



2010

# From the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS)

Hugh Nibley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sba>

---

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Nibley, Hugh (2010) "From the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS)," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*: Vol. 2 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sba/vol2/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).



---

NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE  
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

---

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

**Title** From the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS)

**Author(s)** Hugh Nibley

**Reference** *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 2 (2010): 83-104.

**ISSN** 2151-7800 (print), 2168-3166 (online)

**Abstract** Hugh Nibley, late professor of ancient history and religion at Brigham Young University and one of the foremost scholars of the ancient world in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, discussed the *Rule of the Community* in an appendix to his 1975 book *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*. The Joseph Smith Papyri is an initiatory text; the *Rule of the Community* is both an initiatory text, enumerating details for entrance into the Essene community at Qumran, and a covenant document, listing elements in the covenant made between God and individuals entering the Essene community at Qumran. This piece is an excerpt from the appendix of his text mentioned above and outlines the various aspects of this *Rule of the Community* as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS).

# FROM THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS (1QS)

Hugh Nibley

with an introduction by Stephen D. Ricks

## Introduction

It is interesting that Hugh Nibley, late professor of ancient history and religion at Brigham Young University and one of the foremost scholars of the ancient world in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, discussed the *Rule of the Community* in an appendix to his 1975 book *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*. The Joseph Smith Papyri is an initiatory text; the *Rule of the Community* is both an initiatory text, enumerating details for entrance into the Essene community at Qumran,<sup>1</sup> and a covenant document, listing elements in the covenant made between God and individuals entering the Essene community at Qumran.<sup>2</sup> Nibley originally referred to the text as the *Manual of Discipline*, following the title given to it by William H. Brownlee, who named it after eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestant handbooks of church discipline. Since Nibley first wrote about this Dead Sea Scrolls text it has more recently become known as the *Rule of the Community* or *Community Rule* (based on the first words of the text, *serekh ha-yahad*, “rule of the community”).

---

1. See Wolf Dietrich Berner, “Initiationsriten in Mysterienreligionen, im Gnostizismus und im antiken Judentum” (PhD diss., Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, 1972), 192–212.

2. See Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 99–112.

Strikingly, Nibley sees the Dead Sea Scrolls community as having strong messianic expectations and of being a church of “anticipation,” to borrow a phrase from Frank Moore Cross. Georg Molin (Nibley notes) observes that this Messianic “church of anticipation” could have called itself “Latter-day Saints” if that name hadn’t already been preempted by a “so-called Christian church.” Nibley, who was quite capable of translating Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew, chose to follow Eduard Lohse’s German translation of the text so as to defend himself against the charge of special pleading, though the clarity and simplicity of Nibley’s translation of Lohse’s rendering does stand the test of time.

*Stephen D. Ricks is professor of Hebrew and cognate learning in the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages at Brigham Young University.*

### Description of the *Rule of the Community*

The *Rule of the Community* (1QS), from the Dead Sea Scrolls, sets forth the beliefs and activities of a community of pious sectaries at Qumran in the desert just before the Christian era—what Professor Frank Cross has called a sect (church) of “anticipation.”<sup>1</sup> Everything is by way of preparation “for the eternal planting of a holy temple for Israel, and the mysteries (secret ordinances) of a holy of holies for Aaron” (1QS VIII, 5–6). Preparation is the theme; hence, it is not surprising that the specific ordinances referred to are the *initiatory* rites. But at the same time the scroll makes clear the ultimate objective of its whole operation—exaltation and eternal lives for the members—while plainly indicating the general nature of the temple activities to which it looks forward with such eager anticipation.

The whole theme of religion is eternal life. But beings who would live forever must be prepared to do so—they must be perfect. Nothing but perfection will do for an order of existence that is to last forever and ever. The striving for perfection is the theme of the *Rule of the Community*. The sectaries of Qumran knew that the greatest of all prizes was not to be cheaply bought, that there could be no cheating or cutting of corners; to prepare for eternity, one must be willing to go all the way. Whatever may have been their human failings, these people, as the Roman Catholic scholar Georg Molin observed, must be taken seriously and viewed with great respect. The proper title for them, the name they gave themselves, he maintains, is “Latter-day Saints”—and he deplores the preemption of that name at the present time by a “so-called Christian sect.”<sup>2</sup> A careful reading of the *Rule of the Community* will show that it has a great deal in common with the Book of Breathings.

