



Type: Magazine Article

Since Cumorah: New Voices from the Dust, Part XVII

Author(s): Hugh W. Nibley

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (February 1966)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 118–122

Abstract: This series argues that the changing attitudes of biblical scholars toward basic questions about scripture allow room for claims made by the Book of Mormon. It discusses external evidences, the primitive church, Lehi, Zenos, the olive tree, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The seventeenth part covers various scrolls.

SINCE CUMORAH

NEW VOICES FROM THE DUST

BY HUGH NIBLEY, PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND RELIGION
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As new documents are discovered the comparative study of the Book of Mormon goes forward. We continue a brief glance at some of the more important scrolls that have not yet appeared in book form nor been translated into English.

●The fragment labelled IQSb is the *Blessing Scroll* and contains five blessings.⁷⁷ The first is addressed to those “who hold fast to God’s holy covenant and are perfect in walking in the ways of truth.” Such language recalls Luke 1 and clearly indicates that the gospel was indeed restored to and through those righteous few who were looking forward to the Messiah, as is so fully set forth in the Book of Mormon.⁷⁸ Here we are further told that God shall provide “an eternal fountain of living water for them,” that they may receive instruction “in the congregation of the Saints.” The third blessing (the second is badly damaged) says that God shall “set a crown of eternal glory upon thy head, and sanctify thy seed with eternal glory . . . and give thee kingship.” The emphasis on the importance of progeny and kingship is signifi-

cant. The leaders, “the Sons of Zadok, God’s chosen priests,” are blessed to be “perfect ornaments in the midst of the congregation of the saints.” The fourth blessing is also a blessing of leadership and promises eternal crowns and ministration in the presence of angels and of a time when all things shall be “discussed in common council with the saints for time and for all eternity (lit. ‘for an eternal time and for all the ages of eternity’). The leader is one who is “sanctified among his people . . . a light for all the earth in knowledge . . . a diadem for the Most High; for thou shalt bless Him and glorify His Name, and His saints likewise.” Here we get the New Testament idea of “the light of the world.”

The fifth blessing deals with the time when God “restores [renews] the covenant of the church [congregation], that the kingdom might be established for his people forever and that the poor might receive righteous judgment and the meek of the earth receive instruction, that they might walk perfectly in all his ways . . . to reestablish his holy covenant for the solace of those who seek him.” As for the wicked world, it shall be smitten and made desolate by

the power of God’s mouth at a time when they who have received the blessing will go through the gentiles like a young ox(?) (the text is defective) trampling them down.

A small almost perfectly preserved fragment known as the *Testimonia* (4Q test) contains “a collection of Old Testament proof-texts” expressing “the Messianic expectation of the congregation.”⁷⁹ Moses is told to warn the people against apostasy, and God tells them of a Prophet whom the Lord will “raise up from the midst of their brethren like unto thee,” with strict admonition to heed him. (Cf. Deut. 18:18-19.) A man “whose eye is perfect” shall converse with the Lord and see the face of the Almighty, but veiled and at a distance. Then “a star will arise in Jacob, a scepter in Israel,” to prostrate Moab and the sons of Seth. Then there is a strange passage about the giving of “thy Thummim and thy Urim to a man who devoutly serves thee (a *hasid*), whom thou hast tested in Massah and with whom thou hast had controversy by the waters of controversy (Meribah).” This man, it would seem, parted from his father and his mother, his brother and his sons, “because he kept thy



The miracle of the loaves and the fishes.

command and remained faithful to thy covenant." Such men were the leaders of the congregations of Qumran, who here apply the scriptures to themselves. Note how well the type of refugee prophet fits Nephi or his father, who because of their faith left their own people, were tested in the southern desert and on the waters, and even received the Urim and Thummim.

The *Commentary on Nahum* (4Q pNah)⁸⁰ begins with reference to the young lions raging unopposed as representatives of God's wrath against the gentiles and the wicked of Israel—an image that occurs no less than four times in 3 Nephi. Here the Qumran people apply Nahum 2:12 to their own time: the "greedy priests at Jerusalem" are protagonists in a struggle in which the opposition of "opposing groups is depicted as a contest between Ephraim and Manasseh." There is a vivid description of the falling away of Ephraim, who will "seek after smooth things in the last days, and walk in falsehood and deceit," as a result of which "the sword of the Gentiles will not depart from the midst of her congregation."

But after Ephraim has led many astray "through deceptive doctrine

and her lying tongue and false lips—even kings, princes, priests and people . . . who have joined her," in the last days there will come a change: "Many will acknowledge their sins in Israel," when "the evil deeds of all Israel will be made known," and "turn away from their sins and view them with abhorrence because of their guilty pride and the overthrow of Judah's renown." Then at last "shall the meek of Ephraim flee out of the midst of her congregations, and depart from those who have led her astray, and join themselves to Israel."

