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Checking on Long-Forgotten Lore

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Checking on Long-Forgotten Lore

Peculiar Situations

The Reverend F.S. Spaulding prefaced his elaborate and carefully planned demonstration of the fraudulence of the Book of Mormon by the remark that “a flood of light would be thrown upon the whole question of church origins if the account of the organization of the church in the new world, described in the Book of Mormon, were similar to that in the old.”¹ But the reason such a flood of light would be welcome is precisely that no description of the founding and organization of the Church in the Old World is available, as was fully demonstrated in Olaf Linton’s well-known study.² The study of the nature and organization of the early church has always been a theme of hopeless confusion and disagreement; and the present pope has been good enough to point out how defective our knowledge of the original Christian institutions has been. Actually Bishop Spaulding hit the nail on the head: *If the Book of Mormon gives an authentic picture of how the Lord went about setting up the church, then it gives us indeed a flood of light. But how can we tell whether the Book of Mormon account is not the purest fantasy? Today there is a way.*

For in the year in which Spaulding made his sage observation, a very early and important Christian document was first brought forth to throw a new light on the activities of the Lord after the Resurrection.

The Forgotten Ministry of Christ

It was noted above that, far from being a mere repetition of what he had already taught the disciples, the Lord after his return from the dead taught them secret things they had not known before, and which were absolutely essential to the accomplishing of their missions.³ Whenever a really old Christian text is discovered today, one can be pretty sure that its subject will be what the Lord taught the apostles in secret *after* the Resurrection.

In the texts from Nag Hammadi we have the library of a devout body of sectaries, preserved by the sands of the desert; but these people, instead of looking forward only to the coming of 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 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 the then-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.⁴ These four things characterize Christ's post-resurrectional teaching in the Book of Mormon as well; but since we cannot

here examine scores of Coptic and Syriac texts, we may take as a sampling a writer 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 time of the Patristic writers.

This is the writing mentioned above that came forth in the very year Spaulding flung his challenge to the Book of Mormon. 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.⁵ 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 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 post-resurrectional. 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 17:11–13), 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 18:27–30).

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.⁶ 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 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.⁷

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").

The next section tells how Jesus went about making his disciples and his followers perfectly one with each other, with him, and with the Father: "Have ye not heard, O my beloved, the love of Jesus for his apostles; which was so great that he withheld nothing from them in all the works of his godhead?" This blessing was imparted in three steps, "the first time in blessing the five barley loaves, the second time when he prayed and glorified the Father, the third time when he blessed the seven loaves." In 3 Nephi 19 the Lord also imparts his glory to the disciples in three steps as they prayed three times "to the Father in the name of Jesus" (3 Nephi 19:8).

The main theme of both accounts is how the Lord made the disciples one with each other by making them one with himself and his Father. In founding the church, it was this oneness which, according to both texts, he desired of the Father more than anything else. Accordingly, in two short prayers in the Book of Mormon, one four verses long (3 Nephi 19:20–23) and the other only two verses (3 Nephi 19:28–29), we find no less than sixty-nine personal pronouns! Thus the second prayer ends: "that *they* may be purified in *me*, and *I* may be in *them* as *thou*, Father, art in *me*, that *we* may be one, that *I* may be glorified in *them*" (3 Nephi 19:29). These utterances, astonishing as they seem, are actually matched and even surpassed in the Gospel of John 14–17, where the mingling of identities becomes positively overpowering. Plainly we are in the same thought-world as John, treating matters concerning which the most persistent repetition fails to convince the Christian world. John and Nephi tell us that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one in exactly the same way that they want the apostles and all the other members of the church to be one with them and with each other.

After this, "Thomas says unto Jesus, Behold, O Lord,

thou hast in thy goodness bestowed every grace upon us. But there yet remains one thing which we would that thou wouldst grant unto us." This is a common theme in the "forty-day" accounts, where the apostles, after having received all knowledge and enlightenment and become perfectly one with Jesus, have yet one question to ask him but are abashed at the presumption of asking, until Jesus, who knows what is in their hearts, tells them he knows what it is they desire and that they need not be ashamed, for it is a worthy request. In the present text the Lord simply encourages Thomas and his brethren not to be embarrassed to ask what is in their minds, though usual commendation is lacking. It is not lacking in the Book of Mormon account:

"And it came to pass . . . he spake unto his disciples *one by one* [they always question him individually in the 'forty-day' literature], saying unto them: What is it that ye desire of me . . . ?

"And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three. . . . And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired. And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved . . . desired of me. Therefore, more blessed are ye" (3 Nephi 28:1, 4-7).

Here we are directly referred to an identical situation in the Old World. And what is the special boon granted the three? That they "shall never taste of death, . . . even until all things shall be fulfilled . . . and . . . shall never endure the pains of death; but . . . shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye" (3 Nephi 28:7-8).

A like request is granted in our Coptic account: "We desire, O Lord, that we may see how things are with the dead who lie in their tombs, whom thou hast raised up to be a sign of thy resurrection to take place for us. . . . We desire to see the bones which have fallen apart in the tomb, how they are reunited one to another, that the dead may

speak." What follows shows that this is plainly a post-resurrectional tradition, for in answer to their request Thomas and two friends are shown the raising of Lazarus, at whose coming forth the whole cemetery revolves on its axis, and "the dead arose and came forth because of the voice of Jesus."

Such a mass resurrection could, of course, only take place after the Lord himself had been resurrected. The descriptions of the *descensus* (the visit of the Lord to the spirits in prison) and the *kerygma* (his preaching to them and liberating of them) that follow also clearly belong in a post-crucifixion setting. At the moment Jesus calls Lazarus forth, Adam also hears his voice and cries: "This voice which I hear is the voice of my Creator and my Redeemer. This is the voice of Him who was my glory when he addressed me in Paradise. . . . O my son, Lazarus, take greetings to My Creator. O when will the time come when I too may hear the voice of life calling me?"

Before he grants the wish of the apostles, Jesus says to the people, "More blessed are they who have not seen but believed than they who have seen and not believed," which is akin to the Book of Mormon, "blessed are ye if ye shall believe . . . after that ye have seen me. . . . And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words" (i.e., without having seen) (3 Nephi 12:1-2). Then the Coptic text adds, "You see how many miracles and signs I did among the Jews, and yet they did not believe me." This again compares with 3 Nephi 19:35: "So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief."

