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JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute  
OR  
Philosophical Society of Great Britain

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VOL. LXXXIV

1952



LONDON:

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PUBLISHED BY

THE INSTITUTE, 21, LOWER BELGRAVE STREET, WESTMINSTER,  
S.W.1.

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## 909TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN THE CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY,  
APRIL 21st, 1952.

F. F. BRUCE, ESQ., M.A., IN THE CHAIR

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### *THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS—TOWARDS A PERSPECTIVE*

By REV. BLEDDYN J. ROBERTS, M.A., B.D.

As one tries to look around amidst the chaos of hypotheses concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls, and theories which seem to be mutually annihilating, it seems advisable to consider where, in the general scheme of Biblical studies, the scrolls are to be placed. At the moment I must confess to being rather overwhelmed, and in the present paper I shall not attempt to give even a résumé of theories, and certainly not another theory, but simply to put forward a possible perspective, and to explain that if we do not expect overmuch from the scrolls we might be able to find in them a comparatively important contribution. I shall consider them from three standpoints: their significance for the general study of the Old Testament, the nature of the sect, and the relative importance of the Isaiah scrolls.

#### I

I DO not think much is to be gained by minimizing the discovery itself. The early statements by archaeologists, that the jars containing the scrolls are from the Hellenistic period, have been largely confirmed by subsequent examination. Similar jars from that period have been found in Palestine, and it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Jews had always used earthenware jars as receptacles for their important relics. The prophet Jeremiah commanded Baruch to place in an earthen vessel the deeds of purchase of his field at Anathoth (Jer. 32 : 14). Indeed, Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omerful of manna therein, and lay it before the Lord, to be kept for your generations" (Exod. 16 : 32 f.). There is a very interesting reference in the Assumption of Moses, *c.* 1st century A.D., where Moses is made to say to Joshua, "Receive thou this writing that thou mayest know how to preserve the books which I shall deliver unto thee: and thou shalt set these in order and anoint them with oil of cedar and put them away in earthen vessels in the place which God made . . . ." (Ass. Mos. 1 : 17). It was obviously quite common for leather scrolls to be soaked in oil for preservation; the "heavenly books" shown to Enoch were

“fragrant with myrrh” (2 Enoch 22 : 12). The good state of preservation of some of the scrolls, and the difficulties of unrolling others from the cache at Ain Feshkha, may very well have been due to the success or failure of blending oil and bitumen for the first rolling and encasement.

One point of a rather sensational kind which has attracted notice recently is that an analysis based on the residuum of radio-active carbon in the wrapping around one of the scrolls has shown that the material—linen cloth—was produced at some time between the early 2nd century B.C. and the early 2nd century A.D. I think it is rather hyper-critical to say that this proves nothing about the age of the scrolls ; strictly, it is, of course, a criticism, but I think the wrapping would not have been of much use if it was centuries older than the scrolls themselves. On the other hand, it is indeed precarious to assume finality about the date of the scrolls solely on the basis of this latest analysis. The use of nuclear physics for establishing the date of archaeological discoveries is in an experimental stage, and, I think, it can only be used as confirmatory evidence.

The fragments of jars and manuscripts found in the cave by Mr. Lankester Harding, Père de Vaux and Mr. O. R. Sellers when they visited it in February—March, 1949, have turned out to be almost as important as the material in the larger scrolls. There were fragments of over fifty jars, with flat lids to each one. Each jar had a capacity for three or more scrolls ; consequently it is estimated that in the original cache there were about two hundred scrolls—a very substantial library. But this is where our problems begin. For a library officially attached to a shrine or to any religious centre, such as a synagogue *genizah*, this would be by no means a large number of books. The libraries at Ras Shamra, at least a thousand years older than the present cache, had a much larger collection of tablets. The *genizah* of the synagogue at Old Cairo, possibly of a date some seven or eight centuries later than it, again had a far greater store of manuscripts. We cannot, however, assume that the cache at Ain Feshkha was in any way connected with a shrine or a synagogue, for the general idea seems to be that the jars and their contents were hidden in the cave at a time of flight. There seems to be no other reasonable explanation for their being placed in a most inaccessible hole in a rock in a district known only for its barrenness and for its marauding thieves and bandits, as witness the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Among the six hundred or so small manuscript fragments found littered on the cave floor, there are two or three different classes which have great interest. The first is five pieces which give some verses of Leviticus in the old Hebrew script, a script which had been generally superseded by the square, Aramaic script as early as the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. Thus, an examination of the Septuagint rendering of the Pentateuch, produced *c.* the early 3rd century B.C., has shown that the parent text was written in the Aramaic script, or at least a script which approximates to it. The book of Isaiah, which chronologically followed the Pentateuch in that rendering, was based on a text whose script was still nearer to the Aramaic. But it should not be assumed that the manuscripts of Leviticus antedate the 3rd century B.C., although this is the conclusion of such palaeographers as Pèrè de Vaux and Dr. Solomon Birnbaum. There are passages in the Mishnah, bringing us down into the 2nd century A.D., which show that the custom of using the archaic script for writing the Pentateuch was still sufficiently strong to require a very emphatic prohibition by the Rabbis. Of course, if the early dating is confirmed, the implications for the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch will be serious.

