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Commentary — From the Margins

The Offspring of Truth

In an unpublished paper, John S. Robertson of BYU's Linguistics Department wrote, "We are offspring of Truth" ... Robertson also wrote, "I suppose that in the late 20th Century one could be standing on shaky metaphysical grounds in suggesting that truth is real, let alone discoverable."

Yes, a person would be standing in quicksand if the person were so brazen as to say, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37); for Jesus of Nazareth's assertion was that *truth* existed and was knowable but only through His voice. His statement excludes, though, easy discovery of *truth*.

In an era when intellectual cowardice dominates philosophical thought—in an era when adherence to a politicized morality is directly linked to employment and economic prosperity—literary criticism has become political activism, and biblical criticism as a subset to literary criticism has become the domain of theological wolves intent upon devouring as many sheep as they can and slaying the remainder of the flock. Long ago the biblically courageous were transformed into the "quiet people" through persecution and physical displacement. The many voices that are heard from within Christendom hide behind the skirts of civil authority, peeking out occasionally to support this political candidate or that one, using pulpits as crutches in *visionquests* to make this world spiritually *green*.

Robertson expressed his concern that "when some person or worse, a group of people, take a moral position—at least that bifurcating moral position which cleaves the universe into two parts: good and evil—, then they are no longer able to surrender themselves to the real purpose of inquiry, which is discovery of laws which the collective good reason of any number of other, well informed investigators cannot deny."

Question: is the purpose of Bible study *the discovery of laws which the collective good reason of any number of other, well informed investigators cannot deny*? This would be contrary to the foundational constructs of Brigham Young University, which derive from Joseph Smith's visions. How can *the collective good reason of any number of other, well informed investigators* validate these visions? Where are the bronze discs or the golden tablets? Are they like the Emperor's new clothes, "real" for as long as one believes? Smith's visions certainly cannot be validation by Hebraic Scripture, or by the Gospel of John, or by epistles of Paul—all deny the validity of the Book of Mormon. In fact all also deny the validity of conciliar Christendom. So when it comes to Scripture, being a *well-informed investigator* does not privilege a person to determine the "truth" of a revelation, the problem the Apostle Paul experienced when reasoning with the Circumcision Faction.

Revelation occurs or doesn't occur. Proof testing whether a revelation has occurred through fulfilled prophecy still doesn't determine the source of the revelation, for the spirits themselves must be tested.

Scriptural revelation coming from whatever means lays outside the domain of scientific inquiry, and scriptural revelation produces a bifurcating moral position: those who believe the revelation occurred—regardless of whether that revelation came to Paul, Mohammed, or Joseph Smith—are in the inner sanctum of knowledge [the “good” position]; whereas those who do not believe are confined to the outer court and are excluded from the presence of God. And what test exists by which *the collective good reason of any number of other, well informed investigators* can even comment intelligently upon whether revelation has occurred?

When I first read Robertson's unpublished paper in the spring of 1992—a paper that was philosophical dynamite with the fuse lit (perhaps the reason it remains unpublished)—I gained the argument I needed to refute theoretical Marxism, and I made this argument against several bipolar schema in several graduate papers. Finally, coming at midlife from the cultural margins and the economic fringe of America, I could express in the language of academia what I had observed with wrenches or gouges in hand; I could speak and for this I will owe BYU's Linguistic Department an unpayable debt [unpayable in the sense that I reject Joseph Smith's visions being of the Father and His Son]. Nevertheless, the essence of Christianity is that understanding has not been given to the sons of disobedience so that they cannot turn to God and be healed (Matt 13:15) before it is time; before the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man. Literally, Jesus' citation of the prophet Isaiah projects the truism that it is not God's intention to now give spiritual understanding to humankind or to save humanity, with the exception of the firstfruits. Revelation by its bifurcating nature introduces the concept of an early and a latter harvest of God, not the concept of an *elect* and a *damned*; for the essence of revelation is not prohibition of knowledge but the delayed delivery of this knowledge. The responsibility of the one receiving the revelation becomes the distribution of what has been received, thereby making the one who received the revelation the *helper* or *helpmate* of the one who gave the revelation—and this has tremendous theological implications for ancient Israel, a nation that did not well-disseminate the revelations Moses received but hoarded these revelations.

