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Chapter 10: Final Considerations about Writing

Paragraphs without Paragraphs

Neither the extant original manuscript nor the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon have any indication of punctuation. The dictation was written as it was heard, with no attempt to add the literary niceties of paragraphs and punctuation. The nature of the dictation in English cannot tell us whether the Nephite language had visual clues that helped divide ideas. Based on many early texts, it is safest to assume that it did not.

How can we understand a text that doesn't follow our visual conventions? We can do an experiment and discover how it might work. The following text is from the book of Jarom, verses 1–7:

now behold I Jarom write a few words according to the commandment of my father Enos that our genealogy may be kept and as these plates are small and as these things are written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites wherefore it must needs be that I write a little but I shall not write the things of my prophesying nor of my revelations for what could I write more than my fathers have written for have not they revealed the plan of salvation I say unto you yea and this sufficeth me behold it is expedient that much should be done among this people because of the hardness of their hearts and the deafness of their ears and the blindness of their minds and the stiffness of their necks nevertheless God is exceedingly merciful unto them and has not as yet swept them off from the face of the land and there are many among us who have many revelations for they are not all stiffnecked and as many as are not stiffnecked and have faith have communion with the Holy Spirit which maketh manifest unto the children of men according to their faith and now behold two hundred years had passed away and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land they observed to keep

the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord and they profaned not neither did they blaspheme and the laws of the land were exceedingly strict and they were scattered upon much of the face of the land and the Lamanites also and they were exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts and it came to pass that they came many times against us the Nephites to battle but our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord and they taught the people the ways of the Lord wherefore we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands and began to fortify our cities or whatsoever place of our inheritance

That is an intimidating block of text, but as we read it, most of us silently vocalize the words. We turn the visual into the internally audible, and then the meaning isn't nearly so difficult as the block of text makes it appear. The reason is that we verbalize meanings in certain ways that can assist meaning. Hervey, Higgins, and Haywood describe this process:

Looking at individual sentences in discourse reveals that they often contain 'markers' signaling how sentences relate to one another, markers whose main role is to give a text a transparent inter-sentential organization. Compare, for instance, these two texts:

I was getting hungry. I went downstairs. I knew the kitchen was on the ground floor. I was pretty sure that the kitchen must be on the ground floor. I don't know why I was certain. but I was. I didn't expect to find the kitchen so easily. I made myself a sandwich.

I was getting hungry. *So* I went downstairs. *Well ...* I knew the kitchen *was* on the ground floor. *I mean.* I was pretty sure *it* must be *there*. *Actually.* I don't know why I was *so* certain, but I was. *Still,* I didn't expect to find it so easily. *Anyway.* I made myself a sandwich.

The first text is so devoid of inter-sentential connectives that, if it hangs together at all — that is, if it is *cogent* at all — this is only thanks to the underlying chronological narrative structure. In the second text, however, a rational 'train of thought' is provided by filling in the discourse-connectives (in italics) missing from the first text, which [serve] as markers of a transparent inter-sentential structure. Some of the markers

are rather like illocutionary particles, while others are instances of anaphora — that is, the replacement of previously used words and phrases by elements such as pronouns or adverbs that refer back to them; here, the anaphoric elements are ‘it’ (replacing ‘the kitchen’) and ‘there’ (replacing ‘on the ground floor’). The place of these markers is in individual sentences, but their function would seem to be *outside* them: it is an inter-sentential function linking sentences to one another in a larger text.²⁵⁶

While not nearly as colloquial as this example, the language in the Book of Mormon uses similar principles of inter-sentential clarification. The reason is that the Book of Mormon is an artifact of a literature still heavily dependent upon the techniques of oral discourse. As noted in the section “Nephi’s Plausible Training as a Scribe,” early written texts were supposed to be converted into oral texts when the writing was read out loud. While reading a text out loud is often done to provide information to another person or group of persons, even private reading was typically voiced. Silent reading is a much later skill.²⁵⁷