---

Originally published as appendix 1 in Hugh Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 255–62; reprinted in the 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005), 461–75.

1. Frank Moore Cross Jr., “The Scrolls and the New Testament,” *Christian Century* 72 (1955): 969–70.

2. Georg Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichtes* (Vienna: Herold, 1954), 146.

Roman numerals indicate columns in the original text; numbers following indicate the lines. Passages in brackets are my summaries or paraphrases. Following is a translation from Eduard Lohse's German text.<sup>3</sup> Not all lines are included in each section.

### Return to the Ancient Order

The whole first section of the text (I, 1–9) closely resembles the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants and also the prologue to the New Testament in Luke 1. Thus, in Luke 1:6: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," the expressions "righteous before God," "*walking* in all the commandments," and "blameless (perfect) in all," as well as the pleonasm "commandments and ordinances," though all quite un-Greek, are strictly in the idiom of the Qumran sectaries, among whom (or among whose neighbors) the parents of John the Baptist may very well have mingled.

- I, 2. [to] do what is good and proper (upright) in his [God's] sight (before him) even as
3. he has commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hand of all his servants the prophets . . .
6. and never to walk again (any more) in the ways of a guilty heart and lustful eyes.
7. To love all who take upon themselves to keep the laws of God
8. by covenant in righteousness (*or* in the covenant of grace); to enter into (*lit.* be made one with) the deliberations (*lit.* counsel; *Eduard Lohse translates this as* Ratsversammlung)<sup>4</sup> of God; and to walk before him perfect (in) all
9. that has been revealed regarding the performance [in proper time and place] of their appointed duties (*or* ordinances).

---

3. Eduard Lohse, ed., *Die Texte aus Qumran* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964).

4. Lohse, *Texte aus Qumran*, 5.

### Complete Commitment Required

Here (I, 9–18) and in line 8, the candidates take on themselves by covenant the law of God to keep all his commandments even at the peril of their lives. With this goes a law of consecration. The society calls itself a *yahad*, meaning oneness or unity, thereby identifying itself with the model church, the Zion of Enoch (the oldest known fragments of any book of Enoch have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls), who were “of *one* heart and *one* mind” in both spiritual and temporal things (Moses 7:18; cf. John 17:11, 21–24; D&C 38:25–39).<sup>5</sup>

- I, 11. [All candidates] shall bring with them all their understanding  
(*or* education, including both knowledge and intelligence) and  
physical strength
- 12–13. and earthly possessions into the church of God. [These three  
things are now put on a higher level: Their minds are purified  
by a true understanding of God’s laws, their bodily strength is  
put to the test and refined like pure gold in ways prescribed by  
God, and their property is administered according to his just  
and holy principles.]
14. [They are to be neither impatient for advancement (*or* the fulfill-  
ing of God’s promised times) nor apathetic to such.]
16. And all who enter into the order of the church shall do so (*lit.* go  
over) by covenant before God to do
17. all which he has commanded and not to depart (*lit.* return)  
from his way (*lit.* from after him) out of any fear or dread of the  
burning
18. in the dominion of Belial.

### Preliminary Meeting

At a preliminary meeting, the candidates formally renounce the world and declare their willingness to enter into the order (I, 18–II, 10). The first step is repentance:

---

5. On Qumran as a society of Enoch, see Cent Pieter van Andel, *De Structuur van de Henoeh-Traditie in het Nieuwe Testament* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1955), 51–66.

- I, 21. And the priests shall read the righteous dealing of God . . .  
22. and cause them to hear all the merciful deeds of kindness upon  
Israel. And the Levites shall read (of)  
23. the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their guilty trans-  
gressions. . . .  
24. The candidates shall confess after them, saying: We have sinned,  
25. [. . .] we and our [fathers] before us  
II, 10. And all entering the covenant shall say after both the blessers  
and the cursers, Amen! Amen!

With every blessing goes a cursing—a *penalty* clause with every oath and covenant.

### Conditions of Admission

All who have mental reservations or who backslide or fail to live up to every covenant will be delivered over to the power of Satan, for God is not deceived (II, 11–18).

- II, 13. [whoever] when he hears the words of this covenant assures  
(*lit.* blesses) himself in his heart, saying: I will have peace,  
14. and in the way of mine own heart I will walk . . . ;  
15. the wrath of God and the recompense (zeal, fulness) of his judg-  
ments shall burn him in eternal destruction, and to him shall  
cling all  
16. the curses of this covenant. And God shall set him apart for evil;  
17. his portion (lot) shall be among those who are forever accursed.  
18. And all who come into the covenant shall answer and say after  
them, Amen! Amen!