The second interesting class of fragments is that represented by one small piece of a commentary on a portion of Ps. 107. A phrase is taken from the text of the Psalm, and is followed by an interpretative formula, "this is." This fragment, therefore, may be placed alongside the complete scroll which contains a detailed commentary on Habakkuk 1-2, though it does not have the identical form of interpretation. It may be assumed, consequently, that the Habakkuk scroll was not an isolated work, but that there were other scrolls in the original cache which likewise consisted of commentaries, and which were based on books outside the second part of the Hebrew canon of the O.T.—the Prophets.

The mention of the Hebrew canon introduces a third group of interesting fragments, namely those which represent texts from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. A portion of one of the scrolls handed over to the American Schools of Oriental Research, and which has defied treatment as a whole, has been identified as the Lamech Apocalypse, which is one of the sources believed to have constituted the original form of the book of Enoch. Another fragment, already identified, is from Jubilees 27 : 9-12. Still another fragment consists of eleven lines from a hitherto

unknown apocalypse with affinities with Enoch and Jubilees. It is a fair assumption that among the two hundred scrolls in the cache, some were books which are traditionally known to Christians as Apocrypha or rather Pseudepigrapha, and to orthodox Jews as *Genuzôth* ("hidden" or even "forbidden"). This is confirmed by the fact that many of the complete Dead Sea Scrolls contain quotations from the same and still other Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Thus, in the Manual of Discipline, 1 Enoch is quoted nine times in all, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and Ecclesiasticus each five times, and each of the following at least once: Jubilees, 1 and 2 Esdras, the Sibylline Oracles, the Psalms of Solomon. Furthermore, there are common references to such figures as Belial, the Teacher of Righteousness, the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, to mention but a few.

By the same token, affinities with the New Testament are both numerous and significant, and one of them deserves special mention because, I think, it has important implications.<sup>1</sup> In one of the Songs of Thanksgiving, published by Professor Sukenik in the second volume of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Jerusalem, *Megillôth Genuzôth*, there seems to be a continuous play on the motif of the deluge of fire which is to form part of the cataclysmic end of the evil world-order.<sup>2</sup> Now this passage is strikingly reminiscent of a mention of the Genesis flood-story in 2 Peter 2: 5, where there is also a reminiscence of one of the leading personalities of the Dead Sea Scrolls, namely, the Teacher of Righteousness, or the Righteous Teacher. Furthermore, the motif of a Noah *redivivus* recurs quite frequently in Jewish apocalyptic writings, for instance in the Life of Adam and Eve and the Sibylline Oracles, and in such Christian writings as the Shepherd of Hermas, Justin and Origen. Where exactly the so-called book of Noah, which forms part of the present 1 Enoch, fits into the background is not clear, and belongs to a discussion of apocalyptic generally. All I would wish to say here is that the similarities of passages in the scrolls with apocryphal and New Testament writings are both numerous and noteworthy.

In a special way, the fact raises the general question of the Canon of the Old Testament. Obviously, the question has to do with the whole of the scrolls, not solely with the fragments, and

<sup>1</sup> Father Vermès of Louvain has recently published an interesting monograph on the subject: *La Communauté de la Nouvelle Alliance* (1951).

<sup>2</sup> It is the third song, according to Sukenik's order; Plate 8 in *Meg. Gen. II*.

will also involve a discussion of the nature, aims and, to an extent, the history of the party. I shall have to return to a discussion of their identity; meanwhile I shall simply use a conventional designation for them, namely, the New Covenanters. Enough has been mentioned to indicate that these people, who composed the songs and commentaries and rituals of these scrolls, and whose constitution and organisations are described in the manuals, did not limit themselves to the tripartite Hebrew canon as we know it, nor to the slightly larger collection which Rabbinic Judaism discussed in the Mishnah. They did submit to the Torah, and interpreted it; likewise they were exponents of the Prophets and Writings; they included also one or two of the books of the Apocrypha, for we find in the scrolls quotations from 1 and 2 Esdras and Ecclesiasticus. But they also accepted books which go far beyond this compass, and include books in the Pseudepigrapha. Actually, the scrolls have more in common with the apocalyptic ideas and interpretations found in the Pseudepigrapha than with most of the Rabbinic teaching in the Mishnah and Talmuds.

As a rule we think of the Hebrew canon as a collection of Scriptures to be contrasted with the more amorphous collection in the Septuagint, sometimes called the Alexandrine canon. The Septuagint was the Bible of the Hellenistic Diaspora and of the Early Church, but it is really doubtful to what extent it was refused even by orthodox Judaists of the Palestinian tradition. We know that some apocryphal books were not to be read in the synagogue worship, that after the 1st century A.D. the Septuagint was replaced by the more orthodox renderings of Aquila and Theodotion, and that it was said by the Rabbis that the day the Septuagint was composed was as evil as the day the Hebrews in the wilderness worshipped the golden calf. Nevertheless orthodox Rabbis show considerable familiarity with apocryphal writings. In *Midrash Rabba* to Esther, which comes from a period later than the 10th century A.D., the additions to the canonical Esther are included practically verbatim as they appear in the Septuagint. Again, numerous quotations attributed in the Talmuds to Tannaitic teachers also occur in the Apocrypha; and Ecclesiasticus is, in at least one context,<sup>1</sup> actually listed among the Hagiographa.

