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A New Age of Discovery

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A New Age of Discovery

The Book of Mormon Describes the Bible

In three ways the Book of Mormon by implication rejected the conventional ideas of what the Bible is supposed to be: (1) by its mere existence it refuted the idea of a "once-for-all" word of God; (2) by allowing for the mistakes of men in the pages of scripture it rejected the idea of an infallible book; (3) and by its free and flexible quotations from the Bible it rejected the idea of a fixed, immutable, letter-perfect text.

But beyond that, the Book of Mormon contains certain explicit statements about the Bible that are most enlightening. It claims that many precious things are to be restored in the due time of the Lord by the bringing forth of long-lost writings, specifically of holy writings that had been anciently hidden away "to come forth in their purity" in the last days. It describes the ancient and "original" state of both the Old and the New Testaments in terms that invite the closest inspection by biblical students. Fundamentalists and higher critics have been equally scandalized by the Book of Mormon, which on the one hand neither assumed that the Old Testament was a single book written without error by the very finger of God, nor on the other allowed the verdict of the higher critics, that it was only a thing of human shreds and patches. Today both theories are being modified, with the students of the past generation of higher critics reluctantly conceding the essential unity of the Old Testament, while the fundamentalist sects make a great to-

do about searching the “original” documents as if the true meaning and the true text were still in doubt. The picture of the original Old Testament that is beginning to emerge is very much like that which confronts us in the pages of the Book of Mormon. There Nephi, looking far into the future, is shown a vision of the Gentiles bringing “a book” to the remote descendants of his father in the New World, and is told, “The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel, . . . also . . . many of the prophecies of the holy prophets” (1 Nephi 13:23).

This is our Old Testament, but such a book was quite strange to Nephi, and the angel explains that “it is a record *like unto* the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord . . . unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:23). The only scriptures Nephi knew were a collection of writings, more extensive indeed than what is contained in our Old Testament, but not conflicting with it.

When Lehi eagerly examined the plates which his sons had brought down from Jerusalem, he discovered that they contained (1) “the five books of Moses,” (2) “the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah,” (3) “and also a record of the Jews from the beginning,” including a genealogy of the whole line of Joseph, embracing Lehi’s own forefathers (1 Nephi 5:11–14). These writings are designated in modern Jewish terminology as the Tanach, i.e., the Torah, the Prophets, and the Historic and other writings.

These are the elements of Nephi’s Bible, and of ours, which, he assures us, contains an authentic record as far as it goes, and “many of the prophecies of the holy prophets,” but by no means all.

The New View of the Old Testament

The change of attitude toward the Old Testament in our day has come suddenly and surprisingly. Up until the present generation the world enjoyed the conviction that it had pretty well taken the measure of the Bible, and that the future could hold little more than an indefinite repetition of familiar sermons and commentaries lubricated by the occasional addition of learnedly specialized and technical footnotes. If the fundamentalists had their "once-for-all" Bible, the higher critics were no less satisfied that their own interpretations were definitive. In the same year (1889) in which Westcott and Hort issued the first edition of what they fondly entitled "The New Testament in the Original Greek," thereby serving notice that the most formidable of all textual problems had been solved, "Robertson Smith expressed his belief that . . . nothing of vital importance for the . . . study of Old Testament religion . . . remained uncertain."¹ As in so many other fields, the neat and easy rule of evolution, that greatest of time- and work-savers, explained everything: "Owing to the lack until recently of any real control of their views from external sources, biblical scholars have been forced to construct their systems in an historical vacuum," Professor Albright reminds us; and since they lacked solid information, "to redeem their constructions from pure subjectivity the ablest of them were forced to employ some philosophical scheme as a frame of reference;" and that was where evolution came in—a "unilateral evolution from the material, sensuous, and disorderly to the spiritual, the ideal, and the orderly," which "formed a bed of Procrustes into which all facts and generalizations had to be fitted."²

The sudden acquisition of vast amounts of solid factual information where only speculation was known before has left many scholars standing at the post: "Though Bible scholars live in an age of unprecedented discovery," Cyrus Gordon notes, "they stand in the shadow of nineteenth-

century higher criticism, . . . even though archaeology has rendered it untenable.”³

Specifically, what has been rendered untenable was the popular sport of cutting up every chapter in the Bible into sections each of which is ascribed to a different author. Instead of that we find today “a significant perception that beneath all its variety of form and of idea, the Old Testament has a deep unity.” Important in this shift has been the new view of the prophets. It was the fashion “a generation ago . . . to suppose that in the Old Testament we have a dualism of two irreconcilable conceptions of religion, the prophetic and the priestly,” emphasizing “a contrast between bad priests and good prophets.”⁴ The evolutionary formula required that the prophets, being spiritually advanced, should have a deep antipathy to the primitive formalities of the Temple. But now we know that there is “no definite line of demarcation” between the various aspects of Old Testament religion, and “that the evolutionary view of the Old Testament prophets cannot be accepted; . . . every stress must be laid on continuity.”⁵ That is to say, from the beginning Israel has had only one gospel.

By far the greatest influence in effecting a new reading of the Old Testament comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls. And the surprising thing that the Scrolls show us is that the text of the Bible has not been so much altered – for actually they show that it has been on the whole preserved with astonishing integrity – as mutilated by the removal of material from the original. As Professor Albright puts it, “Our Hebrew text has suffered much more from losses than it has from glosses,” and he proceeds to illustrate the point from a number of books, showing that “future translations will have to expand the text substantially – including . . . some [passages] of great importance for their content.”⁶

Which brings us back to our original proposition that “they have *taken away* . . . many parts . . . that were most precious” and that these are to be restored by the bringing

forth of "other books" and records. There is no better illustration of both these points to date than the Dead Sea Scrolls. By furnishing us with older texts of the Bible than any heretofore known, they show very clearly that present misunderstanding of the scriptures is not due to corruptions of the text but rather to serious omissions and deletions.

Nephi and the New Testament

Even more remarkable is what Nephi has to tell us about the *New Testament*. First, that its substance goes back to the *spoken* words of Jesus; that "when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel" (1 Nephi 13:24). Repeatedly (four times) Nephi uses the peculiar and vivid expression "proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew," or "proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew" (1 Nephi 14:23). It was word of mouth, or, to use the strictly literal equivalent, it was in the form of *logia*.

The most significant texts being discovered today are the lost *Logia*, or mouth-utterances, of Jesus, now recognized as the oldest form and substance of the gospel message.⁷ From these the Gospels were constructed.

Next, Nephi tells us, these things which were had among the Jews in pure, simple, and understandable form "go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:26). In the hands of these last, and at an early date, they suffered mutilation: "They have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Nephi 13:26). It is "the great and abominable church" which is charged with this folly, and here it is only fair to point out that 1 Nephi 22:13–14 designates *any* who fight against Israel by that unsavory title, and that the damage to the scriptures was done by that same great and abominable church before the New Testament went out into the world, possibly before it left Palestine: "And *after* these plain

and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto *all* the nations of the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:29). One of the important discoveries of modern "form criticism" has been that the original word-of-mouth tradition was revamped (*neu geformt*) by certain early Christian groups and in that form "handed on" to the world; the revising took place soon after the appearances of the Lord following the resurrection, and there is still a good deal of uncertainty as to just who did it and why.⁸

In our day the experts have reached the reluctant consensus that the Christian message has not come down to us in its original form. "The present generation," writes a leading authority on New Testament documents, "stands at the beginning of a new cycle, in the search for the original Greek New Testament." And it stands perplexed, not knowing which way to turn: "Any substantial effort to improve the basic critical text must 'mark time' until the whole complex of textual studies reveals a new integrating pattern. . . . We know only that the traditional theory of the [New Testament] text is faulty but cannot yet see clearly to correct the fault. . . . The critic is sobered by the realization that the best critical text so far achieved now holds little assurance of being the original text."⁹ "Thirty or forty years ago," wrote C.C. McCown, ". . . there was much talk of the 'assured results' of literary-historical (higher) criticism. . . . Now . . . biblical scholarship . . . must fight for its life . . . in the light of new methods and new archaeological, textual, paleographical, and historical discoveries."¹⁰

Through the centuries that followed their loss, according to Nephi, "because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble" (1 Nephi 13:29). What word could more aptly express the situation of Bible readers down to the present day: they walk, but as they walk, they stumble—they do not agree on what they read, and they never have

agreed, and today the whole scholarly world is by its own admission stumbling around in the dark, looking for some “new integrating pattern” and wondering what can possibly be “the point of the entire Johannine corpus” (C.H. Dodd). It is remarkable that Nephi does not mention corruptions or insertions in the text but keeps hammering away at that one fatal defect, the precious things which “they have taken away.” Finally Nephi has good news—in his own due time the Lord is going to bring forth writings which were “sealed up to come forth in their purity,” those writings of John which Nephi himself was forbidden to duplicate (1 Nephi 14:26–27).