It is always one to three apostles who are singled out for special blessings and manifestations after the resurrection. In the first of all our early Christian Coptic texts to be discovered, the famous Pistis Sophia, we are told that Jesus appointed three of his disciples to keep official written records of what he said and did,⁸ conformant to the ancient

order (Deuteronomy 19:15) requiring that all things be established by three witnesses. In this case the three are Matthew, Thomas, and Philip, which accounts for the prominence of their names in the earliest Christian records. The significance of the "three witnesses" theme for the Book of Mormon needs no comment.

In the so-called Gospel of Philip we have another mixing of sacrament and transfiguration motifs, when Philip tells how Christ "made the disciples great, that they might be able to see him in his greatness. He said on that day in blessing the sacrament: 'Thou who hast joined the perfect, the light, with the Holy Ghost, unite the angels with us also.'"⁹ Compare this with the 19th chapter of 3 Nephi, where "they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire. . . . And angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them. And . . . Jesus came and stood in the midst. . . . And behold *they* were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus." (3 Nephi 19:13–15, 25).

The great difference between the spirit and teaching of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, according to F.F. Bruce, was that the Messiah of the New Testament "was different from any kind of Messiah expected at Qumran or elsewhere in Israel, . . . and all the accompaniments of messianic expectation had their meaning transformed in the light of His messianic achievement."¹⁰ Moreover, the Lord "fulfilled the scriptures in addition to making their meaning plain."¹¹ Those statements describe very well what happened in the Book of Mormon where, when the Lord finally came, what he said and did was marvelous and unspeakable and quite unlike anything anybody expected. He went through the scriptures and showed the Nephites how their meaning had indeed been transformed by his coming (3 Nephi 12–17, 20), and showed them how he had "fulfilled the scriptures in addition to making their meaning

clear." After that, for over two hundred years Nephite society wore a completely altered countenance.

Strange Behavior

In the Ascension of Isaiah we read a strange story: "When Somnas the scribe and Assur the record-keeper [cf. Zoram in the Book of Mormon] heard that the great prophet Isaiah was coming up from Gilgal [near Jericho and about ten miles from Qumran] to Jerusalem, and with him 40 sons of prophets and his own son Jasum, they announced his approach to King Hezekiah. When he heard this King Hezekiah rejoiced exceedingly and went forth to meet the blessed Isaiah, taking him by the hand and conducting him into his royal dwelling, and ordered that a chair be brought for him."¹² Then the king brought in his son Manasseh and besought the prophet to give him a blessing. When Isaiah declared this impossible because of what he could foresee, the king was so smitten with grief and dismay that he "sorrowed exceedingly and rent his garments and wept bitterly . . . and fell upon his face as one dead."

Isaiah, however, told the king that such behavior would profit him nothing, since Satan would have his way with Manasseh. Later while he was sitting on the king's bed conversing, the prophet was overcome by the Spirit, "and his consciousness was carried away from this world, so that Somnas the record-keeper began to say that Isaiah was dead. But when Hezekiah the King came in and took his hand he knew that he was not dead; but they thought he had died. . . . And thus he lay upon the bed of the King in his transported state [ecstasy] for three days and three nights. Then his spirit returned to his body," and Isaiah "summoned Jasum his son and Somnas the scribe and Hezekiah the King and all those who stood about such as were worthy to hear those things he had seen." To them he delivered an ecstatic discourse on the "surpassing, indescribable, and marvellous works of God who is merciful to

men, and of the glory of the Father and of his Beloved Son and of the Spirit, and of the ranks of the holy angels standing in their places." It will be recalled that Lehi was "carried away in a vision" on his bed, and when he awoke discoursed to his family on the "power, and goodness, and mercy" of God (1 Nephi 1:8, 14), and that in his vision he too saw "numberless concourses of angels" (1 Nephi 1:8).

Here we have something very much like the story of Ammon in the court of King Lamoni (Alma 18-19), with both the king and his inspired guest being overcome and taken for dead and having visions of the glorious plan of salvation. Also in this fragment we see Isaiah at home among the pious men of the Judaeian desert, the "40 sons of prophets," apparently heading some sort of religious community as Lehi and other prophets did later in the same desert, even down to the people of Qumran and the monks of the Middle Ages. Such societies, writes J. Eaton, "were essentially related to the religious communities of later Judaism and of Christianity" and were "called to a special task of guarding and witnessing to Yahweh's revelations vouchsafed in the first place to Isaiah."¹³

In the next section, which is a fragment of the lost "Testament of Isaiah," according to R. H. Charles, we see Isaiah accused before King Manasseh by a false prophet who wins the king and the people to his side with "flattering words" — a reminder both of the opponent of the righteous teacher in the Dead Sea Scrolls and of the troubles of Zenos in the Book of Mormon. Since he cannot endure the awful wickedness of Jerusalem, Isaiah goes into the desert again with his followers, this time camping in "a quiet and pure place on a mountain" not far from Bethlehem and still very near Qumran.

Even more unusual than the story of Ammon at Lamoni's court is the tale of how that same Ammon at the waters of Sebus, where "all the Lamanites drive their flocks," discomfited a band of cattle-raiders when he

“smote off as many of their arms as were lifted against him, and they were not a few” (Alma 17:26, 38). The feat of Ammon at the waters of Sebus is easy to explain. It is very clear from what we are told that Ammon had a trick blow which his heavy-handed opponents, rough herdsman with their clubs and stones, could never get the hang of until it was too late; he was a sort of karate expert with a sword. The cattle-stealing at the waters of Sebus is rather typical too—there is a close parallel to it in the 18th book of the Iliad, where the picture on the shield of Achilles of cattle-rustlers attacking at a watering-place is described as part of a *typical* episode of everyday life:

“When they had found what they thought was a good spot to lie and wait, at a place on a river where all the cattle were watered, there they crouched bristling with their shining weapons. And they sent out a couple of scouts to give them the sign as soon as the sheep and horned cattle were in sight. Before long they turned up with a pair of herdsmen playing on their flutes and not suspecting a thing. Then the men in the ambush dashed out and in short order rounded up the herds of cattle and flocks of fine white-wooled sheep and killed the two herdsmen.” The townspeople came out to rescue their animals, and a lively fight ensued at the “watering place of all the cattle.”¹⁴

The almost supernatural power of Ammon reminds one of Judah in the Testament of Judah, where “an angel of might followed him everywhere that he should never be beaten.”

Peculiar Teachings

The strange imagery and odd expressions and names found in the Book of Mormon are matched by the strangeness of the doctrines and concepts of the people—things utterly unfamiliar to the world of Joseph Smith, but now beginning to emerge as the legitimate property of the ancient saints. For example, the Book of Mormon opens with

what today would be called the Testament of Lehi, parts of which are given verbatim ("in the language of my father") by Nephi. Of recent years a good many such "Testaments" have come to light, revealing the existence of a very old and established tradition of inspired writing.

