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Hugh W. Nibley

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The Expanding Gospel*

by HUGH W. NIBLEY

The expression "expanding Gospel" is not a contradiction of terms. Even the Roman Catholic authorities concluded after much thought that the proper business of theology and philosophy is to expand men's *knowledge* of the Gospel while leaving the scriptures, the sacred deposit and source of that knowledge, untouched by the addition or subtraction of so much as a syllable.¹ Thus men, by the exercise of their intellects, may add to the Gospel, but God may not. But this puts the thunder before the lightning: where has God imposed any limits on His own prerogative of imparting His word to man? The scriptural warnings against adding or subtracting, aside from being limited to specific individual books, are addressed specifically to men—no *man* may add to the scriptures. That imposes no restriction on God. But it is men who have expanded and contracted the scope of the holy writ to conform to their broad or narrow views of the Gospel; it is men who have selected the books that make up the word of God, and these men have not been in agreement. The debate has raged for centuries about certain well-known writings, and still remains undecided.²

Now we are faced by a new and important development. A sizable number of writings have recently been discovered claiming apostolic or otherwise inspired authorship and enjoying unprecedented antiquity. What is to be done with them? Of the author of some of the prophecies in the Dead Sea Scrolls Father Danielou writes:

A revelation was made known to him . . . that the Messiah was near. . . . Now what is amazing is that this prophecy was verified exactly. Thus between the great prophets of the Old Testament and John the Baptist he emerges as a new link

*Second Annual Faculty Lecture, Brigham Young University, March 17, 1965. Dr. Nibley is Professor of History and Religion at Brigham Young University.

¹M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der Scholastischen Methode* (Graz: Akad. Verlag, 1957), I, 1-37; O. Chadwick, *From Bousset to Newman* (Cambridge University Press, 1959), chapters i-iii.

²For a recent treatment of this much-treated theme, see Ol Eissfeldt, *Einführung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964), pp. 2-9.

in the preparation for the Advent of Christ: he is, as Michaud writes, one of the great figures of Israel's prophetic tradition. It is amazing that he remained so unknown for so long. Now that he is known the question arises as to what we are going to do about this knowledge. . . . Why does not this message, then, form part of inspired Scripture?³

This question, says Danielou, now confronts equally the Jewish and the Christian world. How can they expand their Gospel to include the words of a newly found prophet? If the new discoveries only contained exactly what was already known and accepted, there would be no objection to admitting them to the Canon; but neither would they have any message for us, save to confirm what is already known. But what makes the documents so exciting is that they follow along familiar grooves to the end and then continue onward into new territory, expanding the confines of the Gospel. Are we to assume that their writers, so strict and upright in their ways and so conscientious in their teachings, are saints as far as we can follow them only to become deluded purveyors of fraud and falsehood the moment they step beyond territory familiar to us?

Before reaching a decision on this important head, our first obligation is to inform ourselves as to what it is that these writings teach over and above conventional Jewish and Christian doctrine. What they teach, that is, seriously and as a whole. Speculative flights and picturesque oddities can be expected in any sizable apocryphal writing, and when such are confined to one or two texts they can be ruled out as serious doctrine. But in working through the newly found documents one soon becomes aware of certain themes that receive overwhelming emphasis and appear not in a few texts but in many or most of them. Such deserve our serious attention. Among the most conspicuous of these is the matter of a certain council held in heaven "at the foundation of the world" where the divine plan of salvation was presented and received with acclamations of joy; joined to this we are presented almost invariably with some account of the opposition to that plan and the results of that opposition. Around these two themes of the plan and the opposition a great deal of the old apocryphal writing revolves. But it is in the very oldest records of the race that we find some of the clearest statements of the doctrine,

³J. Danielou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* (N.Y.: Mentor Omega, 1957), p. 81.

which in the oldest fragment of all, actually goes under a recognized label as "the Memphite theology."

The antiquity of the material contained in the so-called Shabaka stone of the British Museum has been fully demonstrated and is today not seriously questioned.⁴ The only puzzle to scholars has been how anything so completely thought-out and sophisticated could turn up in what may well be the oldest known text in existence. There is nothing "primitive" in this dramatic presentation which was to mark the founding of the First Dynasty of Egypt. It is divided into two parts, a historical and a theological, the former explaining how the kingdom came to be established and organized after its peculiar fashion, and the latter how and why the world itself was created. The beholder of the drama, which was enacted by priests with the king taking the leading role, is never allowed to forget that what is ritually done on earth is but the faithful reflection of what was once done in heaven.⁵ Since a number of scholars today see an unbroken line of succession between the "Memphite theology" and the Logos-theology of John, the Shabaka stone may not be out of place as the starting-point in a study of the expanding Gospel.⁶ But quite aside from that, it deserves mention as the earliest and one of the best descriptions of the council in heaven.

In the beginning, we are told, ". . . all the gods assembled in the presence" of Ptah, who "made a division between Horus and Seth, and forbade them to quarrel," giving each his assigned portion.⁷ Then for some reason he decided that his first-born, Horus, should be his unique heir, and solemnly announced to the assembled gods, pointing to Horus, "I have chosen thee to be the first, thee alone; my inheritance shall be to this my heir, the son of my son . . . the first-born, opener of the ways, a son born on the birthday of Wep-wawet," that is, on the New Year, the Day of Creation.⁸ Thus, instead of being two portions, they

⁴K. Sethe, *Das 'Denkmal Memphitischer Theologie' der Schabakosteine des Br. Museums* (Band X:1 of *Unters. zur Gesch. u. Altertumskunde Aegyptens*, Leipzig, 1928), pp. 1-5.

⁵In this as in the Pyramid Texts it is often impossible to tell whether a given scene is laid in heaven, on earth or in both places, L. Speleers, *Textes des Cercueils* (Brussels: 1947) pp. xlv-xlix.

⁶See for example L. V. Zabkar, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XIII (1954), p. 87; H. Jacobsohn, *Die dogmatische Stellung des Königs in der Theologie der alten Aegypter* (Hamburg, N.Y., 1939); R. Anthes, in *JNES*, XVIII (1959), pp. 169-212.

⁷Shabaka stone, lines 7-8, in Sethe, pp. 23-26.