But if we do not have the original texts, we are getting a pretty good idea of what happened to them. Here again Nephi “calls his shots” unerringly. Shown in a vision the life and ministry of Christ and the apostles, he was about to write down what he had seen but was prevented from doing so with the command, “But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write” (1 Nephi 14:25, 28). It was explained to him that the recording of these things was reserved for “the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them” (1 Nephi 14:25), and he was told by the angel “that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John” (1 Nephi 14:27). John and not Nephi was to write all these things down, and after that they were not to be published but “sealed up to come forth in their purity, . . . in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 14:26). We are now assured that the three Synoptic Gospels are not the original *Evangelion* at all, but are, to use Schneemelcher’s expression, an *Ersatz*.¹¹ They come from another milieu entirely from that of John, with whose writing they are “completely unfamiliar.”¹²

The fact that there are three Synoptic Gospels instead of one poses the greatest riddle of New Testament criticism: Why are there three, and why do they differ? The very

“multiplicity of the Gospels” is adequate evidence that someone has been manipulating the records.¹³

Some experts think they have a pretty good idea of the sort of people responsible. They were people who had received the gospel from the apostles, but immediately after the passing of the apostles proceeded to make basic alterations, deliberately disregarding some of the most important teachings.¹⁴ They were not the old Jewish-Christian communities, but various local churches of gentile composition, into whose hands the record came at an early time (in the 70’s and 80’s A.D.),¹⁵ and by whom the alterations – especially deletions – were made.¹⁶ The changes consisted in new interpretations of the scriptures, *not* in corruptions of the text, and in substantial omissions.¹⁷

Nephi’s view of the New Testament, then, rests on two basic propositions. Proposition number one is that the Bible has come down to the world in a mutilated form:

“For behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. . . .

“Because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble” (1 Nephi 13:26, 29).

Proposition number two is that the Lord will put an end to this state of things by the bringing forth of more information:

“I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, inso-much that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious” (1 Nephi 13:34).

This knowledge is to be imparted by written documents, including some of the writings of Nephi’s own descendants, “hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:35). But aside from them we are told of “other books, . . . these last records” (1 Nephi 13:39–40, both in the *plural*) which

are to come forth to and circulate among the Gentiles before their conversion to the gospel. Since it is made very clear throughout the chapter that the Gentiles referred to are *not* the Church, it would appear that the books and records which are "seen among the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:40) may be other writings besides the Book of Mormon.¹⁸ Not to labor the point, whether we see in 1 Nephi 13 reference to the Bible and the Book of Mormon only or to yet more records to come (as is clearly indicated in 1 Nephi 14:26), we have at least the clear declaration that certain books and records apart from the Bible are to come forth and change men's views of the Bible itself, because of whose mutilation "an exceedingly great many do stumble" (1 Nephi 13:29).

Every step of Nephi's account of the New Testament writings can be discerned in the emerging pattern of New Testament studies today: (1) Its original form was the spoken word or *logia*; (2) clearly understood only in their original Jewish-Christian setting; (3) transmitted at an early time, "by the hand of the apostles" (i.e., in written form) to the Gentiles (see 1 Nephi 13:24–26); (4) who proceeded in the various churches to reinterpret and delete much of the record (1 Nephi 13:27). (5) After the damage was done the New Testament went forth "unto all the nations of the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:29). It is a fact that while ancient manuscripts of the New Testament are found all over the Old World in many languages, they all represent the same mutilated families of texts. That is why we are still looking for the original. (6) Because of the deficiencies in the known writings, the churchmen have never been able to understand them or agree about what they mean, and today they stand in as great perplexity as ever; in other words, they "stumble." (7) Finally we are assured that there are unspoiled documents hidden away, awaiting that time when they shall "come forth in their purity."

And indeed, for the first time in history, scholars are in our own day beginning to put their hopes quite frankly

in the possible discovery of such documents. (8) To these points we might add the peculiar role of John in Nephi's account – the only New Testament character mentioned in the Book of Mormon – since John is today by far the most important as well as the most baffling and mysterious figure in the search for the original Christian message.

“The Wretched Apocrypha”

One of the reasons for the initial neglect of the Dead Sea Scrolls was that when they first came out, no one was prepared to cope with them. For strictly speaking they are *Apocrypha*, and few scholars were concerned with the Apocrypha when by 1945 their study had “reached . . . its lowest ebb.”¹⁹

What are the Apocrypha? They are a large body of writings, Jewish and Christian, existing alongside the Bible, each of which has at some time or other been accepted as true revealed scripture by some Christian or Jewish group. Where do they come from? The actual manuscripts are as old as our Bible manuscripts and are sometimes written by the same hands, but their contents betray widely scattered sources, some of which are orthodox and some of which are not.

Then why bother about them? Because writers of the Bible respect them and sometimes quote them, thus including excerpts of the Apocrypha in our Bible, while the fathers of the church in the first three centuries accept many of them as genuine and quote them as scripture – they cannot be lightly dismissed.²⁰

Why are they not included in the Bible? Well, some of them are: The Catholic Bible contains fourteen books which are not found in Protestant versions of the Bible. On the other hand, there are books in our Bible, such as Revelation, Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, which some of the most respected doctors of the Jews and Christians, ancient and modern, think are really Apocrypha and

should not be in the Bible.²¹ Then who decides just what is scripture and what is not? That is just the question: "Outside books?" cries Professor Torrey, "by what authority? The authority was duly declared, but it continued to be disputed . . . down even into the nineteenth century."²²

Consider the case of the Book of Enoch. "Nearly all the writers of the New Testament were familiar with it. . . . It is quoted as a genuine production of Enoch by St. Jude [in the New Testament], and as scripture by St. Barnabas. . . . With the earlier fathers and apologists it had all the weight of a canonical book;" yet, "from the fourth century of our era onward it fell into discredit; and under the ban of such authorities as Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine, it gradually passed out of circulation, and became lost to the knowledge of Western Christendom."²³ By what authority do Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine, who disagreed widely among themselves on scriptural matters, put under the ban a writing that the *early* church accepted and treasured as scripture? Here we see that later church leaders, none of whom claimed to be the head of the church, actually removed "many precious things" from the record.

But if the authority of those who condemned various "Apocrypha" is dubious, their reason for doing so is not far to seek. For the basic premise of the Jewish and Christian doctors alike from the fourth century on is that prophecy and revelation have forever ceased.²⁴ In such a case, the only hope of certitude lay in the possession of an absolutely infallible book of scripture. This allows no place for the proposition that a writing might be partly true and partly false: every syllable of the word of God must be absolutely perfect and above suspicion, for if it is not, if one allows that there might be any inaccuracy whatever in the Bible, then we are in the intolerable position of never being exactly sure whether any particular verse of the Bible is reliable or not. Such was the argument of St. Augustine, and such has remained the position of Christendom since his day.

It follows that all the Apocrypha, not being scripture, are full of uncertainties and therefore to be avoided as a pernicious nuisance. As early as the second century it was declared dangerous to allow any latitude whatever to "outside writings," and from the fourth century on that meant the Apocrypha.²⁵ If, as St. Augustine puts it, "men of the most outstanding piety and wisdom often disagree" about the scriptures,²⁶ how can men receive guidance from lesser works, including translations of the Bible? Since it was officially declared that "the written fountain of all revelation is the Bible," that source had to be completely infallible.²⁷ The Reformers condemned the Apocrypha as the doctors of the Church had; it was Karlstadt who first bound a number of works of which he disapproved together in one cover, gave them the name of "Apocrypha," and declared them "worthless for Christian use."²⁸ The Synod of Dort (1618–19) and the Westminster Confession alike agree with Bishop Lightfoot that the "wretched Apocrypha" are but a "patchery of human invention,"²⁹ and in 1816 the American Bible Society condemned them all as "objectionable books."³⁰

Since the Christian world had for centuries taken a uniform stand against the Apocrypha, is it any wonder that Joseph Smith's double outrage of adding to the word of God while proclaiming the possibility of error in it brought the roof down on his head? The indiscretion of the Book of Mormon was followed by a statement of principle regarding the Apocrypha which was received as a revelation in 1833: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning the Apocrypha – There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly; there are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men. . . . Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand, for the Spirit manifesteth truth; and whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom; and whoso receiveth not by the Spirit, cannot be benefited" (D&C 91).

