

36. Van Luik, Abraham *Doctrinal Recognitions* (Unpublished and Incomplete, 1976)

[You object to this obviously non-scholarly item, unavailable to the world, being reviewed amongst these wondrous texts by renowned scholars? Hey, get your own list. This is my list, I can do what I want!]

Since this book does not exist, and won't, I will comment on it at the same time that I reproduce it here:

This is what I wrote in 1976 [and my 2003 comments are in brackets like this]:

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DOCTRINAL RECOGNITIONS

Abraham Van Luik

First Draft of Chapters 1-5, December 1976

Unfinished and unpublished.

[I had thousands of citations cut out and in a box ready to prepare the next chapters, but then lost interest in the whole enterprise because my beliefs changed. I hint at the belief change and its basis elsewhere on my website at <http://www.thoughtsandplaces.org/WIZZF.HTML>].

Prepared for Internet posting February 2003.]

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Here I have seem things rare and profitable;
Things pleasant, dreadful, things to make me stable
In what I have begun to take in hand:
Then let me think on them, and understand
Wherefore they shewed me were, and let me be
Thankful, O good Interpreter, to Thee.

Christian, in *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan

[A quote that describes how I felt at my first reading of the
Clementine Recognitions]

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PREFACE

In the preface to his book *Since Cumorah*, Hugh Nibley writes:

. . . we are not going to prove anything in this book.
And why not? Because: The same evidence which
convinces one expert may leave another completely
unsatisfied;¹ . . .

That this is so is well illustrated by comparing the usage of
Dead Sea Scroll materials in Nibley's *Since Cumorah* with the
treatment of the same subject by Edmund Wilson in his *The*

*Dead Sea Scrolls 1947-1969.*² Nibley arrays line upon line, precept upon precept in defense of the claims of the Book of Mormon. Wilson, on the other hand, seeing himself as "an inveterate myth shrinker," used the Dead Sea Scrolls material to deflate . . . "the myth of the origins of Christianity," and cannot, in the face of the Dead Sea Scroll revelations, . . . "help feeling a certain contempt . . . for the founders of religions since they exploit . . . the innocent credulity of the human race."

In explaining the phenomenon of Christianity, Wilson applies an evolutionary scheme to his interpretation of its history, and observes that Jesus had, at times, . . . "certain doubts of his divine mission and his heavenly sponsorship." Wilson . . . "can see from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the role of a Jewish Messiah had been sedulously built up in advance and that Jesus may well have been assigned and have allowed himself to be assigned to it."

To make it perfectly clear how such a fraud may be perpetrated, Wilson exhibits Joseph Smith and his Mormonism (as seen through the evolutionary eyes of Fawn Brodie) as absolute proof.

[Since I wrote this I have come to respect Brodie's work.]

The merits of the arguments used by Nibley and Wilson to support their extremely divergent hypotheses are not important to this discussion. The point to be made is simply this: all any scholar, or pretended scholar, can do with any given amount of material or "data" is to

- 1) use it to support a given hypothesis,
- 2) use it to disprove a given hypothesis, or
- 3) use it to construct a new hypothesis.

Number three usually follows number two, if it does not it may be that the parlor game is being played where an answer is given and the question must be guessed at. Only number two gives a definite answer: nix on the hypothesis, which, in turn, invites the construction of a new one. Therefore, when anyone, including this author, quotes some source to "prove" a point, the point is not "proven" but only supported, and that only as far as the author's interpretation of the source matches the meaning of the source's original author.

One may see, therefore, the difficulty of using hard to decipher ancient sources to prove modern hypotheses. Only a colossal ego or a dismal lack of scientific understanding can account for the cadre of self-appointed guardians of intellectual purity, which exalt science --so called-- and deplore as basically evil the elevation of myth, fear, superstition and guilt which is, to them, "Religion."

In science, as well as in religion and politics, there are those who have the ability to discern the operation of basic, fundamental principles in even the most complex situations. On the other hand, there are a large number of individuals, who, when faced with complexity, reduce the complex to an absurd abstraction which is then hailed as an absolute principle of truth. The former individuals usually stand out as the real leaders in their respective fields, whether they be recognized as such or not.

The latter may be described as a type of "fundamentalist" whether religious, scientific, or political. Indefensible walls of absolutes protect such individuals from the vicissitudes of the mysterious, complex phenomenon that is human existence. True science, as true religion, must, as expositor of truth, be ever open to new evidence, new vision, new interpretation.

Only when science and religion have both embraced the totality of all truth will they be indistinguishable. That day will not come as long as man divides physically and spiritually derived knowledge into completely separate realms. That day will not come, obviously, under the present circumstance of man. That day can only come when the veil that separates the physical and the spiritual is lifted and man sees again as he is seen. Meanwhile, the separation is a necessity.

Therefore, we truly only . . .

know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (I Cor. 13:9-10)

Why this lengthy polemic on science to introduce a hook on religion? Precisely because even the devout religionist, no matter what his system of religion, instinctively views with hostility an unorthodox source of knowledge.

[Example: my dig at Brodie, above!]

Yet, just as the true scientist does not abandon science, but only his hypothesis, when new evidence demands it, so the true religionist should condition himself to the inevitability of new evidence which will either support or force an alteration of some given religious hypothesis. Illustrations, for better or for worse, are easy to come by: the mission of Christ; the crystallization of Catholicism, the Reformation, the Restoration, to name but a few. Each of these changes had its avid supporters and devout enemies, the reader may decide for himself which of these was a triumph of truth, or of falsehood.

[In a way this is what happened to me, as I learned more I no longer believed in what I had assumed to be Truth with a

capital T just a few years before]

The Latter-day Saint [LDS, Mormon] audience for which this writing is intended, though it should know better, is also very suspicious of unorthodox sources of knowledge. Favorable comparisons between such sources and accepted, orthodox, sources are always welcome, and if this work were to restrict itself to just the making of such 'harmonies' of ancient and modern religious writings this whole introduction would have been superfluous: support of accepted hypotheses is welcome no matter what the source, almost.

This work, however, seeks not only to support the modern scriptures and their claims by favorable comparisons with an ancient source, but it will also attempt to learn from that source. That is a real bugaboo to some, who have, as professed followers of the most mind-expanding religion on earth, followed the example of their closed-minded neighbors who have compressed all religious truth into one volume and shut their ears and eyes even to the full truth in it. To these Latter-day Saints the Standard Works have become, not standards by which every other work is to be judged, but absolutes which exclude the necessity of perusing other works altogether.

[My mind was indeed expanded by my Mormon experience, I am who I am today in large part due to the things I learned and experienced as a believing Mormon.]

The application of D&C 91 can be seen as a challenge. It says of those reading the Apocrypha,

And whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom; and whoso receiveth not by the Spirit, cannot be benefitted . . .

Sticking strictly with sources pronounced orthodox is the avoidance of this challenge. But D&C 91 says that if someone is willing to study the Apocrypha, so be it. If that someone shows how some parts of these works support our modern scriptures, hooray, D&C 91 is fulfilled, and it is.

But what comes through spiritual enlightenment, only recognition of familiar themes and parallel passages? No, D&C 91 suggests that things that are profitable can also be gleaned from the apocryphal literature.

