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**Title** Editor's Introduction: Of Implications

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**Abstract** Introduction to the current issue, including editor's picks. Peterson discusses brief items having to do with the appearance of the phrase *and it came to pass* in books of scripture and with the "newspaper" handed out at the dedication of the Bountiful Temple that discusses doctrines Mormons must believe if they are to be deemed Christian.

## Editor's Introduction: Of Implications

Daniel C. Peterson

It is the relentless quest of the present *Review* to recommend to its readers good books on the Book of Mormon and related subjects, and to critique and warn them against bad books.<sup>1</sup> However, in the wide reading that we are obliged to do in the course of this quest, we occasionally run across interesting items that, being neither books nor of comparable length, fall outside the scope of the *Review*. Two such items, newspaper articles (of a sort), have recently been on my mind. In the spirit of service, therefore, I shall briefly summarize these two important pieces—pieces which, in my opinion, bear incalculable import not only for Mormonism but for the world at large.

In a very recent article, *The Evangel*, an anti-Mormon tabloid published in Marlow, Oklahoma, notes that the phrase *and it came to pass* occurs 1,297 times in the Book of Mormon, but only 65 times in the comparably sized King James New Testament. Even the very brief Pearl of Great Price, *The Evangel* observes, features the phrase 54 times. The clear implication is that “the author of the Bible,” whoever he might be, was very sparing with his use of *it came to pass* when compared with “the author” of two of the other Latter-day Saint sacred texts. “It would appear,” *The Evangel* concludes, “that the *Book of Mormon* and the *Pearl of Great Price* had the same author, and that this was not the author of the Bible. . . . The distinctively LDS scriptures bear the impress of one author, and the Bible shows evidence of another author entirely. This being the case, if the Bible is genuine Scripture, the other Standard Works cannot be.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See “Editor’s Picks,” below.

<sup>2</sup> Robert McKay, “‘It Came to Pass,’ ” *The Evangel* 42/1 (Winter 1995): 3. *The Evangel* is the flagship journal of Utah Missions, Inc., the Oklahoma-based anti-Mormon arm of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Home Missions Board. All quotations in this section come from Mr. McKay’s article; the idiosyncratic emphasis and capitalization and the ampersand in the title of the Doctrine and Covenants are his.

But the statisticians in Marlow have not carried their promising analysis far enough. *The Evangel* itself points out that "The Doctrine & Covenants doesn't use 'it came to pass' so frequently [as the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price do], only presenting the phrase five times." Wouldn't it therefore be logical to conclude, on the basis of *The Evangel's* own method of authorship verification, that, whatever may be the case with regard to the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price, the author of the Doctrine and Covenants seems to be the same as that of the Bible? "This being the case," we might reason, "if the Bible is genuine scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants must also be." A highly significant conclusion, for which we should be grateful to our friends at *The Evangel*.

There is, moreover, further useful information to be derived from *The Evangel's* statistical method—information that may force shocking changes to the traditional Protestant canon of scripture.

For, of course, there is no single "author of the Bible." As its very name implies—derived as it is from the Greek *ta biblia*, "the books"—the Bible is actually a library of different works in different genres, written by numerous authors at widely varying times. And the phrase *it came to pass*, with its variants, is very unevenly distributed within the King James Version. (For reasons of space and time, we shall confine ourselves to a survey of the New Testament.) *It came to pass* does not occur at all, for instance, in the books of 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Phillipians, and Colossians, nor in the epistles of 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. These New Testament books seem, thus, to have a pretty good chance of surviving into *The Evangel's* scientifically revised Protestant canon. Indeed, in the last 111 chapters of the King James New Testament, the phrase "it came to pass" occurs only twice, for a gratifying and obviously divine average of only 0.018 occurrences per chapter. But what, by contrast, are we to make of the gospel of Luke, where the phrase can be found 48 times in a mere 24 chapters?<sup>3</sup> (That yields, obviously, a neat two occur-