### Going Over to the Next Phase

After the preliminary meeting, the entire company is described as “going over” from one state to another (II, 19–25).

- II, 19. Thus shall they do year by year all the days of the rule of  
Belial. The priests shall pass over (*γαΰνδρῦ*, pass on or through,  
proceed, “pass in review”?)



20. first of all, in order according to their spiritual standing one after the other, and the Levites shall pass over after them.
21. And all the people shall pass over in third place one after the other,
22. that each man of Israel may be distinguished by his proper thousand, hundred, fifty, and ten. . . .
24. But in the true church the entire membership shall (must) be of proper (good) humility, charity loving (forbearing), and fair judging (righteous in reckoning).

The verb *ya'avôru*, "they go over," appears in lines 19, 20, and 21 and must signify more than to "enter" the society or join the church, for up to this point and as recently as line 18, the latter idea is expressed by another verb. The "passing over" is a repeated occurrence, whereas the oaths and covenants are taken once for all, the refrain at the swearing-in meeting being "forever and ever." There can be no thought of an annual renewal of initiation rites, though such rites might have been held yearly like the early Christian baptism, which could take place properly only at Easter. After the priests pass along "one by one" (line 20), all the congregation follow, also "one by one" (line 21). But the Amen! Amen! of the swearing-in was taken by the entire body in unison. In the "passing along," emphasis is laid on putting each in his proper place or position, citing the example of the hosts of ancient Israel (there could hardly have been "thousands" at an initiation session at Qumran); at the same time there must be no sense of rank or superiority (line 24). All of this suggests that we are dealing here not with positions in the church, but the actual progression of the company from one place to another. Throughout 1QS everyone is constantly referred to as "walking" and being "on the way" or "road" (*derek*). This is the familiar imagery of the initiation. It is not too much to see in the verb *avar* an idea of passage from one state to another as well as from one place to another. The peculiar allure of the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that partial effacing of boundaries of time, place, and even personality in which all things fuse into one, along with a sense of constant motion and activity.

### Admonition against Backsliding

Again appears the admonition that they who do not have the proper spirit cannot be benefited by the ordinances, the exalted nature of which is here pointed out (II, 25–III, 14).

- III, 3. And he beholds only darkness in the ways of light. In the eye of the perfect ones [initiates]
4. he is not held worthy. He shall not be cleansed by the atoning rites nor shall he be purified by the waters of *niddāh*, nor sanctified by any waters
  5. or streams, nor made clean by any waters of washing. Unclean, unclean shall he be as long as he rejects the statutes (*mishpaṭîm*, ordinances, judgments)
  6. of God! . . . For in the spirit of the true counsel of God are the ways of a man whose sins have all been atoned for,
  7. to see clearly by light of life and by the Holy Ghost (which leads) the church (*lit.* is for the church) in his (*or* its) truth. He is cleared of (*lit.* cleansed from) all
  8. his transgressions, and by an upright and humble spirit the price of his sins is paid. And by the submission of his soul to all the ordinances (*or* laws, commandments, *ḥuqqîm*) of God,
  9. his flesh is purified for (*or* preparatory to) being sprinkled with the waters of *niddāh* and sanctified in the waters of his *dōk*. And he shall direct his steps to walk perfectly
  10. in all the ways of God. . . .
  11. Then will he be qualified (pleasing) . . . for the covenant
  12. of the church eternal.

The unworthy who fails to make the grade is contrasted with the “perfect ones” *tāmîm*, the equivalent of the *teleioi* of the Christian and Greek mysteries, a “perfect one” being one who has learned all that is required in any phase of initiation and passed the tests. *Niddāh* can mean an impurity or the removal of impurity; it has a moral sense of payment for sin—as water, it is a removal of pollution (Numbers 19:21). *Dōk* means to tread or stamp on, to crush or pound—i.e., to

push down on; it can also mean to extinguish a fire and to set apart.<sup>6</sup> Why is this peculiar word used here? Irresistibly the German sect of Dunkers comes to mind: their terms *tunken*, *tauchen*, and *dunk* all convey the idea of immersion. The Arabic root is rich in expressions. Whenever the water rites are mentioned, a plurality of ordinances is evident, for the waterwork appointments (facilities) at Qumran plainly show that there is more than one rite of cleansing by water.