It is not surprising, therefore, that occasional sayings from the Apocrypha occur also in the scrolls; and that the distinction

<sup>1</sup> *Baba Kamma* 92b.

between the Hebrew canon and the Septuagint has no particular relevance to the present problem. The position regarding the Pseudepigrapha, however, is quite different. These books had never been listed with the books of the Septuagint in the Great Codices nor in the Vulgate, but were transmitted solely by the Christian Church and were obviously treasured at least by certain Christian communities. In content, the Pseudepigrapha belong to the essentially Jewish literary and religious *genre* of apocalyptic, which the Early Church, though not everywhere, inherited and adopted with considerable avidity. So far as I am aware, we find no example of this kind of literature being preserved and transmitted by Rabbinic Judaism until about the 6th century A.D. It would, however, be wrong to think that apocalyptic was ignored by the Rabbis. Apocalyptic sayings are attributed to them, and it is unreasonable to think of Pharisees, for instance, as opposed to apocalyptic, for their acceptance of such a doctrine as resurrection, with all its concomitants, means that they were essentially apocalyptists. But I think the argument that orthodox Judaism refused to recognise as valid any written apocalyptic is an important one, and provides a clue to the present problem. The New Covenanters were obviously highly apocalyptic, and as such challenged orthodox Rabbinism. When the party was threatened by the Rabbis, in one of the purges of Judaism which probably took place after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they decided to flee the land, hoping nevertheless to return and to "interpret" apocalyptically their beloved Scriptures and pore over its esoteric literature. Actually, the evidence for such a historical reconstruction is largely circumstantial, but it is not wholly baseless. The main element derives from a document which belongs to the party, but which had been discovered in the Cairo *genizah* in 1895. I shall return to this document later in this paper. My present point is that the New Covenanters diverged from orthodox Rabbinists on matters which we regard as pertaining to the authority of the Hebrew canon, and the latter's refusal of apocalyptic writings such as are found in the Pseudepigrapha.

Much of this apocalyptic literature is esoteric and "mystery"—if I may use the word in a semi-technical sense, to indicate the important part played by allegories and conundrums, with such literary devices as word-plays, hints and substitution of one name by another in order to produce a camouflaged historical writing. The best-known apocalypse, the book of Daniel, you will



remember, was to be a "sealed book even to the time of the end" (12 : 4), and in the other well-known apocalypse, the Book of the Revelation, one of the first objects shown to the Seer was "a book written within and on the back, closed with seven seals" (5 : 2). Now, one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Habakkuk commentary, consists of apocalyptic interpretations of the prophet's oracles, and in them the "mysteries" and "secrets" of God and His providence are of basic importance. "And God," says the commentator in his explanation of 2 : 1-2, "told Habakkuk to write the things pertaining to the last generation, but He did not reveal to him the consummation of the time. And this is what He meant, 'So that he who runs may read from it': the explanation of this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness to whom God has communicated all the secret words of His servants the prophets. 'For the vision is yet for the appointed time, it testifies of the end and is not deceived.' The explanation of this is that the last days are delayed, and all that the prophets spake is left, for the mysteries of God are wonderful. 'Though it tarry (continues Habakkuk), wait for it; because it will surely come and will not delay.' The explanation of this concerns the faithful who practise the Law, whose zeal for loyalty will not languish when the consummation is delayed for them, for all the periods fixed of God will come in due time, as He has decreed for them in the mysteries of His providence."

What led the interpreter to utter these pieties? Unfortunately, columns 1 and 2 of the scroll are mutilated almost beyond restoration, despite an attempted reconstruction of the contents largely by means of conjecture. But even if the columns were intact, I doubt whether they contained anything explicit about the actual historical occasion, any more than the opening chapters of the book of Daniel. A camouflage of actual history by the substitution of another "history" seems to be one of the prominent characteristics of this literary *genre*. Nevertheless, the commentary on Habakkuk is very truly based on actual history, for without the historical occasion the pieties become insincere and meaningless. This problem of "history" is well represented in the following passage: "'For lo (says Habakkuk's prophecy, 1 : 5), I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation.' Its explanation concerns the Chittim who are speedy and strong in combat, to utterly destroy many, . . . . . and they will traverse the country to strike and to strip

the cities of the land, for it is of these he says 'to possess dwellings that are not theirs.'" Who are the Chittim? The term is by no means unknown, and actually most textual critics of Habakkuk since the time of Duhm have argued that the "original text" of Habakkuk in this passage was indeed not "Chaldeans" of the Massoretic text, but Chittim. But obviously that is not the point of the commentator. His text read Chaldeans, but, he says, the Chaldeans here *mean* Chittim. Now this word is generally rendered Cypriotes, and is associated with Greece: cf. Gen. 10 : 4, where Chittim is one of the sons of Yavan (Greece), and which is paralleled in 1 Chron. 1 : 7. In other passages, such as Is. 23 : 1, Jer. 2 : 10, Ezek. 27 : 6, the word refers to the seaboard of the Greek islands, and similarly 1 Macc. 1 : 8, 8 : 5. But in Num. 24 : 24, in the oracle of Balaam, the word occurs in a passage which, though it refers to ships from Cyprus, has the idea of being the vehicle of destruction. Balaam's oracle is taken up, in the same sense of doom, in Daniel 11 : 30, which says that ships of Chittim shall come against "the contemptible person" to aggravate him. Now there is a well-founded hypothesis that the "contemptible person" of this passage is the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes, and one of the ancient historians, Polybius, who is quoted by Livy, describes how Antiochus Epiphanes was finally defeated by the Romans. Furthermore, the actual Septuagint of this passage (though not the better-known text of Theodotion) gives the rendering, "the Romans will have power over him." Likewise the Vulgate, which also renders the Numbers passage by "Italy." The Targums also associated Chittim with the Romans.