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3 The other three gospels fare somewhat better—John does quite well, with a mere three occurrences of the damning phrase scattered over twenty-one chapters; Matthew has twenty-eight chapters and seven occurrences of the fateful words; Mark, rather ominously, has seven specimens in only 16 chapters. Acts has eighteen instances in its twenty-eight chapters.



rences per chapter—over one hundred and eleven [111] times the frequency we have just discovered in the latter part of the New Testament!) “It would appear,” we might therefore conclude on the basis of *The Evangel*’s method, “that the author of the gospel of Luke and the Book of Mormon was not the author of the Doctrine and Covenants and the latter portion of the New Testament. . . . This being the case, if Philemon and Titus are genuine scripture, the gospel of Luke cannot be.” On the other hand, we may now have objective proof that the same person who wrote the Doctrine and Covenants also wrote the epistles of Paul,<sup>4</sup> a proposition that will rock the discipline of biblical studies to its very foundations.

Manifestly, some of the deepest, most radical thinking now being done anywhere on religious topics is to be found among fundamentalist anti-Mormons. (Although, admittedly, for reasons that remain unclear, they appear unwilling to make their stunning conclusions fully explicit.) But the implications of their revolutionary and creative speculation extend well beyond the merely religious sphere, as the next example demonstrates beyond any possibility of doubt:

In the “newspaper” that anti-Mormons passed out at the Bountiful Temple open house, there appeared an article entitled “If Mormonism Is Christian . . .”<sup>5</sup> “If Mormons are Christians as many claim to be,” contends the article, “then there are certain doctrines that Christians clearly must teach.” This is true enough. Even under the rules of traditional logic, a species must share certain attributes with other members of its genus. Yet traditional logic, since the ancient Greeks, has always held that the species within a genus, the sets within a class, can and indeed

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One wants to know precisely where the dividing line is to be drawn between scriptural and nonscriptural frequencies.

<sup>4</sup> Most will no doubt identify Shakespeare as the author, while a vocal minority will insist on the Earl of Oxford. At least we can rule out Solomon Spaulding.

<sup>5</sup> Coincidentally, this article too was written by Robert McKay. It has proven to be an exceptionally popular piece of literature among fundamentalist anti-Mormons, having also appeared in materials distributed at the open houses of the temples in San Diego and Orlando. Its original incarnation seems to have been as Robert McKay, “If Mormons are Christians,” *The Evangel* (May–June 1992): 1. Mr. McKay is described in the Bountiful handout as “a researcher and associate editor at Utah Missions, headquartered in Marlow, OK.”

must have characteristics peculiar to themselves, characteristics which they do not share with other members of the genus or class. Despite the fact, for instance, that blue whales are mammals and live in the ocean, skunks need not do the same in order also to be considered mammals. And blue whales need not frighten off enemies with disgusting odors in order to be considered mammals merely because one other type of mammal, the skunk, does precisely that. There are, yes, certain characteristics that they must share if they are both to be classified as mammals (characteristics lacked by, say, alligators), but they are free, beyond that, to be dramatically different. However, this is not allowed by the Bountiful article. For there then follows a list of nine uniquely Latter-day Saint beliefs, including the doctrines of divine anthropomorphism and eternal progression, the necessity of temple ordinances, and the scriptural status of the Book of Mormon.<sup>6</sup> "I could go on," declares the article's author, "but I trust my point is made. Christians do not believe the items listed above! Yet all of these are part and parcel of Mormonism. Since Mormonism teaches doctrines not accepted by biblical Christianity [sic], it is clear that Mormonism is not Christian."

