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Since Cumorah: New Voices from the Dust, Part II. Hidden Treasures, The Search for the Original Scriptures (Continued)

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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 sixth part continues the discussion of scriptural origins.

SINCE CUMORAH

NEW VOICES FROM THE DUST

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Old books pictured on these pages are the oldest known Christian books from the Nag-Hamadi library in their original bindings, and are as old as most of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

PART II. HIDDEN TREASURES

The Search for the Original Scriptures (continued)

● In each of these passages there is a substantial difference between the three readings. In the first, the Septuagint omits all mention of the waters of Judah; the King James mentions waters of Judah but not “waters of baptism,” found only in the Book of Mormon (though not in the first edition). In the second, the persons and numbers differ between the King James and

the Septuagint, while the latter alone makes mention of removing the seed of the Chaldeans; the Book of Mormon and the Septuagint agree against the King James in adding “unto them” to the first sentence, while the Book of Mormon prefaces the sentence with the words, “yea, and he will fulfill his word, which he hath declared by them,” not found in either of the

other texts. The dropping out of this passage would explain the obvious confusion in the other two texts.

In the third passage the Book of Mormon has an introduction that is missing from both the King James and the Septuagint. Since it is a denunciation of the “wickedness of the pastors of my people,” who are held responsible for the scattering of Israel, it is obvious why it is ignored by the doctors of the schools who made both the Septuagint and the Masora. Justin Martyr accused the Jewish doctors of removing passages which they found distasteful. The Septuagint interprets the people in distant places as gentiles and introduces a direct utterance of the Lord not found in the King James. In the fourth passage the sense of the Septuagint is quite different from that of the King James, explaining that the Lord will forgive his people if they humble themselves. The Book of Mormon adds a phrase found in neither of the other sources, obviously addressed to people possessing more information than we do: “. . . for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established.”

This brief and superficial glance at three books is merely meant to indicate that there is something going on here that deserves more careful investigation. The way in which the Book of Mormon fits into the Old Testament picture is, to say the least, remarkable. But Nephi’s performance is even more impressive where the New Testament is concerned.

In our day the experts have reached the reluctant consensus that the Christian message has not come down to us in its original form. “The present generation,” writes a leading authority on New Testament documents, “stands at the beginning of a new cycle, in the search for the original Greek New Testament.” And it stands perplexed, not knowing which way to

turn: "Any substantial effort to improve the basic critical test must 'mark time' until the whole complex of textual studies reveals a new integrating pattern. . . . we know only that the traditional theory of the [New Testament] text is faulty but cannot yet see clearly to correct the fault. . . . The critic is sobered by the realization that the best critical text so far achieved now holds little assurance of being the original text."²⁵ "Thirty or forty years ago," wrote C. C. McCown, "there was much talk of the 'assured results' of literary-historical criticism. . . . Now . . . biblical scholarship . . . must fight for its life . . . in the light of new methods and new archaeological, textual, paleographical, and historical discoveries."²⁶

But if we do not have the original texts, we are getting a pretty good idea of what happened to them. Here again Nephi "calls his shots" unerringly. Shown in a vision the life and ministry of Christ and the Apostles, he was about to write down what he had seen but was prevented from doing so with the command, "But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; . . ." (1 Nephi 14:25, 28.) It was explained to him that the recording of these things was reserved for "the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them" (*ibid.*, 14:25), and he was told by the angel "that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John." (*Ibid.*, 14:27.) John and not Nephi was to write all these things down, and after that they were not to be published but "sealed up to come forth in their purity . . . in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel." (*Ibid.*, 14:26.)

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,²⁷ written very late in Alexandria or Ephesus by a Greek of Stoic and Platonic leanings. But "under the impact of the new findings," 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."²⁸ Since that was written it has come to be generally recognized that the peculiarities of John takes us back to sources definitely older than the Synoptic Gospels themselves.²⁹

In 1953 H. R. Dodd, and in the following year W. Noack, 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.³⁰ 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 Dodd 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.³¹ What shall we make of it? Dodd assures us "that the Johannine riddle will be solved only after the point of the entire Johannine corpus has been discovered."³¹ Suffice it to say for the present that John holds the key to New Testament origins, and John remains a mystery.