Consequently, a very well supported theory equates the Chittim of the Habakkuk scroll with the Romans, and we must admit that there are implicit references in the scroll which fit in with this equation better than with any other. For instance, the Chittim come from the "isles of the seas" and they worship standards and ensigns. Neither of these descriptions would apply to the Greeks, because the only "Greeks" concerned would be the Syrian Seleucids and the Egyptian Ptolemies. At the same time, in another of the scrolls, designated "Warfare between the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness," the Chittim of "Assyria" and of "Egypt" are very prominent, and I do not know of any scholar who has successfully challenged the obvious associations here with the Seleucids and Ptolemies. Thus, although the case for an identity with the Romans is

plausible for the Habakkuk commentary, it is not so for the Warfare scroll. I think the clue to the general question of the identity of Chittim comes from another fact, which has been elicited by Dr. P. R. Weis of Manchester. He has shown<sup>1</sup> that in medieval Jewish writings the term "Chittim" is used for any power in the ascendancy in Palestine likely to overthrow the rulers at any given time. That is, as far as the Dead Sea Scrolls are concerned, they may be either Hellenists or Romans.

Such a transferability of identity is by no means an isolated feature in apocalyptic writing. For instance, the prototype of the Abomination of Desolation in the Little Apocalypse of the Gospels (Mk. 13, Mt. 24, Lk. 21) is to be found in the book of Daniel. In the latter it is, presumably, the pagan altar set up in the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes; in the former it is, again presumably, the spoliation of the temple by the Romans. It is, at the same time, in both passages, an essentially eschatological phenomenon. I should suggest that in all apocalyptic writing there is nothing which specifically distinguishes between the actually historical and the eschatological. Consequently, to return to the Habakkuk commentary, the Chittim are either Hellenists or Romans or any other threatening power, and also the people responsible for the distressing experiences which precede the final consummation. In some ways, "realised eschatology" is not to be limited to a New Testament Christology; it is one of the prominent features of apocalyptic writing. Apocalyptic is not a remote catastrophe, connected with what we mean by "the last things" in some far-off and unreal future, but is a consummation which is already about to happen, immediately the mysterious revelation is made known, and when the actual "interpretation"—which is also the "fulfilment"—is being declared. Of course, the New Testament "realised eschatology" is more profoundly unique than all this, and I do not wish to imply that the Teacher of Righteousness, the leading figure in the scrolls, can be equated with Christ in the New Testament. But I do think that the scrolls, perhaps to a greater extent than any previously known apocalyptic writing, presuppose a consciousness of the fulfilment of prophecy and of the proximity of the "end" which is similar to much that we find puzzling in the New Testament, and sometimes in the Old.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Date of the Habakkuk Scroll," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 41 (1950), pp. 125 ff.

## II

It is possible to know a great deal about the constitution and way of life of the New Covenanters, particularly from two sets of documents which deal largely with their customs and beliefs. One of them is the "Manual of Discipline" which has recently been edited and translated by Professor W. H. Brownlee;<sup>1</sup> the other is the so-called Damascus Document, to which reference has already been made.<sup>2</sup> There are some slight divergences between the two documents, but these can easily be explained by postulating a slightly later date for the latter, with a change of circumstances due to the retirement of the party to the region of Damascus presupposed by the Damascus Document. It is from the contents of these two documents that the party derives the name of New Covenanters.

There were three sections in the community, Priests, Levites and lay members, the latter, possibly, including proselytes. The first are referred to as *bné Aaron* and *bné Zadoq*, and were the "perfect"—presumably the chieftains, though to what extent, if at all, they officiated at the temple is not clear. They pronounced blessings on the community. The Levites were the counterpart of the priests, and pronounced curses on those who had turned apostate. The community was monastic, that is, the members separated themselves from what are called "the congregation of perverse men," and lived together under a common doctrine and labour and with communal ownership of property. They practised "a common way of life, in a community of truth and humility, justice and righteousness, love and bounty." "They establish themselves as the true Israel, a community of the Eternal Covenant, in order to obtain pardon for all those who are come to the true sanctuary of Aaron, or the true house of Israel."<sup>3</sup> We notice that these characteristics, and others mentioned in the sources, are based on actual quotations

<sup>1</sup> *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, Vol. II, Fasc. 2: *Plates and Transcription of the Manual of Discipline*, 1951. *The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline. Translation and Notes*, by W. H. Brownlee. B.A.S.O.R. Supp. Studies, 10-12, 1951. Other available translations are in French.