⁸Lines 10c-18b, in Sethe, pp. 27-32.

were both united under Horus, while the controversy with Seth was patched up for the duration of the festival.⁹ The entire middle portion of the Shabaka text is obliterated, but from countless other Egyptian sources, we know that the conflict between Horus and Seth never ceased on this earth, the combat and victory of Horus being ritually repeated at every coronation.¹⁰ After rites dealing with a baptism, resurrection and the building of the Temple at Memphis, the texts break off completely to resume with a catalogue of Ptah's titles as "he who sitteth upon the great throne, heavenly father who begot Atum, heavenly mother who bore Atum, the great one, the mind and mouth [heart and tongue] of the council of the gods [the ennead]."¹¹ "In the heart [of Ptah] was conceived the image [form, likeness] of Atum, on the tongue [by the word] was the image of Atum. Great and mighty is Ptah through whose mind and word all the spirits were brought forth.¹² And through the mind and word [of God] all physical members were invested with power, according to the doctrine that he [God] is as that which is in every body [i.e., the heart] and in every mouth [i.e., the tongue] of every god, of every human, of every animal, of every creeping thing, of whatsoever possessed life; for whatever is thought and whatever is uttered is according to his will. The council of the gods brought forth the seeing of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, the breathing of the nose, that these might convey information to the heart, which in turn became aware of things, to which awareness the tongue gives expression, giving utterance to the mind. In such a way were all the gods brought forth—Atum and the council of the Nine. But the word of God was first that which was conceived in his mind and then what was commanded by his tongue. In such a way were the spirits brought forth and the *bmswt-spirits* elected, for the provision of all nourishment and food, according to the mind and word of God."¹³ The best

⁹Lines 13c-14c, The case was ritually retried at every coronation in the so-called "Justification of Osiris" before the priestly court at Heliopolis. See R. Anthes, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 13 (1954), pp. 191f.

¹⁰Sethe, *op. cit.*, Pt. 2, *Ramesseumpapyrus*, pp. 95-96; cf. the *Victory Over Seth* papyrus (Louvre 3129; Br. Mus. 10252, 13).

¹¹Shabaka stone, lines 48-52a, in Sethe, pp. 46-50.

¹²Lines 53f, in Sethe, pp. 50-56. On the nature of Ptah as Father, Begetter, Opener, etc., M. S. Holmberg, *The God Ptah* (Lund: Gleerup, 1946), pp. 258-271.

¹³Shabaka stone, lines 56-57, in Sethe, pp. 59-64.

interpretation of *bmswt-spirits*, following Sethe's long discussion of the word, would seem to be spirits chosen for specially high callings, in particular to have progeny.¹⁴ The spirits having been thus created and a physical basis for life supplied, a law was laid down, "that he who does what is good [lovable, desirable] shall be given life to be in a state of peace [or salvation], while he who does evil [that which is hateful] shall be given death to be in a state of punishment [or condemnation]. All the works [of men], all the arts and crafts, the labors of the arms and the goings of the legs, the motion of all the members are subject to this law, conceived in the mind and declared by the tongue [of God], which law shall be the measure [*yimakh*] of all things."¹⁵ All this was done and nourishment and food and all other good things provided by God alone and He saw that His work was good.¹⁶ "And thus it was that all the gods and all the spirits assembled" before the throne of God, the source of all life and joy.¹⁷ The king, representing Osiris who is the dead king, his own predecessor, "goes through the secret gates in the splendor of the lord of Eternity, in the footsteps of Re of the great throne, to enter the courts on high and become united with the gods and with Ptah, the ancient of days [lord of years]." In the concluding scene the earthly king publicly embraces his son and heir declaring his calling and succession, even as the god did in the beginning.¹⁸

That the picture actually goes back to Menes, the founder of the First Dynasty, is confirmed right at the beginning of the Pyramid texts in a writing for Teti, the second king of the dynasty and immediate successor of Menes: "Spoken by the great heavens in the midst of the lower hall of Geb [i.e., the temple of Memphis as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly court]. This is Teti, my beloved son, who sits upon the throne of Geb [the principle of patriarchal succession], who is well pleased with him; he hath declared him to be his heir in the presence of the great assembly of all the gods; every god hath acclaimed him joyfully with upraised hands, saying, Worthy is Teti with whom his father Geb is well pleased!"¹⁹ In the

¹⁴Sethe, pp. 62-64.

¹⁵Lines 57f; Sethe, p. 65 renders *imakh* as "der die Bedeutung aller Dinge macht."

¹⁶Lines 58ff; Sethe, pp. 66-68, notes that the passage "vividly recalls the Biblical Creation story."

¹⁷Line 61; Sethe, pp. 70-72.

¹⁸Lines 63ff; Sethe, pp. 73-77.

¹⁹*Pyramid Texts*, No. 3. We here translate the entire text.

Coffin texts the theme is carried on as Ptah summons the Great Assembly, "they who share the secrets," gives them formal greeting, and introduces his son and heir to them, who acclaim him as Prince of Peace and Righteousness, shouting for joy.²⁰ The earthly rites reflect the heavenly, and the king (or noble) announces in his Coffin text, "I am in the human assembly what he is in heaven. I am . . . the seed of Atum, the issue of him who gave the names in the day when Atum discussed it with the gods."²¹

The great Babylonian creation text, the Enuma Elish, begins and ends with the great assembly in heaven. "As once above," it starts out, "when the heavens had not yet received their name and the earth below was not known, . . . the Creator, he of vast intelligence, omniscient, omnipotent," presided over "a great assembly among his brethren the gods."²² Since the purpose of this version of the hymn is to exalt Marduk of Babylon, he takes over the principal functions of creating man and settling the score with the adversary. The most concise statement is on Tablet VI: "Then Marduk resolved upon a wondrous work. He opened his mouth and addressed Ea [his father], and told him of what he had conceived in his heart: 'I wish to bring blood and bone together and to organize them into a human being, whose name shall be man; let it be his duty to serve the gods and satisfy them.' " To provide satisfaction, however, was beyond the power of man, and "Marduk, in order that there be satisfaction, proposed a plan to the gods: 'Let one of their race be put to death that humanity might be. Let one of the assembled gods be delivered up as a guilty one, that they might subsist.' "²³ But Kingu opposed the plan; it was he who made

²⁰A. De Buck, *The Coffin Texts*, I, IIIff (Spell 33); cf. II, 6f (Spell 76), 24-26 (Spell 79), etc.

²¹*Ibid.*, I, 167 (Spell 39). On the possible identity of Atum with Adam, see E. Lefévre, in *Bibliothèque Egyptologique*, XXXV (1913), pp. 16-21.

²²R. Labat, *Le Poème Babylonien de la Création* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1935), pp. 76f. The same situation, a great earthly assembly representing the divine council at the creation of the world, is described in early Sumerian texts supplied by E. Chiera, *Sumerian Religious Texts* (Crozer Theol. Seminary Babylonian Publ., Vol. I, 1924), pp. 29-30. For an Old Babylonian parallel, W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), p. 163. Hittite ritual texts contain "obvious allusion to an assembly of the gods for the purpose of 'fixing the fates;' the scene is laid in heaven . . . but the inference that such a gathering of gods was actually enacted in ritual form, as in the Babylonian festival, can hardly be evaded," O. Gurney, in S. Hooke (ed.), *Ritual and Kingship* (Oxford, 1958), p. 108.

²³Labat, pp. 143-5 (Tab. VI, lines 2-16). We have not given the lines here in strict sequence. The whole text is full of repetition and contamination.