### Instructions to the Guide: The Creation Motif

Next come directions for the instructor or leader of the group to introduce them to the creation theme. This is the clearest indication that 1QS is meant not only as a book of rules and table of organization but primarily as a guide to initiatory ordinances (III, 13–IV, 1).

- III, 13. To the instructor, for demonstrating (making plain) and for teaching all the Sons of Light concerning the origin (*tôlēdôt*, birth, fundamental nature, family history) of mankind (the sons of man);
14. for (knowing) every type of their spirits by their tokens, and of their deeds by their history (generations).
15. From God is the knowledge of all that exists and that will (yet) be brought into existence. And before they existed he prepared their whole plan,
16. and when they exist according to schedule (*lit.* their appointment) they are to carry out (fill) all their activities according to his glorious plan without any changes.
17. All decisions rest with him (*lit.* in his hand), but he will sustain them in all their righteous desires. For he created man to have dominion (to rule, govern) over
18. this earth. And he appointed (*lit.* placed) for him two spirits by which he should walk until the time of his visitation (*or* judgment). They are the spirits

---

6. See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes, 1950), 1:285.

19. of truth and of twisting (*ʿāwēl*, perversity), a fountain (*maʿyan*) of light, . . . and a wellspring (*māqôr*) of darkness.
20. In the hand of the Prince of Lights is the rule of all the Sons of Righteousness; upon the ways of light they walk. But in the hand of the Angel
21. of Darkness is the rule of Sons of Deception (*ʿāwēl*). . . . And by (because of, in) the Angel of Darkness
22. all the Sons of Righteousness went astray, so that all their sins and transgressions and guilt and the trespasses of their ways are in his power,
23. according to the deep designs of God, until his appointed end.  
. . .
24. And all the spirits that follow him (of his lot or portion) attempt to overthrow (cause to stumble) the Sons of Light, while the God of Israel and his faithful angel (the angel of his truth) assist all
25. the Sons of Light. It was he who created the spirits of light and darkness; and upon them is founded the whole operation
26. [. . .] all work, and upon their ways [. . .]

The creation story is here summarized in a few lines, but all the main elements are present: first the plan laid down in heaven before the foundations of the earth (III, 15–16); then the creation of man (III, 17–18); and finally an introduction of the evil one into the scene (III, 19–21), by whom the human race is led astray (III, 21–23) in order to be tested by the law of opposition in all things (III, 23–25).

### The Way Back: A Rigorous and Dangerous Passage

What follows is man’s way on earth, specifically his way back to the presence of God. The road is dangerous, and the candidates are charged to avoid all frivolity and improper and lascivious behavior and to be most discreet in guarding the secrets. The ultimate objectives of the whole discipline, both here and hereafter, are set forth (IV, 2–26).

IV, 2. And these are their ways upon the earth . . . ,

4. a spirit of understanding in the planning of every undertaking, anxious to judge rightly and act
5. in holiness constantly (firmly), active (creative), with increase of charity to all the Sons of Truth; and perfect (glorious) purity, loathing all the impure idols, with modest deportment (gait, going)
6. being discreet in all things while hiding the truth of (concealing faithfully) the secret teachings (*or* secrets of knowledge). These are the confidential instructions (*or* secrets) of the Spirit for the Sons of Truth [while on] earth. . . . For healing
7. and increase of peace in length of days, to be fruitful and multiply (*lit.* fertility of seed), with all the blessings of eternity and everlasting joy (joy of the eternities), in eternal live(s) [*can also be read nētzah*, victorious, brilliant, triumphant], with a crown of glory
8. along with a garment of splendor in eternal light.
- 9–14. [The fate of the unworthy is described.]
- 13–14. weeping, . . . dark confusion, . . . destruction.
- 15–20. [Everything is determined in the plan of God according to set periods, to give each a time of probation.]
15. Such are the generations of the children of men and in their proper divisions each of their groups receives its inheritance according to their generations . . . ,
16. each individual receiving his inheritance whether great or small.  
 . . .
18. And God in his deep designs and glorious wisdom has placed a limit to the existence of wrongdoing . . .
20. (until) the time set for the judgment . . . , at which time God will make clear by his truth all the deeds of mankind and purify for himself certain ones of the children of men, abolishing every spirit of iniquity from among them (him), removing every spirit of iniquity that besets
21. his flesh, and purify him by the Holy Ghost from all his iniquities. And he will pour out upon him a spirit of truth like water, purging away all abominable falsehood . . .