The idea that nothing outside the Bible (or for the LDS person, the Bible and modern scripture) can convey truth is the sectarian dogma of the day. Scripture must be understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, say the lips, but Scripture interprets Scripture says the rule and the practice and if something is only mentioned once in scripture or is otherwise unclear it is not necessary for salvation, period.

Why do sectarians and some Latter-day Saints shun the Spirit in favor of the word? Because words alone can give a sense of security and absoluteness independent of lifestyle and spiritual condition, while the Spirit demands compliance with certain rules and regulations and thereafter proceeds to unlock the mind and expand the mere, simple words into grand and never totally comprehensible concepts that fill the soul but leave the tongue rather speechless. It shatters the comfortable little boxes into which former understanding was crammed, and, worst of all, cannot be shared or taught by the recipient to anyone not marching to the same drummer.

[One could see the seeds of my pending fall from faith in these sentences, I just kept on reading and one day my drummer changed.]

This author does not wish to present an exception to the

above in this work. Doctrinal discussions based on the source of this work, which is not orthodox, are not meant to imply that the author is expounding revelatory knowledge. Rather, it is hoped that the reader will accept the challenge and seek the Spirit in discerning truth from error in the statements quoted directly from the source and also in the discussions that follow. The author refuses to shoulder that responsibility for the reader.

--A. Van Luik--

INTRODUCTION

In a warm discussion with a couple of Lutheran friends, the accusation was made that the Latter-day Saints were the "Judaizers" of today. My first impulse, naturally, was to deny this charge, as well it should be, yet, the accusation struck with such force that no response came forth. This was not a classic confounding of error by truth, however, but a temporary blindness such as may be experienced when lightning illuminates surroundings heretofore only known by touch.

Touch? Well, for a considerable time, in reading apocryphal and other ancient writings pertaining to early Christianity, I had amassed a sizable collection of mental notes concerning the doctrinal similarities between certain of these writings and modern (Latter-day Saint, or Mormon, or LDS) scriptures. When the charge of being a "Judaizer" was leveled, many of these heretofore unrelated tidbits of information seemed, in a flash, to congeal: the ancient writings which seemed to correspond most closely with our modern religious instruction in the Latter-day Saint Church are most generally ascribed as belonging to the Jews of the couple of centuries before Christ, and to the Jewish-Christians of the first couple of centuries after Christ.

Concerning the refutation of the charge of being "Judaizers," if the Gospel is what my Lutheran friends believe it to be, then from their viewpoint, we Mormons are truly "Judaizers" in that we couple personal faith and personal performance as both being essential to the obtaining of salvation. On the other hand, if the Gospel is what the Latter-day Saints teach it to be, Judaizers would be those who would seek to impose the ritual observances of the Law of Moses on the saints, and the Gospel version taught by our Lutheran friends would be just as far afield in a different direction.

These differences in belief and perception cannot be resolved by arguments and written proofs, but suffice it to say that the latter (LDS) view will be the bias of the author of this work. And the examination of the content of one of the major works of Jewish-Christianity, the *Clementine Recognitions* will be done with this latter bias and definition of "Judaizers" in mind.

[This is the second warning: this is a work created by a believer to support his belief.]

CHAPTER I JEWISH CHRISTIANS, NOT JUDAIZERS

[This chapter was poorly integrated into the overall discussion, its completion is not achieved until later chapters where Jewish-Christian literature is pursued on this same point as well as other points. This chapter is my setting on paper why the arguments from some of my Christian friends did not affect me or change my mind about the Mormon faith. For an alternative point of view, see the website linked under Kane (item # 23).]

In explaining the distinction that must be made between the Gospel of faith and the law of works, the official teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contain the following:

. . . We believe and confess that these two doctrines must be urged constantly and diligently in the church of God until the end of the world, but with true distinction, so that in the ministry of the New Testament the proclamation of the law and its threats will terrify the hearts of the unrepentant and bring them to a knowledge of their sin and to repentance, but not in such a way that they become despondent and despair therein. Rather, since "the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24), and hence points and leads not away from but toward the Christ who is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4), the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Christ will once more comfort and strengthen them with the assurance that if they believe the Gospel God forgives them all their sins through Christ, accepts them for his sake as God's children, and out of pure grace, without any merit of their own, justifies and saves them. But

this does not mean that one may abuse the grace of God and sin against grace. This distinction between the law and the Gospel is thoroughly and mightily set forth by St Paul in II Cor. 3:7-9.

For this reason and in order that both doctrines, law and Gospel may not be mingled together and confused so that what belongs to one doctrine is ascribed to the other, it is necessary to urge and maintain with all diligence the true and proper distinction between law and Gospel, and diligently to avoid anything that might give occasion for a confusion between them by which the two doctrines could be tangled together and made into one doctrine. Such a confusion would easily darken the merits and benefits of Christ, once more to make the Gospel a teaching of law . . . and thus rob Christians of the true comfort which they have in the Gospel against the terrors of the law and reopen the door to the papacy in the Church of God. It is therefore dangerous and wrong to make of the Gospel, strictly so called in distinction from the law, a proclamation of repentance and of forgiveness of sins. But . . . strictly speaking, the Gospel is the promise of forgiveness of sins and justification through Christ, whereas the law is a message that rebukes and condemns sin.³

The LDS reader may question some parts of this doctrinal declaration, but may also rest assured that his objections are anticipated and answered in this same work. Of course, the answers may not satisfy that reader.

This quotation was made at length, hopefully to show the LDS reader that there exists a rational, coherent Christian doctrine which is not reconcilable with his own. This system judges the LDS system as non-Christian, in view of the fact that what is considered the Gospel of Christ, as defined

above, is not taught by the Latter-day Saints, who confound "law" and "Gospel" thoroughly.

For example, in reference to obtaining exaltation, Mormonism teaches that (D&C 80:22):

. . . he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

This is a concept alien to many branches of Christianity today.

But what is really meant by "law" when Paul set forth the distinction between law and Gospel "thoroughly and mightily" in II Cor. 3:7-9?

II Cor. 3:7-9 contrasts the Mosaic law of the letter with Christ's law of the spirit. But, as my Lutheran friends are quick to point out, using James 2:10-13, the "law" as the word is used in the scriptures contains all of the commandments of scripture, not just those given by Moses.

Such an interpretation is fortified by a multitude of scriptural passages such as Eph. 2:8-9 and Romans 11:6 (etc.):

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.

If, indeed, only "Scripture interprets Scripture," it may be instructive to look in some detail at Paul's polemic against law and for faith in Galatians, Chapters 5:2-6 & 10 [New English Bible, or NEB, New Testament]:

Mark my word: I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision Christ will do you no good at all. Once again, you can take it from me that every man who receives circumcision is under obligation to keep the entire law. When you seek to be justified by way of law, your relation with Christ is completely severed: you have fallen out of the domain of God's grace. For to us, our hope of attaining that righteousness which we eagerly await is the work of the Spirit through faith. If we are in union with Christ Jesus circumcision makes no difference at all, nor does the want of it: the only thing that counts is faith active in love.

You were running well; who was it hindered you from following the truth? . . . United with you in the Lord, I am confident that you will not take the wrong view; but the man who is unsettling your minds, whoever he may be, must bear God's judgement. And I, my friends, if I am still advocating circumcision, why is it I am still persecuted? In that case, my preaching of the cross is a stumbling-block no more. As for these agitators, they had better go the whole way and make eunuchs of themselves.