As to those who sought the smooth and flattering things, "their counsel shall fail and their congregation be dispersed, and they shall not continue to lead the congregations astray, and the meek and simple will no longer sustain their counsel." Nahum 3:8—"Art thou better than No-Amon?"—is explained as meaning that "Amon is Manasseh, and the rivers are the great and noble ones of Manasseh." Manasseh is to profit by the weakness of Ephraim at the time when the humble of Ephraim begin to repent. Next we find that Manasseh had joined "the wicked hosts, the house of Peleg," which

would imply, from the mention of Peleg elsewhere in the Apocrypha, that Manasseh has gone beyond the sea, where he is lost in wickedness. Nahum 3:10 is interpreted as "referring to Manasseh in the last days, when his rule over Israel shall fall," and "his wives, his infants, and his children shall go into captivity while his heroes and noble ones perish by the sword." With a reference to "the godless ones of Ephraim whose cup shall pass to Manasseh," the fragment breaks off.

Students of the Scrolls have called attention to the image of the cup as representing suffering and martyrdom,⁸¹ so it can mean either that Manasseh will have to drink the cup once forced on Ephraim or that the cup which Ephraim forced on Manasseh will be thrust upon him. At any rate, the clear identification of the Book of Mormon people with Manasseh (note also the overwhelming predominance of the name Amon in the Book of Mormon!) should make it easy for anyone to find here all kinds of parallels to prophecies in that book.

In the *Commentary on the 37th Psalm* (4Q pPs 37) "the congregation at Qumran," as Lohse notes, "applied the Psalm to their own situation."⁸² Need we refer again to 1 Nephi 19:23? Psalm 37:8f is explained as "the return to the Law of those who do not hesitate to depart from their wickedness. For all who do hesitate . . . will be destroyed." Verse 9 "refers to the congregation of the Chosen who do his will," and verse 11 to "the congregation of the Poor, who have accepted the time of probation and who will be saved from all the pitfalls of Belial. Verses 14 and 15 "refer to the godless of Ephraim and Manasseh . . . in the time of probation [testing]; but God has rescued them [the Saints] from their hand." The righteous of verse 17 are "they who return to the wilderness, who shall dwell a thousand generations in Israel and with

their seed inherit the whole earth forever"; they shall also be spared the famines and plagues of the last days. Verse 20 refers both "to his Chosen Ones who shall be the heads and leaders," and to the wicked leaders of the opposition "who shall pass away as smoke and wind," while (v. 21f) "the congregations of the Poor . . . shall inherit the earth . . . possess the high mount of Israel and rejoice in its Temple." Next these things are applied to the contemporary feud between the Teacher of Righteous-

ness and the godless priest who sought his death but on whom God will wreak vengeance in the end, as (v. 34) "the congregation of the Poor behold the condemnation of the wicked, his Chosen People who will rejoice in his inheritance."

As they increase in number and tend to be taken for granted, we are apt to forget just how remarkable these prophecies are, coming as they do to us *directly* "in their purity" from the hands of Jews who lived long before Christ.

Light from Egypt. But we must

not forget the companion pieces to the Dead Sea Scrolls. What has Nag Hammadi to say on the subject? Here again we have the library of a devout body of secretaries, preserved by the sands of the desert; but these people, instead of looking forward only to the coming for the Messiah, look both forward and back, since, as we learn from Justin's *Dialogue*, that is the basic difference between Jew and Christian. Both situations are found in the Book of Mormon, however, and the Nag Hammadi writings deal with the second phase, and more particularly with the activity of the Lord among men *after* his resurrection. This is a great stroke of luck, since the most striking and daring part of the Book of Mormon is that dealing with the appearance of Christ to the Nephites after the crucifixion. How do the two versions compare?

Recently this writer went through all available early Christian writings dealing with the activities of the Lord during the forty days after the resurrection and found that with all their pseudognostic corruptions they all have four things in common, these things being demonstrably the original Christian tradition—what remains after all the speculations and embellishments and fabrications have been drained off. The four things are (1) insistence on secrecy, (2) emphasis on the limited sojourn of the Church upon the earth at that time, (3) bodies of doctrine, and (4) rites and ordinances that differ substantially from the teachings and rituals of conventional Christianity. These four things characterize Christ's postresurrectional teaching in the Book of Mormon as well; but since we cannot here examine a score of Coptic texts, we may take as a sampling a writing which no less an authority than Origen claims to be older than the Gospel of Luke, and which was accepted by Christians as perfectly orthodox down to the



"HE CAN WHO THINKS HE CAN"