22. to make known (*or* instruct) the righteous by the knowledge of the Most High (*Elyon*) and by (*or* in) the wisdom of the Sons of Heaven, for the enlightenment (*lit.* making intelligent) of those who are perfect in the way. For with them God has chosen to make an eternal covenant.
23. And to them is all the glory of Adam. . . .
25. For God has placed them (good and evil) in equal portions (side by side) until the time is up and there is a new creation.
26. [. . .] and he causes the children of men to inherit, having a knowledge of good and [evil], each [receiving] his portion (lot) according to his spirit. . . .

The insistence on a fixed order for everything is characteristic of the Qumran community and is in direct opposition to that totally unstructured Church of the Spirit which was long held to be the essence of early Christianity. The ultimate goal is described in terms of the millennium and of the heavenly Zion of Enoch. Until then, the rule of the Two Ways was to hold sway. The doctrine of the Two Ways, which predominates in the earliest Christian writings, admonishes every individual that he must choose between the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness every day of his life as long as he is in the flesh. Here it is presented as the doctrine of the Two Spirits.

### The Priesthood in Charge

The organization of the society exists only to implement its main purpose, which is the exaltation of the individual. The church is not a service club, fraternal or benevolent society, lodge, or social organization. All activities are under the direction and authority of the priesthood—"the priests . . . keep the covenant" and are hence qualified to serve in the temple when it shall be restored in its purity (V, 1–VI, 14).

- VI, 2. and they shall eat together,
3. and pray together, and take counsel together. And in whatever place ten men of the church organization (council) are met together, a priest shall not be lacking among them;

4. and they shall sit each man according to his proper place (*or* rank, quality). . . . And when they set the table to eat or drink of the new wine (*tîrôsh*, unfermented grape juice)
5. the priest shall put forth his hand first of all to pronounce the blessing of the firstfruits of the bread or wine [as the case may be].

### A Sacramental Meal

The separate blessing suggests a sacramental meal, and at the end of the so-called appendix to the 1QS the instructions are more specific (1QSa II, 17–21).

- II, 17. And if they meet (by appointment) for the table of the church or to drink the new wine, the table
18. of the church (congregation) being prepared and the wine [prepared] for drinking, no man shall [put forth] his hand for the first of (*or* to begin)
19. the bread and [the wine,] until the priest; for [it is he who] blesses the firstfruits of the bread
20. and the new wine, and he shall [reach forth] his hand for the bread before the others, and after that the Messiah of Israel shall put forth his hand
21. to the bread [. . .] they shall bless (?) all the meeting of the church [. . .] according to his office (dignity, greatness). And according to this rule shall they do [. . .] as many as ten men meet together.

The mention of firstfruits of the bread and wine implies that the priest speaks a formal set blessing over the bread and wine separately, regardless of the time of year—whenever the meeting takes place. The almost casual mention of the presence of the Messiah is significant since the sacramental meal looks both backward and forward to the visits of the Messiah: “Take, eat . . . in remembrance of me. . . . This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood. . . . drink in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24–25). “This is my blood of the new testament. . . . I will . . . drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:28–29). Today one purpose of the sacramental meal in the church is “that they may always have his Spirit to be with them” (Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79).

Participation in any rites and activities requires a “recommend” from the “bishop” (IQS VI, 13–27).

VI, 13. And all candidates from Israel

14. shall be examined by the *paqid* (visiting overseer, inspector, having the same meaning as Greek *episkopos*, from which comes our term *bishop*) as to his qualifications and past life. . . .

16–23. [He must undergo periods of probation before earning complete membership.]

### Rules of Behavior

The candidate is again charged to observe strict rules of behavior, the violations of which incur set penalties (VI, 24–VII, 1–25).

VI, 24–27. And these are the rules . . . with regard to their (temporal) affairs. . . . The most serious offenses are

VII, 1–9. If he curses or uses strong language [the offender will be punished.]

5–9. [Dishonesty and deceit are not to be tolerated.] . . .

12. [any impure practice] . . . who goes naked before his neighbor

13. who spits during a meeting . . . who puts forth his hand from his garment

14. showing his nakedness. . . . who laughs foolishly and loudly.

15. Who gossips about his neighbor

16. shall be ostracized for one year; but who speaks evilly of others in a meeting of the church shall be banished from among them

17. and never return again. And who murmurs against the leadership of the community shall be permanently excommunicated.