In other words, certain fundamentalist anti-Mormons, stepping forward in their previously unsuspected role as avant-garde philosophers, have now collapsed the difference between genus and species, thereby overturning a logical principle that has been held and taught from at least the days of Aristotle: Since both species and genus (or set and subset) must share certain characteristics, these cutting-edge thinkers now reveal, species and genus must share all characteristics.<sup>7</sup>

The implications of this revolutionary logical discovery are innumerable. On the principle that any proper interpretation or instantiation of a valid logical form is itself valid, we can extend the Bountiful Formula to countless new subjects. In the following two reapplications of the argument—the first treating a

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<sup>6</sup> The list is not precisely accurate, and some of the items in it were obviously chosen more for their shock value than for their representativeness.

<sup>7</sup> At least one stubborn defender of the logical *status quo* has vainly attempted—first in a letter dated 12 September 1992, and then during a 4 December 1994 radio-broadcast telephone conversation ("Religion on the Line," 8:00–10:00 P.M., KTKK 630 AM, Salt Lake City)—to persuade the article's author that the traditional distinction between genus and species ought to be retained.

religious topic, the second a secular one—I shall attempt to illustrate the radical insights this new form of logic now makes potentially available to humanity:

If Catholics are Christians, as many claim to be, then there are certain doctrines that Christians clearly must teach. For Catholics teach these doctrines, and, being Christians, would not teach them if they were not Christian doctrines. If Catholics are Christians, then Christians must believe:

- \* That the bishop of Rome, the pope, is the head of the Church and, properly, the head of all Christendom.

- \* That the pope is infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*.

- \* That priests should not marry.

- \* That members of the Church should regularly confess their sins to priests.

- \* That members of the Church should pray the rosary.

- \* That members of the Church should attend mass regularly, wherein the wine and the wafer become, in a mysterious way, the blood and body of Christ.

- \* That the saints can intercede with God.

- \* That Mary was assumed bodily into heaven.

- \* That tradition is an important source of Christian doctrine and practice alongside the Bible.

I could go on, but I trust that my point is made. Christians [e.g., Pentecostals and Quakers] do *not* believe these things. Yet all these are part and parcel of Catholicism. Since Catholics believe things that Christians do not believe, it is clear that Catholics are not Christians.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, logicians of the pedestrian and unimaginative type are likely to respond that the claim that “Christians” do not believe what Catholics believe merely smuggles into the premises of the argument the very conclusion that the argument supposedly seeks to discover—namely, that “Christians” and Catholics constitute two distinct, nonintersecting sets, with no

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<sup>8</sup> With the exception of slight punctuation improvements and the obvious alteration of subject matter, both of my paraphrases carefully follow the wording of the original 1992 *Evangel* article.



members in common. They will declare that the argument is therefore circular and invalid. (Ordinary logicians are so predictable!) They will also say—see if they don't!—that the following argument is invalid because circular:

If American desert tortoises are reptiles, then there are certain attributes that reptiles clearly must possess. For tortoises possess these attributes, and, being reptiles, would not possess them if they were not reptile attributes. If tortoises are reptiles, then reptiles must have:

- \* Hard shells.
- \* Extraordinarily slow walking speed.
- \* A passion for lettuce and cantaloupe.
- \* Tiny, stubby little tails.
- \* A length of, at most, about eighteen inches.
- \* A tendency to hibernate for several months of each year.
- \* Thick, stumpy legs with dull claws on them.
- \* Great enthusiasm for digging holes.
- \* A preference for desert habitats.

I could go on, but I trust that my point is made. Reptiles [e.g., crocodiles and cobras] do *not* have these attributes. Yet all these are part and parcel of being a tortoise. Since tortoises have attributes that reptiles do not have, it is clear that tortoises are not reptiles.

There is, however, so much to be gained by persistent use of the Bountiful Formula! One can, simply by using this astonishing logical instrument, generate earth-shattering discoveries all day long. One might prove, for instance, that palm trees are not plants, that Republicans are not politicians, that English is not a language, that automobiles are not machines, or (most promising of all) that Protestant fundamentalists are not human. A whole new world lies before us.

