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Commentary — From the Margins

Peer Review

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ... Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? (Heb 1:1–2, 2:1–3)

If every transgression or act of disobedience “received a just retribution,” how shall endtime disciples of Christ Jesus escape condemnation once they are filled with the Holy Spirit and thereby liberated from indwelling sin and death? Does grace extend past when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:30) or disrobed or made naked before the Father? Does grace extend past the second Passover liberation of Israel, now a nation circumcised of hearts? And what does the angel mean when he said, “He shall speak words against the Most High, / and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, / and shall think to change the times and the law; / and they shall be given into his hand / for a time, times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25)? Is it saints that are given into the hand of the little horn, or is times and the law? Or are both saints and times and the law given into the hand of the little horn, the power at work in the man of perdition?

If the message declared by angels [messengers of God] proved reliable, what is this message if not, If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live (Deut 30:16); for every transgression of the commandments is sin (1 John 3:4), the wages for which is death (Rom 6:23).

What about the warning that “we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away”? Has the Christian Church drifted away from Christ Jesus so far that the Most High will deliver the saints into the hand of Satan for the destruction of the flesh as Paul commanded the saints at Corinth to deliver the man who was with his father’s wife into the hand of Satan (1 Cor 5:5)? Is this delivery of the saints into the hand of the man of perdition not what the angel told the prophet Daniel? It is, isn’t it?

Yes, the Most High will deliver Israel into the hand of the lawless one for 1260 days [a time, times, and half a time] beginning when the Son of Man is revealed or made spiritually

naked by the garment of Christ Jesus' righteousness being stripped away. But this is not the message taught by Christian scholars; this is not a message that will pass peer review.

1.

Within a field of study, the process of "peer review" has developed to prevent dissemination of personal views, unacceptable interpretations, and ideas outside of proscribed perimeters. This process of refereeing ideas, research, and scholarship encourages authors to toe the party line, for to tread beyond what a community of experts already believes subjects the author to rejection within his or her discipline. And practically speaking, to tread much beyond what is already believed ends careers. Thus, peer review affects a scholar's financial well-being to such an extent that few are willing to venture into uncharted currents; for publications that have not undergone peer review are generally considered unreliable. Publication in such journals or magazines can harm a scholar's reputation.

In the 1st-Century CE, how would Paul's epistles have fared under peer review?

In an epistle that peer reviewed scholarship doubts that Paul wrote, the author of the epistle (identified as Paul in the epistle's first sentence) says, "You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among them are Phygelus and Hermogenes" (2 Tim 1:15). The author of this epistle says elsewhere,

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. ... At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. (2 Tim 4:9–11, 16–17)

In Paul's better accepted epistle to the Philippians, he writes,

"Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things" (3:17–19).

It is the last clause in the above citation that should concern all biblical scholars: with minds set on earthly things. Is not peer review an earthly thing? Are biblical scholars in academia born-of-spirit disciples of Christ Jesus? Possibly, but usually not. In fact, it is rare to find a tenured faculty member in any major university other than Brigham Young University (BYU) that truly believes the biblical narrative is factual—and even at BYU, scholars that

believe the biblical narrative is factual do not believe the narrative itself. Thus, to submit a piece of research (writing) to peer review is to place one's work into an earthen tomb where it will lie dead until Christ Jesus' return.

To saints at Corinth Paul writes, "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their craftiness,' and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile'" (3:18–20). Elsewhere he writes,

For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (4:9–13)

If Paul wrote how he was really received, his epistles would have been rejected in the 20th or 21st Century peer review process as being unreliable and inflammatory; for the Jews throughout Asia Minor and in Judea sought his life for what he allegedly taught. They were his peer reviewers, and they didn't like any part of the gospel Paul had received via revelation.

Maybe if Paul had toned down his claim of receiving the gospel he preached by revelation rather than from other men he would have been better accepted, suppose? After all, peer review places scholarship within the context of what other men (and women) have done. To produce a radical interpretation that negates all previous scholarship is to invite ostracism ... a radical interpretation is outside of every context of previous work, but if the visions of Daniel were sealed and kept secret until the time of the end, the unsealed visions (or unsealing of the visions) will be outside of the context of previous work.

Human knowledge tended to build slowly, one course of brickwork laid atop a previous course, until the late 20th-Century (some will argue for the late 19th-Century). The angel bringing the prophet Daniel knowledge of what was inscribed in the Book of Truth said, "But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (12:4) ... certainly knowledge has increased in the past two centuries, with the increase in knowledge exponentially expanding since the introduction of the computer.

If the words Daniel received were to be sealed until the time of the end—literally, not understandable by anyone until knowledge shall increase—the expression time of the end takes on significance; for when humankind arrives at this almost mystical moment in a time

continuum that begins with the creation of “all that’s been made” and continues until the coming of the new heavens and new earth, every previous reading of what Daniel kept secret will be negated by the seals coming off ... question, how will anyone know that the seals have been removed? Historical-grammatical exegesis, supported by peer-reviewed scholarship, will absolutely prohibit the removal of the seals; for any rereading of Scripture coming from the seals having been removed will necessarily differ in both exit strategy and assigned meanings that have no hard connection to existing scholarship. Hence, a rereading coming from the seals having been removed will NOT be valued by present biblical scholars and will, most likely, be dismissed as an amateurish intrusion into the domain of “serious scholarship.”