You, my friends, were called to be free men; only do not turn your freedom into license for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment: Love your neighbour as yourself .

I mean this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfill the desires of your lower nature, That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while the Spirit fights against it . . . But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Anyone can see the kind of behavior that belongs to the lower nature: fornication, impurity, and indecency; idolatry and sorcery. quarrels, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions,

dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies; drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God.

But the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self control. There is no law dealing with such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course.

. . . If a man should do something wrong, my brothers, on a sudden impulse, you who are endowed with the Spirit must set him right again very gently. Look to yourself, each one of you: you may be tempted too, help one another to carry these heavy loads, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Make no mistake about this: God is not to be fooled; a man reaps what he sows. If he sows seed in the field of his lower nature, he will reap from it a harvest of corruption, but if he sows in the field of the Spirit, the Spirit will bring him a harvest of eternal life. So let us never tire of doing good, for if we do not slacken our efforts we shall in due time reap our harvest. Therefore, as opportunity offers, let us work for the good of all, especially members of the household of faith.

This quotation shows that the Latter-day Saint concept of a "Gospel law," which must be kept, is not foreign to the New Testament. Also, the law which is condemned so strongly by Paul is the Law of Moses, meaning the temporal law. Observe this explanation from Paul in Gal. 3:17-25 (NEB):

What I am saying is this: a testament, or covenant, had already been validated by God; it cannot

he invalidated, and its promises rendered ineffective, by a law made four hundred and thirty years later

Then what of the law? It was added to make wrongdoing a legal offense, It was a temporary measure pending the arrival of the 'issue' to whom the promise was made [Note: issue meaning offspring of Abraham, who is Christ as in Gal. 3:16]

If a law had been given which had power to bestow life, then indeed righteousness would have come from keeping the law. But Scripture has declared the whole world to be prisoners in subjection to sin, so that faith in Jesus Christ may be the ground on which the promised blessing is given, and given to those who have such faith.

Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith; and now that faith has come, the tutor's charge is at an end.

Could anything be plainer? The law which has no power to save, if it becomes the object of faith, estranges one from Christ. This law was a temporary restraining order given through Moses--which would be lifted when the old agreement, rejected at Sinai, would be re-ratified by the coming of Christ.

The situation is not unlike that of a nation which suffers a revolt which nearly overthrows its benevolent government. Until tranquility is restored, martial law is in effect. When the bans are lifted, the people should be more actively aware of the blessings of freedom.

But what sort of people would try to re-impose martial law after the need for it was gone, and it had been lifted? Those who enforced that law and were in other ways given power over the citizenry.

Thus the Judaizers were Christianized Jews who were jealous of their loss of status with God after the successful spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Before this time, as proselytes, Gentiles could only enjoy a second-class citizenship in the kingdom of God, yet under this new order, they seemed just as much "chosen" as the Jews. That such envy, of a loss of rank in the world, motivated the Judaizers is confirmed by Paul in Gal. 4:17-18, NEB):

The persons I have referred to are envious of you, but not with an honest envy: what they really want is to bar the door to you so that you may come to envy them . . .

Which is a return to the self-appointed status of the Jewish nation over the rest of the world under the "chosen people" concept.

This point has been belabored to show the non-LDS reader, as well as the LDS reader, that the Gospel of the Latter-day Saints finds very fine expression in the words of Paul, in the New Testament. Moreover, the Judaizers are not those who entangle faith and works, but rather they are those who seek to yoke Christianity with the temporal Law of Moses.

CHAPTER II JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

[Now we get to the part directly relevant to the overall book list review. We get to the Ebionites and their writings.]

The Old Testament may, in a sense, be called Judaeo-Christian literature. It originates with the Jews, to be sure, but is considered Holy Scripture by the Christians also. In addition, beginning with Christ himself, the Christian apologists have always used the Jewish Scriptures to prove that a Messiah should, and did, come, and that the birth, mission, and death of Jesus Christ were all foretold by the Jewish Prophets. Eusebius, writing early in the fourth century A.D., does a creditable job showing that:

The name Jesus, as also that of Christ, was both known and honoured from ancient times, by the inspired prophets .⁴

The New Testament, written by Christian Jews, is in a very real sense a Judaeo-Christian work. In a still different sense, the Dead Sea Scriptures reflect Judaeo-Christian values to such an extent that the previously quoted Wilson sees in them the basis for the rise of Christianity much in the same fashion as the Rev. Dr. C. F. Potter sees in them the explanation of where Christ picked up much of what is distinctive in his doctrinal teaching. The idea that Christ was the Son of God, Potter explains,

belongs with the bishops of the Nicene council, . . . it is most doubtful if the Essenes or Jesus himself would have agreed with that.⁵

So far, this chapter has been used to disarm the fear of

impending heresy which so often accompanies the mere classification of a source as Jewish-Christian. Admittedly, what Christian scholarship has traditionally so labeled, in many instances, deserves to be classed 'heretical' because extreme Judaizing themes are blatantly espoused, clumsily disguised, or otherwise aided and abetted. But the question must be asked, do such tendencies invalidate the entire work?

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning the Apocrypha--There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly; There are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men. (D&C 91:1-2)

This quotation suggests that men may have taken the teachings and traditions of Christ and the Apostles, and used them for propaganda purposes. To further a cause, literary fabrications were concocted which were mixtures of truth and error. In the same fashion, today's Christian literature, using the same scriptures, may advocate diametrically opposed systems of religion. As one Lutheran friend honestly observed to me:

. . . we believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God, wherever it quotes the King James Bible verbatim.

Even though this was a slam against the Book of Mormon, yet such an observation at least classes that book with the rest of the Jewish and Christian Apocrypha, which is esteemed by this brand of modern Christianity in exactly the same fashion. Which brings us to perhaps the most literally Jewish-Christian work in existence, the Book of Mormon. If it were considered as apocryphal by the Christian world, it would get some serious study and attention. It is carefully

thrust aside as a clumsy piece of poor fiction, however, and receives from Christian scholarship nothing but ignorance, in every sense of the word.

[I think I actually saw a book, recently published, by a non-LDS scholar analyzing the Book of Mormon, but I have not read it. The point is that this statement may not be as true now as it was then.]

This whole subject of separating Judaizers from Jewish-Christianity takes on importance to the Latter-day Saint expressly because of this aspect of the Book of Mormon.

One interesting difference between Judaizers and the devout Jewish-Christian concerns martyrdom. Paul says of the Judaizers (NEB: Gal. 6:12) that

their sole object is to escape persecution for the cross of Christ.

Curiously, in his goldmine of information on martyrdom and persecution in the early church, Frend observes:

Even in Alexandria, the primitive Jewish-Christian outlook retained some of its vigor and popular appeal. Its hopes still made martyrs.⁶

If these assessments are accurate, then surely Paul, with his multitudinous favorable references to martyrdom, represented the primitive Jewish-Christian outlook. We know he was not a Judaizer.