The longer a written text, the more important are markers to assist the target in understanding the text. In modern written texts, these markers take the form of conventions including spacing and punctuation. Punctuation typically marks sentence-level information, where space marks larger concepts. A space between sentences — particularly followed by an indentation — will mark the end of one paragraph and the beginning of another. These inherently visual clues are unavailable when a text is read, so other types of linguistic triggers are required to assist the hearer in comprehension.²⁵⁸

The linguistic triggers in the Book of Mormon are so obvious as to be almost unnoticed. They appear with such frequency that modern readers

256. Sandor Hervej, Ian Higgins, Louis M. Haywood, *Thinking Spanish Translation: A Course in Translation Method: Spanish to English* (London: Routledge, 1995), 76.

257. Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Reading* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 90–91.

258. Katrin Menzel, Ekaterina Lapshinova-Koltunski, Kerstin Kunz, “Cohesion and Coherence in Multilingual Contexts,” in *New Perspectives on Cohesion and Coherence*, eds. Katrin Menzel, Ekaterina Lapshinova-Koltunski & Kerstin Kunz (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2017), 2: “One major task involved in the process of translation is to identify the linguistic triggers employed in the source text to develop, relate and change topics.”

tune them out as redundant — which they are for reading a written text with its visual clues to coherence.

And

By far the most common linguistic trigger is the simple conjunction “and.” While the examination of “and” in the Book of Mormon has been most often used to suggest that it is the result of the retention of an early Hebrew language on the plates, I am not suggesting that it is descriptive of a particular language but rather of a linguistic feature used when oral cultures begin to write, but that continue to be principally oral.²⁵⁹

Using his understanding of Hebrew, John A. Tvedtnes described one use of “and” in the Book of Mormon:

Hebrew uses conjunctions much more frequently than English does. One clear example of this can be found in lists of items. In English, the conjunction *and* is normally used only before the last item in a list, such as *wood, copper, and brass*. But Hebrew usually uses a conjunction before each item. The Book of Mormon contains many examples of this Hebrew-like usage, such as this one found in 2 Nephi 5:15: “in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores.”²⁶⁰

The function of “and” is a superset of the way it is used in English. The conjunction “and” continues a concept or story. It is a simple ligature that indicates that what comes next is a part of what has come before. It can be better understood when some special cases are examined.

And It Came to Pass/And Now

Both “and it came to pass” and “and now” are textual markers that move a narrative or, in Skousen’s terminology, a narrative connector.²⁶¹ The difference is the location of the story on a conceptual temporal timeline. “And now” marks new information associated with the same time frame as the previous information. “And it came to pass” moves the narrative in time. There is still information related to the previous sentences, but the

259. John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 77–91.

260. *Ibid.*, 82.

261. Royal Skousen, with the collaboration of Stanford Carmack, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, Part 3* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2016), 166.

time frame has shifted and comes later. They are similar to the English markers “with” and “later.”

In the following examples, the verse before the “and now” phrase is given, then the verse following it.

And it must needs be that the power of God must be with him, even unto his commanding you that ye must obey. But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.

And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.

But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him.

And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever. (2 Nephi 1:27–30)

Verses 28 and 30 in this example begin with “and now” and mark a separation of the person being addressed, but as part of the same event.

A more interesting series of these statements comes from Jacob’s discourse:

Nevertheless, I speak unto you again; for I am desirous for the welfare of your souls. Yea, mine anxiety is great for you; and ye yourselves know that it ever has been. For I have exhorted you with all diligence; and I have taught you the words of my father; and I have spoken unto you concerning all things which are written, from the creation of the world.

And now, behold, I would speak unto you concerning things which are, and which are to come; wherefore, I will read you the words of Isaiah. And they are the words which my brother has desired that I should speak unto you. And I speak unto you for your sakes, that ye may learn and glorify the name of your God.

And now, the words which I shall read are they which Isaiah spake concerning all the house of Israel; wherefore, they may be likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel. And there are many things which have been spoken by Isaiah which may be likened unto you, because ye are of the house of Israel.