But what of the other three Gospels? To find out the present state of the problem we can do no better than to turn to W. Schneemelcher's preface to his reediting of the standard collection of New Testament Apocrypha (the old Hennecke collection). He assures us

that the three Synoptic Gospels are not the original "Evangelion" at all, but are, to use his own word, an *Ersatz*.³² They come from another milieu entirely from that of John, with whose writing they are "completely unfamiliar."³³

The fact that there are three Synoptic Gospels instead of one poses the greatest riddle of New Testament criticism: Why are there three, and why do they differ? The very "multiplicity of the Gospels," is adequate evidence that someone has been manipulating the records.³⁴



Today the experts think they have a pretty good idea of the sort of people responsible. They were people who had received the gospel from the Apostles, but immediately after the passing of the Apostles proceeded to make basic alterations, deliberately disregarding some of the most important teachings.³⁵ They were not the old Jewish-Christian communities, but various local churches of gentile composition, into whose hands the record came at an early time (in the 70's and 80's AD),³⁶ and by whom the alterations—especially de-

letions—were made.³⁷ The changes consisted in new interpretations of the scriptures, *not* in corruptions of the text, and in substantial omissions.³⁸

And what does Nephi have to say about our New Testament? First that its substance goes back to the *spoken* words of Jesus; that “when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel.” (1 Nephi, 13:24.) Repeatedly (four times) Nephi uses the peculiar and vivid expression “. . . proceeded forth



from the mouth of a Jew,” or “proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew.” (*Ibid.*, 14:23.) It was word of mouth, or, to use the strictly literal equivalent, it was in the form of *logia*.

The most significant texts being discovered today are the lost *Logia*, or mouth-utterances, of Jesus, now recognized as the oldest form and substance of the gospel message.³⁹ From these the Gospels were constructed.

Next, Nephi tells us, these things which were had among the Jews in pure, simple, and understandable

form “. . . go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, . . .” (*Ibid.*, 13:26.) In the hands of these last, and at an early date, they suffered mutilation: “. . . they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.” (*Ibid.*, 13:26.) It is “the great and abominable church” which is charged with this folly, and here it is only fair to point out that 1 Nephi 22:13f designates *any* who fight against Israel by that unsavory title, and that the damage to the scriptures was done by that same great and abominable before the New Testament went out into the world, possibly before it left Palestine: “And *after* these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto *all* the nations of the Gentiles; . . .” (*Ibid.*, 13:29. *Italics added.*) One of the important discoveries of modern “form criticism” has been that the original word-of-mouth tradition was revamped (*neu geformt*) by certain early Christian groups and in that form “handed on” to the world; the revising took place soon after the appearances of the Lord following the resurrection, and there is still a good deal of uncertainty as to just who did it and why.⁴⁰

Through the centuries that followed, according to Nephi, “. . . because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, . . .” (*Ibid.*, 13:29.) What word could more aptly express the situation of Bible readers down to the present day: they walk, but as they walk, they stumble—they do not agree on what they read, and they never have agreed, and today the whole scholarly world is by its own admission stumbling around in the dark, looking for some “new integrating pattern” and wondering what can possibly be “the point of

the entire Johannine corpus.” It is remarkable that Nephi does not mention corruptions or insertions in the text but keeps hammering away at that one fatal defect, the precious things which “they have taken away.” Finally Nephi has good news—in his own due time the Lord is going to bring forth writings which were “sealed up to come forth in their purity,” those writings of John which Nephi himself was forbidden to duplicate. (See *ibid.*, 14:26-27.)

Every step of Nephi’s account of the New Testament writings can be discerned in the emerging pattern of New Testament studies today: (1) Its original form was the spoken word of *logia*; (2) clearly understood only in their original Jewish-Christian setting; (3) transmitted at an early time, “by the hand of the Apostles” (i.e., in written form) to the gentiles (see *ibid.*, 13:24-26); (4) who proceeded in the various churches to reinterpret and delete much of the record (v. 27).⁴¹ (5) After the damage was done the New Testament went forth “unto all the nations of the Gentiles.” (v. 29.) It is a fact that while ancient manuscripts of the New Testament are found all over the Old World in many languages, they all represent the same mutilated families of texts. That is why we are still looking for the original. (6) Because of the deficiencies in the known writings the churchmen have never been able to understand them or agree about what they mean, and today they stand in as great perplexity as ever; in other words, they “stumble.” (7) Finally we are assured that there are unspoiled documents hidden away, awaiting that time when they shall “come forth in their purity. . . .”