In a simplified expression of fact, every person receives spiritual understanding through revelation. There is no other way for a person to understand the things of God even though these things are knowable from the beginning through the things that have been made ... all spiritual understanding comes via revelation from the Father. Flesh and blood could not reveal to Peter that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, even though Peter had been with the man Jesus for three years (Matt 16:17). Jesus walking on water wasn't enough to reveal to Peter that Jesus was the Christ, not if Jesus' words are to be believed. Of course, most say that they cannot really be believed: they can be challenged on any number of points. This is the work of higher criticism, the work of *well-informed investigators*, the work of flesh and blood men and women ... modern biblical criticism seems more about proving that historically

accepted revelation did not occur than about the *discovery of laws which the collective good reason of any number of other, well informed investigators cannot deny.*

There is no direct means to proof test revelation apart from what Moses outlined in Deuteronomy:

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, "Let us go after other gods," which you have not known, "and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord [*YHWH*] your God [*Elohim*] is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [*nephesh*—mind]. ... But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he taught you rebellion against the Lord your God, *who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery*, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deut 13:1–5 emphasis added)

Under the eternal Moab covenant, the reason for observing the Sabbath is, "You shall remember you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut 5:15).

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. (Deut 16:1–3)

In addition, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of the seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. ... On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. ... All native Israelites shall dwell in booths that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (Lev 23:33, 39–40, 43)

Under the Moab covenant, an eternal covenant not ratified by blood but by a better sacrifice (*cf.* Heb 9:23; Deut chaps 29–32), the weekly Sabbath is a memorial to liberation; i.e., the liberation of Israel from Egypt, the shadow and type of the circumcised of heart nation's liberation from bondage to sin and death. The Passover, now, is the spring seven-day-observance of the Sabbath, the

representation of Israel's liberation from bondage in Egypt (this is how the Apostle John references Passover — John 19:31). Plus, dwelling in booths [i.e., circumcised of heart disciples dwelling in tents of flesh where God places His name] is for remembrance that God brought Israel out from bondage ... both Unleavened Bread and Sukkot can be linguistically described by the singular icon /Sabbath/, with the entire period when an ancient Israelite would have journeyed to Jerusalem and remained there (Deut 16:16) becoming *Sabbath*, thereby extending the *Sabbath* to approximately a three week long period at the beginning of the ancient barley harvest [the harvest of firstfruits] and at the end of the main crop wheat harvest.

The prophet—even the prophet whose prophecies come to pass—and the dreamer of dreams who does not teach Israel, now a nation circumcised of heart, to keep the Sabbath (1) weekly, (2) in the spring of the year and (3) at harvest season is not to be followed. It is not enough to prophesy and have what has been prophesied occur; it is not enough to teach Israel to keep merely the weekly Sabbath as Ellen G. White did now more than a century ago; it is not enough to teach Israel to keep all of the Sabbaths if the person teaches Israel to leave any of the ways God commanded. And anyone can use the standard Moses set forward—this standard applies to Paul as well as to Jesus and to Mohammad—to determine whether the prophet or the dreamer of dreams is of God or has been allowed to come as a test and testing of Israel. By this standard, no denomination that worships on Sunday passes; nor does any denomination not keeping Passover and Sukkot pass. This means specifically that the fellowships usually identified as “Christian” are not of God, who wasn't making up new laws and new Sabbaths during Jesus' ministry. As recorded by John, Jesus said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words” (5:46–47). So Jesus' testimony is that a person must believe Moses before the person can believe His words.

In his defense before Festus, Paul argued, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense” (Acts 25:8). And either Paul's testimony is trustworthy or it is not ... what were the accusations made against Paul? Terullas laid out Paul's offense: “For we [elders of Israel] have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him” (Acts 24:5–6). What was Paul's response? “But this I confess to you [Felix], that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written by the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man” (vv. 14–16).

When Jesus was on trial, the only agreed upon testimony against Him was that He said He was able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (Matt 26:61). This was not enough to condemn Him; however, temple officials judged Jesus worthy of death because He said, “But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of

heaven” (v. 64). That implication that He was the Messiah justified to temple officials their condemnation of Him.