18–25. [Going against the leadership of the church entails the severest penalty of all.]

### Preparation for a True Temple

The highest authority resides in a priestly body whose primary qualification is humility and whose real objective is to prepare for the establishment of a temple in its completeness (VIII, 1–21).



- VIII, 1. There shall be in the council of the church twelve men and three priests, perfect in all that is revealed from all
2. the scriptures (Torah), to do truth and righteousness and judgment and love of mercy, each walking humbly with his neighbor. . . .
  5. To establish the true order of government in the church, for the eternal planting of a holy temple for Israel, and the (secret) ordinances of a holy
  6. of holies for Aaron, (to be) true witnesses, for judgment and chosen ones of [God's] pleasure, for the redemption of the earth (land) and for a recompense
  7. to the wicked of their deserts. There will be the tested wall (*or* wall or partition of testing), the precious cornerstone [Isaiah 28:16].
  8. Its foundations shall not shake nor be moved from their place. A house (*mē'ōn*, dwelling place, habitation) of the holy of holies
  9. for Aaron, for the instruction of all of them in (for) the covenant of judgment (righteousness), and for the bringing of an acceptable offering (*lit.* and for the offering of an agreeable odor), and for a perfect and true temple in Israel.
  10. To establish a covenant in accordance with his everlasting principles (laws, commandments). . . . When these have walked perfectly in the way of the church for two years,
  11. they shall be set apart and sanctified [*i.e.*, to prepare all the others], nothing being hidden from them
  13. (then) according to these arrangements they shall be removed from the dwelling of the men of iniquity to go in the desert, to prepare there the road of "He Who Is" [Isaiah 40:3 has the Tetragrammaton YHWH here, which the writer of the scroll avoids by using a substitute].

### The Temple Represents the Eternal Order

All look forward to the temple (VIII, 15–IX, 26).

- IX, 3. And when these things shall be in Israel according to all these provisions, for a foundation for the Holy Ghost in truth

4. eternal to atone for the guilt of transgression and sinful action(s), as a greater blessing for the earth than the flesh of burnt offerings, the fattening (of beasts) for slaughter; (rather) a heavenly offering
5. of the lips as prescribed (is) . . . as a free-will offering, pleasing and acceptable. At that time shall the men of the church be set apart (separated),
6. a holy temple for Aaron, to be united in a holy of holies and a single (common) temple (house) for Israel such as walk perfectly.
7. But the Sons of Aaron alone shall rule in matters of law (judgment) and property, and upon them (upon their face) the administration and the portion of the entire government of the members of the church, . . .
11. until there shall come a Prophet and the Messiah of Aaron and Israel.
12. These are the statutes by which the prudent ones walk, the whole rule of life by which they identify themselves in each dispensation (*lit.* time by time), and by which they are judged (weighed) man by man (on an individual basis). . . . [The themes of individuality and discretion are developed in the lines that follow.]
17. [The whole operation is to be kept secret from the world.] . . .
19. That is the time (the time has come) to prepare the way
20. in the wilderness and to prepare their minds for all that awaits doing . . . ,
21. and these are the guidelines (rules of the road) for the instructor in those circumstances (times) regarding both love and hate. . . .

The new temple is contrasted with the old one. For a decade the world has been awaiting the publication (mere photographs would do) of the great *Temple Scroll*,<sup>7</sup> pending which it is enough to note that the expected temple was no mere abstract edifice of spirit and allegory, as the later Christians would have it.<sup>8</sup>

---

7. [After the original publication of *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* in 1975, the *Temple Scroll* was published in Hebrew as Yigael Yadin, ed., *Megillat-Hammiqdāš* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977); and in English as Yigael Yadin, ed., *The Temple Scroll* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983).]

8. See Hugh W. Nibley, "Christian Envy of the Temple," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50 (1959–60): 99–106; reprinted in *When the Lights Went Out: Three Studies on the Ancient*

### The Preexistent Plan

Though by now it is quite obvious that the *Rule of the Community* is no product of rabbinic, halakhic, or “normative” Judaism, it is the last two columns of the text that transport us far beyond the familiar scope of conventional Judaism and Christianity. First we are shown the vast sweep of the plan from its background in the preexistent realm, in which the temple by its appointments and ordinances is seen to represent the eternal and celestial order (X, 1–7).