And indeed, for the first time in history, scholars are in our own day beginning to put their hopes quite frankly in the possible discovery of such documents. (8) To these

points we might add the peculiar role of John in Nephi's account—the only New Testament character mentioned in the Book of Mormon—since John is today by far the most important as well as the most baffling and mysterious figure in the search for the original Christian message.

Methods and Obstacles. In their efforts to discern more clearly what might have been the original form of the gospel teachings, the experts have come up with two new and powerful research tools. Once employed by rival schools, they are now combined with great effect to explore the theoretical background of the New Testament. The one tool is Source Criticism (*Quellenkritik* or *Quellengeschichte*), which examines all the documents that surround an ancient writing in all their complex relationships in the hopes of detecting possible sources, direct or indirect, for what is in the writing. The other is Form Criticism (*Formkritik* or *Formgeschichte*), which takes every single passage of a text as if it were an independent production and seeks to determine its background (*Sitz im Leben*) on the assumption that the milieu in which any literary composition has originated will invariably be reflected more or less in the writing itself. The effectiveness of these methods is by no means limited to the Bible; they can be applied in the study of any ancient text, including the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon problem, in fact, is now beginning to look very much like the Bible problem. In both cases the elementary question is, "How can we explain the existence of this large and complicated book?" The answers are not the same, but the methods of investigation are the same. If one asks, "What have the recent manuscript discoveries in the Near East to do with Cumorah?" the answer is, "A great deal." For the manuscripts belong just as much in the

Book of Mormon world as they do in the Bible world. Here a word of explanation is in order.

The Book of Mormon is a colossal structure. Considered purely as fiction, it is a tour de force without parallel. What other volume can approach this wealth of detail and tight-woven complexity, this factual precision combined with simple open lucidity? Any book we choose is feeble by comparison: some of them have one quality and some another, but like Matthew Arnold's *Homer*, the Book of Mormon combines these usually incompatible qualities in a structure of flawless consistency. Our American literature is full of big, bumbling, rambling, brooding, preaching, mouth-ing books, spinning out a writer's personal (usually adolescent) reminiscences and impressions at great and unoriginal lengths.

But this terse, compact religious history of a thousand years is something utterly beyond the scope of creative writing. To test our thesis let the skeptical reader think of a number, any number between ten and thirty; then beginning with page one of the Book of Mormon, let him turn to every page in the book which is a multiple of that number and see what he finds there. Or let him think offhand of fifty or so numbers between one and five hundred—any number—and then consult those pages of the Book of Mormon. The point here is that we are choosing a large number of items from the Book of Mormon and choosing them completely at random. What a staggering wealth of detail we discover! What boundless prodigality of invention! Take every twentieth page, for example:

Page 1: A colophon explaining who wrote the book, his background, his sources of information, his reliability, his culture, the language he is writing in, an account of the time and setting of his story, the peculiar conditions prevailing,

the worries and travels of Lehi—all this and more in the first five verses.

Page 20: Interprets a dream about a large and spacious building; Nephi sees in vision the wars, tribulations, and ultimate extermination of his descendants, great destructions upon the land, and a visit of the Savior to the survivors.

Page 40: Dissension and trouble on shipboard; Nephi is bound and the ship almost founders in a typhoon; the people arrive in the New World and continue their Old



World ways of farming and pastoral nomadism; they domesticate animals and search out precious metals.

Page 60: The ending of a thanksgiving hymn by Nephi, astonishingly like the Thanksgiving Hymn of the Dead Sea Scrolls. (Some have called this a psalm, but strictly speaking a psalm is a ritual hymn connected with the rites of the temple.)

Nephi's brothers charge him with royal ambition and plan to do away with him. He continues to migrate, taking along all who are willing.