The first part of this revelation is a clear statement of the very position taken by Christian scholars today not only regarding the Apocrypha but the Bible as well. Now we rub our eyes when we read in leading Protestant journals: "It needs to be repeated in the strongest possible manner that the hope of absolute certainty based on an Infallible Book . . . is a delusion,"³¹ or that "God's plan for the human race obviously does not include what is called an 'infallible' volume of Scripture. . . . The Bible . . . was never brought into complete harmony by any central authoritative 'Board of Editors' ";³² or Father Hebert's declaration that "the inadequacy of the doctrine of the inerrance of Scripture has demonstrated itself. It is too narrow to fit the facts; it cannot be carried through . . . without . . . special pleading";³³ or E.C. Blackman's that "The Word of God is in the words of the Bible, but is not to be identified with them . . . but interpreted *out of* them."³⁴

Interpreted by whom? The most learned and devoted men often disagree, as St. Augustine pointed out; who then shall tell us what the Bible says? There is only one way out, the way indicated in the second part of our revelation, and that is revelation itself. It is not surprising therefore that this upsetting recognition of the fallibility of the Bible should be accompanied by much discussion of the possibility of revelation—a theme that now fills the theological journals. "The return to ideas of inspiration and revelation may be put down as one of the marked trends of our biblical scholarship of the last decade," said S.V. McCasland in a presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1953.³⁵ And G.W. Bromiley might have been paraphrasing the Doctrine and Covenants when he wrote in 1959: "But since their works are written in the Spirit, they must also be read in the Spirit if they are to accomplish their primary function. . . . In other words, the minds and hearts of the readers must be enlightened by the same Spirit by whom the writings themselves were inspired," though he hastens to

add, "This enlightenment or illumination is not properly inspiration itself."³⁶

Nor is it surprising that there has been a rather sudden recognition of the fact that ancient Christians did not for a moment regard the scriptures as sealed and final, but down to the middle of the third century were perfectly willing to accept the proposition that more inspired writings might be forthcoming.³⁷ One of the first Christian martyrs is reported as saying, "If there are ancient faith-promoting books, why can't there be modern ones . . . or why should the present have less authority than the past because of some superstitious veneration of mere antiquity?"³⁸

Section 91 also has a message for those Latter-day Saints who wonder why the Church has not been forward in officially recognizing and adopting such works as the Dead Sea Scrolls. We do recognize them. Here it is explicitly declared that there is benefit to be derived from the study of these works by those who are enlightened by the Spirit. But on a purely intellectual basis, their study can only lead, as it has, to endless squabbling and confusion. The Prophet was told to leave those who wanted the Apocrypha to read them for themselves, with the distinct understanding that they are full of precious things mingled with interpolations by the hands of men. This today is the recognized condition of the Apocrypha, and the policy of the Church towards them has always been the same.

Serious and thorough study of the Apocrypha is, according to Professor Torrey, "a comparatively recent need."³⁹ And even Professor Zeitlin, a bitter enemy of the Scrolls, calls for a serious study of the Apocrypha, "which had been thrown aside . . . by the Jews, but which should now be reclaimed by them."⁴⁰ Because of the new manuscript finds, "the whole question of canonicity, and the date of the fixing of the canon, will have to be re-studied."⁴¹ For we are now told that canonization may have relegated to the Apocrypha a good deal of genuine scripture.⁴² In 1957

Professor Riesenfeld exploded a "bomb-shell" at the New Testament Congress at Oxford when he declared that some of the apocryphal deeds and sayings of Jesus are genuine, for until then "the opposite view has been held and in some circles has been exalted into the position of accepted doctrine."⁴³

In short, the Apocrypha have been until recently an unexplored bog. To this day "there is no regularity, but utter confusion" in their classification.⁴⁴ It is now recognized that "literally speaking, there are no apocrypha in Jewish literature,"⁴⁵ that the early Christians made no distinction whatever between canonical books and Apocrypha,⁴⁶ and that the Greek Orthodox Church never made "a formal and authoritative utterance" on the subject.⁴⁷

The idea of Canon vs. Apocrypha is an invention or rather a convention of scholarship, the result of "one long process of cooling and hardening."⁴⁸ The conventional breakdown has been into canon (the books of the Bible), Apocrypha (books found in some Bibles), and Pseudepigrapha (books never qualified as biblical), but the classification is arbitrary and confusing. "A new terminology is needed," Professor Torrey announces; ". . . the current classification . . . as Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is outworn and misleading, supported neither by history nor by present fact."⁴⁹ "There is no real distinction between them," wrote M. Gaster of the Jewish holy writings, "and their treatment at the hands of the Jews has been precisely the same. They all belong to that vast literature . . . which fall[s] under one head called Midrash or Midrash Agada."⁵⁰

A leading Catholic scholar points out another reason for rejecting the old distinction between Apocrypha and scripture, namely that there is between the two a class of writing which because of its high antiquity and prestige in the early Church cannot be relegated to the level of Apocrypha and which at the same time does not qualify as scripture simply because it never happened to get bound in with

other books of the Bible, "an intermediary class," he calls it, of which, however embarrassing, "it is impossible to deny the existence."⁵¹

The student who goes to encyclopedias and handbooks to learn about the Apocrypha is soon puzzled to discover that no two "official" lists are the same.⁵² One authority will consider the subject of Apocrypha adequately treated with the discussion of the fourteen apocryphal books of the Bible, while another will list hundreds of interesting titles. Why is there no agreement? Because everything seems to overlap; all these works seem to be forever swapping the same basic ideas and expressions among themselves, so that once we have determined which of the writings are the oldest, we can pretty well rule all the others out as mere repetition. Only, since every apocryphal writing is a composite, no one knows for sure which is really the oldest and who is borrowing from whom. Take the case of the Book of Enoch, for example.

We have seen that the early Christian and patristic writers accepted this work as authentic scripture down to the fourth century, when the great doctors of the church put it under the ban, and it disappeared completely.⁵³ The eccentric Scotchman James Bruce brought to England from his famous expedition to the headwaters of the Nile in 1773 an Ethiopian text of the Book of Enoch. This can be checked against Greek fragments of Enoch, one of which, acquired by the eccentric Irishman Chester Beatty in 1930 (Beatty made his money in Utah copper) is a thousand years older than the Ethiopian documents. And now the Hebrew sources of the Book of Enoch, centuries older than the Greek fragments, have finally turned up in Cave IV at Qumran.

Though "it comes from many writers and almost as many periods," its value lies in the fact that "some of its authors—and there were many—belonged to the true succession of the prophets."⁵⁴ How would such men dare to prophesy in the name of Enoch? They had to, according

to R.H. Charles, because the doctors of the Jews gave them no alternative. The latter "could tolerate no fresh message from God, and so, when men were moved by the Spirit of God to make known their visions . . . they could not do so openly, but were forced to resort to pseudonymous publication."⁵⁵ Even so, Charles himself recognized that part of the book at least may well go back to very early times.⁵⁶ After all, all the prophets do have much the same message, and the now recognized practice of the prophets of giving out the words of their predecessors as their own receives its first clear statement and justification in the Book of Mormon, wherein Nephi explains his policy: "For I did liken *all* scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23). This peculiar and interesting attitude that viewed past events as living again in Israel's present experience is highly characteristic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but was generally ignored by scholars before their discovery.