The detractors or accusers of both Paul and Jesus did not charge them with teaching Israel to observe a God other than the Most High, nor charge them with violations of the Law. Their accusations against Jesus and Paul were civil in nature and not transgressions of the *Decalogue*. Their accusations were not the type made against pip-squeak sized cultmeisters who almost inevitably reveal their falseness through what they teach or practice sexually, or the type made against mid-size gurus whose ambitions reveal their falseness through their accumulation of money, and the type made against those “apostles” of greater ambition through their seizing of civil authority and power. No, the accusers of Paul were motivated by what he taught concerning circumcision of the heart—the prophet Jeremiah records, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart” (9:25–26). Natural Israel then and now, and the followers of Mohammad today comprise these peoples whom Jeremiah directly named as uncircumcised in heart. So Paul would still be condemned by those who are only physically circumcised ... the schism that separated the sect called the Nazarenes from the sects of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees developed from disputes over how the heart is circumcised. Paul said it was by faith. Moses said,

And when all of these things come upon you [Israel], the blessing and the curse, which I [*Yah*] have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and you return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your [*nephesh*—mind], then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. ... And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [mind], that you may live. (Deut 30:1–3, 6)

It takes faith to turn to God when God has delivered the nation into the hand of the Adversary for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit might be saved when judgments are revealed (1 Cor 5:5). It takes faith to return to God when in a foreign land and among foreign gods. It takes faith to believe that the Most High is more powerful than the gods of the people who took Israel captive. It doesn't take many sacrifices, many offerings of gold and silver, many prayers for deliverance. It takes faith to believe that because Israel broke covenant, God delivered Israel into the hands of butchers in a series of reoccurring holocausts. It takes more than determination to follow a person's inclination to good and spurn a person's inclination to evil. It takes more than exercising freewill to do what it is right; it takes obedience by faith, with this obedience becoming the Israelite's outward expression of his or her inner love for God.

Paul wrote, “What can we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30–32).

Only by faith will a Gentile begin worshiping the God of Israel ... and we see this today: only by faith will a Christian turn from the lawlessness of the visible Christian Church and begin to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6); begin to imitate Paul as he imitated Jesus (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17). A Christian is the reality of an Israelite circumcised in the flesh; so when a Christian in a mental landscape far from God—any of the commonly known denominations will serve as an example, for all are foreign mindsets—turns away from disobedience and returns to God, keeping the precepts of the law by faith, this person will receive a circumcised heart (Rom 2:26), for Israel is no longer a nation circumcised in the flesh but the nation circumcised of heart (Rom 2:28–29; Col 2:11). And the visible Christian Church is today farther from God than are Observant Jews, a subset of Judaism that has used its deliverance into the hands of the Adversary to return to God that it might be saved when judgments are revealed.

Mohammad was a dreamer of dreams who taught his followers to *leave the way in which the Lord Israel's God commanded Israel to walk*—although many of Mohammad's followers descended from Ishmael, Abraham's natural son from the Egyptian slave woman, Mohammad never taught Israel anything but was a rejected dreamer from the beginning. Muslims claim to be of *the Book*, but Mohammad's followers wrote a different book, one more to their liking, one more suited to making Abraham's firstborn son the heir to his promises.

Joseph Smith, however, is a different story: he has taught those who have been drawn from this world by the Father (John 6:44) to transgress the laws of God. He and those who followed after him have taught disciples to mock Christ and His sacrifice through how and when these false teachers would have disciples take the Passover sacraments. And whereas one alternate book was enough for Mohammad, Joseph Smith needed three additional books to drag disciples away from Moses.