And now, these are the words: Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

And now I, Jacob, would speak somewhat concerning these words. For behold, the Lord has shown me that those who were at Jerusalem, from whence we came, have been slain and carried away captive. (2 Nephi 6:3–8)

The first “and now” marks the transition from introduction to the topic of the discourse. The second declares that Jacob will read from Isaiah, whereupon the quotation is also introduced with a subject changing “and now.” The final “and now” introduces the commentary on that verse.

Note how the temporal state changes with the phrase “and it came to pass.” Where “and now” often marks movement of ideas during the same event, “and it came to pass” describes sequences. For instance, the following are all of the “and it came to pass” statements from 2 Nephi 5:

And it came to pass that the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me. (2 Nephi 5:5)

And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land. (2 Nephi 5:13)

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands.

And it came to pass that they would that I should be their king.

But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power. (2 Nephi 5:17–18)

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people.

And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.

And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem.

And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far.

And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people. (2 Nephi 5:26–30)

Each of these statements is an event, and they are sequenced by the “and it came to pass.” They do not occur simultaneously, nor during the same limited period. The distinction between conceptual movement and movement in time is the reason “and it came to pass,” a phrase used so often in the Book of Mormon, appears only thirteen times in 2 Nephi. Those thirteen occurrences are concentrated in chapters 4 and 5. It also occurs where Isaiah uses the phrase in a context that similarly marks time: “And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham . . . ” (2 Nephi 17:1).

In contrast to its relatively sparse use in 2 Nephi, 1 Nephi uses the phrase 109 times.²⁶² This difference results from the different nature of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi, with 1 Nephi being more historical in focus. The two chapters with high concentrations of “and it came to pass” are precisely those that contain the historical data in 2 Nephi. Nephi also uses the combined phrase “and now it came to pass” (1 Nephi 16:1; 17:19, 48; 22:1; 2 Nephi 1:1) to mark the combination of a major change in topic as well as a different time.²⁶³

With no known connection to Hebrew, Maya texts also have verbal markers that indicate similar meanings of *and now* and *and it came to pass*.²⁶⁴ I suggest the similarity results from a similar solution to a similar problem of visually representing speech rather than a connection to any Book of Mormon language.

Behold/And Now, Behold

The first sentence-initial “behold” comes in 2 Nephi IV (current 2 Nephi 5:1), where it marks a transition between a quoted discourse by Lehi and the beginning of Nephi’s personal narrative about the brothers’ separation into two groups. The next two appearances of “behold” are Enos 1:1 and Omni 1:1. Jarom 1:1 has a slight variant: “Now behold.”

262. I tallied these occurrences using the search function of *Gospelink 2001*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000).

263. This section is slightly updated from Gardner, *Second Witness*, 2:196–98.

264. *Ibid.*, 1:25.

In each case, “behold” marks a major shift in the topic and, in the last three cases, a change of authors. Furthermore, in the first case, although the author (Nephi) remains the same, the speaker is different; Nephi has been quoting Lehi then resumes his own narrative.

Zeniff’s holographic record does not begin with “behold,” but rather with “I, Zeniff” (Mosiah 9:1), a parallel to Nephi’s “I, Nephi” (1 Nephi 1:1). “Behold” begins several chapters in Alma but not the beginning of the book of Alma itself. In the 1830 edition of chapter 5 (our Alma 7:1), “behold” marks the beginning of a quoted sermon. In chapter XIV of the 1830 edition (our Alma 23:1), “behold” marks the beginning of a new story line after an inserted explanation by Mormon. The ending of the previous chapter highlights the change of story line: “And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon, and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren.” In chapter 16 of the 1830 edition (our Alma 30:1), “behold” transitions from the Ammonites to a new story about Korihor.

Chapter XXI of the 1830 edition (our Alma 45) begins the portion that Helaman wrote in Alma’s book after Alma’s contributions closed (Alma 44:24). Helaman’s writings begin with “Behold, now it came to pass ...” (Alma 45:1). As a new writer in the same book, Mormon notes the transition with the “behold” beginning.