It should be kept in mind that the tradition of martyrdom in the Christian Church is a continuation of the same tradition in Jewry, and the Jewish-Christian "Shepherd of Hermas" also taught the blessedness of the persecuted.⁷

In this light, the Book of Mormon again allies itself with primitive Judaeo-Christianity with these words,

And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consumed in the fire, he also was pained, and he said unto Alma: how can we witness this awful scene?

To which Alma replied

. . . behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory (Alma 14:10-11)

In no other book, except the Dead Sea Scriptures, is Judaism so Christian before the time of Christ.

Only the Book of Mormon and the Dead Sea Scrolls offer such thought provoking mixtures of law and Gospel. From the Scrolls:

I will enter the Covenant of God
I will recite his decrees
I will place in them my bounds without return
As for me, my justification is with God
For mankind has no way
And man is unable to establish his steps
Since justification is with God
And perfection of way is out of His hand.
He will draw me near by His grace,
And by his mercy will he bring my justification.
He will judge me in the righteousness of his truth
And in the greatness of His goodness
He will pardon all my sins.
Through His righteousness He will cleanse me
Of the uncleanness of sin
And of the sins of the children of men,

That I may confess to God His righteousness,
And His majesty to the Most High.⁸

Similar sentiments are found in The Book of Mormon, as uttered by the prophet Lehi:

And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever. Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. (2 Nephi: 5-7)

And from the prophet Nephi,

Be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:25)

There is real wisdom and deep doctrine in these words. By inference Paul, who spoke similarly, was teaching a doctrine which needed a context of righteous living as presented in the Scrolls and Book of Mormon accounts, and also in Paul's personal life, yet not quite strongly enough expressed in the immediate vicinity of the "saved by grace" passages of his letters. The passages quoted from the Scrolls might also be confusing as to the law upon which the receipt of this great gift of God (salvation) is predicated, were it not for the rigorous self- and community-disciplinary code outlined in great detail immediately preceding this great poem of God's saving love and grace. The poem on grace and mercy and God's righteousness is placed literally and figuratively at the end of the law.

Among the literary productions commonly ascribed to the Jewish-Christians are letters, such as the letter of Barnabas; revelations, such as the Shepherd of Hermas; and gospels, such as the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites.

The Ebionites are usually singled out as examples of Paul's enemies: the Judaizers. Yet, the practice of labeling everything which hints at a Jewish bias as "Ebionitic" is patently unfair.

Perhaps the most considerable works commonly classed as Ebionite, the "Clementina," are more properly called simply Judaeo-Christian in origin.

The translator of the Edinburgh Edition of the Ante-Nicene Library, the Rev Thomas Smith, P.O., observed that the Ebionite classification is based primarily on these evidences: (1) high esteem for the apostle James coupled with no mention of the apostle Paul, who was hated by the Judaizers, and (2) Peter's Judaistic doctrinal statements, as also his clinging to such Jewish customs as eating only with believers, which recur frequently throughout the stories.⁹

CHAPTER III

DOCTRINAL PECULIARITIES OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

[Now we get to the things that blew me away when I first read the "Recognitions," they seemed almost Mormon in their general tone, outlook, and their reference to particular beliefs and practices. I still believe this to be an enigma of the first magnitude. But the one resembling the other, ~1,800 years apart, does not in and of itself compel me to believe in either. It is like the revelations and accomplishments of Joan of Arc ([click to go there](#)), they have some things in common with the revelations of Joseph Smith the first Mormon prophet. But in and of itself that is not a reason to become either a Catholic or a Mormon. Faith has to be based on an inner experience, after that, these types of supporting arguments are nice. Believing because of supporting arguments, without a base in spiritual experience, makes for a superficial and temporary faith. Is that what happened to me? All intellectual faith and no spiritual experience? Not in my opinion.]

The reason the Clementine Apocrypha are usually referred to as the Clementina, is because the supposed author, Clement of Rome, did not write them. This point, that Clement did not write the Homilies and Recognitions of Clement, is about the only critical point upon which the scholarly world agrees.

Eusebius, early in the fourth century, described the Clementina in his chapter dealing with Bishop Clement's writings:

There are also other writings reported to be his, verbose and of great length. Lately, and some time ago, these were produced that contain the dialogues of Peter

and Apion, of which, however, not a syllable is recorded by the primitive church. For they do not preserve the pure impress of apostolic orthodoxy.¹⁰

This author would agree with Eusebius' assessment of the lack of a 'pure' orthodoxy, whatever such a thing may be assumed to be by a devout man who, the previous year, found one of his own notions declared unorthodox at the Council of Nice.

The other objection, however, concerning nothing of these goings on being recorded by the primitive church, cannot realistically be held to be a rigorous proof of heterodoxy.

Goodspeed,¹¹ in his study of early Christian literature, observes that until the Greek world was penetrated by the Christians, there was no Christian literature. Hence Greek is the language of the "original" New Testament, and hence the scramble of the more fundamentalist theologians to learn Greek, so that God's word may be learned in its purity. But the Oral Gospel was in the Aramaic language of those who experienced it. And, according to Papias (abt. AD. 140), Matthew composed these 'Sayings' in Aramaic, later translated by followers into Greek.

Goodspeed, in this same discussion, suggests that the written Gospels are missionary tracts written for the use of converts in the Greek world. As such, they do not tell the complete acts and sayings of Jesus undoubtedly contained in the Oral Gospel of the first generation Church, but rather pick and choose material suitable to the purpose at hand.¹²

Striking evidence of this concept, that the Gospels were limited in content by their purpose, was recently discovered, translated, and analyzed by Morton Smith. It appears that Clement of Alexandria was the guardian of a second, more

detailed, Gospel by Mark. This second Gospel was indeed secret, in that it was intended only for those well confirmed in the faith. The first Gospel of Mark was indeed a missionary tract, according to Clement of Alexandria (abt. 200):

As for Mark, then, during Peter's stay in Rome, he wrote an account of the Lord's doings, not, however, declaring all of them, nor yet hinting at the secret ones, but selecting what he thought most useful for increasing the faith of those who were being instructed.

But the second Gospel was:

. . . a more spiritual Gospel for the use of those who were being perfected. Nevertheless, he yet did not divulge the things not to be uttered, nor did he write down the hierophantic teaching of the Lord, but to the stories already written he added yet others and, moreover, brought in certain sayings of which he knew the interpretation would, as a mystagogue, lead the hearers into the innermost sanctuary of that truth hidden by seven veils. Thus, in sum, he prepared matters, neither grudgingly nor incautiously, in my opinion, and dying, he left his composition to the church in Alexandria, where it even yet is most carefully guarded, being read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries.¹³

Part of this *Secret Gospel of Mark* is quoted in which an initiatory ordinance is sketchily described. If this ordinance is a baptism, as Professor Smith suggests as a possible interpretation, it is of a type not presently understood or practiced. In view of the preparation, costume, and time involved in this initiation into the "mystery of the kingdom," Professor Smith links this initiatory ordinance indirectly with . . . "some rite which provided the soul with the necessary

purification and information (angelic names and spells)" . . . for . . . "introducing the initiate into the company of the Gods" . . .¹⁴

Liberties were taken in arranging the above quotations from two different sentences, but the essence of what Dr. Smith tries to establish is undisturbed. The Latter-day Saint religion, interestingly enough, has exactly such a rite serving exactly such a purpose.