What about Joseph Smith's claims to have seen the Father and Christ? Did He see them? He apparently saw some spiritual beings, angelic or divine ... I'm willing to concede that Joseph Smith saw either in or out of visions non-physical living creatures, just as I'm willing to concede that an ex-Adventist minister now in New Mexico with a miniscule cult following was pinned to the floor by a spiritual being. I have been pinned down by a spiritual force, an angel—and I fought it and rolled out from under it only to look up and see a red fir snag three feet in diameter and a 120 or so feet high falling directly on top of me. This snag fell across me, bounced up in the air twenty feet and fell across the top of me a second time. It was then thrown two hundred yards or more out over a canyon. The Cat skinner witnessed what happened. While I was excited, he was ashen. And he said, “You got somebody looking out for you.” I agreed: I do. I know with a certainty that cannot be conveyed to *informed investigators* that there are living entities in a conjoined realm not defined by unfurled dimensions. So I'm not one to say that Joseph Smith did not see spiritual beings. However, I will say

with absolute certainty that he did not see the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that he did not see the Most High and His Christ; that he did not see the Ancient of Days. He saw a fraud, lying spirits, and because he was not living as Moses commanded, he was unable to recognize these lying spirits for who they were. It becomes less that Joseph Smith has conned many than it is that he was conned by lying spirits, just as Mohammad was conned, and just as Christendom has been conned. It is no wonder that Observant Judaism is skeptical about Jesus being the Christ, a problem that God will address through the second Passover liberation of Israel.

If I hadn't rolled quickly and violently into the path of the falling tree, I would never have seen the snag hurled in a manner similar to me throwing sidearm a push broom handle—an unmaterialistic movement that cannot be replicated by time and chance. There would not have been a need for the angelic being to reveal its presence. But in trying to get away from whatever was holding me down after the Cat skinner yelled, "Look Out!" I apparently made an unanticipated move, a move directly into harm's way. If I hadn't moved, the snag would have fallen beside me. It would have been a close call. The Cat skinner and I would have talked about how close I came to getting killed, and we would never have known that a spiritual being was present, one apparently there to provide protection. But as it turned out, both the Cat skinner and I knew/know that I should have been dead and that another presence, invisible to eyes but with the ability to hurl a tree as a person would hurl a broom handle, was there and was looking out for me.

The irony of this is that I had grown comfortable falling timber three, four, five, six feet in diameter—I was cutting white pine for Vowel's Logging in Idaho's Bitterroot Mountains—and I had become complacent about praying daily for protection, but that morning for some reason, I felt compelled to pray for protection. I had, before cutting my first tree that morning, knelt on the dirt skid road (the job was being Cat logged) and somewhat hastily asked for the protection that I received ... in retrospect, it was the feeling that I needed to pray for protection that amazes me as much as the tree hurled out over the canyon.

Where is all of this going? In a claim I have made many times, with it most easily found in *A Philadelphia Apologetic*, chapters one and two, I say that I heard a voice tell me, "It's time to reread prophecy." I saw nothing: I was turning into the parking lot for Southeastern Illinois College, Harrisburg, where I would shortly teach two sections of Comp. My thoughts were on class prep. So the word heard took me by surprise, and the "thinginess" of the words in my mind left me really unable to hurry to class. I just sat in the pickup and tried to make sense out of what I heard. Oh, the words were clear enough, but what was going on? That I couldn't then answer.

To claim to have heard a voice makes a person subject to ridicule, justifiably so. It would have been much easier to have heard a, *Thus says the Lord*. For what does it mean to reread prophecy? Scholars and pundits have been reading and rereading biblical prophecies for centuries, certainly for the past five centuries. So what did it mean to *reread prophecy* ... and how was I to reread prophecy? I was a gunmaker, a logger, a commercial fisherman, a writer, a poet, an artist carving totemic sculpture in the Northwest Coast tradition. I was also a Believer.

Faith had not come from hearing a good argument, or from fear of what would happen, or from searching for spiritually and deep meaning in life. I was having far too much fun shooting, hunting, building guns when, in 1972, I was drafted into belief. So when in January 2002, on Thursday of the second full week, about 10:12 CST—exactly forty years to the day and to the hour after the most visible administration of the Church of God had rejected revelation—nearly thirty years after I was drafted into belief, I had no doubts that God existed, that a coexisting realm or dimension existed, that there were living entities in this coexisting realm, and that these living entities were divided, one from another through lawlessness. Faith had come from seeing many non-materialistic interventions in the flow of natural patterns.

In 2002, none of what I believed was unique even if it wasn't part of the academic community I left after a year at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, as a 16 year old math major. How I then read Scripture was not unique even if I didn't subscribe to historical exegesis. And how I would have reread prophecy would not have been unique if math, playing chess, seeing the lean of a tree in a glance, reading the seas and sea bottoms, writing poetry, carving totemic art works had not caused my innate ability to recognize faces to become a pattern-recognition "gift" [processor] that allowed me to perceive Scripture as a series of *intertextual* and *hypertextual* linguistic structures forming patterns of shadows.