Another "Testament"

We have called attention above to the existence of a special category of ancient religious writing which we designated as the "Testament" type of literature, because the writings in question purported to contain the last admonitions and prophecies of certain patriarchs and prophets to their children and disciples; what all these "Testaments" have in common, we noted, is the inclusion of a cosmological discourse in which the patriarch gives an account of a conducted tour he has just taken in the spirit to the worlds above.¹⁵ This motif is among the oldest in literature, and the Testaments that contain it (e.g., of Enoch, Abraham, Zenez, the Twelve Patriarchs, etc.) are among the oldest of all apocryphal writings.

The visit of a pious observer to the other world, where he is allowed to look in on a great and glorious assemblage of heavenly beings in the presence of God, is familiar to all from Dante, who derived his ideas (it has recently been demonstrated) from Moslem models coming to him through Spain. At once one recalls Mohammed's journey to heaven in the 17th Sura of the Koran, which in turn harks back to a wealth of Jewish and Christian material much older than Islam. Some scholars today maintain that the Christian tradition has definite affinities with Egyptian teachings of great age,¹⁶ and indeed the journey to heaven to behold the great ones sitting in council before the throne of dominion is made by Pharaoh in the oldest written documents, the Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts of the Old Kingdom.

The Great Council held in heaven "at the foundation of the world" is a theme that runs like a red thread through

the scriptures: the first book of the Old Testament opens with it, and the last book of the New Testament closes with it, and all the major prophets had the privilege of viewing the heavenly scene of God upon his throne surrounded by numberless concourses of angels. But the idea of a *real* council ran counter to the prevailing doctrines of the schools, especially the University of Alexandria, at the time when those doctrines were adopted as the norms of Christian and Jewish orthodoxy; ever since the victory in the 4th century of intellectualized "horizontal" Christianity and Judaism over the old "vertical" religions, the tradition of how the plan of salvation was adopted at the council in heaven at the Creation has been systematically suppressed and "demythologized."¹⁷

In the Book of Mormon these teachings burst forth again in their original form and splendor, sweeping us back again into a forgotten world. And now, lending their voices to its voice, we have the newly discovered Coptic texts,¹⁸ the growing Mandaean-Manichaean corpus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The singer of the Thanksgiving Hymn of the Scrolls, who, as we shall see, is a close counterpart of the Book of Mormon's Zenos, found himself in the same plight as Lehi, distressed by the wickedness of the Jews at Jerusalem and their hostility to his teachings; but when the vision of the great council in heaven was brought to his mind, he was filled with joy and blessed assurance:

Thou hast caused me to mount up to an eternal height and to walk in an inconceivable exaltation. And I know that there is a hope for every one whom thou didst form of the dust in the presence of the Eternal Assembly . . . to be counted with the hosts of the Saints and to enter the society of the congregation of the Sons of Heaven. Thou didst appoint unto man an eternal share with the spirits that know, to praise thy name in joyful unison with them.¹⁹

No matter what befalls, all is well with the righteous,

for all is going according to God's plan: "From God is the knowledge of all that is and all that will be: and before they existed he established their whole plan, and when they exist [upon earth] he prescribes the conditions of their existence according to his glorious plan."²⁰ The poet cannot contain his joy at the knowledge that "mere man is to be raised up to join the heavenly hosts . . . and be among those who know in the great choir of jubilation."²¹ This was exactly Lehi's reaction to a view of the heavenly assembly; his former anguish and distress fell from him, and, like the writer of the Hymns, "he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth. . . . And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him" (1 Nephi 1:14-15).

Lehi starts right in with the heavenly journey, a vision in which "he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne" (1 Nephi 1:8). Here we are taken back to a council in heaven as a fitting prologue to a religious history. A decision is reached in the council and hailed with a great acclamation of joy, after which the session breaks up, various parties going about the business of carrying out their assignments in the implementation of the plan – the plan "prepared from the foundation of the world."²²

Here we glimpse a concept of heaven wholly alien to the conventional teachings of the Jewish and Christian doctors, who can think of nothing better than Athanasius's picture of the meeting going on and on and on forever, with the choir never ceasing its hymn and the angels never relaxing from their attitude of praise. That concept comes from the few brief glimpses of heaven reported in the scriptures, cases in which inspired men have been allowed to

look in for a moment in a brief flashback on what once happened above; this was to explain to them what happens here and to console them in their distress by showing them that there is a divine plan behind everything and hence letting them know that good men should not be impatient or dismayed when things seem to go wrong. This is a lesson taught in Job, John, and the Thanksgiving Hymns and Battle Scroll of the Dead Sea documents.²³

The interesting thing about Lehi's vision is that it carries through to the dismissal of the meeting, after which "he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, . . . and he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth" (1 Nephi 1:9-11).

"The Plan"

We have already discussed the image of "the Star," the divine person who comes down to fulfill a special mission among men. Let us here consider another aspect of the meeting.

A search through fifty-odd apocryphal writings of recent discovery reveals the surprising fact that no theme enjoys greater prominence among them than that of the council in heaven held at the foundation of the world and the plan "laid down in the presence of the first angels" on that occasion.²⁴ The word "plan" (usually as *makhashavah* or *boulē*) occurs with great frequency in these writings, but though it is often found also in the Bible, it is never translated as "plan" in the King James version, where, in fact, the word "plan" does not even appear.²⁵ On the other hand, it appears no fewer than twenty-four times in the Book of Mormon.

Basic to the "plan" was the provision that man's life on earth was to be a time of testing or probation (that word occurs thirteen times in the Book of Mormon), in which

every soul would be faced every day of his life with a choice between the two ways—the way of light and the way of darkness, or of life and death respectively.²⁶ This theme, as fully set forth in the Book of Mormon, enjoys almost overwhelming predominance in the newly found apocryphal writings,²⁷ and yet has no place in conventional Christian and Jewish theology, having been vigorously condemned by the doctors of both religions in the fourth and fifth centuries, since they would not tolerate any concepts involving preexistence of the spirit of man.²⁸ Hence is found the studious avoidance of such words as “plan” and “probation” in our translations of the Bible; to the contemporaries of Joseph Smith, these ideas were completely foreign, though we now know, thanks to documents discovered “since Cumorah,” that they were the very essence of early Christianity and Judaism.