Tiamat rebel and caused the war. But he was defeated and cast down by Marduk, and the great assembly gave all the power of heaven and earth to Anu and through him to Marduk for carrying out the execution of the plan.²⁴ Throughout, the earthly rites are a ritual repetition of what was done, (in the opening words and title of the hymn,) "once above" (*enuma elish*); and the affair ends with the admonition that the rites be repeated at the same place from year to year forever: "Let them rehearse throughout the ages to come at this spot what God has done, that they may never forget it. . . . For this is the earthly image of that which is done in the heavens. . . . Great planner, full of loving-kindness, may he forgive their sins and deliver them by his grace. . . . Let us praise his name. They who have taken their places in the assembly to declare his names, in the holy place let them all together proclaim his name."²⁵ Though the texts are full of repetitions, contamination, overlapping of different versions coming from different times and places, the main themes of the council and the plan recur consistently.²⁶

We know today that the religion of Israel cannot be studied in isolation from that of its neighbors, and for many years the experts have recognized affinities between the documents just cited and certain Biblical texts. We have referred to them here, however, primarily to forestall the claim commonly made that the doctrines we are considering are of late, even Gnostic origin. The newly discovered Jewish and Christian apocrypha have so much to say about the council in heaven and the plan laid down at the foundation of the world that every student should be aware of the very great antiquity and wide ramifications of the idea. According to Ben Sirach, the great assemblies of Israel were the ritual repetition not merely of the gathering at the foot of Sinai but specifically of the great assembly at the creation of the world, when "God set before them [the human race-to-be] a covenant, the Law of Life . . . and showed them his judgments. Their eyes beheld His glorious majesty and their ears heard his voice."²⁷ According to II Baruch the whole plan of the history of the world was set forth in detail

²⁴Tab. VI, 29f. The authority is bestowed in Tab. IV.

²⁵Tab. VI, 105-168, from which we have selected typical expressions.

²⁶The mixed and derivative nature of the text is clear from the declaration in Tablet VI, 121f, VII, 140-144, that "for us, whatever name we call him by, he is indeed our god, though we have called him by fifty names."

²⁷Ben Sirach, 17:11-13.

"when the Mighty One took counsel to create the world."²⁸ According to the Book of Enoch, in the beginning "the Head of Days, his head like white wool, sat with the Son of Man beside him upon the throne of his glory, and the books of the living were opened before him," the books of the living being the register of names of those who were to live upon the earth.²⁹ Then the calling or mission of the Son and the plan, both of which had been kept secret until then, were "revealed to the Elect."³⁰ It is not too much to say that the dominant theme of the Thanksgiving Hymns of the Dead Sea Scrolls is an ecstatic contemplation of the wonder of man's participation in heavenly affairs going back to the beginning. Consider a few lines from Hymn VI (or F):

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 everyone whom thou didst form of dust in the presence of the eternal assembly; and that the sinful spirit whom thou hast purified of great sin may be counted with the host of the saints and 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 and to recount thy wondrous works in the presence thereof.³¹

The whole point of this is that man actually belongs by prior appointment to that community of the Elect who share in the knowledge of the plan and who shouted for joy at the foundation of the world. In the preceding hymn, God is hailed as "prince of the gods and King of the Venerable Ones" and we must remind ourselves that this is neither a Gnostic nor a pagan production.³² The baffling tenth and eleventh pages of the Manual of Discipline come to life in the light of this imagery. To refer their message to prayers at various times of day makes good sense, since, as we have noted, earthly rites are but the reflection of heavenly events; but if we leave it there much is left unexplained. "He has placed them as an eternal treasure, and established for them a share with the saints, and has joined their society to the family of the Sons of Heaven, the council

²⁸II Baruch, 56:3.

²⁹I Enoch, 41: 1f; 47:3. On the nature of the Book of the Living.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 62:7.

³¹DST VI (F), p. iii, 19ff.

³²This rendering is that of A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1956), p. 77.

of the Church and the assembly of the Temple, an establishment (lit. "planting") which reaches forever into the future and the past."³³ The word which we have translated as "share" above is usually rendered as "lot" (it occurs seventy-six times in the Old Testament), but it is not the gift of chance, but is rather one's "lot" in the sense of having been appointed by God ahead of time. If we turn back to the opening lines of the preceding section of the hymn (p. x), we may see in prayers at dawn a conscious counterpart of the celestial drama: we are told of God's blessing "at the times which he fixed at the beginning of the rule of light, along with his cycles, and in the assembly at the place appointed by him, when the Watchers of Darkness also began." The Watchers, as is well-known, were fallen angels, here the equivalent of those who first opposed the Rule of Light. At that time, the text continues, God "opens his treasury and shows his plan." The treasury is referred to many times in the apocrypha, especially in the *Hodiyot* Scroll, as that knowledge which was with God in the beginning, and which he imparted to his Elect.³⁴ The last word of the phrase is in code—a plain indication that the text does indeed have a double meaning, as it goes on to tell us in terms of lamps in a shrine, of the shining ones being received in the mansion of glory. We are even told that the great light of the Holy of Holies here actually signifies something else.³⁵

This interpretation is borne out at the beginning of the Clementine Recognitions, a work having the closest affinities to the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which Peter tells of "the plan (*definitio*) of God which he announced (*promisit*) as his own will and desire in the presence of the First Angels, and which he established as an eternal law for all."³⁶ This is from a very early and strongly anti-Gnostic work, but the Gnostics have preserved the teaching and given it a characteristic Gnostic twist: "My Father, the joyful glorious light," says the Psalm of

³³DSD XI, 7-9.

³⁴The treasures of wisdom are kept beneath God's throne on high, II Baruch, 54:13; this is the treasury of life on which all the heavenly hosts depend, *Psalms of Thomas*, 203:9; from this chest God took the elements in the presence of the hosts when the creation of the world was being discussed, *Ibid.*, 203: 11ff; it is "the treasure-chamber of the light," *Od. Solomon*, 16:16; Ben Sirach, 39:17; from it the worthy take the riches of knowledge, DSD X, 2; *Thanksgiving Hymn X*, 23f, 29. Cf. C. Schmidt *Das 2te Buch Jeu*, in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, VIII, p. 193, and J. Leipoldt (ed.), *Religionsgeschichte des Orients in der Zeit Weltreligionen* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), pp. 86, 109f.

³⁵DSD X, 1-3.

³⁶*Clementine Recognitions I*, 24.

Thomas, "summoned all the Aeons of Peace [the First Angels have here become mere abstractions], all his sons and all the angels, and established them that they might rejoice in his greatness [i.e., share it]³⁷. . . . All bowed the knee before him and sang his praises together, hailing him as the Illuminator of the Worlds."³⁸ The newly discovered Creation Apocryphon, another "Gnostic" interpretation, tells us that this earth is the result of a discussion in heaven: "On that day began the discussion in which gods, angels, and men participated. And the decisions of the discussion were then carried out by gods, angels, and men. But the Prince Jaltabaoth did not understand the power of faith," and so was denied "the authority over matter" which the others shared.³⁹ The power of faith, it will be recalled, was the power "by which the worlds were created."

