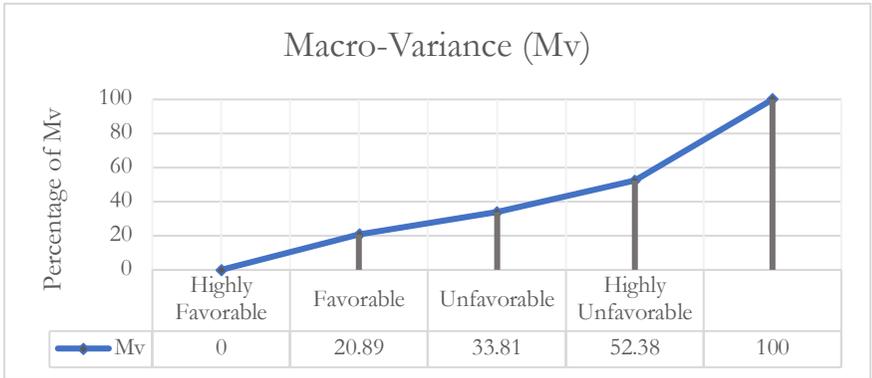
²⁷ A “panel” is another way of describing a list or set of units involved in a chiasm. Every chiasm has two panels as it is composed of a list of units followed by that same list in reverse order.

²⁸ Smith, “Criteria,” 190.

²⁹ Smith, “Criteria,” 190.



mind, Smith offers a grouping of false and valid chiasms to establish a range that could help validate chiastic symmetry represented in the following graph:



If a chiasm has a *Mv* that is less than 20.89% then it is highly favorable to suggest that it is exhibiting symmetry by design. Likewise, if the *Mv* of a chiasm is greater than 52.38%, then it is highly unfavorable to suggest that the chiasm has intentional symmetry, making it less likely that it is a chiasm by design. For Luke’s Temptation account, one finds in the first panel sixty-seven words and in the second panel eighty-six words. Thus, the *Mv* differential for this passage is 22.09%, which indicates that it is favorable to assume that this chiasm in 4:1–14a is intentionally symmetrical.

In addition to calculating the macro-variance differential, balance should also be viewed through the lens of a passage’s symmetrical distribution of units. This pertains to comparing the number of parallel units with those that exist without a pair. As previously indicated, a central unparalleled unit enhances the case for viewing a chiasm as one by design. However, other unparalleled units that might occur in the panels significantly diminish the case for a chiasm.

The proposed chiasm of this paper has several unparalleled units when seen purely from the vantage point of verbal correspondence

(i.e., there are words and phrases in table 1 not present in table 2). However, most of these unparalleled units occur within the first and third temptations, which technically constitute parallel units as both depict the same sequence of events: The context for the temptation, the Devil’s temptation, and Jesus’s response. Therefore, the actual number of unparalleled units is significantly lower, which I estimate as two sense units: *καὶ ἤγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι* and *ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ*. Nonetheless, given how it correlates with its parallel passage in Matthew, it is apparent that the writer is working from some traditional material and has arranged it in a way to meet the rhetorical situation. Luke has provided a text that reflects that rhetorical situation while preserving the traditional materials (i.e. the basic plot with the Deuteronomistic quotations). Smith acknowledges that some larger differentials can be explained by the rhetorical situation of the writer and the macro-variance in Luke’s Temptation in the Wilderness is explainable by the rhetorical situation.

Micro-Variance of Corresponding Units

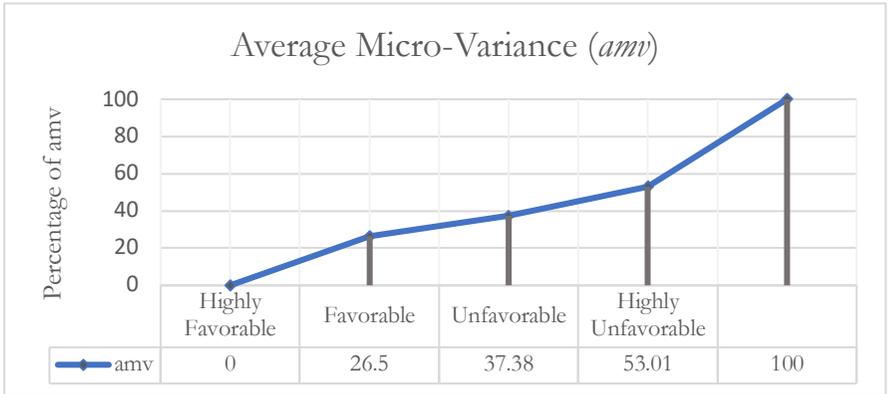
Smith contends that analyzing the balance of a pericope also requires the examination of its micro-variance (*m*); that is, the comparison of either the number of words or grammatical units between corresponding pairs.³⁰ This too can be calculated with a simple percentage differential. At times, analysis via word count seems to be too simplistic when assessing connections at the semantic level, leading a researcher to instead study the number of grammatical units.³¹ Still, analysis at the level of grammatical units might be more suspect than that at the word count level because the researcher may make the mistake of contriving such units. Therefore, analysis of the micro-variance of grammatical units will not be attempted here.³²