RICHARD L. EVANS

Long remembered from years back was a book with an intriguing title: *He Can Who Thinks He Can*. The content we do not so much remember, but the title we recall because it was an indication of the faith and courage and confidence required for accomplishment. "He can who thinks he can." It could apply to almost any endeavor—to developing talents, to improving performance, to learning, overcoming habits, repenting, even to moving toward perfection—toward it, if not to it. It is, in its own way, a restatement of our inner resources and suggests what a person can do when he is under the wonderful necessity of trying to do something for himself. Two men may be ill with apparently somewhat the same physical resources, one with a will to live and one without, and with an opposite outcome. Doctors have observed it often. The difference between two athletes may not be altogether physical; there may be an added element of spirit, of will, of morale, with the determination to succeed, to excel. Many accomplish much because they *think* they can, because they have faith they can. Many break habits because they are convinced they can. The discriminating courage to say no at the right time and yes at the right time is of great consequence. Those who move forward are those who have faith, who have confidence they can. The courage to undertake good but difficult things and to see them through is a great quality of character. The Lord God meant us to learn, to use our intelligence, to solve our problems, to decide for ourselves, to face up to facts. "The spirit of self-help," said Samuel Smiles, "is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigor and strength."¹ "It is no use saying 'We are doing our best,'" said Winston Churchill. "You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary."² "The way for a young man to rise," said Abraham Lincoln, "is to improve himself every way he can, never suspecting that anybody wishes to hinder him."³ With will, with wanting to, with believing in ourselves, and with believing in the help that can come from outside ourselves, "He can who thinks he can."

¹Samuel Smiles, *Self Help*.

²Winston Spencer Churchill.

³Attributed to Abraham Lincoln.

"The Spoken Word," from Temple Square, presented over KSL and the Columbia Broadcasting System, October 24, 1965. Copyright 1965.

time of the patristic writers.

Discovered in 1913 it is called the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* and survives only in Coptic, being of the same period and locale as our Nag Hammadi books.⁸³ It presents a characteristic confusion of events before and after the resurrection, but this presents no great problem since it is universally conceded that the Lord repeated many things as he spent forty days off and on teaching the things of the kingdom. (Cf. Acts 1:3.) The point is that there are conspicuous aspects of the story which can be confirmed by the "forty-day" literature in general and the Book of Mormon in particular.

Fragment 2 of the so-called *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*⁸⁴ begins by informing "the brethren" who want to know "how things really were" that "as long as Jesus was upon the earth he continued to eat with his Apostles on an earthly table, pointing their minds forward to the table in his kingdom, for the things of this world he counted as nothing." The language here is typically postresurrectional. The writer tells how Jesus wanted his apostles to be one, "and used to pray to his Father for them, that they might be one even as we are one."

After a lacuna we see Thomas at the Lord's behest bringing him five loaves and two fishes, while Andrew protests the inadequacy of the fare: "Bring them to me," says the Lord in reply, "and there will be enough." As in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, the people have been three days in the desert with nothing to eat—albeit under very different circumstances. Still the situation is a type and an image. Before he blesses the bread and fish, Jesus holds intimate conversation with a little child (cf. 3 Nephi 26:14 and 17:11ff), after which he explains to the multitude that what they are about to enjoy is a special providence which they must always remember and a meal

that will truly fill them. (Cf. 3 Nephi 20:8.) Next "Jesus took the bread, prayed over it, giving praise and thanks, and then divided it, giving it to the Apostles that they might pass it to the multitude" (cf. 3 Nephi 18:3-4), announcing that "he to whom I have not given a share of the bread with my hands is not worthy to partake of my flesh. . . . This is a mystery of the Father with regard to the distribution of my flesh." (Cf. 3 Nephi 18:27ff.)

Note that the loaves and fishes

seem to be here confused with the Sacrament. The identity, it is now known, is intentional: a number of scholars, especially Roman Catholic, have recently called attention to the close connection of the loaves and fishes miracle with the Sacrament, noting that the feeding of the multitude was actually an ordinance.⁸⁵ The passing of the Sacrament by the Twelve and their administering to the people in twelve separate bodies (Cf. 3 Nephi 19:5) is a significant detail. Recently A. Adam has shown that