The Testament of Lehi and the Dura Synagogue

“He was carried away . . . even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God” (1 Nephi 1:8). This is a standard theme in the apocryphal “testaments” of other patriarchs and prophets, Enoch being the classic example.²⁹ But as here described, the picture was thought to be strictly a Christian one, until the discovery of the Dura-Europos synagogue. It seems once to have held a central position in early Jewish imagery, enjoying a prominence that was entirely lost later on. That prominence is attested on the walls of the synagogue, discovered just a hundred years after the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

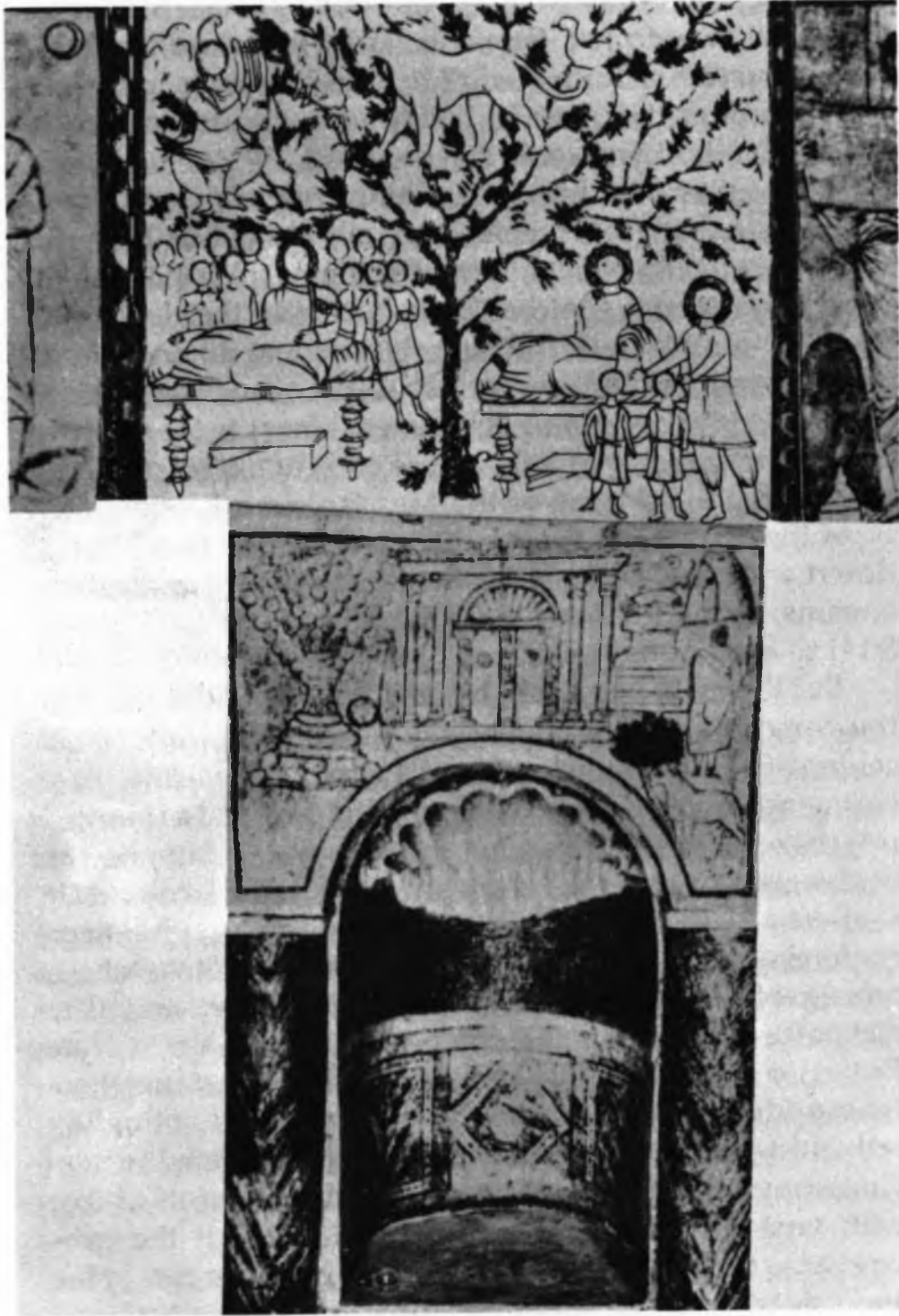
“Before the discovery of the Dura synagogue in 1932,” writes Professor E. R. Goodenough, “anyone would have been thought mad who suggested that Jews could have

made such a place of worship. Its discovery has maddened us all, but we do not return to sanity when we force the synagogue to conform *a priori* to Jewish literary traditions which through the centuries had never suggested to anyone that such a building could have existed."³⁰

Here, then, we have something truly new and revolutionary turning up "since Cumorah" to tell us how the early Jews really thought about things—splendid murals from a synagogue that has been buried in the dust since the third century A.D. showing us things so different from the conventional and accepted concepts of ancient Judaism as to appear to be nothing less than madness to the experts. In these impressive murals we see such unexpected things as the bread and wine of the Messianic meal, reminding us of the sacrament; we see the wandering of Israel in the desert with the waters of life flowing in twelve miraculous streams, with "the head thereof a little way off" (1 Nephi 8:14) to each of the tribal tents.

But the most important representation of all is the central composition that crowns the Torah shrine, the ritual center of the synagogue. Directly above the shrine, as if springing directly from the Law itself, is depicted a splendid tree beneath whose sinuous and spreading boughs the twelve sons of Israel stand around their father Jacob; while sheltered by the branches on the other side Joseph is seen conferring his blessing upon Ephraim and Manasseh. A remarkable thing about this tree of life (for none fail to recognize it as such) is that it is both a tree and a *vine*. Here Professor Goodenough helps us out: "In an atmosphere where identification rather than distinctions, mingling rather than separation, ruled the thoughts of men, the tree-vine seems to express this sense of identification of tree with vine to the point that we have called it the tree-vine. . . . Out of the Torah shrine . . . grew the tree of life and salvation which led to the supernal throne."³¹

Now, for whatever it is worth, the olive tree that stands



Torah-shrine and symbolic tree in the ancient synagogue of Dura Europos

for Israel in the Book of Mormon imagery is also a vine; it grows in a vineyard, is planted, cultivated, and owned "by the lord of the vineyard," and is in the charge of the workers in the vineyard. We have suggested a possible explanation for this queer state of things by the close association of the olive and the vine in Mediterranean lands,³² but we may have here a better explanation. There was nothing repugnant to "the thoughts of men" in Lehi's day in having one and the same object both a tree and a vine and in having it represent half a dozen different things at the same time, with no sense of contradiction or confusion whatever.