³⁰ Smith, “Criteria,” 191.

³¹ Smith, “Criteria,” 199.

³² Smith, “Criteria,” 199.

Again, Smith provides a helpful dataset against which *mv* can be assessed. This graph illustrates the different levels of favorability for determining chiastic symmetry according to the average micro-variance (*amv*):



Using the word counts of units, the average micro-variance for the first three corresponding units in the temptation chiasm is 26.85% (leaving D/D' out of the equation).³³ I have chosen to only measure the first three units because the fourth pair (D/D') is characterized by Luke's use of traditional materials, which means authorial shaping was more restricted. This explains its artificially high degree of micro-variance. Moreover, since the phrase, εἰ υἰὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, occurs without variation in each unit of D/D', including only it in the micro-variance average would reduce the *amv* differential to 20.14%. The results for each unit are as follows:

- A (5 words) A' (5 words) = *mv* of 0
- B (12 words) B' (7 words) = *mv* of 41.67
- C (18 words) C' (11 words) = *mv* of 38.89
- D (33 words) D' (66 words) = *mv* of 50

³³ The *mv* of each pair was calculated by dividing the smaller value by the greater value of each pair. The result was then subtracted from 1 and multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. The *amv* was produced by taking the average of the *mv* values of A/A', B/B', and C/C'. If one factors in D/D', the *amv* is 32.64%.

An *amv* of 26.85% is just outside of the “highly favorable” zone, at a percentage that Smith would find favorable for confirming chiasmic symmetry. If we include D/D', of course, favorability drops as the *amv* would be 32.64%. Yet, taking into account the use of tradition material, this figure is artificially high. Therefore, although not definitive by itself, this *amv* score suggests there is a symmetrical shape to Luke 4:1–14a and that it is as a chiasm by design.

Symmetrical Distribution of Corresponding Verbal Elements

The final locus of symmetry relates to the distribution of corresponding verbal elements. Here, analysis determines whether the verbally correspondent elements are positioned in approximately the same position on either side of the central element. Again, Smith provides a method for numerically ascertaining and representing this condition.³⁴ In order to most accurately represent Smith's method, it will be best to quote his work here at length. He writes:

Variance in distribution of corresponding elements must be calculated with respect to the size of the whole passage. Consider two passages of text (X and V), both of which have a set of corresponding elements which are 6 and 9 words, respectively, from the center of their proposed structures. We might say that both passages have a distribution variance of their corresponding terms of 3 ($dv = 9 - 6 = 3$). However, this number is meaningless unless it is fixed to the size of the passage under consideration. If passage X consists of only 20 words total, a distribution variance of 3 would obviously be more significant than in the case of passage Y which consists of 200 words. Along these same lines, there is a need to calculate distribution variance with respect to the distance each element occurs from

³⁴ Smith, “Criteria,” 200.

the hypothetical center. If a set of terms occurs at 6 and 9 words from the center, the 3 word variance is necessarily more significant than if the repeated terms occur at 106 and 109 words from the center. Both of these related considerations may be dealt with together by calculating distribution variance in the following manner:³⁵

$$Dv = [(position\ of\ 1^{st}\ occurrence - position\ of\ 2^{nd}\ occurrence) / (position\ of\ 1^{st}\ occurrence + position\ of\ 2^{nd}\ occurrence)]$$