(Continued on page 226)

Since Cumorah

(Continued from page 213)

There is a description of the way in which civilizations are suffused through virgin lands.

Page 80: Entirely taken up with quotations from Isaiah: we have already seen some indication of how daring and ingenious these Isaiah translations can be.

Page 100: A discourse by Nephi on Satan's *modus operandi* in this world; he prophesies the final gathering of Israel and describes the conditions under which it is to take place.

To save space let us skip from the first hundred to the last hundred pages. Page 420: Describes the aftermath of a major, and very accurately depicted, earthquake.

Page 440: Here Jesus himself is addressing the people to whom he has appeared after the resurrection, showing them how all the prophets spoke of him.

Page 460: The ten-year-old Mormon receives instructions on the care of sacred records in the bad times ahead. A year later he goes with his father to Zarahemla and is overwhelmed by the sight of the place. A complicated local war is raging at the time.

Page 480: Takes us back thousands of years to the great dispersion from the Tower, describing in some detail the nature of those protohistoric migrations.

Page 500: The odd customs of Jaredite kings are described—how they spend their days in captivity. Prophets, including Ether, go forth among the people.

Page 520: Moroni, having finished his sad history, finds time on his hands; he prescribes an acid test for the truth of his book and discourses on the various gifts of the Spirit.

But enough, the reader can continue for himself. Here we have selected at random 1/26 of the pages of the Book of Mormon and from each have taken just an item or two. This sort of exercise is a good way of calling attention to the dense compactness of the book's contents, the remarkably even distribution of material, the easy, competent, confident, unencumbered handling of vast and complicated detail. Where else will one find such inexhaustible invention combined with such unerring accuracy and consistency? To put it facetiously but not unfairly, the artist must not only balance a bowl of goldfish and three lighted candles on the end of a broomstick while fighting off a swarm of gadflies, but he must at the same time be carving an immortal piece of statuary from a lump of solid diorite. In an undertaking like this, merely to avoid total confusion and



“BLOCK THE BEGINNINGS”

RICHARD L. EVANS

Along with the importance of beginning what should be done, of which we spoke last week, there is also the importance of not beginning what shouldn't be done. This suggests two or three citations, one from Amiel, who nearly a century ago said: “We shut our eyes to the beginnings of evil because they are small, and in this weakness lies the germ of our defeat. *Principiis obsta* [resist the beginnings]: this maxim closely followed would preserve us from almost all our misfortunes.”¹ The second comes from Thomas a Kempis: “We must be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation, because then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he is not suffered to come in at all at the door of the soul, but is kept out and resisted at his first knock. Whence a certain man said, ‘Withstand the beginning. . . .’”² “A fool beholdeth only the beginning of his works, but a wise man taketh heed to the end.”³ If, in our decisions, we were to look at the full length, at the ultimate, at the end, frequently we would never take the first step, and would avoid the dabbling with, the trifling with, the flirting with; the assuming that a little compromise, a little evil, a little indiscretion won't matter much. We would avoid the first indulgence in something that could become a habit. Often there is rationalizing, saying it is only this once or only a little compromise, a little evil, a little indiscretion won't matter much. himself that he didn't intend to put back what he took—but from a small beginning the amount becomes too big to put back. Perhaps no drunkard ever intended to let a habit grow beyond his control. Perhaps no man in degradation, in disgrace, ever intended to be where he was. Things come often by small steps, by small degrees, by “small” compromises of principle, by holding the door a little ajar, by holding the mind a little open for the enticement of temptation; by accepting what supposedly is just a little unlawful, immoral, improper, by someone who assumes he can control both himself and circumstances and reverse the process anytime he wants to. But no man who is foolish enough to begin what he shouldn't begin can be sure at what point he may lose control of himself or the situation. The very act of opening leaves doubt that the door can be completely closed. “Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things,” wrote Bruce Barton, “. . . I am tempted to think . . . there are no little things.”⁴

¹Amiel, *Journal*, February 23, 1870.

²Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, Book I, chapter 13.

³Author unknown.

⁴Bruce Barton.