Other “behold” beginnings that serve as transitions within the text are in the 1830 edition at Alma XXVIII (our Alma 61:1), Helaman III (our Helaman 7:1), and 3 Nephi VIII (our 3 Nephi 17:1). Interestingly, however, Mormon does not begin new books with “Behold.” I hypothesize that Mormon sees his writing as a continuous unit; therefore, his beginning to the books he is abridging are more typically “And now” or “and now it came to pass.”²⁶⁵ Extrapolating from the available data, I see “behold” as making a distinct type of transition from one chapter or book to the next, typically either because of quoted texts where “behold” is associated with identifying the original author or else to introduce new authors on the source plates. When Mormon is simply moving through his narrative, he uses the same transitions (“and now,” “now,” “and now and it came to pass ...”) that appear within chapters as well.

There are other occurrences of “behold” which appear to indicate emphasis rather than a new beginning:

265. For example, in the book of Mosiah, “and now,” “now,” or “and now it came to pass” opens nearly all chapters of the 1830 edition. In parentheses is the 1830 chapter number, followed by the location of that verse in our 1981 edition: Mosiah (1) 1:1, (2) 4:1, (3) 5:1, (4) 6:1, (5) 7:1, (7) 11:1, (8) 13:25, (9) 17:1, (10) 22:1, (11) 23:1, (12) 28:1, (13) 28:20.

Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay.

Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them; and the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it. (1 Nephi 17:34–35)

Behold, my soul is rent with anguish because of you, and my heart is pained; I fear lest ye shall be cast off forever. Behold, I am full of the Spirit of God, insomuch that my frame has no strength. (1 Nephi 17:47)

And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever. (2 Nephi 1:30)

Therefore, we have two ways in which “behold” marks a text: One simply provides emphasis, and the second introduces a new topic. Since the introduction of a new topic is a type of emphasis, it is probable there is an underlying concept that ties these uses together. Of course, a second hypothesis would simply be that we have translated multiple Nephite words with the same English word.²⁶⁶

266. Donald W. Parry, “Why is the phrase ‘and it came to pass’ so prevalent in the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* (December 1992), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1992/12/i-have-a-question/why-is-the-phrase-and-it-came-to-pass-so-prevalent-in-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>.

But why does the phrase “and it came to pass” appear in the Book of Mormon so much more often, page for page, than it does in the Old Testament? The answer is twofold. First, the Book of Mormon contains much more narrative, chapter for chapter, than the Bible. Second, but equally important, the translators of the King James Version did not always render *wayehi* as “and it came to pass.” Instead, they were at liberty to draw from a multitude of similar expressions like “and it happened,” “and ... became,” or “and ... was.”

Wayehi is found about 1,204 times in the Hebrew Bible, but it was translated only 727 times as “and it came to pass” in the King James Version. Joseph Smith did not introduce such variety into the translation of the Book of Mormon. He retained the precision of “and it came to pass,” which better performs the transitional function of the Hebrew word.

Wherefore/Therefore

There is no functional difference between the use of *wherefore* or *therefore* in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The use of *therefore* clusters around the translation of the Mosiah to Words of Mormon section of the Book of Mormon as well as the revelations given to Joseph during that period. Joseph appears to have simply made a lexical choice that shifted after that time to *wherefore*.²⁶⁷

Either *wherefore* or *therefore* was used as the most common introduction of the moral of an argument. As a unit, a particular argument typically began with the explanation of a situation and then moved to a *wherefore/therefore* to provide the conclusion to that particular argument.

A simple transition is seen early in Nephi's writing:

And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; *wherefore*, they did as he commanded them. (1 Nephi 2:14)

The statement begins with the event (marked as a new point in time by the "and it came to pass") which describes Lehi speaking to his sons and the action of the Spirit upon them. The clause beginning with *wherefore* shows the conclusion, result, or consequence of the event. In this case, it is the result of the Spirit shaking Laman and Lemuel.