Smith also distinguishes between a verbal element's absolute and relative location. The distinction between absolute and relative location is that an absolute location accounts for a verbal element's position in relation to the entirety of its respective table as compared to its corresponding pair. A verbal element's relative position measures its place within its respective unit as compared to its pair. The relative location is also an important measure of symmetry as it can quickly discover the chiasm's syntactical symmetry within parallelisms. The relative differential is calculated with the following formula:

$$Relative\ Dv = [(pos.\ of\ 1^{st}\ occ.\ w/in\ unit - pos.\ of\ 2^{nd}\ occ.\ w/in\ unit) / (pos.\ of\ 1^{st}\ occ.\ w/in\ unit + pos.\ of\ 2^{nd}\ occ.\ w/in\ unit)]$$

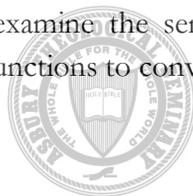
Regarding the location of verbal elements, the chiasm of Luke 4:1–14a has an average absolute differential of 14.68% and an average relative differential of 39.75%. Given these numbers, it's clear that the absolute position of the verbal elements is more indicative of a chiasm by design here than is the relative position. While the average relative differential would seem to contradict this paper's central

³⁵ Smith, "Criteria," 200.

claim, it should be noted that Smith does not provide clear instructions for determining the beginning and end of a parallel unit. Also, the average relative differential is an adequate alternative when repetition is used in a passage, which is not the case for the passage under examination. The best indicator, when unencumbered by repetition, of distribution is still a verbal element's absolute position.

Discernable Chiastic Function

Given the results from our analysis of the symmetry of Luke 4:1–14a, it is clear that the passage possesses a high degree of symmetry. It is now time to turn to the criterion of discernable function. Smith proposes that a chiasm can be used for the purpose of expressing one or more of the following four kinds of functions: (1) Mnemonic or organizational, (2) aesthetic, (3) rhetorical, or (4) semantic. To assess the mnemonic or organizational function would require an in-depth look into the oral tradition of the text of Luke. Such research, while important, is not ultimately crucial to the purposes of the present study. The aesthetic function of a chiasm is not easily determined except in view of a pressing contextual reason that would then elicit an aesthetically motivated response. It is unclear what contextual reason surrounding the composition of Luke, an inherently controversial issue itself, might have provoked the use of a chiasm for purely aesthetic reasons. Similarly, addressing the rhetorical function of the chiasm is challenging because the extent to which this chiasm makes the passage more persuasive is also unclear, especially since the goal of such persuasion is equally ambiguous (at least within the immediate context of this passage). Therefore, it is most profitable for our study to examine the semantic function of the chiasm (i.e., how the chiasm functions to convey meaning).



Discernible Authorial Affinity: The Semantic Functions of Luke 4:1–14a

According to Smith, semantic function can be expressed in terms of emphasis or interpretive significance.³⁶ For example, the structure can be shown to emphasize a certain element or elements, or the chiasm might demonstrate the development of thought and/or clarify an otherwise ambiguous element. Regardless, determining how a chiasm functions must be done in conjunction with other hermeneutical considerations.

While a chiasm may lead to new interpretive possibilities for text, it should not totally contradict interpretations derived from other hermeneutics. To put it another way, it may contribute new insights, but should not rewrite past scholarship. When the interpretive significance of a given text is enhanced by a chiasm, it should do so by either enhancing our understanding of the development of an argument or by exposing how parallel elements complete or illumine one another. For example, when a chiasm creates emphasis, it might highlight OT quotes or allusions, or a theme found throughout a given work. In this respect, the researcher is not conducting an anachronistic enterprise. Rather, assessing the semantic function of a chiasm in light of other known hermeneutical data often provides further evidence for the chiasm and enhances our understanding of the pericope. I will now show that the Luke 4 chiasm is instrumental in emphasizing Lukan pneumatology through the parallel unit A/A' and that the central element of the pericope emphasizes the universality of Jesus's ministry, enhancing the interpretive significance of the segment for the book and Luke-Acts as a whole.

