Verbal Punctuation in the Book of Mormon II — *Nevertheless*

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Abstract: *One example of verbal punctuation that has a very clear pattern of usage in the Book of Mormon is the term* nevertheless. *It is used to draw a marked contrast between what the previous text would lead one to expect and what follows it. It is not clear what the ancient antecedent to the term might be and the English term and usage might be an artefact of the translation process. The frequency and usage of nevertheless in the Book of Mormon contrasts with the way that Joseph Smith's writings use it.*

Modern books use marks as punctuation to help structure the narrative. The Book of Mormon, being an ancient book, uses words as punctuation, rather than marks. Having established the existence of verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon,[1] other individual items of verbal punctuation remain to be explored. I will examine one whose function in the Book of Mormon is clear, but whose other features are more complicated.

A Note on Methodology

In looking at verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon, the following general method is employed.

1. The most important consideration is how a particular feature is used in the Book of Mormon text. All other considerations are secondary. Examples of usage are, whenever possible, drawn from every book in the Book of Mormon. This

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1. John Gee, "Verbal Punctuation in the Book of Mormon I: (And) Now," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 33–50, https://interpreterfoundation.org/verbal-punctuation-in-the-book-of-mormon -i-and-now/.

provides the reader with multiple illustrations that cover the whole gamut of the text as well as a check on whether there are chronological developments within the Book of Mormon. To avoid too lengthy of a list, generally only one or two examples from each book are cited.

2. The Book of Mormon claims to be based on a language consisting of "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2). Therefore both Hebrew and Egyptian are considered in providing antecedents to the expressions in the Book of Mormon. Where possible, if the expressions occur in the Isaiah portions of the Book of Mormon, the corresponding Hebrew text serves as a guide to finding Hebrew equivalents. These can then be examined in the parts of the Hebrew Bible that claim to be pre-exilic to see if the Book of Mormon has Hebrew parallels. Proposed Egyptian parallels are less secure.

3. Because many claim that the Book of Mormon is not ancient; and that it came through the dictation of Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith's usage from around the time of the Book of Mormon is also compared. Finding examples of Joseph Smith's early usage, however, is a complicated matter. For the purposes of these studies, Stanford Carmack's collection of early Joseph Smith documents (available through WordCruncher[2]) are used.[3] These consist of ten early letters (from October 1829 to January 1833) and his 1832 history; they are documents that were written around the same time as the Book of Mormon and provide enough material to be

2. "WordCruncher: Search, Study and Analyze," v.7.1.107 (Digital Humanities, Brigham Young University, 1991–2022), Windows 10, app by Jason Dzubak, James Rosenvall, and Monte Shelley, https://wordcruncher.com.

3. See the WordCruncher collection "Joseph Smith: Early Writings," compiled by Stanford Carmack, in the WordCruncher Bookstore, https://wordcruncher. com/library. This collection has documents taken from the Joseph Smiith Papers website (https://www.josephsmithpapers.org), with some modifications in spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing. The documents are: Letter to Oliver Cowdery, 22 October 1829; Letter to the Church in Colesville, 2 December 1830; Letter to Martin Harris, 22 February 1831; Letter to Hyrum Smith, 3–4 March 1831; Letter to Emma Smith, 6 June 1832; Letter to William W. Phelps, 31 July 1832; Letter to Emma Smith, 13 October 1832; Letter to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832; Letter to Noah C. Saxton, 4 January 1833; Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833; and History, circa Summer 1832.

linguistically useful. Students of Joseph Smith have noted stylistic changes in his usage over time (indeed an example of these changes will be documented later in this article), and so it is important to narrow the scope of Joseph Smith's writings used to the time period when the Book of Mormon was dictated.