Mormon employs a more complicated thesis/conclusion. One example is from Words of Mormon:

And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates, which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi.

267. Brent Lee Metcalfe, "The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis" in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 410.

This analysis follows my suggestion that the majority of the Book of Mormon is a functional translation, and the specific words are dependent upon Joseph's vocabulary. See Gardner, *The Gift and Power*, chapter 19. This differs from Royal Skousen's opinion of the nature of the translation. It is not the purpose of this book to resolve those differences.

And the things which are upon these plates pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ; and my fathers knowing that many of them have been fulfilled; yea, and I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day must surely come to pass —

Wherefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people. (Words of Mormon 1:3–5)

Verse 3 begins a new topic, marked by *and now*. That topic is “that which I have written.” Mormon speaks about an event that occurred as he was writing, which was the discovery of the small plates. He explains what they were and particularly that they were “pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ” (v. 4).

After expounding the historical situation and the things which he found pleasing, he concludes, using a *wherefore* clause that shows the result of the event. The result was that he included those plates in his record.

Even more complex usages come with the word *therefore* because of the theological emphasis in some of the Alma chapters rather than any intrinsic value of the word *therefore*. For example:

Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case — that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead.

Now there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection.

And now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection?

Now whether there is more than one time appointed for men to rise it mattereth not; for all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men.

Therefore, there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection. (Alma 40:5–9)

Verses 5 and 6 are both introduced with *now*, simply indicating elements of the argument. The *and now* in verse 9 indicates an expansion of the question, and the *therefore* in verse 9 indicates the conclusion. Verse 9's "there is a time" reprises the "there shall be one time" and "a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection." Verse 8 is an aside, and the conclusion comes in 9. That conclusion restates the earlier statements. The circuitous logic simply provides the reasoning behind what might have been simply declared, that "there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection."

Antithetical Construction — But

The word *but* is complicated in its use in the Book of Mormon. Skousen documents Oliver Cowdery mixing up *but* and *and* in the manuscripts.²⁶⁸ In English usage available in Joseph's day, the word *but* might also be used where more modern speakers would use *only*. Webster's 1828 dictionary gives this example: "2. Only. A formidable man, *but* to his friends. There is *but* one man."²⁶⁹ The use of interest here is that of providing a contradiction to the thesis.

A pithy use of the form comes in Moroni's letter to Pahoran:

Behold, I am Moroni, your chief captain. I seek not for power, *but* to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, *but* for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country. (Alma 60:36)

Moroni has two clauses, where he states what he does not wish to do, contradicted by his true goal. A longer example comes from Teancum's second foray into the Lamanite camp:

And it came to pass that Teancum in his anger did go forth into the camp of the Lamanites, and did let himself down over the walls of the city. And he went forth with a cord, from place to place, insomuch that he did find the king; and he did cast a javelin at him, which did pierce him near the heart. *But behold*, the king did awaken his servants before he died, insomuch that they did pursue Teancum, and slew him.

Now it came to pass that when Lehi and Moroni knew that Teancum was dead they were exceedingly sorrowful; for

268. Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, Part 3*, 192.

269. Daniel Webster, s.v. "But," *American Dictionary of the English Language: Webster's Dictionary 1828*, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/but>.

behold, he had been a man who had fought valiantly for his country, yea, a true friend to liberty; and he had suffered very many exceedingly sore afflictions. *But behold*, he was dead, and had gone the way of all the earth.

Now it came to pass that Moroni marched forth on the morrow, and came upon the Lamanites, insomuch that they did slay them with a great slaughter; and they did drive them out of the land; and they did flee, even that they did not return at that time against the Nephites.

And thus ended the thirty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and thus they had had wars, and bloodsheds, and famine, and affliction, for the space of many years.

And there had been murders, and contentions, and dissensions, and all manner of iniquity among the people of Nephi; nevertheless for the righteous' sake, yea, because of the prayers of the righteous, they were spared.