We get the same free-and-easy identifications in the art of Dura as in the Book of Mormon. At Dura we see high in the branches of the tree the familiar figure of Orpheus as he sits playing his lyre to a lion and a lamb. The earliest Christian art is fond of the figure of Orpheus, one of the two pagan figures admitted freely to Christian imagery; instead of playing to all the animals as he usually does, the Christian Orpheus usually sings to a lion and a lamb, as in the Dura synagogue – which of course suggests that it was Isaiah 11 that paved the way for the acceptance of Orpheus into the Christian community.³³

Goodenough suggests that the Dura Orpheus "was probably called David," through whose "heavenly, saving . . . music . . . Israel could be glorified."³⁴ Certainly he represents the harmony of Israel throughout the world as well as the harmony of all nature; the listening animals show that. In this picture, to follow Professor Goodenough again, "the artist is trying to show the glorification of Israel through the mystic tree-vine, whose power could *also* be represented as a *divine love* which the soul-purifying music of an Orpheus figure best symbolized" (italics added). What Orpheus does, then, is to show that the tree represents divine love.

Again we turn to the Book of Mormon: there the spreading tree-vine is clearly and often stated to represent Israel,

but it also has another significance. When the angel asked Nephi about the tree of his vision, "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" the young man "answered him saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things" (1 Nephi 11:21–22).

What at a later date could better express "the meaning of the tree" as that universal love for which all creatures yearn than to add the classic picture of Orpheus to it?

That the Jews at Dura by centuries of exposure to them become quite hospitable to certain standard Greek and Persian images appears also in the Iranian character of the heavenly court that appears above the tree. Above "the tree of life and salvation which led to the supernal throne" was depicted the throne itself, in a scene in which God is shown enthroned in heaven, Persian fashion, surrounded by his heavenly hosts. Goodenough finds the idea both surprising and compelling: "The enthroned king surrounded by the tribes in such a place reminds us much more of the Christ enthroned with the saints in heaven . . . than any other figure in the history of art. Let me repeat that before the discovery of the synagogue all sane scholars would have agreed that 'of course' no such synagogue paintings as these could have existed at all."³⁵ As this is the high point in the Dura murals, so was it also in Lehi's vision.

It is interesting how these visions seem to get around, and the Book of Mormon casts some light on that problem too when it reports that after Lehi had described his vision to his family, his son Nephi was granted the identical revelation, only with a fuller explanation, including points that Lehi had overlooked. Thus we see how the same vision, far from being reserved to one man, might be shared by others with the intent that through the preaching of those thus favored the vision might become the common property and tradition of all the people (Moroni 7:29–32).

Some New Scrolls

Any student of the Book of Mormon reading through some of the more recently published and less-familiar Scrolls from the Dead Sea should find himself delightfully at home. These documents are a fresh reminder that the study of the Book of Mormon will always remain an open-ended operation, whether one believes the claims of the book or not. Always there are new things turning up and demanding an explanation, as if the Book of Mormon were being forced on the world against its will. Only the practiced skill and single-minded determination of the learned has to date enabled them to escape the toils of a serious involvement with the Book Nobody Wants; but that skill and determination are not to be underestimated—we cannot hope to match them, but we can call attention to some of the things like the following.

The *Florilegium* ("Bouquet"; 4Q Flor. I) is so called because it is a selection of proof-texts from different prophets, all of whom look forward to the fulfilling of God's plan on earth. In this fragment 2 Samuel 7:10–11 is explained as referring to the house of the Lord that shall be built in the last days, while Exodus 15:17–18 shows that only the elect of Israel "who hold sacred the Name" will be allowed to enter that house which, unlike the other temple, will never be destroyed. For 2 Samuel 7:11 makes it clear that the sons of Belial will never again prevail in their attempt to carry out "the Plan of Belial (the Evil One), to overthrow the Sons of Light . . . and make their souls captive to Belial by causing them to stray in wickedness." Compare this with 2 Nephi 9:28: "O that cunning plan of the evil one!" and with Alma 12:11: "And then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction." Next 2 Samuel 7:11–14 is explained as referring to "the shoot of David who will stand beside the Seeker of the Law in . . . Zion in the Last Days, as it is written" in Amos 9:11, referring to "the Ark [tent, shrine] of David that is fallen which shall rise

again for the salvation of Israel." The opening line of the First Psalm is next explained as referring "to those who have strayed from the road, as it is written in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the Last Days." It then cites Isaiah 8:11 as applying to "those of whom it is written in the Book of Ezekiel the Prophet," quoting Ezekiel 37:23, a significant chapter. Then there is reference to the sons of Zadok seeking their own counsel, "the counsel of the church," that is, setting up their own church; and lastly Psalm 2:1–2 is quoted as describing the rage of the opposition—the Gentiles—against "the Chosen of Israel in the Last Days."³⁶

It would be hard to find in any so brief a fragment a more concise and telling description of the restoration from the Latter-day Saint point of view or a neater bouquet of Book of Mormon sentiments. The reference to David calls our attention to another newly published fragment, called *The Patriarchal Blessings* (4Q Patr), which reads like a typical "testament" and is a commentary on Genesis 49:10: "The rule shall not depart from Judah."³⁷ This it explains as meaning that "as long as Israel has dominion there will always be one of the House of David on the throne," and that the support of all Israel can be counted on until the coming of "the true Messiah, the shoot of David, to whom and to whose seed the covenant of the kingship is given over his people for generations without end." This shows that the Qumran people knew of the Messiah of the house of David, the Messiah of the New Testament.

The fragment labeled IQSb is the *Blessing Scroll* and contains five blessings.³⁸ The first is addressed to those "who hold fast to God's holy covenant and are perfect in walking in the ways of His 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.³⁹ 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 significant. 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."⁴⁰ 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. Deuteronomy 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 served thee (a *ḥasid*), 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 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)⁴¹ 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 fewer 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—"Are 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,⁴² so it can mean either that Manasseh will have to drink the cup forced on Ephraim, or that the cup which Ephraim forces 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 Ammon 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."⁴³ Need we refer again to 1 Nephi 19:23? Psalm 37:8–9 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 (Psalm 37:21–22) "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 Righteousness and the godless priest who sought his death but on whom God will wreak vengeance in the end, as (Psalm 37:34) "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 either before or very soon after the time of Christ.