“The Spoken Word,” from Temple Square, presented over KSL and the Columbia Broadcasting System, December 6, 1964. Copyright 1964.

complete disaster would be a super-human achievement.

But that is not the assignment—that is only a coincidental detail to the main business at hand, which is, with all this consummately skilful handling of mere technical detail, to have something significant to say; not merely significant, but profound and moving, and so relevant to the peculiar conditions of our own day as to speak to our ears with a voice of thunder.

One stands aghast at the presumption of those journalists, professors, and hack-writers who through the years have made merry over the quaint language and unfamiliar subject matter of the Book of Mormon while choosing to ignore its unparalleled scope and mastery. One is amazed by the easy effrontery of those who still assure us that anyone with a little time on his hands and an open Bible at his elbow could produce a Book of Mormon.

The very least the candid student can do is to admit that we are up against a problem here—there are things about the production of the Book of Mormon which we simply do not understand. This was frankly admitted in Joseph Smith's day,⁴² and the whole corpus of literature devoted to exposing the Book of Mormon succeeds only in exposing the confusion of its authors.⁴³ Students of the Bible now find themselves in the same situation. Thirty years ago every seminarist

was convinced that he knew just where the Bible—and the Book of Mormon—came from. Those were the days when they knew all the answers, but today new tests are being applied to the Bible text, and we suggest the same tests for the Book of Mormon.

A forgery is defined by specialists in ancient documents as "any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publisher." (Wilrich.) The Book of Mormon obligingly gives full information regarding the time, place, and manner of its production. All we have to do is to check these claims. How? Against what evidence? By the same methods and using the same evidence now employed to investigate the Bible. For the two books belong to the same universe of discourse, not only spiritually but also culturally and historically.

If the Book of Mormon were a work on mathematics, it should be submitted before all to mathematicians for intelligent criticism; if it were a book on chemistry, chemists should be called in; if it were about primitive races and customs, anthropologists might with caution be consulted; if it claimed to be a work on philosophy, we might submit it to the examination of philosophers; if it were put forth as a masterpiece of American literature, the English department might be invited to comment.

But it claims to be none of these,

and as we have seen, the authenticity of an ancient writing can be judged only in terms of what it claims for itself, never of what others may claim *for* it. Otherwise one might begin by assuming that the Book of Mormon was written by an Eskimo hunter, a Celebesian fisherman, or a New York farmer, and from there proceed to seek out anything and everything in its pages that might confirm the theory. That won't do, because literary evidence can always be contrived, even unconsciously, by an ingenious and dedicated interpreter. What, then, is the Book of Mormon about by its own assertion?

First of all, the Book of Mormon is *not* a history of the ten tribes, as many supposedly able critics have assumed; it is *not* a history of the Indians, but only of some very remote relatives of theirs living in a distant age with a totally different culture; it does *not* describe or designate any *known* ancient people, civilization, or individual in the Western Hemisphere, nor does it designate any recognized place, city, or territory in the New World—even Cumorah receives only limited recognition and only by Latter-day Saints. Strangely enough, nearly all Book of Mormon criticism in the past, whether favorable or unfavorable, has rested on one or more of these false assumptions. All have expended their powers in examining not what the Book of Mormon claims for itself, but only what others have claimed for it.

On the other hand, the book does designate *known* cities and territories in the Old World—there is no dispute as to where Jerusalem or the Red Sea is; it does supply specific dates in terms of absolute chronology—a tremendous aid to any serious investigation; it does designate well-known individuals, peoples, and civilizations in the Old World; it does explain fully the Old World cultural background of its authors, describing how that

MARCH

BY FRANCES GORMAN RISSE

*March bustles in on breezy feet
To make the earth look clean and neat.
She flicks away the winter's dust
And every bit of grime and rust.
She tips cloud buckets in the sky
Until rain splatters, low and high.
Then with her broom of winds she leaps
First here, then there, and sweeps and sweeps.
At last she says, with head a-bob:
"No one could do a better job!
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Earth so she'll be Queen of the May!"*

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culture was transplanted into a new land with certain resulting changes; it does indicate the literary and linguistic traditions of its authors, and tells how the migrants viewed their own situation, zealously preserving their traditions and always conscious of the central, perennial, Near Eastern core-culture from which they sprang.