But behold, because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, because of the exceedingly great length of the war; and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility. (Alma 62:36–41)

This example might be clearer if it were reformatted so the *but*, *behold* statements were more clearly parallel in their narrative function. However, in each case, a statement sets an expectation, and *but*, *behold* is used to show the conclusion which is the opposite of what might have been expected in the thesis.

The contrast between thesis and the *but* conclusion can also provide a positive example:

And the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to multiply and to wax exceedingly strong again in the land. And they began to grow exceedingly rich.

But notwithstanding their riches, or their strength, or their prosperity, they were not lifted up in the pride of their eyes; neither were they slow to remember the Lord their God; *but* they did humble themselves exceedingly before him. (Alma 62:48–49)

In this case, the expectation of Nephites prospering would be that they would begin to gain in pride and return to costly apparel. That

they did not is emphasized with two *but* phrases. The phrase is not a contraction to the first *but*; it is rather an emphasis by repetition.

The frequent repetition of these conjunctive elements allow us to deduce their textual functions. They all mark specific types of linguistic triggers that allow the listener to follow the sense of the topic in the absence of visual markers we provide with modern punctuation. Those modern markers are more subjective than the original linguistic triggers. Two different editors might create paragraphs differently, and even the same person might see the same text differently and produce a different set of paragraphs at different times. For example, Grant Hardy combines verses 4–6 of 1 Nephi 1 into one paragraph, whereas Lynn A. and David L. Rosenvall have 4, 5, and 6 as separate paragraphs.²⁷⁰

Two Men and Their Two Stories

In his introduction to *The Structure of Thucydides' History*, Hunter Rawlings noted:

[There are] two basic methods open to the historian for marshalling his data, the explicit method in which he simply narrates and analyzes the data consecutively is by far the easier and the more common one. The other, more subtle than the first, is the implicit method, in which the historian arranges and characterizes the facts in a matter that brings out or even creates their essential meaning. With this method, the historian judges without seeming to judge, or, even more subtly, the historian makes the reader judge, unconsciously, in the way the historian wants, by leading him to form certain impressions about the material. The historian who masters this method is more than a recorder of facts — he is an artist.²⁷¹

That definition fits both Nephi and Mormon. Both wrote without calling attention to the way they wrote. Nephi wrote from experience but included other sources he named, such as his father's record and various chapters of Isaiah from the brass plates. Mormon wrote some from experience but mostly from other sources. While the tradition of

270. Grant Hardy, *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 5–6; Rosenvall and Rosenvall, *A New Approach to Studying The Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus*, 29; Jacob M. Lyon, *The Book of Mormon: The Readable Scriptures* (West Jordan, UT: Temple Hill Books, 2015), 5–6, formats verses 5 and 6 together as Hardy does.

271. Rawlings, *The Structure of Thucydides' History*, 3–4.

records called “the plates of Nephi” served as his major source, Mormon left his readers a breadcrumb trail to point to alternative sources.

Both Nephi and Mormon wove events into a story that told more than lists of events.²⁷² Both had overarching concepts in mind, and neither was so simple a writer that he pointed his writing to only one idea. Nephi looked forward to when Yahweh would descend to earth. Mormon knew that not only had it happened but that there were Nephites in and around Bountiful who had witnessed that very event. Nevertheless, Nephi also wrote to establish a new people and his divine appointment to rule them. Mormon lived through the destruction of his people and wrote of the signs that led to that destruction in the hopes his future readers might avoid them.

Both Nephi and Mormon wrote stories. They wrote history as story, not as sequenced events. They selected from the available stories a specific set of stories designed to promote their overarching purposes. While they were faithful to the actions of the events, those actions were molded to be faithful. At the beginning and the end of Nephite civilizations, two consummate artists left their picture of a people striving toward God, sometimes failing and sometimes repenting. While their people may not have continually walked it, they both unfailingly described the straight and narrow path that led to the Tree of Life.

272. Hardy, “Mormon as Editor,” 25: “The purpose of the Book of Mormon makes the spiritual meaning of history much more important than any specific set of facts.”