4. The Doctrine and Covenants presents a special case. Because the bulk of the Doctrine and Covenants dates early (88 of the sections were received by the end of 1832), it could, in theory, significantly expand the corpus of early material to compare to the Book of Mormon. The Doctrine and Covenants is excluded from consideration in this study for two reasons. The first, and most important, is that authorship of the Doctrine and Covenants is disputed similarly to the way the authorship of the Book of Mormon is disputed. Views of Doctrine and Covenants authorship may be simplified into three general camps: (i) those who believe that the Doctrine and Covenants represent the actual words of the Lord as He spoke them; (ii) those who believe that the Doctrine and Covenants represent the thoughts of the Lord in the phrasing of Joseph Smith; and (iii) those who believe that Joseph Smith is writing the Doctrine and Covenants and pretending that it is God talking.

The first two opinions are both held by faithful members of the Church; the last opinion is generally held by those who are not members of the Church. For those who hold the first opinion, including the Doctrine and Covenants in the corpus of Joseph Smith's early writings is wildly inappropriate since the words are believed to not be his. Rather than attempting to settle the issue in this case, it is better to bracket the issue by removing the corpus from consideration and limiting our explorations to material that is generally agreed to be either written or dictated by Joseph Smith.

The second reason to exclude the Doctrine and Covenants is that it has been heavily edited. As anyone who has looked at the early manuscripts of the Doctrine and Covenants knows, before it was published, many different hands edited

the dictated text in the manuscripts.[4] This editing tended to expunge archaic features in the text (such as changing *thou* to *you*), although in an inconsistent fashion. The result is a linguistically mixed text that is unusable for analysis as published. Furthermore, while the editing appears in different hands, we do not know whether the editing is dictated by Joseph Smith and recorded in the hands of a scribe or editorial work by the scribe. Assumption of the former would mean that the published text would more likely conform to Joseph Smith's usage, but assumption of the latter would mean that the published text is corrupted away from what might be presumed to be Joseph Smith's usage. Either of these considerations (authorship or editing) dictates against using the Doctrine and Covenants to furnish examples of Joseph Smith's early usage. Those who wish to use the Doctrine and Covenants as reflecting Joseph Smith's early usage have a great amount of basic linguistic work to demonstrate that it is before they can do so.

Individual items of analysis may require appropriate adjustments to the methodology to handle special cases.

Examples of Book of Mormon Usage

Among the various examples of verbal punctuation in the Book of Mormon is the term *nevertheless,* which term occurs 177 times in the Book of Mormon. One of these usages, in 3 Nephi 19:26, is arguably incorrectly divided and should be the archaic expression *never the less,* meaning "not in any way less" or "by no means less."[5] The function of the term *nevertheless* in the Book of Mormon is easy to explain. It functions as an adversative that serves to draw a distinction between what comes before and what comes after, where the contrast between what precedes and what follows is so stark that nothing that comes before would prepare the reader for what follows.

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4. See *The Joseph Smith Papers—Revelations and Translations,* vol. 1, *Manuscript Revelation Books* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2010).

5. Royal Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Part Three: The Nature of the Original Language* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2018), 380–81; Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part Six: 3 Nephi 19–Moroni 10, Addenda* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2009), 3448–49.

The first example that occurs in the Book of Mormon illustrates this usage:

> … having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, *nevertheless*, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days. (1 Nephi 1:1)

Saying that one had seen many afflictions would not necessarily lead one to conclude that one was highly favored of the Lord. Normally in the ancient world one would think that someone who is highly favored of a god would see fewer afflictions than one who is not. Nephi provides an explanation in that the afflictions took place "in the course of my days," whereas the favor of the Lord occurred "in all my days." In other words, the afflictions were sporadic while the favor was constant.

This usage is paralleled later in the text when Lehi tells his son, Jacob,

> And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren. *Nevertheless*, Jacob, my firstborn in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain. (2 Nephi 2:1–2)

The term *nevertheless* can also structure the narrative, as it does in the so-called Psalm of Nephi:

> Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.
>
> *Nevertheless*, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me. And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; *nevertheless*, I know in whom I have trusted. My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep. (2 Nephi 4:16–20)

The text begins on a positive note that continues until the first *nevertheless* appears. It then changes to a negative mood until the second *nevertheless*. After that, it finishes in a hopeful mood. The term

nevertheless divides the text into three parts and marks the transition between the three sections.