Traditions and Legends: The Iranian Puzzle

Along with strange practices, the Book of Mormon recalls a number of strange nonbiblical traditions that deserve attention. One of the most striking of these is the tradition

of the Two Garments or rather two fragments of *the* Garment of Joseph, the one blood-stained and decayed to signify the corruption of Israel, the other freshly preserved through the centuries, representing that blessed remnant of Israel which would be saved.⁴⁴ Recently Prof. Philonenko has pointed out that in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, "an altogether special importance" is attached to the garment of Joseph, noting that in the Testament of Zebulun 4:10, Joseph is represented as having *two* garments, a good one and a bad one.⁴⁵ This supports Tha'labi's confirmation of Moroni's legend of the double garment of Joseph (Alma 46:23–26).

Years ago we noted that the story of Moroni and his rent coat had strong *Iranian* affinities. This we have always found rather puzzling, and yet it is no more so than the Iranian background of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which "Iranian influence has been especially strong," according to K. Stendahl.⁴⁶ Moroni refers to the story of the Two Garments as a well-known tale which was familiar to everybody and which the people could read about in the books that were brought over from the Old World (Alma 46:24–25). The fullest Old World account was that picked up by Tha'labi among Jews living in Iran in the Middle Ages. If we wonder why Moroni should choose to reenact the Kawe story with his Title of Liberty, it is just as much of an enigma how we are to account for "an Iranian penetration into Qumran," among the strictest of all sectarian Jews; how does it happen that early Jewish apocrypha are "saturated with Iranian material?"⁴⁷

The frequent association and identification of Old Testament patriarchs and prophets with Zoroaster in apocryphal writings both Jewish and Christian, though very difficult to date, show at least that the Jews had no antipathy to the Persian prophet, who was possibly a contemporary of Lehi. And though, as D. Winston observes, "the Jewish identification of [Zoroaster] in itself is no guide whatever

in our attempt to ascertain the extent of Iranian-Jewish interpenetration,"⁴⁸ it does suggest sympathetic contacts between the two peoples as early as the time of Lehi. For if the original image of Zoroaster had been an unfavorable one, it would have remained such traditionally; but the image was a favorable one, showing that Zoroaster was not first introduced to the Jews as a legendary prophet of an alien people. At present "investigators are as divided as ever as to the extent of Iranian influence on Jewish literature."⁴⁹ Hopes for an objective approach to the subject are today being sought in the Iranian affinities of Isaiah. The main difficulty there is in deciding what is and what is not distinctively Iranian. The Jews share various "Iranian" ideas with other neighbors who are not only nearer to them geographically than the Persians, but are able to produce written sources for those ideas that are far older than anything the Iranians can offer. In fact, Iran is more often a clearing-house for older teachings than a place of origin, so that which passes for "Iranian" doctrine may well be "a fusion of Persian and Babylonian teachings."⁵⁰

Thus if Isaiah 44–45 "shows very close resemblances to the so-called Cyrus Cylinder . . . it has been suggested that both were dependent on the style of the Babylonian Court Inscriptions."⁵¹ If the same two chapters of Isaiah suggest ancient Iranian teachings about the creation, the same teachings may be found at a much earlier date and much closer to Israel in the Memphite theology of Egypt—and Isaiah's use of Egyptian imagery and ideas has long been recognized.⁵² The case for Iranian priorities must await some means of dating Iranian traditions, which at the moment present an "insuperable chronological difficulty."⁵³ Since, as we have already noted, the appearance of the name of Cyrus in the book of Isaiah does not even serve to date the verse in which it occurs, the more subjective appeals to a Persian atmosphere, such as the much-debated issue of whether chapters 40–48 were written before the Edict of

Cyrus and 49–55 after, or whether they were written at the same time, can hardly be expected to settle anything. E. Jenni has pointed out that Cyrus is a “stock figure” representing the herald of salvation in ancient literature. Such stock figures, when they were representative of the same ideas, were interchangeable, and could be readily substituted for each other.⁵⁴ Thus the Messianic prophets listed in 3 Nephi 10:15–17 are typical stock figures, representing the same idea regardless of the time in which they lived. A later scribe would not hesitate to put the name of Cyrus in the place of that of some earlier deliverer who was not so well known to him and his hearers. The name of Cyrus, which has formerly been taken as a sure means of dating “Second Isaiah,” does *not*, however, appear in the Book of Mormon.

In trying to account for the Iranian elements in very early Jewish writings, including the Book of Mormon, we must not overlook the very real possibility that the Persians, with their notorious hospitality to the ideas and religions of other people, were borrowing from the Jews rather than the other way around. For example, the imagery of the light versus the darkness, which constantly recurs in the early Jewish writings including the Dead Sea Scrolls, does *not* appear in the old Persian writings, but turns up later in heretical Iranian teachings plainly borrowed from someplace else.⁵⁵ So all we can say at present is that Iranian and early Jewish literature have a good deal in common and that the connection between them has not yet been explained. The legend of Kawe, who became the founder of the Persian monarchy and priesthood when he put his garment on a pole and went throughout the land rousing the people to fight for liberty and overthrow the traitor and false aspirant to the throne, is the story of Moroni and Amalickiah even in detail, and it is far older than Lehi or Isaiah. The presence of the Old World legend in the Book of Mormon, where Moroni attributes it to a very old and

popular tradition, is rather a confirmation than a weakening of that book's claim to authenticity.

The Mystery of Joseph

The ancient apocrypha like the Book of Mormon give a peculiar importance to the figure of Joseph, who is both a real person and a symbol. Since Joseph is "a type and a shadow," we find a whole line of Josephs. "I have led this people forth out of . . . Jerusalem," says the Lord through the prophet Jacob, ". . . that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph" (Jacob 2:25). This Jacob's younger brother was named Joseph as a reminder that Joseph was the ancestor of the family and that he also suffered in the desert, and also that that same Joseph "truly saw *our* day" (2 Nephi 3:5). Lehi's Joseph was further told that in ages yet to come there would be yet other Josephs: "For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, . . . and his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of *his* father" (2 Nephi 3:6, 15). Finally Lehi concludes, "And now, behold, my son Joseph, after this manner did *my* father of old prophesy," for he calls the Patriarch Joseph his father (2 Nephi 3:22).