Smith also points out the affinity of some magical rites which seek to unite man and his deity, with similar Christian doctrines as found in Paul's letters. Particularly, the notion . . . "that by union with the ruler of the gods, the initiate can attain superiority to the astral deities--is precisely that of Paul in Col. 2.8-3.4." Professor Smith admits . . . "some doubt as to when Paul is talking about baptism."¹⁵

Nibley's *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* explores this same connection between seemingly pagan magical rites and the "mystery of the kingdom," but with special reference to Latter-day Saint theology and practice.¹⁷ Daniélou, in his *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* reconstructs the rite of Jewish-Christian Baptism from a number of sources. In discussing many references, Daniélou notes that in intimate association with the baptismal rite, were a rite of anointing, a "rite of the white garment," and a "coronation" rite, all of which, it seems . . . "Christianity was obliged to abandon when it moved into a pagan society."¹⁸

To illustrate the rite of anointing, the *Testament of Levi* was quoted in part. It may be instructive to here quote a similar passage from another Jewish Christian source which illustrates all three of these rites of anointing, clothing, and coronation, (from the Slavonic version of the *Book of Enoch*,

Chapter 23, verses 8 and 9):

And the Lord said to Michael: Go and take Enoch from out of his earthly garments, and anoint him with my sweet ointment, and put him into the garments of My glory. And Michael did this, as the Lord told him. He anointed me and dressed me, . . . and I looked at myself, and was like one of his glorious ones.

The sacred endowment of Mormonism is, as it were, a shadow, pointing to the reality as here experienced by Enoch.

In discussing the Jewish-Christian theology of redemption, Daniélou mentions that The descent [of Jesus] into hell was a subject "of central importance for Jewish Christianity:"

the purpose of the Descent, in Jewish Christian thinking, was to enable Christ after his death to preach deliverance to the righteous who were imprisoned there. This doctrine appears to be unknown to the New Testament, and to be purely Jewish Christian; it, in fact, constitutes a dogmatic development which was to be accepted by the common tradition, and finally included in the Creed.¹⁹

Daniélou goes on to say that Eph. 4:9 and I Peter 3:18-22 refer to the descent from heaven to earth, not below it.

This "purely Jewish-Christian" doctrine, then, found its way into the Creed. The official stance on this subject, of one Church which believes this Creed, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, is:

. . . we let matters rest on the simple statement of our Christian Creed, to which Dr. Luther directs us in the

sermon that he held in the castle at Torgau in the year 1533, "I believe in the Lord Christ, God's Son, who died, was buried, and descended into hell." Herein the burial and the descent into hell are differentiated as distinct articles, and we simply believe that after the burial the entire person, God and man, descended into hell, conquered the devil, destroyed hell's power, and took from the devil all his might.²⁰

Thus we have, from modern Christendom, instead of salvation for the righteous dead, an account of the "harrowing of hell." In the 1948 Improvement Era series on "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times," Hugh Nibley shows this "harrowing" to be "a borrowing from obvious pagan source, popular and literary."²¹ If this doctrine is verily a purely Jewish-Christian one, should not Jewish-Christian sources be able to shed more light on the subject? Daniélou arrays the following texts as proof of his interpretation of the meaning of Christ's descent into the "habitations of the dead," which, he strongly emphasizes, is not exactly what the term "hell" means to most moderns.²²

1. *The Gospel of Peter* (41-42):

And they heard a voice from heaven saying: Hast thou preached to them that sleep? And the Cross answered: Yes.

2. "the Elder quoted by Irenaeus" (Adv. Haer. IV, 27:2):

the Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His Advent there also and the remission of sins received by those who believe in Him!

3. *The Apocryphon of Jeremiah*, quoted by Justin

(Dial.LXXII,4):

The Lord God remembered His dead, the saints of Israel that have fallen asleep in the dust of the tomb, and lie went down unto them, to proclaim the good news of the salvation which he was bringing to them,

4. Ignatius of Antioch (Magn. IX, 2):

How shall we be able to live apart from Him? seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit. And for this cause He whom they rightly awaited, when He came raised them from the dead.

5. *Shepherd of Hermas* (Sim. IX 16:3-7):

These, the apostles and the teachers who preached the name of the Son of God, after they had fallen asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached also . . . to them that had fallen asleep before them, and themselves gave unto them the seal of the preaching. Therefore they went down with them into the water, and came up again . . . So by their means, they were quickened into life, and came to the full knowledge of the name of the Son of God.

The passage also explains that these baptisms were performed by those yet living for those who were dead.

6. *Epistle of the Apostles* (26-27)

Therefore I descended, and spake with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with your fathers the Prophets, and proclaimed to them in Hell the rest in Heaven to which they are to come. With my right hand I gave them the

baptism of life, pardon and remission of all evil, as I did for you.

This "Epistle" purports to be part of Jesus' teaching to His apostles after the resurrection (see Acts 1:3).

7. "Odes of Solomon" (Ode XLII, 17-26)

I held an assembly of living men among the dead, and I spake to them with holy lips; and those who had died ran towards me, they cried and said: Son of God have pity on us, and deal with us according to thy loving kindness; . . . As for me, I heard their voice, and I traced my name upon their heads; therefore they are free men and they are mine.

This subject, of "central importance" to Jewish Christianity, also holds a place of "central importance" to modern Latter-day Saint theology.

The Latter-day Saint reader, in fact, may after this series of favorable comparisons, be tempted to theorize that Jewish-Christianity may well represent that elusive "Primitive Church" mentioned in the sixth Article of Faith, after which his own Church is supposedly patterned.

Such speculations are not much dampened by Daniélou's assessment of Christian history as it is usually presented without the Jewish-Christian theology: "mistake" and "false picture." He blames . . . "the paucity of material from which this earliest theology could be reconstructed," as well as the Greek philosophical bias in our own conceptual system through which works that were available were viewed, judged, and found wanting.²³

To be assured, the sources used so far may also be used to

catalog the serious differences between "this earliest theology" and Latter-day Saint theology. The point must be made again that these works contain truth as well as interpolations which are not so true. In this work, such subjective judgements are made against our modern bias of what we, as Latter-day Saints, consider true.

It is remarkable, however, that in these doctrinal matters of central importance to Jewish-Christianity, there is so much agreement with a modern theology founded generations before the existence of a Jewish-Christian theology, as such, was even suspected. Even more intriguing, these newly defined theological entities differ comparably from the "orthodox" Christianity with which they are usually compared.

CHAPTER IV
THE CLEMENTINE RECOGNITIONS,
A JEWISH-CHRISTIAN
THEOLOGICAL ROMANCE

According to the translator, Thomas Smith:

The writer of the work seems to have had no intention of presenting his statements as facts; but, choosing the disciples of Christ and their followers as his principal characters, he has put into their mouths the most important of his beliefs, and woven the whole together by a thread of fictitious narrative.

This thread is the source of the name "Recognitions," since Clement is re-united with members of his scattered family in the Christian fold as the narrative draws to a close.