The complexity of apocryphal works is thus by no means a sign of fraud. The fact that "certain considerable portions of the book [of Enoch] belonged originally not to the Enoch literature at all, but to an earlier work, i.e. the Book of Noah," adds to its value rather than lessening it.⁵⁷ Along with the Book of Enoch, known as 3 Enoch and written in Hebrew about 66 A.D., we have also an Epistle of Enoch, and a Book of the Secrets of Enoch, or 2 Enoch, written in Palestine before 70 A.D. and best known as the Slavic Book of Enoch.⁵⁸

We cannot dismiss these other works with a smile, because each book is a mixture of things, and they all overlap. One part of 3 Enoch, for example, sounds very Christian and had accordingly been given a title of its own, *The Similitudes of Enoch*. "Many scholars have held that the work has been interpolated by a Christian editor, and in particular they have found references to the Son of Man to be accretions, and have accordingly removed them."⁵⁹ That

is a good illustration of how the experts work, removing from the ancient texts whatever they think does not belong there. Third Enoch contains, for example, remarkable parallels to the teachings of Paul.⁶⁰ Should these "many precious things" be removed? It is the Dead Sea Scrolls that have taken away the license of the learned to cut and slash as they pleased, for they have shown that many concepts formerly held to be uniquely Christian were familiar to Jews before the time of Christ.

Particularly close ties have been noted between 3 Enoch and a very old work called the Book of Jubilees, known in one version as the Lepto-Genesis or Little Genesis, which scholars suggested years ago was the remnant of a lost book of Abraham from which our own Genesis accounts were taken.⁶¹ Now among the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls to be discovered was one that now goes by the name of the Genesis Apocryphon, the largest part of which is labeled by its editors as the Book of Abraham, the other parts being books of Lamech and Noah. These books are so close to Jubilees as to give "the impression of having possibly been a source on which the writer of Jubilees drew."⁶² Jubilees itself is so full of Christian stuff that it has been declared to be of all Jewish Apocrypha the one presenting Christian apocalyptic ideas "in their most complete form."⁶³ The astonishing mixture and overlapping of Jewish and Christian elements in the Enoch writings would thus seem to be something far more fundamental than a mere Christian re-editing of the texts.

A type of apocryphal literature that has recently come to the fore, thanks to new documentary discoveries, is the testament form. Jubilees has been called the Testament of Moses, and we now have a Testament of Abraham (in Arabic and Ethiopian, originally written in the first or second century in Hebrew), a Testament of Isaac and Jacob (in Arabic and Ethiopian), a Testament of Job (written by a Jew in Greek in Egypt in the second century), a Testament of

Solomon (in Hebrew), a recently discovered Hebrew Testament of Naphtali, a Testament of Isaac (the Coptic text first published in 1957), and the all-important Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.⁶⁴ These writings are called testaments because in them a patriarch or prophet before his death addresses his children or his followers, giving them prophecies and blessings and foretelling what is to befall them individually and collectively. In every case there is an all-embracing revelation of the whole of human history, centering about a recent vision in which the old man was caught up to heaven and viewed the cosmos and the great plan of salvation in its fulness, including the council in heaven at the creation when it all began.⁶⁵

What we wish to point out here is that the first section of Nephi's book is an abridgment of his father's writings. It is really Lehi's book, and it follows the testament form in every particular: The story of the patriarch's perplexities and wanderings, his journey to heaven and eschatological discourse, and his blessings and admonitions to each of his sons are thoroughly typical in every respect, so that it would be perfectly proper to distinguish the first part of 1 Nephi from that hero's account of his own "reign and ministry" by calling it "The Testament of Lehi," it being by Nephi's own account a separate work from his own (1 Nephi 1:16–17). Read along with the other old Jewish testaments, it gives an overpowering impression of authenticity, which may someday be demonstrated by the impartial verdict of an electronic computer.

Since part of every testament is an ascension, the works called testaments could be and sometimes are called Ascensions. We have already mentioned the peculiar service of the Assumption (or Ascension) of Moses in determining the nature of the Dead Sea Scrolls deposit.⁶⁶ The testaments of Abraham and Isaac have also been labeled the Assumptions of Abraham and Isaac. Just to show how complicated things get, the Ascension of Moses begins with a section

that also has been called the Testament of Moses, written in Hebrew at the very beginning of the first century. This is thrice quoted as scripture in the New Testament (Acts 7:36 and Jude 1:16, 18), and by early apocryphal writers and church fathers.⁶⁷ There is an Ascension of Isaiah (also called the Testament of Isaiah) which sounds so Christian that Torrey declared it to be "entirely a Christian composition," though admitting that it was very hard to tell whether such a writing is Christian or not.⁶⁸ Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, Torrey's verdict must be repealed, and the Ascension of Isaiah must now be classified, according to Flusser, with Jubilees, the Book of Enoch, and the Twelve Patriarchs, which all fuse together.⁶⁹

Since the prophecies found in the testaments are all apocalyptic in nature, these works could also be entitled Apocalypses—again a mere matter of convenience. The Apocalypse of Moses, the Apocalypse of Baruch, of Sophronia, of Daniel, of Abraham, and of Elijah (first known in 1899) were all first seriously considered at the turn of the century, but, as with the other Apocrypha, we are only just beginning to realize their true significance, the last two being especially important.⁷⁰ Related works are 3 Baruch, the Remains of Jeremiah (by a Jew in the second century or by a Christian in the third or fourth century),⁷¹ a book of the Secrets of Moses, with commentary (Samaritan), and a Samaritan story of the death of Moses.⁷² Important pseudo-historical works are the Book of the Lives of the Prophets, the Book of Melchizedek, the Prayer of Manasseh, the History of the Deportation of the Children of Israel (attributed to Jeremiah).⁷³ None of these can be condemned outright, but each must be judged on its merits as a whole and in parts. One never knows where an authentic and valuable item might turn up, as in the recently found Book of Joshua in Arabic, containing a good deal not found in our biblical Book of Joshua, but which can be checked against older sources.⁷⁴

Of interest to Latter-day Saints is the Book of Jasher, one of the first English translations of which was published in Salt Lake City. "There can be little doubt that the book of Jasher was a national epic," according to Cyrus Gordon; but how much of this particular book goes back to the original? "The time is ripe," he says, "for a fresh investigation of such genuine sources of Scripture, particularly against the background of the Dead Sea Scrolls."⁷⁵

A good illustration of the apocryphal problem is offered by the famous Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. Largely neglected until very recently, this work was first brought to light by Robert Grosseteste, the Bishop of Lincoln, about 1242 A.D. He thought it was a Christian work, and it was duly included in the pages of the *Patrologia*.⁷⁶ Recently two books appeared on the Twelve Patriarchs, one declaring it to be a Christian work that "may no longer be reckoned to the pseudepigraphic literature of the Old Testament. They must be classified among the literary products of the early Christian Church."⁷⁷ The other author reached the opposite conclusion, that the work is "free of any Christian interpolation of any importance,"⁷⁸ thus agreeing with Charles's earlier verdict, that it was a Jewish writing which had "much influence . . . upon the language of our Lord and of the New Testament."⁷⁹ This illustrates how the interpreter can edit a work to suit himself; in this case one group of experts accounts for the Christian material in the Twelve Patriarchs as a Christian *interpolation*, while the other with equal conviction explains that the Christians later borrowed it. The Dead Sea Scrolls would seem to favor the latter interpretation.

The Christian Apocrypha

In our short discussion of the Jewish Apocrypha we have imperceptibly moved into the area of Christian Apocrypha—another example of the ubiquitous overlapping from which we never escape; for the same old question, Is

this Jewish or is it Christian? plagues the student of early Christian as much as of early Jewish writings. Lists of Christian apocryphal writings are even more confusing than the Jewish lists, since the latter at least include fourteen indisputably "biblical" Apocrypha (the taxonomists actually employ this oxymoron!), while among the Christian titles, nothing is certain.

In 1638 when Charles I of England received the great Alexandria Codex of the New Testament as a present from the Patriarch of Constantinople, there came bound in the book with the canonical texts and obviously considered as scripture by the people who used the codex, two writings designated as letters of Clement to the Corinthians. These letters, though frequently quoted by early church writers, were at the time entirely unknown to Western scholars, the church having completely lost track of them.

These were the first of a special class of writings to which the Catholic theologian Cotelier in the seventeenth century gave the name of "Apostolic Fathers," it being assumed that the authors had known the apostles or at least their disciples. The title is not a satisfactory one, and the problem of classifying the Apostolic Fathers has been a difficult one, as they were "written, transmitted, interpolated, disregarded, recovered, and analyzed for theological and polemical purposes from the second century to the twentieth, and it seems unlikely that any impartial observer exists who can comprehend them apart from this history of debate."⁸⁰ The so-called Apostolic Fathers recognized today as being both ancient and orthodox are:

I Clement, Letter to the Corinthians, written c. 95/96 in Rome, of high authority in the early church but virtually unknown in later times.