The unimpeachable orthodox Pastor of Hermas is quite as specific: "Behold God, constructing the world in accordance with the great council [in some Mss. "the most honored council"] . . . creating the beautiful world and turning it over to his chosen ones, that He might carry out his promise to them, which he gave in the midst of great glory and rejoicing, that is, if they keep his laws (*legitima*) which they accepted in great faith."⁴⁰ The Mandaean version is interesting because it calls the Creator Ptah-il, combining the archaic Egyptian and Semitic names,⁴¹ and while giving the familiar account of the great council, adds the important detail that three messengers were sent down to supervise the work and to instruct Adam, these three being glorious angels who were later to live upon the earth as ordinary mortals and prophets.⁴¹

So far we have only mentioned the bare fact of an assembly in the presence of God at the foundation of the world, but even so it has not been possible to do so without giving some indication of what the business of the meeting was, namely, the agreement upon the great *plan* which is to be "the measure of all things" for those who live upon the earth. Recently J. Fichtner has pointed out that the preoccupation with "Yahweh's *plan*" is the very core and center of Isaiah's thinking, and

³⁷*Ps. of Thomas*, 203: lff.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 8:13.

³⁹*Creation Apocryphon*, 148: 17, rendered by H. M. Schenke, "Vom Ursprung der Welt," in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1959, Nr. 4, p. 249.

⁴⁰Pastor of Hermas, Vis. I, iii.

⁴¹G. Widengren, in J. Leipoldt, p. 86.

scholars are now noting that the presence of a heavenly council from the beginning has been part and parcel of Jewish thought from the earliest times.⁴² In fact, it was concentration on God's pre-existent plan, Seligmann avers, which freed the Jews from the danger of falling into the "naturalistic fatalism" that engulfed the religions of their neighbors.⁴³ Before the creation, according to 4 Ezra, "even then I God had these things in mind, even to the end thereof";⁴⁴ and at the creation itself "when the Most High made the world and Adam . . . he first of all prepared the judgment and the things which pertain to the judgment."⁴⁴ Where there is a purpose there is a plan; where there is neither there is only chaos and chance, leading to the "naturalistic fatalism" of the pagans and the philosophers. God knew, Enoch tells us, "before the world was created what is forever and what will be from generation to generation."⁴⁵ Or, in the words of Ben Sirach, "When God created his works in the beginning, after making them he assigned them their portions. He set in order his works for all time, and their authority unto their generations; and after this God filled the earth with good things, and then finally created man, and gave him a fixed number of days, and gave him authority over all the earth."⁴⁶

When the plan is discussed, we usually hear of a definite time schedule as part of it, with set ages, dispensations, and ends carefully worked out and determined ahead of time, along with a definite and fixed number of spirits appointed to go to the earth in each of those dispensations. The so-called Manual of Discipline has a positive obsession with times and periods as part of 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 (*makhshevtam*), and when they exist [upon the earth] he prescribes the conditions of their existence according to his glorious plan."⁴⁷ Since God created man "according to his own plan (or purpose)," says a Thanksgiving Hymn, ". . . before thou didst create them, thou didst know all their doings from eternity to eternity."⁴⁸ This writer often reminds

⁴²J. Fichtner, in *zeitschrift f. Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 63 (1951), 16-66.

⁴³C. Seligmann, in *Kernmomente*, pp. 54-56.

⁴⁴IV Ezra 7:70.

⁴⁵I Enoch 39:11.

⁴⁶Ben Sirach 16:26-29; 17:1f.

⁴⁷DSD III, 15.

⁴⁸DST I: 7-13. The whole passage is relevant.

us that man was allowed to share in the plan: "In the wisdom of Thy knowledge thou didst establish their knowledge before they existed . . . and without thy knowing nothing was done."⁴⁸ The Battle Scroll reminds us that both blessing and cursing are but the faithful working out of God's plan, that a definite day "has been appointed for the overthrow and humbling of the rule of Wickedness," and that the saints should never despair in their time of probation "until God gives the sign that he has completed his test."⁴⁹ The Zadokite documents teach that the wicked on this earth were those who were not chosen and called up in the pre-existence; thus Rabin translates a key passage on the subject:

For God has not chosen them 'from of old, (from the days of) eternity,' and before they were established He knew their works and abhorred the generations (when they arose), and He hid His face from the land from their arising (or: and from Israel) until their being consumed. And He knows (or: knew) the years of their existence and the number (or: set times) and exact epochs of all them that come into being in eternity (or: in the worlds) and past events, even unto that which will befall in the epochs of all the years of eternity (or: the world). And in all of them He raised for Himself 'men called by name,' in order 'to leave a remnant' for the land and to fill the face of the universe of their seed, and to make (or: and he made) known to them by the hand of His anointed ones His holy spirit and shew *them* (or: demonstration of) truth. And with exactitude He set out their names; but those whom He hated He caused to stray.⁵⁰

Rabin has taken liberties with the next-to-last sentence which, as many have pointed out, states as clearly as possible that God has made known the truth to chosen spirits, called up in the pre-existence, through the Holy Ghost, bestowed "by the hand of His Messiah."⁵¹

Almost always when the plan is mentioned something is said about its glad reception, "when the Morning Stars sang to-

⁴⁹DST 17:7-9, in Gaster's translation, p. 304. The "main purpose" of the Battle Scroll "is to give courage to the Sons of Light—liable to despair because of their defeats—by telling them that this sequence of defeats and victories has been determined from time immemorial," Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford Univ., 1962), p. 8.

⁵⁰C. Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents* (Oxford, 1954), p. 6, citing CDC, ii: 7ff.