Dupont-Sommer has lauded the genius of R.H. Charles, who forty years ago saw that much in the New Testament, "especially the Sermon on the Mount," goes back to an old Jewish apocryphal writing known as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, which G. Molin and others have shown to be in turn perhaps the closest of all the Apocrypha to the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵⁶ The key figure in this writing is Joseph, "the most arresting and the most mysterious figure in the Testaments," according to M. Philonenko, a specialist on the subject. "He is the central character, the pivotal figure, . . . model of all the virtues, . . . object of the hatred and jealousy of his brethren."⁵⁷ "How can one explain this impassioned interest?" he asks, and he notes that Hippol-

ytus, one of the earliest Christian writers, actually cites the Twelve Patriarchs to show that Joseph is a prefiguration of Christ.⁵⁸ M. de Jonge, who maintains that the Testament is actually a Christian writing, points out that "Joseph was quite commonly regarded as a type of Christ" by the earliest Christian writers.⁵⁹

The Hebrew version of the Testament of Naphthali, which belongs to the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs but was discovered much later, tells of a contest between Joseph and Judah. In this account, Naphthali sees Israel as a ship at sea, "the Ship of Jacob." As long as Joseph and Judah got along together," he reports, "the ship sailed calmly and well, but when quarreling broke out between Joseph and Judah, it would not sail in the right direction but wandered and was wrecked."⁶⁰ The Book of Mormon student will of course think immediately of the quarreling of the brothers on Lehi's ship, which accordingly was driven off its course and nearly foundered; and he is licensed to do so, because Alma, hundreds of years after Lehi's journey, discussed that journey as a "type and a shadow" (Alma 37:41–45). For Lehi and his people, types and shadows are things which reappear in certain situations, and are therefore to be considered as symptomatic—they are symbols, but they are nonetheless real. Thus when father Lehi addresses "Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions" (2 Nephi 3:3), he is thinking of another last-born Joseph, and he is thinking of another wilderness, but he is thinking of both because at the moment little Joseph is *his* last-born and he is indeed in the midst of a very real and tangible wilderness.

When the ship of Jacob breaks up, according to the Testament of Naphthali, all the brothers cling to floating planks and are thus borne away by the winds and scattered in all directions—all except Judah and Levi, who cling to the same board, and Joseph, who all alone is able to commandeer a life-boat and escape out of sight. At once we

think of the well-known image of Joseph passing “beyond the wall” intact, and of those descendants of Joseph who came to the New World by ship and left us their record in the Book of Mormon, which we call (following Ezekiel 37) “the stick of Joseph,”⁶¹ in contrast to “the stick of Judah,” which is the Bible. It is remarkable that the quarreling in the Testament of Naphthali is not between Judah and Israel but specifically between Judah and Joseph, upon whose unity and harmony the well-being of all Israel depends. We have also noted that it is one of the Twelve Patriarchs who tells of the two garments of Joseph – another Book of Mormon story. Tha’labi, who also tells that story, has some very interesting things to say about the preexistent Joseph, bringing to mind many teachings in newly published Mandaean and Coptic Gnostic sources, which, however, are much too extensive to examine here.

“Most scholars,” writes Tha’labi, “say that Joseph is a Hebrew name . . . and Abu-l-Hasan . . . said that *asaf* is ‘sorrow’ in that language, and that *asif* is ‘servant,’ and that the two are combined in the name of Joseph.”⁶² The identification of Joseph with Asaf is indeed an authentic Hebrew tradition. Adam in a vision (this is Tha’labi again) “saw Joseph sitting in all his glory, and cried out, ‘Who is that noble one sitting in such an exalted degree of glory?’ [cf. Abraham 3:22–23!] And Gabriel answered, ‘O Adam, that is thy son, the envied one. . . .’ Then Adam clasped him to his bosom and his heart and said, O my son, do not sorrow (*asaf*), for thou art Joseph. Thus he first gave him his name.” The writer is puzzled by the preexistent situation and explains that “Joseph knew it all in the beginning in the preeminence of his intelligence, and he was instructed in the matter (of his future trials on earth) even as it would be, and he saw that he would be so and so before he was. But that is a thing that only God understands – how, for example, Adam knew all (his children’s) names beforehand.”

The mystery of Joseph appears in Benjamin's admonition to his children in *The Twelve Patriarchs*: "Follow the example of the holy and good man Joseph. For until death he was not willing to tell regarding himself" ("No man knows my history"); "but Jacob, having learned it from the Lord, told it to him [Benjamin]." ⁶³ In the *Dead Sea Scrolls* the famous Teacher of Righteousness is also called Asaph, that being, as we have seen, another name for Joseph, which, as H.J. Schonfield observes, "thus fits in with the Joseph traditions." ⁶⁴ Jacob blessed Joseph according to Benjamin's Testament, saying, "In thee shall be fulfilled the prophecies of heaven, which say that the blameless one shall be defiled for lawless men, and the sinless one shall die for godless men." According to the Testament of Zebulun, Joseph's three days in the cistern were the type of the descent of the Lord made to the spirits in prison. ⁶⁵ One can readily see how the Joseph type would be applied to any suffering servant, though the Messiah remains the archetype. Indeed, the Christian fathers were fond of working out elaborate parallels between Joseph and Jesus. ⁶⁶ The Teacher of Righteousness was also called the Chosen One, Asaph, the Son of Berechiah, Joseph the Just, and Joseph ben Joezer, so that his given name probably was Joseph and he "appears to us as a composite figure," just as his wicked opponent does. ⁶⁷ The Joseph tradition has been traced backwards as well as forwards, and Bo Reicke has found significant parallels in the Ras Shamra fragments of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C.! ⁶⁸

The Mystery of John

John enjoys a special place in the Book of Mormon, where he is the only future prophet mentioned by name. His special office, however, is not to serve as a prophet so much as a recorder. It is John, the man in the white robe whom Nephi sees in a vision, who is to write the fullest record of the Lord's ministry (1 Nephi 14:19-25) and the

accurate setting forth of his words as they proceeded out of his mouth, "plain and pure, and most precious and easy to understand of all men" (1 Nephi 14:23); but his record and those of others to whom the Lord "hath shown all things" are to be "sealed up to come forth in their purity" *after* the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon – hence Nephi was forbidden to write them (1 Nephi 14:25–26). When the Book of Mormon has been brought forth and introduced to the house of Israel, then shall they "know that the work of the Father has commenced upon all the face of the land" (Ether 4:17), and when the people begin to believe, "*then* shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John be unfolded in the eyes of all the people; . . . the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed" (Ether 4:16).