Reading Luke 4:1–14a in view of its chiastic arrangement reveals semantic function in both the areas of emphasis and interpretive significance. This chiasm functions semantically to emphasize

³⁶ Smith, "Criteria," 284.

prominent Lukan themes such as the role of the Spirit. Whereas Mark makes mention of the Spirit six times, and Matthew twelve, Luke mentions the Spirit at least seventeen times in the Gospel alone.³⁷ No Gospel is more concerned with the work of the Spirit than Luke's. His pneumatology is central to the portrayal of Jesus. Scholars have not always agreed as to how Luke portrays the role of the Holy Spirit. Since the appearance of E. Schweizer's *TDNT* article, the Holy Spirit has often been viewed as solely inspiring the ministry of Jesus in Luke.³⁸ Yet, given the role of the Spirit in many other activities such as in the repentance proclaimed by John the Baptizer and the conception of Jesus in the infancy narrative, M. Wenk argues that it is not representative of Lukan pneumatology to limit the Spirit's role to solely that of inspiration.³⁹

In fact, Luke 4:1–14a reflects the broader pneumatology of Luke, a fact that many scholars have indicated without acknowledging the underlying chiasmic formula. Christopher Francis Evans writes, "While the proximate agent of temptation is the Devil, behind it is the action of the Spirit of God, who not only allows it but brings it about."⁴⁰ Wenk sees the temptation narrative as indicating that Jesus was not only lead by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, but was lead through the wilderness by the Spirit and sustained through the struggle by the Spirit.⁴¹ Similarly, Fitzmyer highlights the connection between the filling of the Holy Spirit in 4:1 and the descent of the Spirit at Jesus's baptism (3:22).⁴² Having received the Spirit at His baptism, Jesus conquers the devil because He is filled with the Spirit. Nolland also observes that Stephen (Acts 6:5, 8; 7:55) and Barnabas (Acts

³⁷ Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 227. He also sees a possible 18th instance of the Spirit in Luke.

³⁸ M. Wenk, "Holy Spirit," *DJG'*, 389.

³⁹ Wenk, "Holy Spirit," *DJG'*, 389.

⁴⁰ Christopher Francis Evans, *Saint Luke* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 257.

⁴¹ Wenk, "Holy Spirit," *DJG'*, 389.

⁴² Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 513.

11:24) were filled with the Spirit.⁴³ Like Jesus in Luke 4, Stephen is filled with the Spirit in the face of persecution and sees a vision of God's glory and Jesus at His right hand. Thus, for both Stephen and Jesus, the Spirit aids the persecuted to remain faithful.

This pneumatological theme, that the Spirit enables and sustains individuals during temptation, is emphasized by the chiasm of Luke 4:1–14a. It begins and ends by referring to Jesus' relationship to the Spirit. In Luke 4, the unit A/A' indicates that Jesus is not only guided by but also empowered with the Spirit. These chiastic bookends emphasize the theme of the Spirit in Luke and echo its importance in the rest of the gospel. This semantic function enhances the case for its validity. We should now assess the centerpiece of the chiasm to discern its intended function.

Just as the chiasm creates emphasis at its peripheral units by stressing the role of the Spirit, it also creates emphasis via the role played by the central unit, E. As the central unit, the second temptation occupies a place of prominence because concentric chiasms are often constructed to draw attention to their center. The zenith of this chiasm emphasizes the universal scope of Jesus's mission. In a moment of time, Jesus is shown all the kingdoms of the world. This universal scope is a hallmark theme of Luke's gospel.

Some scholars have misappropriated this theme to insist that Luke's intended audience was primarily gentile and that his goal was to explain their incorporation into the Church. Yet, this view neglects the extent to which Luke comes from Jewish tradition and his real eschatological viewpoint. Eric Franklin expresses it this way, "Luke is indeed interested in the universal spread of the gospel, but this is not necessarily the same as his having a universal concern which is directed primarily towards the Gentiles, which envisages a continuing mission to them, and which is concerned with the ongoing growth of

⁴³ Nolland, *Luke*, 178.

the Church and with their inclusion in its fold.”⁴⁴ The theme of universality in Luke is defined by Luke’s appeal to the reception of the gospel by the gentiles as a sign of the sovereignty of Jesus. Luke is not primarily directed toward the gentiles but sees in their conversion hope that the Jews might still come to claim Jesus as Lord.⁴⁵

The second temptation places special emphasis on this theme of the universal validity of Jesus’s lordship. The devil guarantees the kingdoms of the world in exchange for Jesus’s praise. Jesus, of course, rejects this offer. This meeting follows the form of ancient benefaction, which was the primary means by which power was distributed in the Greco-Roman world, existing across the empire and even in Palestine.⁴⁶ John Barclay explains the system of Roman patronage in the days of the Senate, which allowed wealthy families access to the Senate and the skills necessary for social and political influence, in this way: patronage consisted of “a *reciprocal* exchange of goods and services, which is *personal, enduring, and asymmetrical*.”⁴⁷ The establishment of the Roman Empire did not undo this system, but flourished because of it. The state’s goals were advanced through imperial benefaction, whether directly granted or mediated through brokers.⁴⁸

Analogously, the devil is portrayed as a patron who can give Jesus that which is ultimately already his: authority and power over the kingdoms of the world. Jesus, of course, rejects the offer and responds with scripture: “You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him” (4:8; NET). This deference to the OT reflects Luke’s frequent couching of the Christ-event in the language and themes of the OT. It also reflects the Gospel’s partiality to Israel, an aspect that is seen in features such as the infrequency with which salvation is

⁴⁴ Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 139.