The "Clementina" consist of the "Recognitions," the "Homilies," and the "Epitome." The Epitome contains an extract from the Homilies. The Homilies are an expanded, more doctrinally oriented version of the Recognitions. The Recognitions are not as clearly tainted with Gnostic speculation, and are not as well identified with the Elkesaites, an Ebionite sect, as are the Homilies. This is not to say the Recognitions present a more pure or more orthodox version. Rather, both works borrow from an older work entitled "Kerygma of Peter," and both deviate from that work, but not necessarily in the same places.²⁴

So here we have typical apocryphal works, based on the same materials as scriptural works, but modified to espouse (slightly) differing points of view.

There are other borrowings in both the Recognitions and Homilies, and it is by dating these borrowings that scholars have come up with dates of authorship ranging from the first to the fourth centuries or even later. An explanation could lie in the above modification theory: as the need arose the travels and discourses of Peter and Clement were expanded in newer editions.

These details are perhaps not very important to our discussion. The Recognitions were chosen over the Homilies, as the objects of this study, simply because they seemed to have a more orthodox and familiar flavor. A subjective choice.

One thing only scholarship can tell us, which is important to our discussion, is in what esteem the Recognitions were held by the early churches.

Grant described the Clementine Recognitions as "a favorite piece of 'Sunday afternoon literature'" of the second century.²⁵ As much as we would like to believe this, however, Grant gives neither reason nor reference for such a judgement. Nibley characterized them as . . . "devoid of any trace of exaggeration or partisan pleading." Among other arguments, Nibley cites this as strong evidence of genuineness, and adds that . . . "numerous papyrus fragments discovered in the last fifty years fully bear out the picture that Clement has given us in the first part of the Recognitions."²⁶

Note Nibley's reference to the "first part", interestingly enough, our doctrinal excursions into the Recognitions will be largely centered in the "first part"(of the "Recognitions") for the "last part" really teaches little doctrine and has more of the "borrowings" already discussed than does the first part.

Streeter says the Recognitions are less Ebionite than the homilies, but both may still have been within 'orthodoxy' at the time of their writing.²⁷ Streeter believes that the Tübingen school, which supposed the Recognitions "to afford a key to the true interpretation of the Apostolic Age," made a "grand mistake" because they missed the point that the personification of evil in the stories: Simon Magus, was really the Apostle Paul.²⁸

That Paul was Simon, or vice-versa, is perhaps the outstanding reason for classing the Recognitions as Ebionite. Yet this judgement is by no means unanimous among scholars, and requires much reading into--rather than reading of-- the Clementine Recognitions, in my opinion. Yet, because this theory is so pervasive, we find statements such as this by one scholar: . . . "the obscure Judaizing faction which hatched the famous Clementina."²⁹ A more sober appraisal classes the Clementina as attempted harmonies between Jewish-Christianity and Paul's Christianity.³⁰

[Of course by this time, in 2003, I have read enough to see that indeed the Ebionites had it in for Paul. Just because I was able to reconcile the views of Paul and the Ebionites to my satisfaction did not mean that the two factions were historically reconciled. What, to me, is a rather simple question of what comes first, chicken or egg, works or faith, is solved by James saying you simply can't have one without the other. But the Ebionites were observing and believing Jews, like the Jesus they revere, and then comes Paul saying to his converts that none of that is necessary, and that Jesus visited him and told him so himself. This was no esoteric chicken-egg question for the Ebionites, however. It was a question of whether or not their entire religious world view was valid or invalid. Paul said it was invalid. They did not take kindly to Paul.]

Lietzmann feels research has established that the Clementine writings are . . . "without any significance for research in the early Christian and Judaistic period,"³¹ in direct conflict with Mosheim's feeling that: "A careful perusal of them will assist a person much in

gaining a knowledge of the state of the ancient Christian church.³²

Scholarship is thus not much help in deciding this matter. It is interesting, as Nibley observed about the Recognitions, that:

Its value has been raised or lowered by various schools and scholars in proportion as the text has confirmed or weakened the position of their various churches.³³

Perhaps this is well illustrated by pointing to a pair of Catholic scholars, Lebreton and Zeiller, who feel that, speaking of the urging of marriage by the Clementina:

This suspicion in regard to celibacy does not come from an authentic Christian tradition; we find it among the Ebionites.³⁴

The protestant Schaff, on the other hand, observes:

But singularly, and again in true Ebionitic style, James, the brother of the Lord, bishop of Jerusalem, which is the center of Christendom, is made the general vicar of Christ, the visible head of the whole church, the bishop of bishops.³⁵

The agreement of an Ebionitic origin is there, yet the Catholic scholar defends celibacy, and the non-Catholic scholar indirectly attacks the Papal notion of a Roman bishop being

the 'vicar of Christ,' a 'bishop of bishops.'

We are not poking fun at these gentlemen: they are scholars. We are going to follow their example, and examine what supports our theological bias while at the same time ignoring or discrediting as an unauthorized interpolation whatever does not. We should never allow ourselves the immoral pleasure of gloating over the obvious stupidity or bias of a scholar who, after examining a piece of evidence we have examined, reaches a conclusion contrary to ours. Were we looking through his eyes, we may have also reached his conclusion, but more importantly: we may be wrong.

[Re-reading this tome after 27 years gave me two surprises: one was how well I had researched these topics at the time, the other one is how liberal I was. This is twice now I criticize my fellow believers saying some among them tend to be narrow-minded, even closed-minded, and here I say they, including myself, may actually be wrong!]

CHAPTER V THE GODHEAD: GOVERNMENT OF THE UNIVERSE

The Latter-Day Saint doctrines concerning God, man, and their relationship, have aroused considerable opposition among their Christian neighbors. Perhaps this is strange, considering the diversity of doctrine concerning God already tolerated in sectarian Christianity. Be that as it may, most all Christians, no matter what their concepts of Deity, are doctrinally supported by their interpretation of the Bible.

This points out an enigma: there is no comprehensive discourse in the Bible on 'God,' His nature, man's relationship to Him, etc. Such an overview of the central motif of Christianity can only be found in piecing together numerous references to the subject given in the context of discourses on other subjects. This is also true of the Book of Mormon. The most important contribution concerning the knowledge of God in the Book of Mormon occurs when Christ reveals himself, before His mortal life, to the brother of Jared (Ether 3:14-16). Here, again we must look at the purposes of the writings composing these, and other books of scripture. In all of these books, a basic knowledge of certain fundamentals is assumed. In the Book of Mormon, as in the letters of Paul, specific problems are addressed. These problems do not seem to include explicit definitions of God, man, and their relationship, and hence, these basic subjects are only mentioned in passing. Even in the literature specifically designed for missionary work, the Gospels, only the fourth Gospel approaches explicitness in defining Christ's Godhood. As a Jewish scholar observed:³⁶

The Fourth Gospel portrays, in a Christian way, and through the medium of the Christ, conceptions about

God which are paralleled and held as firmly and as warmly in Jewish tradition in the Jewish way. Scholars have pointed out that the rabbinic parallels to the Fourth Gospel consistently assign to God the role which the Gospel assigns to the Christ. Christians have often been unaware that Jews have expressed these conceptions . . .

Thus, even the most unique book of the New Testament offers no new thought on the nature of God, but only translates Jewish tradition into a Christian idiom. In short, even the New Testament makes no real effort to explicitly define God for its audiences, which implies an assumption of understanding in the hearers. Where an attempt at such a definition is made, it is an application of Jewish concepts to the life and role of Christ, as it were, a reiteration of the message that the Messiah had come in the person of Christ.