But when looking at the science of global climate change (i.e., global warming) peer review of journalist-written science articles is absent; for within the journalistic community, there is no credible argument to be made against carbon-based atmospheric warming even though ir-warming caused by carbon dioxide was “capped” by Beer Law (Lambert-Beers Law) in the pre-industrial age [the graph for CO₂ curves over so that ir energy is reflected back into space at approximately 4.5 ppm; thus, an increase from 280 ppm to 330 ppm will not cause atmospheric warming]. And because the journalistic community rejects out-of-hand evidence presented by a significant percent of atmospheric scientists that contend if global warming is truly occurring (and evidence for Northern Hemisphere warming has been absent for the past two years), it is being caused by something other than carbon emissions.

There is really nothing scientific about journalist-written science articles. It is papers presented by scientists themselves that are subjected to peer review ... but who does the reviewing? Scientists selected by the editors of journals? Yes, the journalist community retains control over scientific papers by choosing the scientists that will review an especially controversial paper. Thus, peer review produces a form of censorship that can end budding or even long establish careers of those who do not support the intellectual positions of journalists and editors of scholarly publications, thereby making journalists and editors, not scientists, the ultimate arbiter of knowledge.

But some of journalism’s control of knowledge has eroded through the democratization of information dissemination via the Internet. No longer can learned editors present papers about global warming without themselves being mocked by bloggers having come indoors from shoveling driveways in March ... it is hard to argue for global warming when Alaskan glaciers are again growing and Alaska had its coldest summer in 2008 in 30 years, and middle America is experiencing its coldest winter in 10 years. The evidence of the thermometer argues against global warming—and people are quick to notice that if global warming is truly occurring, it is only occurring inside editorial offices where anti-Capitalist sentiment simmers on computer screens.

Those attending a global warming summit in Washington D.C. today were delayed or unable to come due to an uncharacteristic snow storm, caused of course by global warming, an intellectual non-sequitor.

Bloggers and social networking commentators have become the new kids in the peer review paradigm; for they evaluate the journalists ... if a journalist gets something wrong, the error will be identified and spread around the world within minutes. And whether for good or ill, the world now hears and judges what everyone else says. Hence, the authority of publication no longer resides solely with editors of prestigious journals but has been given to everyone with a computer.

But bloggers are no more able to read sealed and kept secret biblical prophecies than are traditional scholars, who are better schooled in understanding the nuances of the ancient languages and placing events into a historical context, thereby well articulating the principle tenets of historical-grammatical exegesis ... if the visions of Daniel could be unsealed by historical exegesis, why were they not unsealed decades or centuries ago? How could God seal these publicly described visions and keep them sealed and secret for more than two millennia? If those things Daniel described in his visions had not happened within his lifetime or within a short while after he lived, he would have been dismissed as a false prophet. And if those events Daniel describes occur in a course of historic happenings that fulfill or satisfy the visions, how are these visions sealed and kept secret until the time of the end unless it is the apparent fulfillment that seals and keeps secret the visions?

Although one major American denomination gets around the sealed and secret nature of Daniel's visions by using "another testament of Jesus Christ" and employing the office of "prophet" to add to Scripture and then define Scripture by these additions—this is a clever strategy for which no argument exists within Scripture; the strategy that cannot be argued against, for who is to say that a revelation didn't occur as described—the vast majority of Christendom will not accept as valid any addition textual material. Thus, since unsealing what has been sealed requires the production of another text, this additional text must come from the existing text, meaning that the existing text must be reread to produce this additional text through the assignment of differing linguistic objects to the same linguistic icons.

The entirety of Paul's gospel comes from a revelation that was apparently unshared and not really understood by other apostles. Peter wrote,

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. (2 Pet 3:15–17)

If there were some things hard to understand in Paul's epistles, for whom were these things hard to understand if not for Peter?

No addition to Scripture will be accepted as legitimate even though the end of the Book of

Acts has not yet been written. But because endtime disciples received linguistic icons to which meaning must be assigned—these icons being the inscribed text of canonical Scripture—the biblical canon is not a closed text but is open. However Scripture is not open through the incorporation of additional linguistic icons but through a differing set of linguistic objects being assigned to the received icons forming Scripture, said with pedagogical redundancy.

Unsealing the long sealed and secret visions of Daniel comes by rereading these visions, employing (in this case) typological exegesis rather than historical-grammatical exegesis or precept-upon-precept exegesis: typological exegesis is an old reading strategy whose time has returned. But in rereading these visions, no context exists for this additional text; thus, it will not and actually cannot be accepted until after events described in the rereading begin to occur as foretold by the rereading.

Rereading Scripture, with the rereading producing an additional or a differing text, serves Israelites living in the time of the end as the initial delivery of the prophecy served Israel living in so-called Bible times. And as many false prophets existed in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, many false prophets will exist in the time of the end, with these “false prophets” not delivering new words of the Lord but rereading existing words, claiming things such as the whore who rides the beast (Rev chap 17) refers to women preachers ... a son of God is neither male nor female but is as the angels are. Being male or female is a matter of the flesh, or an earthly thing. Thus, the person who is concerned about a son of God residing in a female tent of flesh speaking the words of the Father lacks spiritual understanding; the person is of this world, not of God. However, the son of God residing in either a male or female tent of flesh who speaks words other than the words of the Father is not to be trusted and is to be avoided.

When the visions of Daniel are unsealed, peer review will come after the events described in the unsealed text occur; thus, peer review will come too late to prevent the great falling away when the lawless one is revealed (2 Thess 2:3) — and this is unfortunate, but the only way that faith can enter into endtime biblical prophecies. Disciples must, by faith, determine whether a person speaks for God and is thus a prophet of the Most High. And there will be endtime prophets for Jesus said, “The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward” (Matt 10:41) ... prophets are not peer reviewed, but judged by whether what they say comes true.

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