<sup>2</sup> This was discovered in the *genizah* of the Old Cairo synagogue in 1895-96. and published in 1910 by Solomon Schechter, under the title *Fragments of a Zadokite Document*. With the same title, a translation by R. H. Charles was included in vol. 2 of his *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. (1913).

<sup>3</sup> A full and very important discussion of the characteristics of the party may be seen in Lambert, *Le Manuel de Discipline du Désert de Juda. Étude Historique et Traduction Intégrale* (1951).

of Biblical phrases, which are developed along the lines of a specific exegesis.

The piety of the community is beyond question, but here, even more than elsewhere, there is ample evidence to indicate that they were by no means orthodox from the standpoint of Rabbinic Judaism. The leaders emphasize the need for a "new" interpretation of the Law, and it is required of the members that they diligently seek in the Torah to discover those things that, up to that time, were "kept hidden from Israel."

The government of the community is not quite easy to reconstruct, mainly because of inconsistencies in the Manual of Discipline itself, and it may be worth while mentioning that one recent publication<sup>1</sup> consists of an attempt to analyse the Manual into literary sources, somewhat on the same lines as Old Testament Higher Criticism. A scrutiny of the constitution is, however, very desirable, because in many respects it resembles the organisation of the Early Church. In both, there was communal possession, though the New Covenanters imposed the condition after a novitiate period. There was also in both a conscious desire for unity of doctrine. Again, there was among the community's officers a *paqid* who presided over the congregation, and a *mebaqqer* who seems to have been the purser and inspector of works, and I am not the first to suggest the possible similarity here with the *episkopos* of the New Testament.

A candidate for membership in the community "passed over" into the "covenant," or "entered into" it. He took the oath, with the priests blessing God and the candidate repeating "Amen, Amen." Then followed a ritual which led up to a confessional in which all the members participated. "We have been perverse, we have transgressed, we have been blameworthy, we and our fathers before us, in that we have walked contrary to the commandments of God. His judgment upon us and upon our fathers is right and just, and He has bestowed upon us the abundance of His goodness from eternity to eternity." This confessional calls to mind, very vividly, that most moving prayer in Daniel 9. Somewhere in the ritual of the community there was a "holy washing" (baptism) and a "holy meal" (eucharist), but as yet the precise part played by these institutions is not clear.

Part of the Manual is given to regulations of conduct, and I

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<sup>1</sup> H. E. del Medico, *Deux Manuscrits Hébreux de la Mer Morte* (1951).

shall quote a few, simply to give an idea of the penal code. "If there be found among them a man who lies in the matter of wealth, and it become known, they (the community) shall exclude him from the Purity of the Community for one year"—that is, punishment by partial excommunication. Other periods of punishment are imposed as follows: insubordination and quick-temper, one year; blasphemy, six months to one year; deceit, six months; "whoever utters with his mouth a word of folly," three months; "he who interrupts his fellow," ten days; "whoever lies down and sleeps during a session of the community," thirty days; "whoever laughs foolishly with a raucous voice," thirty days.

The other scrolls deal more especially with events in the history of the community, but the Damascus Document is very helpful in that it combines something of the history and of the constitution, and describes some of the main historical personalities. One of them is the Teacher of Righteousness, whom "God raised up to lead Israel in the way of His heart." He was opposed by "the scornful man, who spoke to Israel lying words, and made them go astray in the wilderness, where there was no way . . . ." Now the Habakkuk commentary, too, seems to be concerned, above all else, with the misfortunes of the Teacher of Righteousness at the hand of the Man of Lies. Another prominent figure is the Messiah, who is identified as the Messiah of Aaron and Israel, and who, unlike the Teacher of Righteousness, is frequently mentioned in the Manual of Discipline. There have been, of course, a variety of Jewish Messiahs who were not of the house of David, as the New Testament as well as Rabbinic sources inform us; but the present Messiah (or Messiahs) is interesting because he is otherwise unknown. There were Messiahs ben Ephraim and ben Joseph, both slightly later than New Testament times; there were, furthermore, a great number of individuals who set themselves up as Messiah. But here it is interesting to see the whole life of a Messianic community of whom it might be said, as St. Luke said of Simeon, "this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel." Indeed, we may add with St. Luke, though using the Manual of Discipline as evidence, "and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Lk. 2: 25).

But is it possible to identify these people? Of course, this question raises all kinds of preliminary questions: date, the validity and adequacy of extant historical sources for any

particular period, the possibility—to my mind, rather remote—of reducing the information in the scrolls into identifiable “historical writing.” These and many other problems are involved; nevertheless, with or without consideration of them, there is hardly a writer on the scrolls but has ventured an identity. I have suggested that the most popular period for dating the scrolls is the 1st century B.C., and many leading scholars argue for an identity of the party with the Essenes. The suggestion was put forward soon after the scrolls were discovered, because there were Essene establishments in the vicinity of the Dead Sea about the beginning of the Christian era; latterly, the idea has gained force because of a number of common elements in the constitutions of the two parties. But there are also serious difficulties facing the theory, mainly on the score that what Philo and Josephus, our main sources for the history of the Essenes, have to say about them is vague and not always free from prejudice. The similarity between them, it would appear, amounts to little more than that both parties had neophytes and senior members; that they had a similar initiation rite and oath; that they apparently flourished at the same time and in the same locality. We do not know—and have grounds for doubting—whether they adopted similar standpoints on such questions as temple sacrifices, celibacy, and, above all, Bible exegesis. The importance of the last point is underlined by the fact that the New Covenanters were so pre-eminently concerned with Bible exegesis.