It should, therefore, not be disconcerting to us to find a similar lack of a comprehensive discourse on the nature of God in the *Clementine Recognitions*. Piecing together a complete doctrine of God from the few peripheral references on the subject, as has been done by some scholars, is very misleading. A preface by the translator, Rufinus, whose Latin translation of the Greek is the only version now known, reports the following:

Introduction by Rufinus:

There are also . . . some dissertations concerning the Unbegotten God and the Begotten, and on some other subjects, which, to say nothing more, are beyond our comprehension. These, therefore, as being beyond our powers, I have chosen to reserve for others, rather than to produce in an imperfect state. But in the rest, we have given our endeavour, so far as we could, not to

vary either from the sentiments or even from the language and modes of expression; and this, although it renders the style of the narrative less ornate, yet it makes it more faithful.

To which the American editor replies:

How far Rufinus has omitted portions which occurred in Greek cannot be known. It is quite probable that the apparent heresy of some passages, rather than their incomprehensibility, led him to omit them.³⁷

Before we feel that this editor's assessment is unduly harsh, it should be known that Rufinus' credibility has been questioned on other matters: "The Latin translator, Rufinus (A.D. 410), is the same who is generally believed to have taken such unwarrantable liberties with the text of Origen."³⁸

Be that as it may, Latter-day Saints generally do not overlook object lessons such as these: that a favorite piece of Sunday afternoon literature in the second century could contain heretical material by the fifth century. A little kindness is advised, however, since the 'original' of the second century may have suffered considerable revision by the fifth, and since even in Latter-day Saint history some utterances of a hundred years ago are not doctrinally acceptable today. The ability of man to exercise his fallibility at the most unfortunate times must never be underestimated, or lost sight of altogether in studying "our own." As long as God allows fallible man to lead his fellow man to Him, there will be errors in doctrine, judgement, and application.

After this lengthy apology for the lack of material on God, some contributions are made by the Recognitions,

nevertheless:

Book II, Chap. XLL--The Answer, Continued.

"Listen, then," says Peter, "that you may know, first of all, that even if there are many gods, as you say, they are subject to the God of the Jews, to whom no one is equal, than whom no one can be greater; for it is written that the prophet Moses thus spoke to the Jews: 'The Lord your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, the great God,' Thus, although there are many that are called gods, yet He who is the God of the Jews is alone called the God of gods. For not every one that is called God is necessarily God. Indeed, even Moses is called a god to Pharaoh, and it is certain that he was a man; and judges were called gods, and it is evident that they were mortal. The idols also of the Gentiles are called gods, and we all know that they are not; but this has been inflicted as a punishment on the wicked, that because they would not acknowledge the true God, they should regard as God whatever form or image should occur to them. Because they refused to receive the knowledge of the One who, as I said, is God of all, therefore it is permitted to them to have as gods those who can do nothing for their worshipers. For what can either dead images or living creatures confer upon men, since the power of all things is with One?"

There is good agreement between Peter's explanation of God's relationship to others who may be called Gods, in my opinion, and similar thoughts found in several citations from LDS scripture:

Wherefore, as it is written "they are gods, even the Sons of God Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or

things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's and Christ is God's.(D&C 76:58-59)

According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should he reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest.(D&C 121:32)

The use of "gods" in the above citations is not the same as the use of "gods" in the next cite from LDS scripture:

My fathers having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refusing to hearken to my voice;

For their hearts were set to do evil, and were wholly turned to the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt;

Therefore, they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their children unto their dumb idols, and hearkened not unto my voice, but endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah. (Abraham 1:5-7)

The dumb idols are called "gods" but these are not the same beings referred to in the other citations from LDS scripture above. The "Recognitions" have more to say about God:

Book II. Chap. XLII--Guardian Angels

Therefore the name God is applied in three ways: either because he to whom it is given is truly God, or because

he is the servant of him who is truly; and for the honour of the sender, that his authority may be full he that is sent is called by the name of him who sends, as is often done in respect of angels: for when they appear to man, if he is a wise and intelligent man, he asks the name of him who appears to him that he may acknowledge at once the honour of the sent, and the authority of the sender. For every nation has an angel, to whom God has committed the government of that nation; and when one of these appears, although he be thought and called God by those over whom he presides, yet, being asked, he does not give such testimony to himself. For the Most High God, who alone holds the power of all things has divided all the nations of the earth into seventy-two parts, and over these He hath appointed angels as princes. But to the one among the archangels who is greatest, was committed the government of those who, before all others, received the worship and knowledge of the Most High God. But holy men also, as we have said, are made gods to the wicked, as having received the power of life and death over them, as we mentioned above with respect to Moses and the judges. Wherefore it is also written concerning them, 'Thou shalt not curse the gods, and thou shalt not curse the prince of thy people. Thus the princes of the several nations are called gods. But Christ is God of princes, who is Judge of all. Therefore neither angels, nor men, nor any creature, can be truly gods forasmuch as they are placed under authority, being created and changeable: angels, for they were not, and are; men, for they are mortal; and every creature, for it is capable of dissolution, if only He dissolve it who made it. And therefore He alone is the true God, who not only Himself lives, but also bestows life upon others, which He can also take away when it pleaseth Him.

The characterizations of God in the above rather verbose statement have some things in common with other statements in LDS scripture:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them--Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths--then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject to them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject to them.(D&C 132:19-20)

In both accounts, three characteristics stand out as defining God:

1. Possession of an eternal nature,

2. Ability to give life and take it away,
3. Authority over angels and lesser gods.

Note the parallelism in describing the hierarchical structure of universal government. Interesting speculations could be made about this structure, Paul mentions it several times (for example Col. 1:16), but our knowledge of it is dismally incomplete and perhaps the wisest thing to do would be to leave the subject as is, until more becomes known as promised:

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory;

A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest.

All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars--

All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times- (D&C 121:26-31)

In the face of our present ignorance, perhaps we should not lightly dismiss fanciful accounts of Jesus' exploits in the

universe as the "Pistis Sophia," in which Christ sets bounds to the powers of, and curtails the authority of many "principalities and powers" so that man may have a fair chance of reaching his ultimate destiny. Perhaps there is a real basis of truth underlying some of these 'Gnostic speculations,' and Christ's work for us extends into many spheres we are totally ignorant of. (See, for example, Paul's references to this subject in Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:20-23, 3:10, 6:12, etc.)

As to the role of Christ, it is interesting to compare these words from the "Recognitions":

Book I. Chap. XLV--The True Prophet:
Why Called the Christ.

When God had made the world, as Lord of the universe, He appointed chiefs over the several creatures, over the trees even, and the mountains, and the fountains, and the rivers, and all things which He had made, as we have told you; for it were too long to mention them one by one. He set, therefore, an angel as chief over the angels, a spirit over the spirits, a star over the stars, a demon over the demons, a bird over the birds, a beast over the beasts, a serpent over the serpents, a fish over the fishes, a man over men, who is Christ Jesus.

With these words from LDS scripture:

All kingdoms have a law given;
And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom.