II Clement's Letter, not a letter and not by Clement. Written probably by a priest in Corinth, c. 135-140 A.D., contains some very old sayings of Jesus.

Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, c. 110-115. Let-

ters to Seven Churches, written on his way to martyrdom in Rome, are accepted as genuine, an equal number rejected.

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, Letter to the Philippians. Polycarp died in 155.

Papias of Hierapolis, Sayings of Jesus, written c. 135–150.

The Didache, or Teachings of the Twelve Apostles, discovered at Constantinople in 1872. Written between 100 and 150 A.D. in Syria, Palestine, or Egypt.

The Shepherd of Hermas, written in Rome c. 140, by the layman Hermas; divided into Visions, Mandates, and Similitudes for the instruction of the church.⁸¹

As an example of the usual overlapping, an important discourse in the Didache on the doctrine of the Two Ways (i.e., the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness that lie open to all during this lifetime of probation) also turns up slightly altered in an Epistle of Barnabas (classed by some as an Apostolic Father), and it would now appear that both go back to a common pre-Christian teaching frequently referred to in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁸²

All the Apostolic Fathers are related, in fact, and although orthodox and Christian, they show many affinities with the Dead Sea Scrolls and quote other apocryphal works. This leads to the usual problems of classification: Some acknowledge that the *Pastor of Hermas* was certainly written by a Christian, but is not understandable except through Jewish apocalyptic literature⁸³; and while Henneke lists a hundred authentic Christian Apocrypha, J. Perier insists that “the canonical apocryphal literature of the primitive church is contained almost entirely in but [seven] works: . . . The Didache, . . . the Didaschalia, the Apostolic Constitutions, the Greek Canons [i.e., rules for the Church, 84 or 85 of them], the Apostolic Canons [27 or 30 of them], the Canons of Hippolytus, and the 127 Canons

of the Apostles," which Perier himself edited.⁸⁴ To all of these we refer below.

The sands of Egypt have yielded up papyrus fragments of unidentified gospels, sayings of Jesus, apocryphal gospels (of the Nazarenes, Ebionites, Hebrews, and Egyptians), conversations of Jesus with his disciples after the resurrection, at least 40 "Gnostic" gospels, Infancy Gospels telling of the childhood of Jesus, and some important collections of noncanonical stories about Jesus.⁸⁵ Again, none of this material can be lightly dismissed, for it all overlaps and much of it goes back to very early times. The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, for example, found in 1913, is mentioned by Origen as authentic scripture in the church of his day, and in his own opinion older than the Gospel of Luke,⁸⁶ and has close ties, for example, with all seven of the important works mentioned by Perier above.

If we were merely to begin to point out the relationships between the hundreds of apocrypha, nearly all of them first brought to light *since Cumorah*, we should soon find ourselves at sea. But it is no longer a shoreless sea, for thanks to many recent studies, dim and distant but imposing islands have begun to take shape through the mists.

The most impressive of these is that corpus of writings known as the Pseudo-Clementines. The *Patrologia Graeca* attributes to Clement of Rome besides the two epistles, letters to the Virgin and to James the Elder, twenty homilies, a work on the acts of Peter, liturgical writings, and the famous Clementine Recognitions, a novel which was "a favourite piece of 'Sunday afternoon literature'" in the church of the second century.⁸⁷ Since this Clement is supposed to have been the Bishop of Rome, the important Apostolic Constitutions are also attributed to him as well as certain decretals and episcopal letters, and even the so-called Cave of Treasures—the Pseudo-Ephraim or Book of Rolls.⁸⁸ Forty years ago the celebrated Eduard Schwartz declared that the Clementine writings have no significance

whatever for the study of early Judaism and Christianity.⁸⁹ But today, thanks again to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the position of the "Tübingen School," which saw in the Clementine Recognitions the most valuable first-hand view of the primitive church, has been vindicated.

To trace but a single line, the Apostolic Constitutions, attributed to Clement, show very close affinities with a work published in the last year of the nineteenth century and given the title of "The Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This work was also attributed by its ancient compiler to Clement, and purports to contain instructions given by the Lord to the apostles after the resurrection on matters of doctrine and organization.

Both these works in turn are closely related to a writing discovered in 1897, the Epistle of the Apostles or Conversations of Jesus with His Disciples After the Resurrection. (The Ethiopian version was labeled, "The Testament in Galilee of Our Lord Jesus Christ.")⁹⁰ These works in turn are very close to another collection called the Didascalia, purported teachings of the Lord to the Apostles after the resurrection. Parts of this are identical with the eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions, but also very close to the canons of the Epistle of Peter attributed to Clement, above, and various other apostolic canons including the "127 Canons of the Apostles" first published in 1912, which claims to have been "composed by our Fathers the holy Apostles and published by Clement the disciple of the Apostle Peter."⁹¹

Whatever one may think of these works today, many of them display "complete mastery" of the canonical materials, and many are now accepted by most scholars as representing the authentic views of the early Christians,⁹² to whom their teachings, especially about the return of the Lord after the resurrection, were "of sovereign importance."⁹³

When the Lord first met with the Apostles after the

resurrection, he rebuked them for their hardness of heart and slowness to believe; for they had thought it was all over with the crucifixion, and when reliable witnesses reported that Jesus had risen, they stubbornly refused to believe them. It was only when the Risen Christ himself took them in hand and for a period of forty days gave them instructions in "the things of the kingdom" that they were ready to go forth as missionaries to all the world. That post-resurrectional instruction made all the difference in the world to the Apostles, yet we find few words of that priceless instruction in the Bible! It is therefore more significant when the great *majority* of the earliest Christian writings to come into our hands announce that they are purveying those very lost teachings of Jesus which we miss so much — the words of the Lord to his disciples after the resurrection. And in this area a particular collection of recently discovered documents is the most valuable.

A Survey of Some Major Discoveries Since Cumorah

The great discoveries of our time were heralded by impressive preliminary rumblings. In 1886, according to Eduard Meyer, "not a single document existed to attest the authenticity of the Old Testament as history." A year later the Amarna Tablets, a whole library of correspondence between the kings of Egypt and the princes of Palestine and Syria in the days of the Patriarchs, came forth.⁹⁴ But the great and revolutionary discoveries came with the finding of two other libraries, those of Ugarit and Qumran.⁹⁵ The former was first discovered at Ras Shamra ("Fennel Cape" on the Syrian coast) in 1928, but it is still yielding documents, thirty boxes of tablets, "a whole new archive," having been found in 1960.⁹⁶ Here is a temple archive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C., kept by Israel's closest neighbors, the Canaanites. From these records we learn for the first time how close the ancient Hebrews were in

culture and religion to those Canaanites and can appreciate the force of Nephi's remark to his brothers that the one real difference between their own ancestors and the earlier inhabitants of the land was a moral one: "Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they [the Canaanites] if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay" (1 Nephi 17:34).

The Ras Shamra fragments opened up a whole new world of biblical study by putting Israel in a new world setting. "It is now realized that Israel was no more isolated in her language than she was in her religion and culture, and that Hebrew . . . borrow[ed] freely from other languages."⁹⁷ Hence it can be "no longer assumed that if a Hebrew passage is unintelligible it must be corrupted."⁹⁸

An example of puzzling Bible words explained by these records is the word *khashmal*, which is now known to mean "brass" — a word which this writer long thought to be an anachronism in the Book of Mormon.⁹⁹ Ideas and words go together, of course, and the Ugaritic ritual texts cast a flood of light on early Jewish cult practices, particularly the Year Rite and the Coronation patterns which today are "the centre of interest in the study of the relation between the religions of the Near East and the Old Testament."¹⁰⁰ The ritual picture that emerges conforms in detail to the long description of an Old World coronation rite that meets us in the pages of the book of Mosiah.¹⁰¹

It was the Ras Shamra texts more than anything else which showed that the Old Testament must be studied in an ever larger context to be properly understood. "The Bible strikes root into every ancient Near-Eastern culture, and it cannot be historically understood until we can see its relationship to its sources in true perspective," according to Albright.¹⁰² "One hundred years ago," writes A. Parrot, "in Mesopotamia it was discovered that history lies behind the Old Testament. Today . . . the Old Testament itself is being discovered," to wit, in the Ras Shamra documents, in the



Some important manuscript deposits
(explanation on following pages)

1. *Knossos*, where Sir Arthur Evans in 1900 discovered the library of the Palace of Minos, between 3,000 and 4,000 tablets from the 15th century B.C., written in the Minoan Linear Script B. In the 1950s a young British architect, Michael Ventris, deciphered the writing and showed it to be Greek. This has altered the whole picture of ancient Near Eastern civilization and brought the Patriarchs of Israel into contact with people speaking languages related to our own.