The contrast can be used in something as mundane as a list:

> Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; *nevertheless*, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites. (Jacob 1:13)

Here Jacob notes that although for convenience he was going to combine the various groups into two categories, there were properly seven distinct groups related to lineage.

> 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. (Jarom 1:3)

One would expect that God would not extend his mercy to a people who was described as so stiff-necked as the Nephites were in the time of Jarom. He notes that contrary to expectations, God was still merciful to them and did not give them what they deserved. This may not have always been the case — as the examples of Ammonihah, the destruction at the time of the crucifixion, and the final days of Nephite civilization illustrate — but it clearly was here. In fact, the next usage in Omni demonstrates a counterexample:

> Wherefore, the Lord did visit them in great judgment; *nevertheless*, he did spare the righteous that they should not perish, but did deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. (Omni 1:7)

The expectation is that when the Lord visited the Nephites in judgment, all the Nephites would have been destroyed. Contrary to that expectation, the righteous portion were spared.

> And now Limhi was desirous that his father should not be destroyed; *nevertheless*, Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities of his father, he himself being a just man. (Mosiah 19:17)

One would expect that since Limhi wanted his father to live, he either did not realize that his father was wicked or that he himself was wicked like his father. The situation was actually contrary to those expectations.

> And it came to pass that they took him; and his name was Nehor; and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti, and there he was caused, or rather did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth, that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death. *Nevertheless*, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land. (Alma 1:15–16)

If the reader thought that the death of Nehor would have put an end to the problem of priestcraft, then the text hastens to assure the reader that that expectation will not be met, and this is marked by the use of the term *nevertheless*.

> And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, *nevertheless* the people who went forth became exceedingly expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell. (Helaman 3:7)

The societal expectation was that houses were built of lumber, yet that group had little lumber available. (This indicates that the geographic region in which most of the Book of Mormon took place had an abundance of trees.) One would expect that this would prove difficult for people to find housing and that they might be reduced to tents. The use of *nevertheless* explains why this expectation was incorrect.

> … they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; *nevertheless*, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn. (3 Nephi 11:3)

One expects that a small voice that was neither loud nor harsh would have little impact on a crowd conversing one with another. Contrary to that expectation, the voice was piercing and caused the multitude to quake and had a profound impact on them.

> Therefore they did exercise power and authority over the disciples of Jesus who did tarry with them, and they did cast them into prison; but by the power of the word of God, which was in them, the prisons were rent in twain, and they went forth doing mighty miracles among them. *Nevertheless*, and

> notwithstanding all these miracles, the people did harden their hearts, and did seek to kill them, even as the Jews at Jerusalem sought to kill Jesus, according to his word. (4 Nephi 1:30–31)

One expects that the three Nephites exercising miracles and rending prisons might have been treated the way Alma and Amulek had been (Alma 14:28–15:1), or that Nephi and Lehi had been (Helaman 5:49–51). Such, however, was not the case. Instead, the people tried to kill them, and the use of *nevertheless* signals that contrast.

> … they did curse God, and wish to die. *Nevertheless* they would struggle with the sword for their lives. (Mormon 2:14)

One might expect that someone who wished to die would not bother to fight but would just surrender to death. The situation as Nephite civilization was destroyed was not according to what the reader might be led to expect.

> For behold, ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. *Nevertheless*, I will bring you up again out of the depths of the sea. (Ether 2:24)

If one is told that mountain waves will be covering one, the expectation is that one would drown. The term *nevertheless* reassures that the Lord supported the Jaredites in their voyage.

Moroni does not use the term *nevertheless* in his own record (he does use it in Mormon 8:12). He is not drawing contrasts or highlighting ironies in the historical situation, because he is not dealing with historical situations other than a brief note on his own situation (Moroni 1:1–3).