Unfortunately, busied with our own stewardships and, perhaps, equipped only with more commonplace minds, we shall have to depend upon our anti-Mormon friends for further refinement of these amazing discoveries. In the meantime, a few words about the present issue of the *Review*:

\* Camille Williams and Marvin Folsom offer somewhat differing opinions on modern-English versions of the Book of Mormon. In order to help our readers place in perspective the



issues they raise, we preface to the Williams and Folsom reviews a highly relevant statement from the First Presidency, whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

I would also like to express my own opinion on two issues suggested by these reviews. First, I am not certain that the “message” of scripture is entirely reducible to propositions that can be abstracted from its revealed language. Its complexity may well be part of its message, just as its parables are richer than any simplistic moral platitudes that one can deduce from them. This is one of the reasons that the scriptures are infinitely rereadable. Second, the fact that errors occur during the process of translating the scriptures into foreign languages even when this is done of necessity and under Church supervision does not seem to refute the claim that scriptures should not be translated, unnecessarily and without Church supervision, into more colloquial versions of their own language. Indeed, it could well be taken to argue for precisely the opposite position.

\* The present issue contains two substantial reviews of items that were addressed already in *Review* 6/1. There will no doubt be some who, for whatever reasons, will see this as evidence of our obsession or our desperation. Not so. Neither piece was originally commissioned by the *Review*; both were already under way when they came to my attention. I found them interesting and opted to publish them. I reserve the right to do so again in the future, on these or other topics.

\* The *Review* has itself developed into a rather lengthy book. Many of its essays, I hope, will be of considerable interest, but they cannot conveniently be used as guides by those who simply want to know what is best in recent publishing on the Book of Mormon and related subjects. I have therefore elected to append a short list, directly to this “Introduction,” of the “Editor’s Picks” from the present issue of the *Review*. I do this (somewhat subjectively, it is true) on the basis of my own prepublication acquaintance with the reviews and generally, though not always, with the books themselves.

I am grateful to those who have helped in the production of this issue of the *Review*. Brent Hall assisted in a number of ways, and Dr. Shirley S. Ricks played her customary indispensable role in preparing the volume for publication. Alison Coutts, Dr. Louis C. Midgley, and Dr. Melvin J. Thorne read and commented upon a number of the individual reviews (but should not be held accountable for my final editorial decisions).

Janet Hovorka and Rebecca Ricks created the indexes, which we hope will prove to be useful tools for students of the Book of Mormon and allied subjects. Most of all, I thank the reviewers, without whom we would have had nothing to edit, index, or publish.

### Editor's Picks

- \*\*\*\* Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely
- \*\*\* Enthusiastically recommended
- \*\* Warmly recommended
- \* Recommended

Warren P. Aston and Michaela Knoth Aston. *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994. A brief and rather personal summary of the authors' extremely important research into the Arabian geography of 1 Nephi. (More scholarly treatments are to be found in the Astons' papers, distributed by FARMS.) \*\*\*

Eugene R. Fingerhut. *Explorers of Pre-Columbian America?: The Diffusionist-Inventionist Controversy*. Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1994. A non-Latter-day Saint account of the ongoing debate, of interest to fairly serious students. \*

Ronald H. Fritze. *Legend and Lore of the Americas before 1492: An Encyclopedia of Visitors, Explorers, and Immigrants*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1993. An interesting collection of entries on theories and legends of transoceanic colonization, etc., suited probably to more committed readers in Book of Mormon studies. Not limited to the Book of Mormon, on which its non-LDS author takes a mildly skeptical position. Fun for browsing. \*\*

H. Clay Gorton. *The Legacy of the Brass Plates of Laban: A Comparison of Biblical and Book of Mormon Isaiah Texts*. Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1994. An examination of all of the Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon, accompanied by the author's proposed explanation for their variations from the King James Version. \*\*

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. *The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young Univer-

sity, 1992. A mixed collection of articles drawn from a symposium held at Brigham Young University under the auspices of Religious Education. \*