This last point brings to my mind a possible identity, which I can only present by a slight *détour* in my account of the scrolls. I need hardly explain that the presence of fragments of manuscripts and jars in the cave indicates that the cache had been found and sacked before its present discovery; the presence of late Roman utensils alongside the Hellenistic remains would, however, support the view that entry into the cave was made at some time in the Roman domination. But there is a strong likelihood that a letter written by a Timotheus, a bishop in the Nestorian Church about the turn of the 8th century A.D., deals with such a discovery. He says that about ten years before the letter was written, an Arab wandering about the region near Jericho had some trouble in rescuing his dog from a cave, and when the Arab entered the cave he found a large number of jars in which manuscripts were encased, and these texts turned out to be in Hebrew, many of them Biblical. This is the only extant historical reference that seems to pertain to the present discovery,

for it is much more likely than the hazard which would connect Origen's *Sexta* column in the *Hexapla* with the scrolls, since all Origen is reported to have said is that his *Sexta* was found in a jar near Jericho. Be that as it may, the cave at Ain Feshkha had not only been entered before the 9th century, but had also been deprived of some of its manuscripts.

I have already frequently referred to one of the community's texts which had previously been recovered, namely, the Damascus Document. Actually there are two manuscripts, one of which is a variant recension of part of the other and both together form the Damascus Document. Now, the existence of these two manuscripts in copies made in the 10th and 12th centuries and deposited in the Cairo *genizah* shows that the literature of the New Covenanters became of considerable importance to people, probably a Jewish sect, who flourished in later centuries. The most likely people are the Karaites, a sect with a very strong interest in the Bible and with distinct anti-Rabbinic tendencies. They are believed to have originated in the early 8th century A.D., and it is to the work of one of their prominent scholars, Kirkissani, who flourished in the 10th century, that I wish now to draw your attention. He wrote an important treatise, *Kitab al-Anwar wal-Marakib* (the book of the lights and the watch-towers) in which he describes, among other things, the early sects of Judaism.<sup>1</sup> He mentions at least two sects which have relevance to the present discussion. One sect is called Magharians, who were so-called "because their sacred books were found in a cave;" and some scholars have fastened on these as the people likely to be identified with the New Covenanters. My own interest, however, inclines to another sect, mentioned immediately before the Magharians, namely, the Zadoqites. "Their leaders," says Kirkissani, "were Zadoq and Boethus. They were, according to the Rabbanites, pupils of Antigonus who succeeded Simeon the Righteous, and received instruction from him. Zadoq was the first who exposed the Rabbanites, and disagreed with them . . ." This is not the occasion to elaborate on the suggestion, but I may mention that other points in the account agree with what we know of the New Covenanters, and I have included it here, in passing, because I think it is as

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<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, in the Introduction to his translation, first drew attention to this possible identity, but a more recent treatment and translation of this work is that published by L. Nemoj, "Al-Qirqisani's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 1930.



close an identity as any other and because I have not seen it mentioned elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

### III

Finally, the significance of the Biblical scrolls and their characteristics should be briefly discussed. Among the fragments there are passages from various books of the Pentateuch and Judges and from the book of Daniel, but our main interest attaches to the longer texts, namely, Habakkuk 1 and 2, and the two scrolls which contain different texts of Isaiah. The text of Habakkuk is in itself interesting because it has occasional variants from the Massoretic text, but the major problem here is the question of the unity of the book as we know it. In the scrolls the whole book appears to have contained only the two chapters, compared with three in the Massoretic and Septuagint Bibles. Higher Criticism has argued for many generations that the Psalm in chapter 3 is an addition to the original book, but recently there has been a tendency to regard the book as we know it as an entity, and to say that the absence of the Psalm from the scroll has no special significance.

The texts of the two Isaiah scrolls are of considerable importance, and the recent new edition of the Isaiah text in Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* includes the variants of one of them in the critical apparatus. This text, of course, is the Isaiah scroll edited and published by the American Schools of Oriental Research as DSIa (or, as it may be referred to here for convenience, text A). The other Isaiah (text B), is as yet unpublished, and lies in the Hebrew University at Jerusalem. It was on view in the British Museum for a short time, and collations have been made of two or three of its columns. Short passages have also appeared in facsimile. It contains chapters 41-59, and sections of other parts have also been recovered.

