

## Aggressive hogs or rightly dividing the Word of God?

In 1949 LG Sargent wrote an article in the Christadelphian Magazine about poetic parallelism in Matthew 7:6 -

*Give not / the holy thing / to the dogs  
Neither cast / your pearls / before swine,  
Lest they trample them under their feet,  
And having turned they rend you.*

LG Sargent pointed out that “the parallelism appears to show a crossing over of the sense (technically a *chiasmus*), the fourth line being the counterpart of the first, and the third of the second. That is, it is the dogs who rend, and the swine who trample”.

But chiasmus, known about for generations, has often been relegated to a poetic footnote. Many are understandably cautious; but what if introversion is common, what if it is so common as to be considered the “default option” when we read scripture?

Consider the immediate context of Matthew 7:6. Immediately before we have Matthew 7:4-5

*A (4) Or how wilt thou say to **thy brother**,*

*B (4) Let me pull out **the mote** out of thine eye;*

*C (4) and, behold, **a beam** is in thine own eye?*

**D (5) Thou hypocrite,**

*C' (5) first cast out **the beam** out of thine own eye;*

*B' (5) and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out **the mote***

*A' (5) out of **thy brother's** eye.*

In Matthew 7:15-20 we have

*A (15) Beware of false **prophets**, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

*B (16a) **Ye shall know them***

*C (16b) **by their fruits.***

*D (16c) Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

E (17a) Even so every good tree **bringeth forth good fruit**;

F (17b) but a corrupt tree **bringeth forth evil fruit**.

F' (18a) A good tree cannot **bring forth evil fruit**,

E' (18b) neither can a corrupt tree **bring forth good fruit**.

D' (19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

C' (20a) Wherefore **by their fruits**

B' (20b) **ye shall know them**.

A' (21-23) Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not **prophesied** in thy name?

So chiasmus in Matthew 7:6 is not an isolated occurrence; chiasmus is common throughout scripture. And it does help our understanding. For example, Matthew 7:15-20 parallels the false prophets with fruitless disciples - a warning indeed.

Of course introversion is not the only type of literary structure. Take for example Matthew 7:7-11

(a) 7 **Ask**, and it shall be given you;

(b) **seek**, and ye shall find;

(c) **knock**, and it shall be opened unto you:

(a') 8 For every one that **asketh** receiveth;

(b') and he that **seeketh** findeth;

(c') and to him that **knocketh** it shall be opened.

Here is an excellent example of regular parallelism within a setting of frequent introverted parallels. The rhythm of the repetition gives a force of certainty to the truth of the promises that Jesus makes.