2. Modern *Pylos* in Messenia, where C. Blegen in 1939 discovered 600 tablets of a Mycenaean palace archive. More tablets were discovered after 1952 when work was resumed after World War II. These tablets, in Linear B script, showed that the Mycenaeans were Greeks, and that the Greeks (whose language is often surprisingly close to our own) were busy in the Near East as early as the times of the Patriarchs.

3. *Karatepe*, where since 1946 have been discovered inscriptions in Phoenician and Hittite, telling how people migrated and founded cities in the century before Lehi.

4. *Constantinople*, where in 356 the Emperor Constantius founded the Imperial Library, from which a vast number of ancient manuscripts came to Europe in 1453 and thereafter. The city had a very ancient patriarchal library and many monastic libraries. There, in the library of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Greek P. Bryennius in 1872 discovered among many valuable early Christian Apocrypha the only known text of the *Didache*, which describes the organization and function of the church around 140 A.D.

5. *Boghaz Keui*, where beginning in 1906 H. Winckler excavated the royal archives of the Hittites—more than 10,000 cuneiform tablets from the 14th and 13th centuries B.C., mostly written in Hittite, a language related to our own. Scholars had formerly maintained that the Hittites, with whom Abraham has intimate dealings in the Old Testament, were either a myth or a scribal mistake—that they never existed!

6. *Ras Shamra* (ancient *Ugarit*), where C. Schaeffer beginning in 1929 brought forth thousands of tablets from a temple archive of the Canaanites going back to the 14th century B.C. They are in a language closely related to Hebrew and contain many expressions and concepts that are close to those of the Old Testament, making it possible to solve many Bible mysteries and brightly illuminate certain phases of the early history of Israel. Thirty more boxes of tablets were excavated in 1960.

7. *Qumran* and the surrounding area, where since 1947 hundreds of caves have been explored, many of them yielding written documents comprising tens of thousands of fragments and more than 400 separate works. The most valuable of these were written by Jewish sectaries in the first century B.C. The remarkable resemblance of their institutions and language to those found among the early Christians has called for a complete reevaluation of the nature both of early Christianity and of Judaism.

8. *Lachish*, where in 1935–36 J.L. Starkey discovered the first of the Lachish Letters, the office files of a military garrison of the time of Lehi. These eighteen ostraca (writing on potsherds), written in Hebrew, give eyewitness accounts of the state of things in Palestine just before the fall of Jerusalem.

9. *Gizeh* near ancient Memphis, where the *Pyramid Texts* were discovered cut in the walls of tombs and passages of the kings of the V and VI Dynasties of Egypt (2600?–2200 B.C.). First collected and published by G. Maspero in 1881, they run in K. Sethe's edition to 712 spells and 1,048 pages. These writings are continued with new additions in the *Coffin Texts*, written on the inner sides of nonroyal wooden coffins of the IX through XI Dynasties, and published by A. De Buck in 7 volumes. It is now realized that the frequent resemblance of these writings to the literature of Israel is not accidental.

10. *Tell el-Amarna*, where in 1887 two hundred cuneiform tablets were dug up by peasants, followed by hundreds of others, many of which were smashed and lost on

the way to the dealers. In 1892 F. Petrie discovered the source of the documents, the royal archives of Ikhnaton at Amarna. The available collection consists of 358 cuneiform tablets, being the correspondence, in the Akkadian language (some of the letters are in Hittite), between the Egyptian court and the princes of Palestine and Syria, 1370–1348 B.C., during the time of Israel's wanderings in the area.

11. *Hieraconpolis*, a prehistoric capital of Egypt, where in 1898 J. Quibell found a collection of predynastic Palettes containing very ancient ritual and historic texts. Just across the river in 1878 Mariette discovered the remains of a great royal library building, and to the north at Thebes where the documents now reproduced in the Pearl of Great Price were found was the great library of the Ramesseum.

12. *Elephantine*, where in 1906 A. Cowley and in 1911 E. Sachau discovered the business and law archives of a Jewish community of the fifth century B.C. In 1953 more documents were located in Brooklyn, where they had lain unnoticed in a trunk for fifty years. In our opinion these letters, written in Aramaic to Persian officials and to important Jews in Jerusalem, supply the most valuable single commentary to the Book of Mormon.

13. *Serdabit al-Khadim*, ancient mines of the Pharaohs where people from Palestine were employed around 1500 B.C. and where they left some thirty rock inscriptions behind. These were discovered by Petrie in 1905, with important additions in 1948. They are written with Egyptian symbols but in Canaanitish dialect which has been identified as proto-Hebrew. They show the early Egyptianizing of the Semites and indicate much closer ties between the cultures of Egypt and Israel than have heretofore been conceded.

14. *Mt. Sinai*, at whose foot in the monastery of St. Catherine, K. Tischendorf in 1844 first spotted the manuscript of the Codex Sinaiticus in a wastebasket. The codex, which he finally acquired in 1859, contains valuable early biblical materials and Christian Apocrypha.

15. *Nineveh*, the third capital of Assyria, where in 1851 A. Layard discovered the huge library of Assurbanipal, founded by Sargon in the 8th century B.C. Here was found what was long thought to be the original version of the flood story, and many documents illustrating and confirming the history of Israel.

16. *Nuzi*, where in 1925–26 Edward Cheira brought forth the great archives of the Hurrians, one tablet of which can be dated 1475 B.C. These records contain accounts of men engaged in exactly the sort of activities as was Abraham and demonstrate the authenticity of the patriarchal age as depicted in the Old Testament.

17. *Sippar*, where a large temple library was discovered by H. Rassam in 1879 and P. Scheil in 1894. The ritual texts are important in constructing the over-all picture of Near Eastern religions in general, and of "patternism" in particular.

18. *Nippur*, where H. Hilprecht and others discovered a library of thousands of documents in 1889, including a flood story much older than the Nineveh version, and much closer to that of the Old Testament.

19. *Mari*, where in 1935–36 A. Parrot discovered a palace archive which had been destroyed by Hammurabi in the 18th century B.C. Thousands of tablets, including correspondence with the king of Babylon, depict in great fulness the travels and business activities of important men in the days of Abraham and strikingly vindicate the biblical portrait of the patriarchs.

20. *Nag-Hammadi*, in which in the remains of an ancient Christian community was found in 1945 a collection of thirteen leather-bound volumes containing 49 separate writings (about 1000 pages). Though the books date from the 4th century, they contain Christian writings going back to the 2nd century of the church. By far the oldest Christian library known.

Mari Tablets (a huge collection of tablets discovered on the upper Euphrates by Parrot himself), and in the Nuzi Tablets, vast private archives which "make frequent mention of the Habiri," and the Dawidum, and even tell of the use of fire-signals by the Benjaminites as described in the Old Testament.¹⁰³

"The beginnings of Israel are rooted in a highly cultural Canaan," where we now know "Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and branches of the Indo-Europeans [our own ancestors] had converged and blended" – as we learn from our own book of Abraham. Hence "the notion that early Israelite religion and society were primitive is completely false."¹⁰⁴

If the Book of Mormon reflects the culture of the whole Near East of its day, so does the Bible.¹⁰⁵ Cyrus Gordon would now even bring the Greeks into the Hebrew picture (as we did in the portrait of Lehi), by showing that the people of ancient Greece and Israel have a common Semitic heritage based on the flow of Phoenician culture. We were brought up to believe that the Jews gave us ethics and religion, that the Greeks willed us science and philosophy. Yet, we now see a similar tradition running through both cultures, and we can't be sure which culture gave us what.¹⁰⁶