THE MEANING OF DIGNITY

RICHARD L. EVANS

There is a word in our language that could well be currently considered, a word not often talked of, but one of much meaning. The word is "dignity." In dictionary definition it is associated with character and quality, intrinsic worth, nobleness, honor, excellence. These are words of much meaning. As children of God, made in his own image, how would the human race ever fail to carry the quality of dignity? Nor can one imagine the Savior of mankind in any other role than that of dignity. This does not mean stiff or strained formality, not "front" or "frumpiness" or artificiality or long-faced living, but a naturalness and happiness and ease of approach—respect without aloofness—the respect which everyone is entitled to and has an obligation to give all others. And in a day of extremes, of fads, of looseness and lack of restraint and lack of respect for law, we well could emphasize this quality of dignity which so easily associates itself with honor and honesty and high qualities of character. There is both dignified and undignified humor. There is raucous, loud-mouthed humor, uncouth humor. There is evil, offensive humor. And there is high-minded, wonderful, delightful humor. There is the dignity of cleanliness and tasteful grooming and the careless indignity of unkempt hair and clothes and acts and attitudes. There are undignified extremes contrasted with modest good taste. Extremes are seldom dignified, seldom durable, seldom really sensible. "When we go too far it is seldom in the right direction."¹ Included in dignity is the question of courtesy. Emerson said: "Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy."² Discourtesy is always undignified. Sin is never dignified, but leads to depravity of soul. We come back to this basic fact: that men should respect themselves, should respect one another, and should respect their relationship to God, to truth, to law, and should respect whatever lifts men's lives, and should shun whatever lowers men's lives. "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report . . . , we [should] seek after these things"³—with dignity and happiness and honor and honesty.

¹Arnold Glasgow, Freeport, Illinois.

²Attributed to Emerson.

³Joseph Smith, Articles of Faith, xiii.

"The Spoken Word," from Temple Square, presented over KSL and the Columbia Broadcasting System, October 31, 1965. Copyright 1965.

STIMULATING READING FROM DESERET BOOK



1 **THE TESTIMONY OF PRES. HEBER J. GRANT**
\$1.75

by Gerrit de Jong, Jr.

Everyone will find this uplifting insight into the life of and beliefs of President Heber J. Grant an unusually spiritual experience. Here was a prophet of God with a truly remarkable understanding of human nature . . . and a special mission to his people.



2 **WITH SUGAR AND SPICE**
\$3.95

by Daryl V. Hoole and Donette V. Ockey

An important addition to every Latter-day Saint home library — and an indispensable guide to many home situations. Children will appreciate the spirit and letter of the advice contained in "With Sugar and Spice." Co-authored by Daryl V. Hoole



3 **WHEN YOU SPEAK IN CHURCH**
\$3.95

by Emerson R. West

You'll find this a handy guide to more effective talks in Church . . . how to give meaning and purpose and power to your sermons. Every member of the Church should absorb the message of WHEN YOU SPEAK IN CHURCH.



Clip Coupon
DESERET BOOK COMPANY
44 E. So. Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah
Please send me the following books I
have circled 1 2 3 I enclose
check, money order for the full cost
plus Utah state tax of 3½%, total
\$..... Or please bill me for
same amount.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....
State..... Zip.....

Feb. 66, Era

"BURNED OUT"

REALLY MEANS BURNED OUT TODAY

*A fire may mean you are out of a place to live,
with tremendous added expense before you find
another.*

*Let us explain your need for ample insurance
to cover today's higher values.*

UTAH HOME FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY
HEBER J. GRANT & CO., General Agents, Salt Lake City

this division into twelve bodies was an essential part of the old Jewish rite of the shewbread of which the Christian Sacrament was a continuation—as it is in the Book of Mormon.⁸⁶

Jesus blesses the bread that those who eat of it may be filled, "that Thy Son might receive glory in Thee; that those whom thou hast taken out of the world might obey him." The reference to being taken out of the world occurs also in the other oldest-known prayer on the Sacrament—that in the *Didache*—while the element of obedience is important in the prayer on the bread in the Book of Mormon: ". . . that they may . . . keep his commandments which he hath given them. . . ." (Moroni 4:3.)

Then, we are told, "all the people ate and were filled; whereupon they praised God." (Cf. 3 Nephi 20:9: "Now, when the multitude had all eaten . . . they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus. . . .")

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

⁷⁷Text and discussion in D. Barthelemy and J. T. Milik, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (Oxford, 1955), I, 118-130.

⁷⁸F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts*, p. 151, notes that "piety and hope link them (the characters of Luke 1) rather with 'sectarian' Judaism than with the main stream of national religion." Cf. Dupont-Sommer, *Manuscrits de la Mer Morte*, p. 201.

⁷⁹Lohse, *op. cit.*, p. 249. The text is in the same handwriting as the *Manual of Discipline*, according to J. Allegro, who reproduces the text in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 75 (1956), pp. 182-7.

⁸⁰Complete photographs of the texts are supplied by J. Allegro, in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 7 (1962), pp. 304-8.

⁸¹J. Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), p. 72.

⁸²For the fullest discussion, H. Stegemann in *Revue de Qumran*, 4 (1963), pp. 235-270.

⁸³The text is discussed by E. Revillout in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 2:123-130, where the text is reproduced, pp. 131-184.

⁸⁴All the material here discussed is found *ibid.*, pp. 132-143.

⁸⁵G. H. Boobyer, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 3 (1953), pp. 161-171, and A. M. Farrer in the same journal, 4 (1953), pp. 1-14.

⁸⁶A. Adam, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 88 (1963), pp. 10-19.