These examples show that the term *nevertheless* is used in the Book of Mormon to show that matters were not as the text previously described might lead one to expect to be the case. Although it is used to draw contrasts on a smaller narrative scale, it can also be used to structure larger units of text.

Hebrew and Egyptian Antecedents

Finding a Hebrew or Egyptian antecedent of the term *nevertheless* is not as clear-cut as other examples of verbal punctuation. The term *nevertheless* appears only once in Isaiah portions of the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 19:1 = Isaiah 8:23). Here it translates the Hebrew term *kî*. The Hebrew term *kî*, however, has a wide variety of usage. An adversative is

just one of the possibilities.[6] It can also introduce an object clause,[7] or direct narration,[8] or be causal,[9] conditional,[10] asseverative,[11] temporal,[12] or consecutive.[13]

Hebrew *kî* has cognates in other Semitic languages, but those cognates do not necessarily have the same functions as Hebrew *kî*. We do, however, see some of the same functions in Ugaritic,[14] Akkadian,[15] and early Aramaic.[16] Old and Middle Egyptian seem to have had no adversative particles except *swt*.[17] Though Late Egyptian had two (*ḫr* and *ḫr-iw*),[18] they are not used that way in Egyptian of the Third Intermediate Period[19] or Demotic.[20] Coptic borrowed its adversative particles from Greek.[21]

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6. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 500 §163.

7. Ibid., 491 §157b.

8. Ibid., 491 §157b.

9. Ibid., 492 §158b.

10. Ibid., 497 §159aa-bb.

11. Ibid., 498 §159ee.

12. Ibid., 502 §164d.

13. Ibid., 318 §107u, 505 §166b.

14. Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Leiden, NLD: E. J. Brill, 2015), 417–19; Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 59.

15. CAD K 316–20.

16. Rainer Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Inschriften des 10.-8. Jh. v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Franz Steiner, 1969), 61, 63.

17. Elmar Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1964), 421; Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 174–89; James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 213–21.

18. These are not listed in Jaroslav Černý, Sarah Israelit Groll and Christopher Eyre, *A Late Egyptian Grammar* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984), 142–53.

19. Karl Jansen-Winkeln, *Spätmittleägyptische Grammatik der Texte der 3. Zwischenzeit* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 1996), 206–17. Jansen-Winkeln does list *swt* as adversative (p. 216), but it is only attested once.

20. See Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Demotische Grammatik* (Heidelberg, DEU: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), 65–67, 184–92. Note that Spiegelberg's adversative *iiry* (p. 192) has been reanalyzed as a second tense converter.

21. Walter C. Till, *Koptische Grammatik* (Leipzig, DEU: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1978), 186; Bentley Layton, *A Coptic Grammar* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 2000), 180.

	Hebrew	Ugaritic	Akkadian	Aramaic
Direct Narration	kî	k	kî	
Causal	kî	k	kî	ky
Conditional	kî	k	kî	
Adversative	kî	k		
Asserative	kî	k		
Temporal	kî	k	kî	
Consecutive	kî	k		kh

These various uses of *kî* mean that it is not always translated with the same word or words in English. Thus, in the book of Isaiah in the King James Version, *kî* is translated in the following ways:

"for" (causal)	219 (65.6%)
"that" (object clause/direct narration)	36 (10.8%)
"because" (causal)	25 (7.5%)
"when" (temporal)	20 (6.0%)
"but" (adversative)	16 (4.8%)
"surely" (asserative)	3 (0.9%)
"forasmuch" (causal)	2 (0.6%)
"though" (adversative)	2 (0.6%)
"yea" (asserative)	2 (0.6%)
(not translated) (direct narration)	2 (0.6%)
"doubtless" (asserative)	1 (0.3%)
"even" (asserative)	1 (0.3%)
"if" (conditional)	1 (0.3%)
"neither" (adversative)	1 (0.3%)
"nevertheless" (adversative)	1 (0.3%)
"therefore" (consecutive)	1 (0.3%)
"yet" (adversative)	1 (0.3%)

There are seventeen different ways in which the King James translators translated *kî* in Isaiah. One of those is *nevertheless*. There are also other Hebrew expressions that the King James translators translated by *nevertheless*, including ʾak (Leviticus 11:4, 36), ʾepes kî (Numbers 13:28), and wa- (Numbers 14:44), or û- (Exodus 32:34). Good translations do not necessarily have a one-to-one correspondence between words in the source language and words in the target language. The use of *nevertheless* would seem to be an artifact of the translation.