⁵¹Dupone-Sommer, *op. cit.*, p. 65, points out that in this passage we are dealing with "three great divine entities." To escape such a conclusion, Rabin, *loc. cit.*, puts "messiah" in the plural and then explains in a footnote that such a plural form may refer to prophets.

gether and all the Sons of God shouted for joy." The great year-rites, common to all ancient societies, are a rehearsal of the creation usually presented in dramatic form; invariably the rites end with a great and joyful acclamation.⁵² Thus the concluding lines of the Shabaka stone, with which we began our story: "So all the gods and all the spirits came together to hail God upon his throne . . . and they rejoiced before him in his temple, the source of all good things."⁵³ And the Mesopotamian Enuma Elish ends with an exhortation to all men to "come to this place and rejoice and celebrate the festival," hailing God for His wonderful deeds and His loving kindness, even as was done "once above."⁵⁴ In the Asmavedha, the oldest recorded rites of India, the king is joyfully hailed at the creation as "the Morning Star," a title that often occurs in this connection.⁵⁵ This is a reminder that the question put to Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" was not a rhetorical question at all, for Job is expected to give the right answer—"answer, for thou knowest!" This is confirmed in the testament of Job, where that prophet says, "The Lord spake with me in power, and showed me the past and future."⁵⁶ The same writing recommends study of the hymns of Job's daughter, designating them as inspired poems. The word "poema," meaning literally creation, owes its prominence as Walter Otto has shown, to the circumstance that the first poets were all inspired people who sang one and the same song, namely the Song of the Creation: that was the standard ritual hymn at all the ancient cult centers where the Muses were housed and the royal year-rites rehearsed and performed.⁵⁷

The whole purpose of the Book of Jubilees is to show that the great rites of Israel, centering about the temple and the throne, actually originated with "the celebration in heaven on the Day of Creation."⁵⁸ All who were present on that occasion,

⁵²We have described the situation in *Western Political Quarterly* 4 (1951), pp. 226ff, and *Classical Journal*, XL (1946), 521ff.

⁵³Line 61, in Sethe, pp. 70-72.

⁵⁴Enuma Elish, Tab. VII, 32f, 146-150; VI, 72-81, 108-113.

⁵⁵W. Neisser, in *American Oriental Soc. Jnl.*, XLV (1925), 287.

⁵⁶Text in *Jewish Quart. Rev.* XIII (1900), 112.

⁵⁷W. F. Otto, *Die Musen und der göttliche Ursprung des Singens und Sagens* (Düsseldorf-Köln: E. Diederich, 1955).

⁵⁸See the discussion by R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees* (London, 1902), pp. li-lii.

according to I Enoch, took an oath to abide by the proposed order and then burst forth into a mighty spontaneous shout of joy.⁵⁹ Like Job, the psalmist of the Thanksgiving Hymns is frightfully downcast until he is reminded that "the humble bless Thee, while the Sons of Heaven jubilate in eternal glory. . . ."⁶⁰ Thou hast placed the lot of man eternally with the eternal spirits to shout for joy and to tell thy wonders. . . ."⁶¹ The thing to notice here is that man shares fully in these heavenly jublations; the poet is simply intoxicated with the assurance that man, a mere speck of "west dust" is allowed not only to know about the secret councils of the beginning, but actually to share in them, not only as a participant but as one of the directors! The words marvellous, knowledge, treasures, secrets, counsel, intelligence, understanding, etc., occur in constant and varied association in the scrolls. "Mere man is to be raised up to join the heavenly hosts . . . and be among Those Who Know in the great choir of jubilation."⁶¹ "Who is man that God gives him intelligence to share in such marvels and lets him know his true secrets?"⁶² "Thou hast given to thy children a rich portion of the knowledge of thy Truth, and to the degree of a man's knowledge will he be glorified."⁶³

This equating of knowledge with glory may lie at the root of the unique Jewish reverence for things of the mind: "Endowed with intelligence, O Lord, I have known thee. . . . I have learned sure and certain things regarding thy marvellous secrets, thanks to Thy Holy Spirit. . . ."⁶⁴ And in the wisdom of thy knowledge didst thou establish their knowledge before they existed."⁶⁵ The same thoughts preoccupy the author of the Manual of Discipline, who also asks, "Who is man . . . that he should take his place before thy face. . . . How can the clay and the potter sit together; or who understands thy wonderful plan of God?"⁶⁶ And he supplies the answer: "For eternal glory he has chosen me, and for that he teaches me. . . ."⁶⁷ the Way of Light itself is "the spirit of the understanding of all the Plan. . . . Without thee nothing came into existence—and

⁵⁹I Enoch 61:6-10; 69:25-27.

⁶⁰DST XI, 25, 61.

⁶¹DST III, 22-24.

⁶²DST X, 4f.

⁶³DST X, 28.

⁶⁴DST XII, 11-12.

⁶⁵DST I, 19.

⁶⁶DSD XI, 20-22.

⁶⁷DSD X, 12.

he instructed me in all knowledge." Even the Battle Scroll recurs to the theme: "Thou hast engraven them," speaking of the elect of Israel, "on the Tablets of Life for kingship . . . in all the promised ages of the eternities."⁶⁸ Hence if it should happen that the hosts of Israel are defeated in battle, one seeks the explanation where Job found it, in the economy of heaven; the ultimate victory of the earthly hosts is assured by their close cooperation with the heavenly hosts, of which they are but a local extension: ". . . the rule of Michael will be exalted among the angels, and the dominion of Israel among all flesh. Righteousness shall flourish in heaven while all those who embrace God's truth (on earth), shall have joy in the knowledge of eternal things. So, Sons of the Covenant of God, be of good courage in the trial which God visits upon you. . . ."⁶⁹ This was the answer that Job received.

The oft-recurring statement that nothing exists whatever except in the will and plan of God, has led scholars to see a connection not only of the Dead Sea Scrolls but of the Shabako stone itself with the Gospel of John.⁷⁰ The suggestion of Richard L. Anderson, that the "logos" in John may sometimes be translated "council" deserves closer consideration: "In the beginning was the logos (council, discussion) and the logos was in the presence of God, and God *was* the logos. This was in the beginning in his presence. Everything was done (determined) by it, and without it not a single thing was created. . . ." Recently C. N. Dahl has shown that the early Christian conceived of salvation "as a counterpart to the beginnings of the world As a divine act of creation, conforming to the creation of the world, eschatology and creation can be linked up with one another even in this way."⁷¹ Eschatology, that is, cannot be understood without protology (Dahl uses the word), or an understanding of what took place in the beginning before the foundation of the world. The words of the early Christian Barnabas might have been taken right out of the Dead Sea Scrolls: "Praise the Lord who put wisdom and intelligence (*nous*) in us for the understanding of his secrets. Who understands the Plan (*parabolen*: project) of the Lord save the wise

⁶⁸DSW XII, 3. See above, Note 49.

⁶⁹Y. Yadin, pp. 8, 12, 15, 237-242.

⁷⁰See above, Note 6.

