



## Sola Structura: An Appreciation of Mark Throntveit

Until you start looking for them, you tend not to pay much attention to the patterns and the structures that are a part of this created world. Literally, patterns and embedded structures are everywhere in our physical world, but we tend to be oblivious to them. But should your eye and mind become attuned to these patterns and structures, then their presence starts to explode into your consciousness, and you begin to see them absolutely everywhere. Think of the atomic forces that hold the world together, or the intricate biology of life, or the geological forces that shape our landscapes—patterns and structures are everywhere. The creation gives witness to an order that testifies to God’s work; as the psalmist proclaims, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well” (Ps 139:14).

Patterns and structures are also parts of our human, creative world—really, I think, as a way of replicating and copying the intricate elements of the created world around us. When humans write or paint or compose or do math (among many other things), we are in some way participating in (or at times, against) the conventions of organization that are common to our cultures. We often enhance our enjoyment of a creative task by embedding it in a structure that will give insight and delight to those who will, somehow, later participate in our work.

These patterns and structures are, in an important way, an integral part of this issue of *Word & World*, especially in how literary patterns and structures are

Chiasmus: *In rhetoric, chiasmus or, less commonly, chiasm (Latin term from Greek χιάσμα, “crossing,” from the Greek χιάζω, chiázō, “to shape like the letter X”) is a “reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses—but no repetition of words.”*

embedded in the biblical texts, and how they are intended to bring to the reader deeper meaning and understanding not only of the text but of the Creator who inspired the reflections in the first place. For many of the writers of these essays, their interest in and work with these literary patterns was inspired or enhanced by the teaching and work of Dr. Mark Throntveit, who served for decades as Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, until his recent retirement. Mark was also for decades the Book Reviews editor of *Word & World*, another reason we honor him. His students, friends, and colleagues here join together to thank him for his many years of marvelous work by means of articles that pay particular attention to elements of biblical interpretation.

Throughout this issue are scattered the elements of their appreciation of Mark and his work. The following is just a small selection of their comments:

- “He is a master teacher, especially when it comes to the Hebrew language. He skillfully used humor and clear communication to help his students through the often stressful experience of learning another language.”
- “He was a terrific colleague, especially in my early years on faculty. He helped me interpret and navigate a number of complicated issues.”
- “He is a lively teacher, a provocative preacher, a master of chiasmic and concentric reading of texts, a friend and sometime computer mentor.
- “Mark’s gifts to the academy and the church were made manifest every time he stepped into a classroom: he was generous in teaching, sharp in exegesis, focused in Lutheran theology, always quick with a word of humor.”
- “He once told me that teaching Hebrew is 90 percent pastoral care, 9 percent explanation, and 1 percent answering questions. Having received that pastoral care both as a student and as a colleague, I am grateful for his huge heart.”
- “His teaching and mentorship were formative to my understanding of the Old Testament and biblical Hebrew. I have fond memories of Mark’s insight and humor in our Elijah/Elisha class, and his approach to teaching continues to inspire my own calling as a teacher of Scripture.”
- “Whenever Mark and I discussed a contentious issue, Mark always left room for a continued relationship. I never felt that I had to agree in order for our relationship to continue. Whenever in the course of debate he emerged ‘more correct’ than I, he did not require defeat. So, in some wonderful way, it is probably fitting that he is known for his love of chiasms.”
- “I truly appreciate the friendship that arose between Mark and me during my years at LNTS, and the inspiration I gained from his classes and from the many hours he was willing to spend in mentoring me in preparation for teaching.”

So, Mark, from your friends and students and colleagues, a profound “thank you” for all you have done in so many ways for those who serve Christ and Christ’s church.

Mark Granquist