It was the Ugaritic texts that put the brakes on the higher critics, to use Speiser's expression, by demonstrating the futility of their favorite game, namely, cutting every book of the Bible up into numerous separate sections which they claimed were the work of various interpolaters and commentators.¹⁰⁷ Whenever a scholar thought he could discern within a book of the Bible the slightest peculiarity of language or change of mood, outlook, or attitude, he would proudly announce the discovery of a new author or corrupter of the text. "A generation ago we could speak of 'critical' as over against 'traditional' 'orthodoxy'; . . . we knew precisely where one 'document' ended and another began."¹⁰⁸ True, "the unedifying conclusion of all such

study is," as Gordon notes, "that nothing is authentic"; but this loss of reality was compensated for by the warm satisfaction of all playing the same game and wearing the same "badge of inter-confessional academic respectability."¹⁰⁹ But today numerous texts on closer examination show that it was common practice in the East to introduce a variety of styles and even dialects into a single composition.¹¹⁰ "No Egyptologist (or other Orientalist in parallel disciplines) is such a fool," writes K.A. Kitchen, "as to see 'sources' behind such texts . . . or to scissor up . . . these stone stelae" as Bible students have scissored up the Bible every time an author hits a change of pace.¹¹¹ So now the trend of higher criticism has been reversed, and there is a "growing emphasis on the unity of the Old Testament, . . . a significant perception that beneath all its variety of form and of idea, the Old Testament has a deep unity."¹¹²

The Patriarchs Come to Life

"One of the remarkable results of archaeological research during the period between the two Wars," G.E. Wright informs us, "was the sudden emergence of the Patriarchal Age" as real history.¹¹³ The kind of world described in the pages of Genesis really existed, and was therefore not, as the higher critics had assumed, the invention of men writing many centuries after the times they are supposed to be describing; the Old Testament gives a vivid and accurate picture of the very world in which the patriarchs are said to have moved, and of no other.¹¹⁴ Eduard Meyer and Edvard König were right when they insisted that the Old Testament narratives, unlike the dry annals of the Babylonians or the fairy stories of the Egyptians, were real history: "This respect for fact and historical perspective in the records of the race finds no parallel in the whole literature of the ancient Near East until the time of Herodotus."¹¹⁵

The theory that Genesis was not intended as history but as "poetic media for the conveyance of divine truth"

must now be discarded.¹¹⁶ For "none of the Pentateuchal and other early historical sources of the Old Testament invented its material; . . . [they] cannot be charged with any kind of fabrication."¹¹⁷ And not long ago it was thought to be *all* fabrication! "It is clear," writes Albright, "that the substantial historicity of biblical tradition has been vindicated to an extent which few unprejudiced bystanders could . . . have deemed possible a generation ago."¹¹⁸ In commenting on this, Albright observes that the peculiar genius of the Jewish and Christian religions, as over against all other religions, is the total involvement of their teachings with a real historical background; he also notes that this background has been largely lost today, but has its clearest expression in the Book of Mormon, which commits the Mormons, whether they like it or not, to a literal and historical interpretation of the story of salvation.¹¹⁹

When a hundred years ago late Babylonian parallels to the Hebrew flood story were discovered in the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh (first of the great library discoveries), it was instantly concluded that the Old Testament version had been lifted from this Babylonian "original." But as still older versions of the flood story were found in Mesopotamia, they were noted to be more like the Genesis story the older they were, indicating that the Bible story might be the oldest one after all.¹²⁰ From recent studies of the Atrahasis Epic, in fact, it would now appear that the old Babylonian flood story, long accepted as the original source of all the other flood stories, including that in Genesis, is really secondary and "has been wrenched from its context," which now appears for the first time, offering proof "that the whole framework of the Hebrew traditions in Genesis i-x, and not just the episode of the flood, has its counterpart in Sumero-Babylonian legend."¹²¹

A perhaps even more striking vindication of the possible priority of much Bible material over the sources from which it is supposed to have come is the discovery by Drioton

that a famous monument of Egyptian Wisdom literature, which is supposed to have been the source and inspiration of Hebrew Wisdom literature, "is actually an indifferent Egyptian translation from a Semitic—Hebrew—original. . . . This would be the 'Words of the Wise' on which Proverbs also subsequently drew."¹²² The idea that the Babylonians and Egyptians might be dependent on the Hebrews for ideas found in the Bible instead of the other way round is indeed a revolutionary one.

It is interesting that the Hebrew remains, though not scarce, do not have the impact that the foreign materials do.¹²³ The Lachish Letters, containing eyewitness accounts of the desperate state of things in the land of Jerusalem in Lehi's day,¹²⁴ have excited far less comment than the Elephantine Papyri which show us a Jewish community living far up the Nile, whither they had fled for safety, possibly at the destruction of Jerusalem in Lehi's day.¹²⁵ In 1954 some of these records, the Brooklyn Aramaic Papyri, were discovered in a trunk, where they had been overlooked for fifty years.¹²⁶ Perhaps the most surprising discovery about these Jews settled so far from home, was their program for building a temple in their new home.¹²⁷ Not long ago, learned divines were fond of pointing out that Nephi's idea of building a temple in the New World was quite sufficient in itself to prove once and for all the fraudulence of the Book of Mormon, since, it was argued, no real Jew would ever dream of having a temple anywhere but in Jerusalem. So the Elephantine Papyri score another point for the Book of Mormon.

The same year (1954) saw the publication of part of an actual record kept at an important Egyptian prison in what is usually thought to be the time of Joseph. It includes a list of seventy-five prisoners' names, of which forty are of West Semitic origin, by which "the genuine antiquity of some patriarchal names is . . . brightly illumined."¹²⁸ Which reminds us that in 1938 Nelson Glueck first showed

Lehi to be an authentic West Semitic name, at home in the borders near the Red Sea.¹²⁹ In 1958 the same authority was able to trace part of Abraham's route through the desert "through the Wilderness of Zin from Palestine to Egypt and back again. . . . After having discovered these Abra(ha)mitic, period sites", he reports, "the chapters in the Bible describing the journeys of Abram [Abraham] and his people . . . became clearer to us."¹³⁰

Within a stone's throw of Jerusalem (less than fifteen miles away on the average) is a land that had been examined with care by Christian antiquarians since the days of Origen and Jerome. Hundreds of caves containing thousands of written fragments had escaped detection through the centuries until the desert suddenly came to life in the early 1950s. "Discoveries tread on the heels of discoveries," cried Professor Cross. "The antique riches of this land seem limitless."¹³¹ By 1960 over 230 caves had been explored, and around 400 manuscripts had been discovered.¹³² The documents that interest us consist of more than 400 manuscripts covering a span of 300 years—from the end of the third century B.C. until 68 A.D. They include "the first major biblical manuscript of great antiquity,"¹³³ letters of the great leader Simon Bar Kochbah (now read Kosiba) written by himself,¹³⁴ the "first [known] Hebrew documents from the early Rabbinic period,"¹³⁵ and above all the records and teachings of a pre-Christian "Church in the Wilderness."¹³⁶

More than a decade ago this writer, following a clue from an apocryphal work called the Assumption of Moses, suggested in the pages of *The Improvement Era* that the documents from the caves of Qumran had not been hastily buried by their owners to preserve them from the ravages of a Roman army but had rather been deliberately buried and sealed up to come forth in a later "dispensation."¹³⁷ Since then, the discovery of a fragment of the Assumption of Moses itself in one of the caves has put scholars on the track of investigation which now leads them to the conclu-

sion that the Scrolls actually were buried in “a solemn communal interment” with the hope of their discovery in a later and better age.¹³⁸

In this connection, one find in particular should be mentioned, namely the now famous Copper Scroll from Cave IV. It is a document of first importance: “There is hardly an aspect of Near Eastern Archaeology, history, and religion that it does not in some way illumine.”¹³⁹ Originally it consisted of copper plates, but these have been riveted together so that they could be rolled up in imitation of a sacred leather scroll.¹⁴⁰ Why copper? Because this record was more valuable than any of the other Scrolls, being nothing less than a catalog of all the buried treasures of the society. If this record should perish, many if not all of their possessions—all dedicated to the Lord—would be irretrievably lost. Hence it had to be written on an enduring substance and carefully hidden away.¹⁴¹ Consider some items from the Copper Scroll:

Item 4: “Tithe vessels, consisting of ‘lôg’ vessels and amphorae, all of tithe and stored Seventh-Year produce and Second Tithe . . . in the bottom of the water conduit, six cubits from the north towards the hewn immersion pool.”

Item 26: “Buried at three cubits, (hidden) there is a pitcher; in it, one scroll, under it 42 talents.”