⁷¹In N. Davies and D. Daube, *Eschatological Background of the New Testament* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1956), p. 424.

one who knows and loves his Lord?"⁷² We have seen in the Pastor of Hermas that God's plan was "promised in the midst of great glory and rejoicing."⁷³ The theme is as conspicuous in the earliest Christian writings as in the Jewish, but after the fourth century the doctors of both religions rejected it completely.⁷⁴

The early Christian apocrypha are especially concerned with the *opposition* to the plan, which was also initiated at the foundation of the world. The combat between the powers of light and darkness enjoys a very conspicuous place in ritual, being one of the essential episodes of the world-wide creation drama of ancient times.⁷⁵ In the scroll entitled "The War between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness" we have ample illustration of the ritual and doctrinal concern of the Jews for this motif, and the quotations just cited from that work show that the embattled hosts on earth were but a local version of the war in heaven.⁷⁶ Satan, who opposed the plan, led a rebellion and was cast out of heaven with his followers, to become an unwilling agent in the carrying out of the plan upon the earth. The name Mephistopheles ". . . der stets das Böse will, und stets das Gute schafft," denotes the ultimate frustration of the Evil One, who with the worst intent in the world, can only contribute to the exaltation of man by providing the opposition necessary for testing him in the time of probation upon the earth.⁷⁷ In the early Christian apocrypha Satan's rebellion in heaven begins not with a refusal to worship God, but with his refusal to bow down to *Adam*. "I have no need to worship Adam," he says in one early writing, ". . . I will not worship an inferior and younger being. I am his senior in the Creation; before he was made I was already made. It is rather his duty to worship me! When the angels who were under me heard this, they refused to worship him also . . .", and so the revolt was on.⁷⁸ "Now the Prince," says the recently discovered Bodmer Papyrus X, "not being righteous wanted to be God," he had his own counter plan to propose, and the

⁷²Ep. Barnab., c. 6.

⁷³Above, Note 40.

⁷⁴There is a note on this in Migne, *Patrol. Graeca*, I, 1222f (Note 20).

⁷⁵S. Hooke (ed.), *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, p. 8.

⁷⁶Discussed by Yadin, pp. 229-242.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 232: ". . . the Lord placed Belial to carry out his specific task," this doctrine of the DSS being "in complete agreement with the statements about Belial (or Beliar) in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," *ibid.*, p. 233.

⁷⁸*Lives of Adam and Eve*, 14:2f; 15.

apostates of the Church "actually accept the plan of the serpent whenever they reject God's plan."⁷⁹ The two plans represent the two ways that confront us in life, the devil himself having a definite mission on earth. "If I am a fisherman of men," says the Lord in the Gospel of the XII Apostles (a writing which Origen says is older than the Gospel of Luke),⁸⁰ "the Devil is also a fisherman, who catches many in his nets. . . . If I have come to take for my kingdom those who are mine, why should not he do the same?"⁸¹ "O Adam," cries the Evil One upon meeting him out in the dreary world after the fall, "I was cast forth from my glory because of thee, and behold I have caused thee to be expelled from paradise . . . because thou didst cause me to become a stranger to my home in heaven. Know thou that I shall never cease to contend against thee and all those who shall come after thee . . . until I have taken them all down into Amente with me!"⁸²

The contrast and choice between the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness is made possible by Satan's presence upon the earth. "Horus has two heads," says the famous seventeenth chapter of the Book of the Dead, "the one is truth, the other is sin; he gives truth to whoever brings truth to him, and sin he gives to whoever sins."⁸³ The concept of this world as a double sphere of light and darkness, good and evil, war and peace, meets us in the earliest meaningful human documents, the prehistoric palette, seals, "standards," reliefs on temples, and designs on clay vessels. On these we find in dramatic opposition to the happy and orderly banquet scenes, rural charm and religious processions opposing scenes of conflict, rapine, and military aggression.⁸⁴ The contrast is shown on the shield of Achilles in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*,⁸⁵ and Hesiod in the eighth century B.C. reminds his wayward brother that two ways are always open to man: "O Perses, the better road of the two is that of Righteousness," the hard and narrow one.⁸⁶ Evil upon the earth is not a dreadful mistake, as St. Augustine

⁷⁹*Papyrus Bodmer X*, 54:12.

⁸⁰See E. Revillout's discussion in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 2:126-9.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 2:154.

⁸²Timothy of Alexandria, *Discourse on the Abbaton*, fol. 21a, in E. A. W. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms* (Brit. Mus., 1914), pp. 240f.

⁸³H. Grapow, *Das 17. Kapitel des . . . Totenbuches* (Berlin, 1912), p. 43.

⁸⁴A. Moortgat, *Tammuz* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1949), treats the theme at length.

⁸⁵*Iliad* 18: 490ff.

⁸⁶Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ll 214ff, cf. llff.

thought,⁸⁷ for, as the Zohar says, "if God had not given men a double inclination to both good and bad, he would have been incapable either of virtue or of vice; but as it is he is endowed with a capacity for both."⁸⁸ "All things have their opposites," says the old and mysterious Sefer Yeshira, "good and bad. It is the Good which is the foil and proof of the Bad, and vice versa."⁸⁹ Hence in this world "we may live either by the Law of the Lord or the Law of Belial," according to the testament of Naphthali⁹⁰ and though the testament of Abraham announces the alarming news that "for seven thousand who walk the road of perdition, there is hardly one soul that takes the path of righteousness . . . to find salvation!"⁹¹ the presence of the two ways is a blessing, giving man a freedom of choice and opportunity for exaltation that makes him "envied of the angels." "Happy is the man," says Ben Sirach, "who could have fallen away and did not fall away; who could have inflicted injury but did not do so. . . . Poured out before thee are fire and water, stretch forth thy hand and take thy choice. . . . Life and death are before man, and that which he desireth shall be given him."⁹² This state of things, according to Fourth Ezra, was established "when the Most High made the world and Adam," and is "the condition of the contest which every man who is born upon the earth must wage."⁹³ The Manual of Discipline takes up the theme with zeal: "To these two ways all the children of men are born, and to these two divisions they are heirs; every one of them each in his generation, and in his time every man shares more or less in both of them."⁹⁴ The whole human race, "all kinds of their spirits and their natures" are put to the same test, each in his own dispensation "until the final appointed end-time." The real issue is never lost from sight, for Satan himself remains actively engaged: "All man's afflictions and tribulations are in the dominion of Mastema (the Devil as a deceiver of men), and everything that makes the

⁸⁷" . . . misera necessitas non posse non peccandi," this being the exact opposite of the early Christian teaching that men's freedom to choose their own way "makes them envied by the angels," Irenaeus, *Contra haereses*, IV, 37, 1.

⁸⁸Zohar I, 23.

⁸⁹Sefer Yeshira VI, 2f.

⁹⁰Test. Naphthali, c. 2.

⁹¹Testament of Abraham, cited by K. Kohler, in *Jew. Quart. Rev.*, VII (1895), 586.

⁹²Ben Sirach 15:14-17; 31:8-10.

⁹³IV Ezra 7:127.

⁹⁴DSD IV, 15.