⁴⁵ Franklin, *Christ the Lord*, 140.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Marshall, *Jesus, Patrons, and Benefactors: Roman Palestine and the Gospel of Luke*, WUNT 259 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 105–6.

⁴⁷ John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 36.

⁴⁸ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 38.

offered to gentiles in the Gospel or the identification in the infancy narrative of Jesus's role as heir to David's throne.⁴⁹

This temptation episode then reinforces the order of salvation-history that unfolds across the rest of Luke-Acts. Rather than giving into the devil in order to accelerate the universal impact of his mission, Jesus once again fulfills the OT and seeks the reconstitution of Israel by whom the gentiles would be saved.⁵⁰ As the focal center of the chiasm, the second temptation alerts us to the prominence of this salvation-history theme and even directs us to the end of Luke-Acts when Paul enters Rome (Acts 28:11). "Luke sees the arrival of Paul at Rome as the supreme example which guarantees the reality of the Christian proclamation of the lordship of Jesus, and what is true for Paul in particular is true also of the whole Christian enterprise which has caused the Gentiles to acknowledge this fact."⁵¹

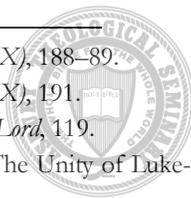
By using a chiasm to emphasize this theme of universality, the temptation in the wilderness looks ahead to a time when the reality of Jesus's life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension will be verified in the response of the kingdoms to the Gospel. Furthermore, this chiasm not only emphasizes a prominent feature of Luke-Acts, but also enhances the passage's interpretive significance. Ben Witherington suggests that Luke 1–4 is intended as a preface to both Luke and Acts because the books were written as a two-volume historiographical work.⁵² If this is the case, then this chiasm advances the interpretive significance of the passage and Luke 1–4 since the temptation foreshadows the resolution of the two-volume work by pointing in the direction of Rome, even as thousands of miles and many years lie ahead of the Gospel's journey.

⁴⁹ Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 188–89.

⁵⁰ Fitzmyer, *Luke (I–IX)*, 191.

⁵¹ Franklin, *Christ the Lord*, 119.

⁵² Michael F. Bird, "The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 432.



Conclusion

By viewing Luke 4:1–14a through Smith’s methodology, this paper has determined that one does find a chiasm by design. Because of space, Smith’s final condition of authorial affinity for chiasm was not pursued. However, there are a number of scholars who have demonstrated the frequent use of chiasm in Luke-Acts.⁵³ In closely following Smith’s method, not only has the chiasm of Luke 4:1–14a been confirmed, but its theological implications have also been explored. These theological emphases explain why Luke’s sequence of temptations differs from that of Matthew because, fundamentally, Luke does not emphasize the same themes and motifs as Matthew.

The Temptation in the Wilderness chiasm emphasizes the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, which reflects the broader work of the Spirit within the Lukan corpus. This chiasm also emphasizes the final universal reach of the gospel in its central elements. This emphasis points to the final validation of Jesus’s lordship as the gospel takes hold around the known world, even in Rome. It also reveals a broader intention for the pericope as part of the introduction to Luke-Acts, namely that the end of the two-volume salvation-history is foreshadowed within its first four chapters. These semantic functions further confirm the existence of a chiasm by design within the segment of 4:1–15 that extends from 4:1 to 4:14a.

Smith’s work has produced a groundbreaking approach to validating chiasms by design. This contribution to biblical studies is considerable as the criteria used to verify a chiasm by design were the matter of some debate and in need of further clarification. With a more critical method available for assessing chiasms in scripture, scholars may now more easily avoid anachronistic interpretations based on false chiasms and glean new insights still yet unobserved for the benefit of scholarship and the Church.

⁵³ E.g., Kenneth R Wolfe, “The Chiasmic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship,” *SwJT* 22 (1980): 60–71.