- X, 1. During the periods (*or* in the regions; *qētz* is a marked-off extent of either time or space) in which [God] was establishing the dominion of light with its cycles, and when he gathered together at his appointed place, at the beginning
2. of the initiation of the supervising bodies (*lit.* night watch) of the darkness (*i.e.*, lights in the firmament); as he opened his treasury and poured its contents upon the earth, and as he cycled them and condensed (gathered) them by virtue of the light, even in the radiance
3. of the illuminators of the holy dwelling, along with those he had assembled to the abode of glory; when the set times emerged according to the days of the month, coordinated (united) in their revolutions (cycles) with
4. the passing of one into the other as they renew themselves, the great M (*i.e.*, the great day, New Year’s Day) stands for the holy of holies and the symbol N for the key of his eternal mercies, for opening (*or* at the beginnings)
5. of the established seasons (*or* festivals) in each period. . . . [More follows on the observance of seasonal festivals—the year-rites.]

Talk of the treasury and the cycles exactly matches those descriptions of the creation found in a number of Coptic Christian texts.<sup>9</sup>

---

*Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 93–98; and in Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 392–97.

9. See Hugh W. Nibley, “Treasures in the Heavens: Some Early Christian Insights into the Organizing of Worlds,” *Dialogue* 8/3–4 (1973): 79–80, 84; reprinted in Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 177–79, 185–86.

The code writing of the M and the N is intentional, to judge by the Christian parallels.

### *Hymn of Creation*

The text now shifts to the first person in a triumphant conclusion that echoes the *Thanksgiving Hymn* of Qumran and the ancient *Hymn of Creation*. The individual here orients himself in all the dispensations of the world, as well as in the glories of the preexistence and the eternities to come (X, 8–18):

- X, 8. And as long as I live, the law of liberty is on my tongue as fruits of praise and the offering of my lips;
9. I shall sing with understanding, and all my music (is) for the glory of God, and the strings of my harp are for declaring (describing, setting forth) his holiness, and the flute of my lips shall exalt his never-ending skill and judgment.
10. At the coming of day and night (*or* the passing of day into night), I shall enter into the covenant of *‘Ēl*, and with the coming of (*or* at the gates of, as in Psalm 65:9) evening and morning I shall recite his laws. And where they are I shall place
11. my own boundaries, from which I shall not depart. . . .
13. At the beginning (at the creation), stretching forth hands and feet, I praise his name; at the first coming and going,
14. sitting and standing (rising), and lying upon my bed, I sing unto him . . . after the manner of men.
15. And before I lift my hand to cultivate [*lit.* fatten] the delights of the fruits of the earth (*or* before I fatten myself with the pleasures of the earth’s bounty); and at the onset of fear and dread in the place of distress and loneliness (*bûqāh*, emptiness)
16. I will call upon (root \*BRK; kneel to, supplicate; *or* bless, praise) him in his manifest wonders and prostrate myself (*or* humble myself; *šahaḥi*) for his mighty deeds; and upon his mercies will I lean continually (all the day). And I know that in his hand is the judging of
17. all that lives, and all his works are true. . . . I shall not return to any man a recompense

18. of evil. With good I shall pursue mankind, for with God is the judgment of all living, and he will repay to man his deserts.

### **The Initiate as Adam**

The identification of the individual with the man Adam is unmistakable. From the creation hymn we move to the creation of man; his cultivating the garden and partaking of the fruit are both conveyed in a single sentence in line X, 15, the key to which is the word for “pleasures,” using the root of “Eden.” This is confirmed by the surprising second half of the line, which abruptly turns off the light and finds the singer “in a place of sorrow and emptiness”—a dreary and lone world—but still calling upon God and receiving his support. Recognizing God’s mercy, forbearance, and sole right to judge, he vows to forgive all beings their trespasses against him.

### **Combat and Tribulation: A Dreary World**

The theme of the lines that follow is combat and trial in a dark and dangerous world—a psalm of tribulation, with the imagery of the courtroom and a Negative Confession (X, 18–XI, 2).

- X, 20. I do not flinch (turn aside) before men of deceit (twisting, false witnesses) and am not satisfied until he has passed judgment. . . .
22. Foolishness, falsehood, iniquity, deceit, and lies will not be found on my lips, but fruits of holiness on my tongue, and abominations
23. shall not be found there. . . .
- XI, 2. But as for me, God will judge me, and in his hand is the perfection (correctness) of my way and the uprightness of my heart.