Children of Light to stumble is due to the operations of the angels of the Devil," while on the other hand "the God of Israel and his true angels will help every Son of Light, for He created both the spirits of the Light and of Darkness, and according to them he will determine all the deeds of their life . . . for a judgment that will last for all the eternities."⁹⁵ The main idea of "the plan which God laid down . . . in the presence of the First Angels for an eternal universal law," according to the Clementine Recognitions, is that "there shall be two kingdoms placed upon the earth to stay there until judgment day . . . and when the world was prepared for man it was so devised that . . . he would be free to exercise his own will, to turn to good things if he wanted them, or if not to turn to bad things."⁹⁶ In the Dead Sea Scrolls and the earliest Christian writings this is expressly designated as "the ancient Law of Liberty."⁹⁷

The Didache, one of the oldest Christian writings known, (discovered in 1873) begins with the words, "There are two roads, one of life and the other of death, and there is a great difference between the two," which difference it then proceeds to describe.⁹⁸ All the other Apostolic Fathers so-called are concerned with this doctrine, but one of the most striking expositions is in the newly found Gospel of Philip, a strongly *anti-Gnostic* work: "Light and Darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers to one another. It is not possible to separate them from one another," in this world, that is, though in the next world where only the good is eternal this will not be so.⁹⁹ This is the doctrine of "the Wintertime of the Just," i.e., that while we are in this world men cannot really distinguish the righteous from the unrighteous, since in the wintertime all trees are bare and look equally dead, "but when the summertime of the Just shall come, then the righteous shall bear their leaves and fruit while the dead limbs of evil trees shall be cast into the fire."¹⁰⁰ It is another aspect of the plan. "We believe

⁹⁵DSW III, 23 to IV, 1.

⁹⁶*Clementine Recognitions* I, 24. See our discussion in *The World and the Prophets* (SLC: Deseret, 1954), pp. 166-173.

⁹⁷The "Law of Liberty (khoq kherut) of the DSS (e.g. DSD X, 6, 8, 11), can only be the Christian "ancient Law of Liberty" discussed in the references in the preceding note.

⁹⁸Didache I, 1. The Epistle of Barnabas after a brief introduction begins almost the same way.

⁹⁹*Gospel of Philip* 101:14ff.

¹⁰⁰The classic statement of the doctrine, which is very often met with in slightly altered form through the Apocrypha, is in the Pastor of Hermas, *Simil.* iii.

that God organized all things in the beginning out of unformed matter," says Justin Martyr to the Jew Trypho, ". . . for the sake of the human race, that they, if they prove themselves by their works to be worthy of His plan, having been judged worthy to return to his presence (so we believe), shall reign with him, having been made immortal and incorruptible. At the creation they themselves made the choice . . . and so were deemed worthy to live with him in immortality."¹⁰¹

There are many other areas of doctrine and important rites and ordinances set forth in the newly found writings and in the longer known texts which must now be reread and reconsidered in the light of recent discoveries. In time these are bound to exert some pressure to push out the walls of conventional Christian doctrine. But before the student gets involved in them it would be well to consider one issue which forces itself on the attention of every serious student of early Christianity and Judaism. We mean the problem of literalism. Just how literal are all these things supposed to be? What we have been talking about implies a different view of reality from that of conventional Christianity; it introduces as it were a third dimension into the purely two-dimensional pictures given us by scholastic philosophy and naturalism. The great difference between the Primitive Church and conventional Christianity is that the two take different things literally.¹⁰² The history of Christian dogma has been one long process of accommodation and de-eschatologizing by which one body of belief has been completely displaced by another, eschatological reality being supplanted by sacramental piety. The teachings with which we have been dealing in this paper definitely infer a level of reality above that of the allegory and symbolism of the schools of rhetoric which became the official teachers of Christianity. The early Christian literalism was an *horrendum* to the schoolmen, but the more we learn about the early Church the clearer it becomes that that very literalism is the distinctive stamp not only of the Christian religion but of the Jewish as well.¹⁰³ Today scholars are being forced into a compromise. A recent study of Christ's forty-day ministry concludes: "What happened after our Lord's resurrection was that He moved constantly back and forth between

¹⁰¹Justin, *Apology*, c. 10.

¹⁰²This is seen in the fourth-century description of a typical old-fashioned Christian, in Sozomen, *Church History* I, 10f.

¹⁰³H. Nibley, in *Jew. Quart. Rev.*, L (1959), 98-100.

these two 'spaces' or worlds—the seen and the unseen. There *is* another world than this. It is not at some remote point in outer space. It exists side by side with this; . . . it is the world of the spirit, and this is the world of matter."¹⁰⁴ Here a rather surprising concession to literalism is made only to be promptly withdrawn as the "other world" turns out to be only the immaterial "spirit" world after all, in spite of all the pains to which the Lord went as he "moved continually back and forth" between the two worlds to make perfectly clear that he was *not* a spirit.

The earliest Christian apologist, Aristides, rejects spiritual or allegorical interpretations outright when his colleagues at Athens want to introduce them into their religious discussions. If religious stories are "mythical," he insists, "they are nothing but just so many words . . . but if they are allegorical they are simply myths and nothing else."¹⁰⁵ Early Christians were not interested in myths or allegories. The youthful Clement leaves the schools of the philosophers in distress because they cannot answer what he considers the important questions of life, "When was the world created? What was before that? Will a man really continue to live after death?"¹⁰⁶ Only Peter could answer such questions, and Peter opens his discourse by saying, "To begin with, we say unequivocally that there is nothing bad about material substance."¹⁰⁷ This was the absolute antithesis of the teachings of the schools; it was the Gnostic intellectuals who first insisted on dematerializing Christian doctrine, followed by the Neoplatonists. Between those two the attitude of Christian theology to literalism was given its fixed and permanent form. The Bodmer Papyrus "X" shows how early they attacked with their basic weapons: ". . . they deny the resurrection, they are ashamed of the physical birth and death of the Lord."¹⁰⁸ The charge is repeated by all the apostolic fathers and in all the oldest Christian apocrypha. "Christianity," wrote Schopenhauer, "has this peculiar disadvantage, that, unlike other religions, it is not a pure system of doctrine: its chief and

¹⁰⁴B. Holt, in *Encounter*, XXIV (1963), 89.

¹⁰⁵Aristides, *Apology* 13:7. The same thing in Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, c. 3.

¹⁰⁶*Clem. Recog.*, I, 1, 1-2.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, IV, 23.

¹⁰⁸*Papyrus Bodmer X*, 51:10.

essential feature is that it is a history, a series of events, a collection of facts."¹⁰⁹

If the eschatological drama deals with real rather than allegorical events, part of those real events took place long ago and far away, but part of them are actually being acted out here upon the earth. If the saints were taught to think of themselves as outcasts in a hostile world, it just so happened that they *were* outcasts in a hostile world; one had only to look around to see that the pitfalls and dangers were real and physical as well as "spiritual." The faithful actually have found themselves more often than not holing up in the desert places of the world—E. Kaesemann's "Wandernde Gottesvolk," and when they talked of being gathered out of the world and taking leave of it, they were thinking in the most factual and spatial terms. Even those learned doctors of the Church who utterly deplored the old-fashioned literalistic ways of thinking constantly slip back to those ways themselves, especially in times of crisis; and the spiritual miracles, spiritual parousia, spiritual pilgrimage, spiritual Temple, and spiritual Jerusalem, etc., of the schoolmen never proved very satisfying to the Christian mind which displays a constant tendency to revert to the tangible article whenever possible—even the great doctors prefer the dinner to the menu, when they can get it!¹¹⁰ Today a return to literalism is part of the expanding Gospel.