After hearing that call to *reread prophecy*, then teaching those two sections of Comp, I began writing what I knew about biblical prophecy—or thought I knew. Within three hours I was leagues away from what I had been taught. It was as if blinders had been removed. I could not only "see" forward, but to each side, and what I saw was the resurrection of the now dead Body of Christ at a second Passover liberation of Israel, a nation circumcised of heart.

If a person must be born of spirit to understand the things of God (1 Cor 2:11), then these things of God cannot be discovered through *laws which the collective good reason of any number of other, well informed investigators cannot deny*. However, if these things are discernable through a recognizable reading strategy—i.e., typology and typological exegesis—then these things should be understandable even if not believed.

I was called to reread prophecy not to produce more text about the nations of this world ... Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world or from this world (John 18:36). The kingdom of God is not a kingdom like Rome or Great Britain or even the United Nations. It will be, rather, the kingdom that reigns over the mental typology of living things. It will be given to the Son of Man once and only once, with this one occasion occurring halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation (Dan 7:9–14; Rev 11:15–19). And Christ Jesus will supersede Satan as the prince of the power of the air.

The following correspondences exist:

- The first Adam is the shadow and type of the last Adam, Christ Jesus (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45).
- The first Adam becoming a physical breathing creature, a *nephesh*, when *Elohim* breathed into his nostrils (Gen 2:7) is the shadow and type of the last Adam being born by the divine breath of God [πνεῦμα

θεοῦ] when the Holy Spirit [πνεῦμα ἅγιον] descended as a dove, lit and remained on Him (Matt 3:16).

- The Garden of Eden is the shadow and type of the temple.
- The animals Adam named in the Garden form the shadow and type of the religious sects in the temple, with Pharisees being named and forever remembered as hypocrites.
- The creation of the first Eve is the shadow and type of the events between Calvary and when the glorified Jesus breathes on ten of His disciples and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit [πνεῦμα ἅγιον]” (John 20:22).
- The deep sleep that came over Adam is the shadow and type of the three days and three nights Jesus was in the Garden Tomb.
- As the serpent deceived the first Eve with his lie, “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:4), the old serpent, Satan the devil, deceived the last Eve with his lie, “Neither you nor the Church will surely die, for you have an immortal soul.”
- As the first Eve sinned when she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the last Eve sinned when she determined for herself what was sound doctrine instead of believing the writings of Moses and the words of Jesus.
- The curse of the first Eve (that she shall have pain in childbearing and that she shall desire her husband and he shall rule over her) is the shadow and type of the curse of the Church: the Tribulation is the pain of the last Eve’s childbirth, with this pain to follow childbirth rather than precede it (Isa 66:7–8).
- Paul identifies the Church as spiritual Isaac—this will make Jesus the spiritual Abraham, and Esau and Jacob types of Cain and Abel, with Jacob being the shadow and type of empowered disciples who keep the commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17).
- The physically circumcised nation of Israel becomes the shadow and type of the spiritually circumcised nation of Israel.
- Israel dwelling in houses in Egypt becomes the shadow and type of the new creature, born of spirit as a son of God, dwelling in a tent of flesh.
- The Passover liberation of Israel from physical bondage to a physical Pharaoh becomes the shadow and type of the second Passover liberation (Isa 43:3–4) of disciples from indwelling sin and death.

These correspondences continue to such a length that listing them would produce a text tedious to read. But listing them will produce a text that can be read and possibly understood by *any number of other, well informed investigators*. Therefore, the calling I received wasn’t like that of the numerous *messiahs & witnesses* for God. The calling I received can be proof tested by both Moses and by *any number of other, well informed investigators*. I invite such testing.

Again, relaying a, *Thus says the Lord*, has physical peril but might well be easier than rereading Scripture without being told how to go about doing so, or told what should be found. Mistakes are possible. Growth is unavoidable.

Knowledge is compounded. And finally, after six plus years, the 1335 days is understandable. But that is the subject for another text.

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