### **Divine Guidance to a Glorious Goal**

The conclusion that follows is on an entirely positive note, the singer ending his dangerous journey amidst the glorious company in the presence of God (XI, 2–22).

- XI, 2. [God is the guide whose hand leads him safely along the way]

3. and by his righteous (provisions, pl.) he will wipe out my transgression. For from the fountain of his knowledge he has brought forth (opened) his light. And he has caused my eye(s) to behold his marvelous works, and my mind has been enlightened by performance of his mystery (ordinance).<sup>10</sup>
4. For the Eternal Being (*or* eternal existence) is the support of my right hand. On a mighty rock is the way of my steps, which nothing can cause to shake. For the truth of God is
5. the rock of my footsteps, and his strength is the support of my right hand; and from the fountain of his righteousness is my judgment. His marvelous mysteries are a light to my mind (heart);
6. my eye has beheld the things of the eternities (*or* by the Eternal One my eye has discerned); special knowledge (*túshiyyāh*, knowledge conveyed in confidence, as in Job 11:6) which is hidden from men of learning, treasures of wisdom hidden from the children of men, a fountain of righteousness and a vessel
7. of power; also a place of glory for the assembly in the flesh of those whom God has chosen. He has established them as an eternal treasure and caused them to be heirs in the portion (lot)
8. of the saints, and with the Sons of Heaven he has associated their society, for the council of the church and the assembly of the holy habitation for an eternal planting along with all past ages (dispensations).

As in the Book of Breathings, the Stone of Truth is here closely associated with the purification in water, and this opens the way to further light and knowledge culminating in the blessed assembly of the saints, which like the Zion of Enoch is a heavenly community duplicated (planted is the technical word) on earth, becoming united in the end with all other such bodies: “and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made” (Moses 7:64).

---

10. Zadokite Fragment (CD) III, 18; XVI, 2.

## Glorified in the Presence of God

Now comes the great and marvelous paradox that staggers the imagination and baffles credulity. The problem is how God and man can not only share the same universe of discourse but live together forever on terms of intimacy amounting to identity (XI, 9–22):

- XI, 9. And as for me, I am a man (Adam) of evil after the dictates of the wanton flesh; my iniquities, transgression, and sins, along with all the corruption of my mind (heart)
10. belong to the brotherhood (secret society) of the worm and to the ways of darkness. For a man (Adam) goes his way, but no man (Enosh) really determines his steps, for the decision (judgment) is God's, and from his hand is (*i.e.*, he determines, prescribes)
  11. the perfect way, for it is his knowledge that brought all into existence and his plans that guide all things, and nothing happens without him. And even though I
  12. trip, the mercies of God will always be there to help me. And even though I stumble in the perversity of the flesh, my judging rests with God's justice, an assurance forever.
  13. And if he allows (opens) troubles for me, yet from the pit will he rescue (pull up) my soul and guide my footsteps on the road. By his acts of mercy he will cause me to arrive, and by his loving kindnesses provide (bring)
  14. my reward (judgment). And with his true judgment he has judged me, and in his exceeding goodness has forgiven (atoned for) even all of my iniquities. And by his righteous provisions he purifies me from the uncleanness
  15. of men and from the sins of the children of Adam, to praise the justice of God, even the splendor of the Most High God. Blessed art thou, my God, who openest the [way of] knowledge
  16. to thy servant. Guide all his works in righteousness, and raise (him) up for a son of thy truth (accept him as a true son) according as thou art well pleased with the chosen ones of Adam, that they may dwell

17. in thy presence for all eternity. For without thee there is no proper guidance, and nothing is done without thine approval. It is thou who showest forth
18. all knowledge, and all existence depends upon thy good pleasure. And there is none next in order beside thee to challenge (reply to) thy suggestions (counsel) or to give advice (enlighten)
19. in any matter on which thy holiness has decided, or to penetrate into the depths of thy mysteries, or to comprehend all thy wondrous (doings), by thy power
20. of thy might. For who can contain (measure) thy glory? And what also is the son of man (Adam) amid thy marvelous (works)?
21. And he that is born of woman to sit down in thy presence? He being formed of dust; . . . and he is made (formed) only
22. of clay of the destroyer (trashman, one who sweeps aside), and towards dust is his yearning. How does the clay sit down with the potter (hand former), and for counsel how does it qualify (what does it discern)?

*Hugh Nibley (1910–2005) was a professor of history and religion at Brigham Young University.*