The authors of the Book of Mormon carefully explain that they are writing a very specialized history, confining their attention to the doings of one particular and numerically very minor religious group, whose peculiar traditions they trace back to a long line of Messianic prophets who used to seek refuge along with their followers in the deserts of Judaea.

To whom, then, should the Book of Mormon be submitted for criticism? Plainly to those who today are at grips with the documents that hold the keys to both Jewish and Christian history.

Recently a Protestant journal of wide circulation reported with obvious satisfaction that there is "no non-Mormon archaeologist who holds that the Indians descended from the Jews, or that Christianity was known in the New World before Columbus."⁴⁴ That is hardly surprising. For years we have pointed out that such results are only to be expected as long as people insist on looking for the wrong things in the wrong places. How could an archaeologist, of all people, hope to prove "that the Indians descended from the Jews, or that Christianity was known in the New World before Columbus"? As one of the world's foremost archaeologists recently wrote, "The first thing that must be remembered is the fact . . . that material evidence will give material results. You cannot, from archaeological evidence, inform yourself on man's ideas, beliefs, fears or aspirations. You cannot understand what his works of art or craftsmanship signi-

fied to him . . . without a written word, and one in some detail, you can have no knowledge of social or political systems, of ethical or legal codes. . . ."⁴⁵ In a word, it is to the written word that we must turn if we would test the Book of Mormon, specifically to that very literature from whose common background it purports to have sprung.

And here we find ourselves in an awkward situation. The geologist can impart edifying information to the most ignorant audience by showing them a piece of rock and talking about it; a botanist can tell us something important about a plant we have never seen before; even sophisticated mathematical ideas can be conveyed by an able teacher to the mathematically ignorant, and one can learn something basic about the stars the very first time one hears an astronomer talk about them. But an ancient manuscript means *nothing whatever* to a person who has not already laid a broad and solid foundation in its language.

All discussions of the facsimiles in the Pearl of Great Price, for example, soon grind to a halt because the disputants are not discussing the text at all, but simply throwing names and "authorities" at each other. It is as if a coterie of blind men after reading in Braille the writings of various eminent art critics, were to engage in a heated debate about the relative merits of certain painters; or as if a deaf mute after reading works on musicology were to compare the beauties of various compositions. Such a level of discussion is possible, but it has no real substance whatever. When we start discussing literary, historical, and religious subjects whose content is drawn from texts we cannot read, we are not talking about the subject at all, but only comparing other people's opinions regarding it.

The clue to identifying and understanding the old Christian and

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Jewish texts is the fact that they “draw from a common reservoir of terminology and ideas.”⁴⁶ When we are told that “practically all commentators have been amazed at the similarity between the text-form of the scrolls and that of the New Testament; it is the most phenomenal aspect of the whole discovery,”⁴⁷ or that “echoes of New Testament thoughts and phraseology are clear in the scrolls; especially those having apocalyptic associations,”⁴⁸ we are brought to realize that in this field of study “key words and phrases are an index to thought.”⁴⁹ Translation destroys all the clues.

The fond hopes of a few years ago that we would soon have electronic translators have today been dismissed by one who is generally regarded as the world's foremost authority on machine translation. Yehoshua Bar-Hillel states: “The machine will never be able to deliver flawless translation of scientific or technical works [by far the easiest to translate], if only because the relationships between a language and the ideas it seeks to express are by no means simple and direct. . . . The precise meaning of a sentence is often only apparent in its context, which the reader must understand, and which a machine can never understand. . . . The sooner we realize that the perfect translation machine is an illusion, the sooner we can turn our attention to pursuing a real improvement in linguistic communication.”⁵⁰

More recently the same authority jointly with J. Wiesner stated that “the human translator . . . is often obliged to make use of extra-linguistic knowledge which sometimes has to be of considerable breadth and depth.”⁵⁰ This rules the machine out either as a serious assistant or competitor, for every word of an ancient religious text is loaded with extra-linguistic associations. If anyone had ever produced such a thing as a perfect translation,

then we might design a machine to duplicate the process. But it has never been done, because we cannot even imagine a perfect translation—the very concept eludes us.