Our main interest in these texts is the extent to which they diverge from each other and from the Massoretic text. Text A, as you may remember, was hailed as a most valuable witness to the correctness of the Massoretic text, because it was said that they agreed very closely. Nowadays, however, little is heard about this, for textualists soon discovered that not only are there thousands of orthographic variants but also that many of the

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, by no means an easy identification to establish, for obviously the New Testament Sadducees must fit into the picture somewhere; and they do not take their place very well.

textual variants introduce new meanings. Professors Hempel and Lindblom and the present writer argue that the variants represent a recension of the text which is self-consistent and different from the Massoretic, though related to it rather than to the other known early recension, namely, the parent text of the Septuagint. Professors Driver and Kahle, though postulating different dates, argue that the texts are simply popular texts whose deviations from the Massoretic, though numerous, have no particular significance. I shall not enter here into the intricacies of distinctions between these two points of view; they both agree fundamentally that there was some misplaced enthusiasm at the earlier stages in the discussions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it may now be noted that Professor Millar Burrows, who at first publicised the importance of text A, and who did extremely good work with the editing of the text in facsimile and transcription, has stated that the tradition of the text is a different one from that of the Massoretic.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways the character of this "tradition"—if I may use this rather ambiguous word in this connection,—indicates a period which is later than that presupposed by the Massoretic text. Thus, the orthography, which incidentally is not quite consistent, shows a far greater abundance of vowel letters than does the Massoretic text, and it is reasonable to explain this as an indication of progressive ignorance by the professional readers of the traditional pronunciation of the language. It forms part—though not directly—of the process which ultimately produced the pointing of the Massoretic text. The Scribes and Massoretic of orthodox Judaism in the 1st century A.D. and later, and the translators of the Septuagint, three or four hundred years earlier, could manage fairly well to enunciate with far fewer *matres lectionis*. Another significant point is that a considerable number of the textual variants in text A consist of the substitution of familiar words for less familiar words and *hapax legomena* in the Massoretic text. Both these facts obviously presuppose the seniority of the Massoretic text. Attention has also been drawn to another interesting substitution: in 42: 4 the M.T., followed faithfully by the R.V., gives "the isles shall wait for his law." Text A, however, gives "laws," presumably because the singular, *torah*, had a different, technical meaning for the community. I think all these points must be allowed, and for them and for other

<sup>1</sup> "Waw and Yodh in the Isaiah Dead Sea Scroll (DSIa)," *B.A.S.O.R.*, Dec. 1951, p. 20.

reasons, we must concede that the M.T. is the older text, despite some different reasons which have been adduced for the seniority of text A. But it does not follow that we must accept Professor Driver's position in his latest, and to date, fullest treatment of the subject in the Dr. Williams' Library lecture,<sup>1</sup> and date the A text about A.D. 500. We should, rather, find here evidence that the Massorettes preserved a text-form which is considerably older than the period to which we can assign text A, and the Dead Sea Scrolls generally, that is somewhere about the early years of the Christian era, or slightly earlier. There are other and stronger reasons for giving the Massoretic text an earlier date; for instance, the strength of the oral transmission of the text, and the inherent and traditionally conservative character of the Massoretic activity. There is very little evidence to suggest that Rabbi Aqiba, or whoever it was who agitated towards the early 2nd century A.D. for a semi-standardized text, ever created such a text, or in any way interfered with the text.

As regards text B, the interesting feature is that it agrees with the Massoretic much more closely in matters of orthography and text, and if what I have suggested above is correct, this might well be an example of the traditional text in its pre-Massoretic form. Professor Kahle, however, finds in the few variants of orthography and text evidence of "popular" variations of the same kind as in text A. Nevertheless, until more of this text is available for study it is premature to come to any definite conclusion, for no one has been more industrious than Professor Kahle himself in showing that the Massoretic tradition itself shows some textual, and, definitely, orthographic variations at least until about the 6th century A.D.

An interesting speculation is whether or not the tenets and ideas of the New Covenanters are reflected in the textual variants of text A. Professor Hempel has argued<sup>2</sup> that they are present. He suggests that the chief care of the scribe was to preserve the recitation as free as was possible from contamination by Aramaic influences in Palestine, hence the plethora of *matres lectiones*; whereas orthodox Judaism did not need these safeguards. Furthermore there is a possible anti-Samaritan tendency implied in a significant omission of a place-name from the Massoretic text in 37: 13.

<sup>1</sup> *The Hebrew Scrolls from the Neighbourhood of Jericho and the Dead Sea* (Oxford, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> "Über die am Nordwestende des Toten Meeres gefundenen hebräischen Handschriften," *Nachr. d. Akad. d. Wiss. in Gött., Phil.-Hist. Kl.*, 1949.

In conclusion, I return to the general estimate of the scrolls I ventured to make at the outset. The Biblical texts are, of course, important because there are no early manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, nor of the Septuagint's parent text. But the texts A and B will not provide us with a "better" text-form of Isaiah than the one we already have. They will, of course, provide Hebrew grammarians and linguists with better means than ever before of reconstructing the history of the language development, and of kindred dialect-forms, at a period long before the Tiberian Massorettes pointed the text, and so frequently distorted its meaning. But before the results of these and similar researches can be applied to the textual criticism of Isaiah and of other books, much time must elapse; and meanwhile much care should be taken lest we "emend" the text wrongly, as has so often happened with emendations based on the Septuagint. As for the community, the New Covenanters themselves, it is certainly sensational that now, two thousand years after the time it flourished, we are able to give a fairly detailed reconstruction of its customs and its beliefs. Doubtless, a study of its constitution, its ways of living and thinking, its Bible study and interpretation—these and many other findings will help us the better to understand the story of the Early Church. But the Covenanters are not the Early Christians, nor is the community the Early Church. Their founder and inspirer was, undoubtedly, the Teacher of Righteousness, and we should like very much to know who he was. Their Messiah, however, was the Messiah of Aaron and Israel, and if any fact about Jesus is established on very sound evidence, it is that he was the Messiah, son of David, Son of God.