In the Book of Mormon, we have the following adversatives used:

but	993 times (64.0%)
neither	185 times (11.9%)

nevertheless	177 times (11.4%)
nor	143 times (9.2%)
yet	29 times (1.9%)
though	21 times (1.4%)
although	3 times (0.2%)
howbeit	1 time (0.1%)[22]
however	0 times (0%)

Thus, an examination of Hebrew usage shows that while the term *nevertheless* may be a translation of a particular ancient term, that ancient term might be translated in other ways within the Book of Mormon text and thus the usage of *nevertheless* within the Book of Mormon is an artifact of the translation into English.

Joseph Smith's Usage

Some claim that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon and others claim that he translated it into his own language,[23] so it is worth looking at the language of Joseph Smith's usage. If we look at Joseph Smith's usage from 1829 to 1832, we find the following adversatives used:

but	96 times (91.4%)
neither	6 times (5.7%)
although	1 time (1.0%)
nevertheless	1 time (1.0%)
nor	1 time (1.0%)
howbeit	0 times (0%)
however	0 times (0%)
though	0 times (0%)
yet	0 times (0%)

In his personal writings around the time the Book of Mormon was dictated, Joseph Smith does not use the variety of adversatives used in the Book of Mormon.

The one time that Joseph Smith uses *nevertheless* is in his 1832 History:

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22. For usage of the phrase *how be it* in the Book of Mormon, see the discussion in Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Part Three: The Nature of the Original Language*, 365–67.

23. Grant Hardy, "Ancient History and Modern Commandments: The Book of Mormon in Comparison with Joseph Smith's Other Revelations," in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020), 209.

> … for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the hevnly vision *nevertheless* I pondered these things in my heart[24]

Unlike the Book of Mormon, the text following the use of *nevertheless* does not appear to be contrary to the expectations of the text before. Whether or not others believed him would seem to have no bearing on whether Joseph Smith pondered the events. Joseph Smith does not seem to use *nevertheless* the way it is used in the Book of Mormon.

Compare this use to Joseph Smith's later 1835–1836 journal:

but	144 times (62.1%)
nor	27 times (11.6%)
yet	21 times (9.1%)
although	14 times (6.0%)
however	10 times (4.3%)
neither	7 times (3.0%)
nevertheless	5 times (2.2%)
though	4 times (1.7%)
howbeit	0 times (0%)

The greatest change in Joseph Smith's frequency of usage between the two corpora is in the use of *nor*, *yet*, and *however*. In both the Book of Mormon and in Joseph Smith's writings at the time, *however* was not used. In the use of *nor*, Joseph Smith's 1835 frequency of usage is much more similar to that of the Book of Mormon than it is in his own writings at the time the Book of Mormon was written. Joseph Smith uses *yet* much more frequently in 1835 than he does when the Book of Mormon was written or than it is in the Book of Mormon.

In all of Joseph Smith's writings, the term *nevertheless* is used with much less frequency than it is in the Book of Mormon. When he does use it, he uses it in a way that differs from that of the Book of Mormon.

Conclusion

The term *nevertheless* is used in the Book of Mormon to draw a stark contrast between the text before and the text after. It is therefore used to structure the text, at least on the small scale. The use of the term *nevertheless* in the Book of Mormon does not have clear ties to antiquity

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24. Joseph Smith, "History 1832, p. 2," in *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2012), 13, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/3.

and may be a creation of the translation process. It is used distinctively in the Book of Mormon, and this is in contrast to Joseph Smith's usage in his own writings.

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