Now nothing is more striking about the new Jewish and Christian manuscript finds than the persistent and emphatic way in which their phrases and ideas call the writings of John to mind. Student after student has been pointing this out in the journals with steadily increasing frequency. "Thirty years ago . . . a kind of current orthodoxy" insisted that John was the latest and most un-Jewish of the Gospels,⁶⁹ written very late in Alexandria or Ephesus by a Greek of Stoic and Platonic leanings. But "under the impact of the new finds," Albright informs us, "a strong reaction has recently set in. . . . Some radical scholars . . . now consider John as the earliest of the Gospels instead of the latest."⁷⁰ Since that was written, it has come to be generally recognized that the peculiarities of John take us back to sources definitely older than the Synoptic Gospels themselves.⁷¹

In 1953 H.R. Dodd, and in 1960 J.A.T. Robinson, showed that John was "the most Hebraic book in the New Testament, except perhaps for the Apocalypse," being a product of the desert Christians of the very earliest period.⁷² As for the Apocalypse, denied a place in the Bible by some

of the most eminent doctors of the church and denied Johannine authorship by scholars down to the present day, "this disquieting document," as Casey puts it, "has caused much searching of hearts in recent criticism. A generation ago it was still possible to regard Revelation as a work of scissors and paste" — but no longer.⁷³ What shall we make of it? Casey assures us "that the Johannine riddle will be solved only after the point of the entire Johannine corpus has been discovered."⁷⁴

Today the uniqueness of John's record with its "immense, unexplained dissimilarities" between it and the Synoptic Gospels is causing much perplexity.⁷⁵ Its authentic old Messianic background now becomes apparent from the Dead Sea Scrolls; indeed, K.G. Kuhn, one of the first and most diligent students of the Scrolls, insists that "we get hold of the fundamental source of John's Gospel" in the Scrolls, "and this source is Palestinian-Jewish; not, however, Pharisaic-Rabbinic [i.e., conventional] Judaism, but a Palestinian-Jewish pietistic sect of gnostic structure."⁷⁶ Here again, gnostic means opposed to conventional Jewish and Christian ideas — but not to those of the Book of Mormon! Others would attribute the resemblance between John and the Scrolls to their common dependence on Deuteronomy.⁷⁷ Specifically what John has in common with the Scrolls are such expressions as "the sons of light," "the light of life," "walking in darkness," "doing the truth," "the works of God," etc.,⁷⁸ all of which are typical Book of Mormon expressions, though in the Book of Mormon one acts "according to the truth." From the very beginning, "studies of the Gospel of John and the Johannine literature [were] greatly affected by our new knowledge of sectarian Judaism gleaned" from them;⁷⁹ the new picture of sectarian Judaism exactly matches that in the Book of Mormon, as we shall see. The early Christians did not get their teachings from Qumran, however; the close resemblances are explained by the way in which they favor the same prophets in their

quoting. Thus Jesus is fondest of quoting "Isaiah, Deuteronomy and the Psalms—which appear to have been the favourite reading also at Qumran." And though John the Baptist went about things in a completely different way from the people of Qumran, "there is much similarity in his teaching" to theirs.⁸⁰ Now Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and the Psalms are also plainly the scriptures that have the greatest influence on the writers of the Book of Mormon. The makers of the New Testament and the makers of the Dead Sea Scrolls may never have been associated; the resemblances of their writings are readily explained on the assumption that they follow a common prophetic tradition, which was quite different from that of the Rabbinical Judaism and Alexandrine Christianity which were to become the official religions. The Book of Mormon gives every evidence of drawing on that same tradition.

The World of the Jaredites

With the story of the Jaredites the Book of Mormon launches boldly forth into the shadowy half-world of the dawn of history. Here is another field in which an awful lot has been discovered "since Cumorah." We have demonstrated at great length that there is no more perfect exposition of that ancient "Epic Milieu" which produced the earliest literature of the race than is to be found in the book of Ether.⁸¹ But it was not until the present century that the Chadwicks first showed the world what an Epic Milieu was and then demonstrated its tangible historic reality.⁸² Among other things, the book of Ether makes much of the role played by terrific winds in the Great Migration; for a time it was fashionable to minimize the importance of the weather in influencing major migrations, but of recent years increasing respect has been shown towards the role of the weather in history.⁸³

In our studies of Ether we overlooked one significant expression that deserves notice: When the human race had

defiled the earth with sin, the righteous brother of Jared was ordered to move out and establish a righteous foundation in the earth. His people were not saints – they were just not quite as bad as the others. But the specific instructions to Jared were to go with his people “into that quarter where there never had man been” (Ether 2:5). Some years ago H. Gressmann, in examining the tradition of the great natural catastrophe and moral overthrow in the time of the Tower of Babel (when our Jaredite migration takes place), came across the ancient concept found among the Hebrews, that when the earth was defiled by men, it was necessary for those whom God would preserve from the general destruction that they be sent into some *undefiled* part of the earth, which could only be, as Gressmann’s sources have it, “a Land of the beyond, where no members of the human race had as yet inhabited.”⁸⁴ This is exactly the sense of God’s instructions to the Brother of Jared.

Another thing we failed to note was the odd circumstance that in the “proto-historic” book of Ether, kings seem to be overthrown rather regularly at the end of a forty-two-year period (Ether 10:10, 15, 32). Why forty-two? Whatever the reason, it is interesting to find in the oldest king-lists of Mesopotamia among regnal years that are obviously symbolic and astral (most being multiples of 12, 36, or 52), a significant number of reigns that are multiples of 42 – 2100, 840, 420, 2310, 21.⁸⁵ The number 42 is even more significant in the Pharaonic economy, where the 42 names are matched by the 42 blessings of the king’s coronation and by the 21 bearers of his palanquin. Recently C. Lévi-Strauss in an important book has called attention to the special significance of numbers uniting 6 and 7, either by addition or multiplication, among “primitive” and ancient people all over the world.⁸⁶

Finally we should mention the crossing of the waters in a peculiar type of ship, constructed according to the book of Ether after the manner of the ark of Noah. The description

of the ships suggests nothing in the Bible, where aside from its general dimensions (which are symbolic) nothing is said as to how the ark actually looked; but it exactly matches the description of those sacred magur boats in which, according to the oldest Babylonian stories, the hero of the Flood was saved from destruction.⁸⁷ Moreover, that particular hero was in possession of a life-giving talisman which in many legends is a stone that shines in the dark—a reminder that the Zohar itself was, according to the Palestinian Talmud, a shining stone with which Noah illuminated the ark.⁸⁸ The point here is that Jared's ships were illuminated by such shining stones. It is interesting that our friend Zenez of the Pseudo-Philo, "the prophet of old," experimented as did the brother of Jared with shining stones, and that in both cases a knowledge of these things was withheld from mankind in general because of their sins.