But there is ambiguity here. Take for example the business of light and darkness. In the thousands of passages contrasting the two they are most of the time quite plainly figurative. Yet the shining garments of heavenly beings, as of Jesus at the Transfiguration, are real; and so is the darkness: "As every man's nature in this life is dark," says Enoch, "so are also his conception, birth, and departure from life."¹¹¹ When in the *Pastor of Hermas* the Church is described as a tower built above the water, we are told that the tower is a symbol, but that the water is very real: no one can enter the typological tower without passing through real water.¹¹² From this we see that rites and ordinances present an ambiguous situation, with some

¹⁰⁹A. Schopenhauer, *Essay on The Christian System*.

¹¹⁰Nibley, *op. cit.*, Note 103, pp. 230ff.

¹¹¹*Secrets of Enoch* 68:4.

¹¹²*Pastor of Hermas*, *Vis.* III, iii-v. In the same way the hero stands "sentry duty" not only symbolically but literally, *Simil.* V, i.

things to be taken literally and done literally and others figuratively. But in our ancient texts the reader is rarely left in doubt as to which is which; it is only the doctors of the Church, all men of the schools, who insist on minimizing the literal at the expense of the allegorical. Once one comes to understand, Origen assures us, that the historical parts of the Bible are to be understood symbolically, the historical interpretation of the whole becomes not only expendable but actually misleading, and should be abandoned altogether!¹¹³

The mixing of types and images with reality is of the very essence of our life upon the earth, where we see through a glass but darkly. In the scriptures and the apocrypha we are told of things that are real and yet too wonderful for us even to imagine here, let alone describe; we simply can't conceive them: "Eye hath not seen not ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared. . . ." (I Cor. 2:9). Consequently, if these things are to be mentioned at all, it must be in terms of types and images which are not real. Yet the types and images are not for that reason to be despised. A valuable commentary on this theme is supplied in the newly discovered Gospel of Philip: "Truth did not come into the world naked, but she came clothed in types and images. One cannot receive the truth in any other way." (115:10-12) The solid reality behind the images can only be known by apocatastasis, or restoration to a former state. (115:15-18) If people do not receive the ordinances here, we are told, they will not enjoy the real thing hereafter (121:1-8). Marriage, for example, has a different form in the next world to what it has here (124:6-9); but only by entering it *here* will one be allowed to enter it there: "If anyone does not receive it while he is in this world, he will not receive it in the other place" (134:6-7). So it is with all the ordinances: he who has not mastered "the places" here "will not be able to be master of that place . . ." (124:33-36). "The mysteries of the truth are revealed as types and images" here, while "the veil conceals how God really governs the physical creation" (132:20-25). The rending of the veil is not the abolition but the revelation of what is behind it, "in order that we might enter into the truth of it. . . . We enter in our weakness through despised symbols" (133:1-

¹¹³J. Danielou, *Origen* (N.Y., Sheed and Ward, 1955), pp. 155-7, cf. 119, 141-4, 152.

15),¹¹⁴ but enter we must, for who does not "receive the light" through these ordinances "will not receive it in the other place," while he who does receive it "cannot be held back, and will be beyond the reach of all his enemies even in this world. And when the time comes for him to go out of this world he has already received the truth in the images" (134:6-13).

If one makes a sketch of a mountain, what is it? A few lines on a piece of paper. But there is a solid reality behind this poor composition; even if the tattered scrap is picked up later in a street in Tokyo or a gutter in Madrid, it still attests to the artist's experience of the mountain as a reality. If the sketch should be copied by others who have never seen the original mountain, it still bears witness to its reality. So it is with the apocryphal writings: most of them are pretty poor stuff and all of them are copies of copies. But when we compare them we cannot escape the impression that they have a real model behind them, more faithfully represented in some than in others. All we ever get on this earth, Paul reminds us, is a distorted reflection, but it is a reflection of things that really are. Since we are dealing with derivative evidence only, we are not only justified but required to listen to all the witnesses, no matter how shoddy some of them may be. For years the evidence of the Egyptians, Greeks, Babylonians, etc., has been brought into court as powerful defutation of the Bible's claims to originality and inspiration. Their voices do indeed refute the claims of conventional Christianity to the absolute originality and exclusive inspiration of the Bible, but the Bible itself never made such claims.¹¹⁵ What the outside texts prove is the antiquity and universality of the Gospel and its central position in the whole history of civilization. It is not a local or tribal tradition on the one hand, nor is it the spontaneous expression of evolving human intelligence on the other, but is the common heritage of all ancient civilizations, battered, corrupted, and distorted in most cases, to be sure, but always recognizable in its main features and much too ingenious and elaborate to be the product of independent discovery.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴The translation is that of R. M. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 43ff.

¹¹⁵We have discussed this in the *Improvement Era*, LXVII (Oct. 1964ff), 816ff.

¹¹⁶Lord Raglan, *The Origins of Religion* (London: Thinker's Library, 1949) Chaps. vii and viii, develops this theme.

But what are we to make of pagans possessing the Gospel, and that from the most ancient times? We did not say they had it, but only that their records testify to it. If we examine those records, we soon discover that all their authors possess are mere fragments which they do not pretend to understand. For them all those elements of the Gospel which fit so perfectly into the account of things given in the story of the redemption are but distant traditions, shattered remnants of a forgotten structure, completely mystifying odds and ends that once meant something but whose meaning can now only be guessed at. This attitude to the heritage of the past may fairly be called the basic mood of Egyptian religion. In the seventeenth chapter of the Book of the Dead, to which we have already referred, the question is regularly asked, "What does this mean?" and fourteen times when an answer is supplied, it is with the reservation that "others say" it means something else. From the earliest times "the impression made on the modern mind" by the Egyptians, according to I. E.S. Edwards, "is that of a people searching in the dark for a key to truth . . . retaining all lest perchance the appropriate one should be lost."¹¹⁷ They know there is a key, that is, but they also know that they do not have it. It would be easy to show that the keynote of the literature and religion of all ancient people who have left us their records, with the exception of Israel, is one of pessimism and despair. We would only have to quote the authors of the standard literary histories of the various nations to make that clear.¹¹⁸ Israel escaped both that pessimism and fatalism by being constantly reminded by the prophets of the great pre-existent plan that lies behind everything that happens. This we believe to be the most significant element in the expanding Gospel.

¹¹⁷I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt* (Penguin Books, 1952), pp. 27f.

¹¹⁸An excellent illustration is W. G. Lambert's "Introductory Essay" in his *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford Univ., 1960).