A perfect translation would have to convey, imply, suggest, hint, recall, and suppress the same things (no more and no less) in the mind of its reader that the original does to a reader of the original; it would have to bring identical images to the minds of the two readers. But the only reason we have a translation in the first place is that the two readers do not live in the same world and therefore do not have the same images. A word designating even as simple a thing as a house or a tree suggests quite different pictures to people living in different parts of the world, and it is the genius of a language to bring to mind the peculiar images, situations, moods, and memories of the culture that produced it, and of no other. A language produces almost automatically a photographic likeness of just one culture.⁵¹ If we try to switch or substitute photographs, all kinds of explanations and clarifications are necessary, and that is why every translation that strives to be exact must fall back continually on elaborate explanatory notes. So we learn a language not in order to translate, but because there is so much in that language that can never be translated.

Our subject, it will be recalled, is hidden treasures, and the earth itself is hardly more efficient in hiding ancient messages than is the linguistic convention in which they are conveyed. Indeed, it would now appear that a large part of the newly found records is written, so to speak, in code.

FOOTNOTES

⁴⁶K. W. Clark, in Davies and Daube, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 31, 42.

⁴⁷C. C. McCown, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 75, pp. 12f.



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²⁷C. L. Mitton, in *Expository Times*, 71 (1960), p. 337.

²⁸W. F. Albright, *Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 240.

²⁹W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959), I, 48.

³⁰Mitton, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

³¹C. H. Dodd, in Davies and Daube, *op. cit.*, pp. 75f.

³²Schneemelcher, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

³³Mitton, *loc. cit.* As late as 175 AD there were Christians who would not accept any writing that went under the name of John. Schneemelcher, I, 11.

³⁴Schneemelcher, *op. cit.*, I, 44f. The efforts of Marcion and Tatian to unite the three Gospels into one were based on the assumption (1) that the gospels were apostolic, but (2) that they had been subjected to fallible human manipulation, *ibid.*, I, 11-12.

³⁵Eusebius, *Church History*, V, 25; Schneemelcher, *op. cit.*, I, 9. There was at first a tendency to canonize anything written by the Apostles, and then to attribute to the Apostles whatever one wanted to canonize, whether written by them or not.

³⁶*Ibid.*, I, 12: The canon grew up "slowly in the various collections of the . . . separate Church provinces." By the middle of the second century the four Gospels had by no means received general acceptance, *ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁷*Ibid.*, I, 8: It was in the 70's and 80's that a written *Ersatz* took the place of the original "oral utterances." The Apostles themselves wrote little; their testimony was fixed in writing only after their departure, *ibid.*, p. 9. This agrees with Eusebius, *Church History*.

³⁸Irenaeus, *adv. Haereses*, I, 27, 4. Eusebius, *loc. cit.*

³⁹Schneemelcher, *op. cit.*, I, 9, 46, calls the Gospels "an *Ersatz* for the spoken reports," p. 8. The word *evangelion* (gospel) shows this since it indicates properly "something non-literary: A glad message delivered by word of mouth," *ibid.*, 41; it means specifically "an oral message," *ibid.*, p. 42f.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, I, 46-47.

⁴¹The *Ersatz* was supplied because it was something much nearer to the heart's desire, H. Nibley, in *Church History*, 30 (1961), pp. 3-4.

⁴²F. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1947), pp. 129-137.

⁴³See our "Mixed Voices" in *The Improvement Era*, 62 (1959), pp. 145ff, and subsequent issues.

⁴⁴*Christianity Today*, 8 (August 28, 1964), p. 42.

⁴⁵S. Piggott, *The Dawn of Civilization* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 15.

⁴⁶W. Albright, in Davies and Daube, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁴⁷J. Roberts, *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 62 (1950), p. 230.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴⁹L. J. Liebreich, in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 46, p. 273.

⁵⁰F. M. Cross, in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, February 1954, p. 16.

⁵¹Quoted by R. See, in *Science*, May 8, 1964, p. 621. The first quotation is from *Die Zeit*, undated.

⁵²C. S. Coon, *The Story of Man* (New York: Knopf, 1962) pp. 18-19.