Item 34: “In the (drain) pipe which is in the eastern path to the Treasury, which is beside the Entrance: tithe jars and scrolls in amongst the jars.”¹⁴²

All these were sacred treasures and could be used only for religious purposes.¹⁴³ Note that along with the money are sacred writings, one of them in a clay vessel such as the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in, others packed in among the jars. The “immersion pool” refers to “a ritual bath,” according to Allegro’s note, and the “Seventh-Year produce” reminds one of the custom, referred to casually in the Book of Mormon, of the people’s bringing a seven years’ supply to a great gathering.¹⁴⁴

Pre-Christian baptism and seventh-year produce thus ring familiar bells to the student of the Book of Mormon. But what is of particular interest, of course, is the nature and use of the copper plates. By both precept and example they proclaim for the first time clearly and unequivocally that it was indeed an ancient Jewish custom to conceal sacred records, including records kept on metal plates prized for their durability. The business of writing on such plates was hard and distasteful work: "The scribe, not without reason, appears to have tired toward the end, and the last lines of writing are badly formed and rather small. One can almost hear his sigh of relief as he punched out the last two words in the middle of the final line."¹⁴⁵ How clearly this recalls the protests and explanations of our Book of Mormon writers, "and I cannot write but little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates" (Jacob 4:1) and "I would write it also if I had room on the plates, but I have not" (Mormon 8:5). Writing on plates requires a cramped and abbreviated script, Moroni explains (Mormon 9:32), and Allegro also notes that writing on copper plates actually produces a new kind of writing that is peculiarly difficult to read, characterized by mixing forms of letters, ignoring the proper spacing between words, "running-over from one line to the next in the middle of a word," and general neglect of vowels.

"A greater deficiency lies in ourselves," Allegro concludes; "we simply do not possess a sufficiently comprehensive technical Hebrew vocabulary to deal with a text of this kind."¹⁴⁶ This should have a sobering effect on those people who fondly suppose that if we could only discover some Nephite plates, the translation could be left to them: this sort of thing needs a Urim and Thummim indeed.

Since the past few decades have brought forth numerous exemplars of ancient writing on metal plates, of which Exhibit A are the gold and silver Darius plates – sacred history deposited in a special stone box by a near-contem-

porary of Lehi¹⁴⁷—it is only too easy to forget that nothing in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon excited louder howls of derision than the fantastic idea of a sacred history being written on gold plates and then buried in the ground. The Copper Scroll and its message, compared carefully with what the Book of Mormon itself has to say about the recording and storing of bronze and gold plates, should give pause to the most skeptical critic of the Book of Mormon.

Cause for Alarm

In the Melchizedek Priesthood Manual for 1957 this writer included a chapter entitled “Unwelcome Voices from the Dust.” This called forth some protest at the time, but the ensuing decade with its increasingly cool reception of new scrolls from Qumran has more than vindicated our position; it was just in 1957, in fact, that publication on the Scrolls suddenly cut down to a trickle and has remained at that low level ever since, as was pointed out by Professor Allegro in a rather sensational article in *Harper's Magazine* for August, 1966. Allegro's article caused quite a flurry and has led to much confusion by linking together two propositions which do not necessarily belong together. The first proposition was that the Dead Sea Scrolls had not proven popular with scholars at all, and are now receiving the deep-freeze treatment. With this proposition we agree.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is “a marvelous story” in which it is not too hard to see the hand of the Lord.¹⁴⁸ It quickly produced “a whole cascade of revolutions.”¹⁴⁹ Some Christians were at first alarmed at the threat to the “originality” of their version of Christianity, and to allay fears scholars tried to minimize the importance of the Scrolls,¹⁵⁰ while Jewish experts viewed the new discoveries as a threat to Halachic, “normative” Judaism and in some cases with great severity denounced them as a fraud.¹⁵¹ There was real consternation at what the Scrolls were doing to our accepted Bible text, and conservative scholars still

try to brush them aside as of little consequence.¹⁵² But in 1954 the Jews, who had once been cool towards the Scrolls, were glad to pay \$250,000 for just four of them,¹⁵³ and Christian scholars now assure us that "all of us . . . should be proud to claim as a part of our heritage those people whom we now know as Judean Covenanters or Essenes."¹⁵⁴

Persistent denial has only called attention to the fact that vested interests have influenced the study of the Scrolls from the first and that their discovery has not been greeted with cries of unalloyed delight by Christian and Jewish scholars. "It is as a potential threat to Christianity, its claims, and its doctrines that the Scrolls have caught the imagination of laymen and clergy," wrote K. Stendahl.¹⁵⁵ It is not surprising that the Russians forthwith put forth the claim "that the Qumran discoveries conclusively prove that Jesus never existed."¹⁵⁶ But it is somewhat disturbing that after the Russians have seen their error and changed their position, our American intellectuals still accept Edmund Wilson's verdict "that the rise of Christianity should, at last, be generally understood as simply an episode of human history rather than propagated as dogma and divine revelation."¹⁵⁷ That "at last" clearly announces the vindication of a preconceived notion.

Actually the new documentary finds are a blow to conventional Christianity, which, as Stendahl points out, takes the position of the famous heretic Marcion: "He wanted Christianity to be a new religion, just as it is to us. Whereas the New Testament sees Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecies, we are apt to see him as the founder of a new religion. . . . Our pattern of thought is that of natural science: Jesus is the inventor of Christianity and the church is the guardian of his patent and his copyright. In the New Testament the major concern is the diametrically opposite one: to make clear that all is 'old,' in accordance with the expectations of the prophets."¹⁵⁸ If this fact had been recog-

nized, all the fuss and alarm about the threat to the "originality" of Christ (especially among Catholic scholars) would have been unnecessary. "If Dupont-Sommer was correct in this approach," wrote R.K. Harrison, who felt on the whole that he *was* correct, "the very foundations of the Christian faith might well be shaken by the realization that a hitherto-unknown pre-Christian Jewish religious community had possessed similar beliefs and practices. On such a view Christianity would have to abandon its claim to uniqueness."¹⁵⁹

But the Christian scriptures make no such claim to uniqueness, as Stendahl reminds us, and the Christian doctors should have known better since, as Bruce observes, "it has long been known that some kind of parallel can be found in the Talmud to practically every element in the ethical teaching of Jesus."¹⁶⁰ The men in the seminaries have known for years about all kinds of such parallels, but they have never made "a thorough attempt to come to grips with the basic problem of what such parallels actually mean"; instead they have been quietly swept under the rug, with the result, as Stendahl notes, that the Christian world was "badly prepared to receive the good news from the Qumran Scrolls."¹⁶¹ And it is precisely on these presuppositions, in particular that of the absolute uniqueness of the New Testament and the finality of the accepted scripture, that all criticism of the Book of Mormon has been based in the past. The new discoveries thus cut the ground away from all such criticism.

Which brings us to Allegro's second point, which is that the unpopularity of the Scrolls with Christian scholars must be due to the way in which they prove Christianity a fraud. Here he makes the mistake of identifying modern with ancient Christianity, assuming, as people commonly do, that there has only been one Christianity, just as there has supposedly always been one Judaism, though Professor Goodenough has shown that rabbinical Halachic,

“horizontal” Judaism is quite a different thing from the old “vertical” Judaism of another day; just so it can now be shown that what people label Christianity today is totally different from the ancient article. It is true that the Scrolls are very hard on conventional Judaism and conventional Christianity alike, and have been condemned by leaders of both religions. And they have been condemned for the very same reason that the Book of Mormon was condemned; for presenting a picture of ancient faith which was totally different from what modern Jews and Christians have always assumed it should have been.

What Yadin wrote eleven years ago still applies: “Any attempt at this stage of research to identify the Dead Sea sect with any other sect of the time is more likely to be based on assumptions than on facts”; but of one thing we can be sure, that “the commonplaces of scholarship are up for re-examination in the light of the new material offered by the scrolls.”¹⁶² And one of those commonplaces, long accepted but completely untested, has been the status of the Book of Mormon. “Scholars may disagree violently with one another’s interpretations,” writes F.F. Bruce, “and engage vigorously in debate; far more progress will be achieved in this way than by a mute agreement to differ.”¹⁶³ Unfortunately, there has been no disagreement or debate about the Book of Mormon among those qualified to undertake a comparative investigation, but only a mute agreement to ignore: the apotropaic power of its title page has been insurmountable. But in view of the wonderful combination of circumstances that has been necessary to bring present-day students to a serious consideration of hundreds of valuable and neglected apocryphal writings, the neglect of the Book of Mormon should be anything but a surprise.