And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

All beings who abide not in these conditions are not justified. (D & C 38:36-39)

And I saw the stars, that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; and there were many great ones which were near unto it;

And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones; and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God; I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.

And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that if there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these were many of the noble and great ones;

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou was chosen before thou wast born.

And there stood one among them that was like unto God. (Abraham 3:2-3,19, 22-24)

Here we have descriptions of an ordered, structured cosmos, under God's direction. The references to Christ being "like unto God," and His being placed as "a man over men" may be understood and validated by each other. In both this quotation from the Recognitions, and the other quote above,

the one from Book II, Chap. XLII, are references to an angelic hierarchy.

In the former:

But to the one among the archangels Who is greatest, was committed the government of those who, before all others, received the worship and knowledge of the Most High God.

And in the latter:

He set, therefore, an angel as chief over the angels, . . .

Some scholars have used these words to show that Jewish-Christians confused Adam and Christ, or that they thought they were the same person in different incarnations as some of the Gnostics held. This type of interpretation is reminiscent of the furor over Brigham Young's unfortunate wording of the fact that Adam is "our Father and our God" (J.D. 1:30), which is quite well explained in Joseph Fielding Smith's 'Doctrines of Salvation' (Vol. 1, pp. 96-106), as a statement belonging to futurity. In the government of the 'gods,' it appears, a patriarchal order exists in which each progenitor is 'god' to his posterity: hence, Adam will be God, under Christ's direction, over his posterity which is all mankind which has obeyed:

They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given

That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of him who is

ordained and sealed unto this power.

And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

These are they whose are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

(D&C 76:51-52, 67-68)

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.

And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. (D&C 107:53-55)

The sectarian world is shocked at this doctrine for two main reasons:

1. Failure to realize that Godhood is an office in the governance of the universe, besides being the Title of Him who is God over us who are not.
2. Failure to understand the nature of the patriarchal order of the "gods," where a strict equality exists but yet there is also a "hierarchy" or established order.

Often we forget that "Christ" means the "Anointed," as is fitfully explained by Peter (according to the "Recognitions" that is):

Book I. Chap. XLV.--The True Prophet: Why Called the Christ.

But he is called Christ by a certain excellent rite of religion; for as there are certain names common to kings, as Arsaces among the Persians, Caesar among the Romans, Pharaoh among the Egyptians, so among the Jews a king is called Christ. And the reason of this appellation is this: Although indeed He was the Son of God, and the beginning of all things, He became man; Him first God anointed with oil which was taken from the wood of the tree of life: from that anointing therefore He is called Christ. Thence, moreover, He Himself also, according to the appointment of His Father, anoints with similar oil every one of the pious when they come to His kingdom, for their refreshment after their labors, as having got over the difficulties of the way; so that their light may shine, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, they maybe endowed with immortality.

This is reminiscent of Enoch's experience referred to in Chapter 4. Christ, under direction from the Father anoints the pious with an oil from the tree of life, with the end result of their receiving an endowment of immortality.

All these pronouncements by this apocryphal Peter may be quite well understood when illuminated by Latter-day Saint teachings. Latter-day Saints, because they teach that God, angels, and men are of the same race, but at different stages of progression, are often accused of blasphemy. This accusation is often accurate, but not because the doctrine is not true.

Failure to understand the nature of God, the Godhead, Godhood, and the present dependent, lowly state of mankind

in comparison--makes some of the flippant chit-chat about 'eternal progression' and becoming 'gods,' having our own worlds, etc., blatantly blasphemous. These subjects should be sacred, guardedly spoken of only under proper circumstances with properly prepared individuals as directed by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps Bruce R. McConkie should have the last word on this subject:

If the sectarian world, or even the spiritually unenlightened in the Church, had the slightest concept of the dominion, exaltation, and pre-eminence of our Lord both in pre-existence, during his mortal ministry, and now that he has returned to his Father, it [his description of who Christ is and what He is to mankind] would seem little short of direful and presumptuous blasphemy to them. Words, either written or spoken, cannot convey such a realization; it can only come by the revelations of the Spirit.³⁹

[The late Apostle Bruce R. McConkie and his like-minded relatives and associates in the Mormon Church hierarchy have been leading Mormons closer to normative Christian appreciations for the status and stature of Christ. But one of the things I found so interesting is that the appreciation I had of Christ as a true believer at this time was very compatible with what I found in the Recognitions. McConkie's words do not detract from that, but do nudge the Jewish-Christian view of Jesus in Mormonism a tad closer to normative Christian views. Except of course that McConkie believed as Mormons do and should, that we are all destined to become as Christ is, if we but believe and obey God.

Had I not been familiar with this aspect of Jewish-Christian (Ebionite in this case) belief regarding Christ, I would have scoffed at those who maintain (as do Daniélou and Crossan, I believe, and several others) that even without Paul

accelerating and Hellenizing the belief in the Deity of Christ, it would in due course have come out that way anyway. Christianity without Paul, they suggest, would still have developed around Christ as the visible aspect of the invisible God, as God in other words. But would it have survived or thrived without Paul taking it to the Gentile world and removing the law in a more radical way than ever thought proper by the Jewish-Christians? I think not.]

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING:

Because the subject of God is so vast and so vital to an understanding of life and all that pertains to it, the following two works are recommended:

1. "God." Chapter V of *Discourses of B. H. Roberts of the First Council of Seventy*, also known as *The Last Seven Discourses of B. H. Roberts*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948). Out of print but available in most public libraries in Utah.

[This piece by Roberts is still a favorite read for me. It comes close to integrating pantheism with monotheism. Is this like integrating fire and water? Exactly: steam and water are excellent analogues, steam can diffuse through all space, water tends to locate in a single place, and both are water.]

2. *God, Man, and the Universe*. Volume I from the series: *Foundations of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ*, by Hareem L. Andrus (Salt Lake City: Book craft, 1968) especially chapters:
 5. The Knowledge of God Restored.
 6. The Nature and Order of the Cosmos.
 7. The Primal Nature of Man.

8. Christ's Pathway to Godhood.
9. The Ministry of Christ as the Father and the Son.
10. Manifestations of the Glory and Power of Christ.
11. Preparations for Man's Second Estate.
14. The Fall of Man.
15. The Atoning Mission of Christ.
16. The Power of the Atonement.
17. The Nature and Challenge of Mortal Man.

Future chapters will include the following topics:

1. Origin, nature, and destiny of evil and Satan.
2. Responsibility and free agency of man.
3. The Gospel
 - a. What it is
 - b. How it is taught
 - c. To whom it is taught
 - d. By whom it is taught
4. The Church
 - a. Authority
 - b. Prophets and apostles
 - c. Lesser authorities
5. Plan of salvation
 - a. Where is man from
 - b. Why is man here
 - c. Where is man going
 - d. How does he get there
6. The mysteries of godliness
 - a. Why concealed
 - b. What they pertain to
 - c. How they may be known
7. History of man
 - a. Adam's creation
 - b. Fall
 - c. God's dealings with men
8. Ordinances of the Gospel

- a. Baptism
 - b. Salvation for the dead
 - c. Anointings
9. Interesting insights on various other subjects.

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- ¹⁵Ibid. p. 222.
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²⁰Tappert. *Op. cit.* p. 610.

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²³Danielou. *Op. cit.* pp. 2.

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