#### DISCUSSION.

The Chairman (Mr. F. F. BRUCE) said: The Victoria Institute may consider itself fortunate in securing Mr. Roberts to address it on this subject. Mr. Roberts has won the right to speak with authority on all matters concerning Old Testament textual criticism. His book on *The Old Testament Text and Versions*, published last year, has been warmly welcomed as filling a gap of which teachers of Biblical subjects in universities and theological colleges have long been acutely conscious; in it we have at last a standard work on Old Testament textual criticism to stand alongside several excellent handbooks to the textual study of the New Testament. As an expert on the text of the Old Testament, Mr. Roberts has

been much in demand as a writer and speaker on the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls; I have lost count of the number of learned periodicals to which he has contributed papers on this subject (in Germany as well as in this country); he has even broadcast on it.

After listening to his paper tonight many of us have a clearer appreciation than before of the probable value of the Scrolls as witnesses to the text of the Old Testament. Mr. Roberts has also touched on interesting possibilities in relation to the Old Testament canon, which will repay further exploration. But I think it is becoming increasingly clear—and Mr. Roberts's paper bears this out—that the supreme importance of the Scrolls will yet prove to lie in the light which they may throw on the background of Christian origins. For example, the apocalyptic emphasis in Matthew's Gospel—a subject to which I have had to pay special attention of late—makes one wonder if this Gospel appeared first in some community of people keenly interested in apocalyptic literature, or at least if it were influenced by such a community at some stage in its formation. (This would, of course, have been a Christian apocalyptic community, whereas in the case of the Scrolls we are dealing with a Jewish one.) I was therefore specially interested a few days ago, when reading Mr. Roberts's paper "Some Observations on the Damascus Document and the Dead Sea Scrolls" in the *Rylands Bulletin* for March, 1952, to find that he points out resemblances between the method of Biblical interpretation adopted in the Habakkuk commentary (DSH) and the way in which quotations from the Old Testament are introduced by the First Evangelist.

On the identity of the New Covenanters, it looks as if we may soon have further light from more recent manuscript discoveries made near the north-west shore of the Dead Sea—at Khirbet Qumrân and in the Wadi Murab'at. My knowledge of these thus far comes exclusively from an article in the *Manchester Guardian* of April 7th, 1952. According to this article (a despatch from that newspaper's Paris correspondent), Père de Vaux considers that the discoveries at Khirbet Qumrân strongly suggest that this may be the site of the Essene settlement above En-gedi mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* (Book V, ch. 17). It is also interesting to learn that pottery discoveries at Khirbet Qumrân have led Père de Vaux to the conclusion that the jars in which the

Ain Feshkha Scrolls were preserved were of the type still in use during the first century of the Roman occupation of Palestine.

It is a token of Mr. Roberts's sound scholarship that he has resisted the temptation to propound confident solutions to the problems which the Scrolls raise, as too many others have done on insufficient evidence. He has shown us clearly what the main problems are, and in which directions it seems that some elucidation may most profitably be sought. We are greatly indebted to him for his exposition on this fascinating subject, and in the name of the Institute I thank him most warmly.<sup>1</sup>

Rev. H. L. ELLISON said: The suggested light thrown on the formation of the O. T. canon by the non-canonical Dead Sea Scrolls is very interesting, but we may perhaps go further. It is as unreasonable to base our estimate of the Pharisees purely on the Mishnah and the early Midrashim, as it is to base it purely on the N. T. The *Birkat ha-Minim* and the early Talmudic references to the *am ha-aretz* and others show how implacably those that would not conform were squeezed out of the synagogue in the 150 years that followed the destruction of the Temple, but the Pharisees were as implacable to the few nonconformists in their own ranks. It is clear, however, that it would be wrong to postulate any such attitude, at least widely diffused, among the Pharisees before A.D. 70.

There is ample evidence for much greater freedom then, and Dr. Klausner is almost certainly correct in maintaining that between Zealot, Pharisee and Essene we have differences only in degree, not in kind, and no clear line can be drawn between them. So it must not be assumed that the attitude of the Pharisee towards apocalyptic and the pseudepigraphic literature when Judaism was fighting for its very existence was necessarily the same as it was earlier.

There seems to be a remarkable similarity between Judaism and Christianity here. Jewish literature between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100 has been preserved for us almost entirely by Christians or archæo-

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<sup>1</sup> Special reference should now be made to the latest study of Professor H. H. Rowley, *The Zadokite Fragments and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1952).

logical "accident"; similarly the bulk of non-canonical Christian literature from the first century and a half has perished, and what we have has often been preserved by "accident." That the parallel is not accidental seems to be shown by the same cause being adequate to explain both phenomena, viz., gnosticism.

Friedländer may have exaggerated the Jewish element in gnosticism, but he did show its relevance for Judaism. R. Aqiba, the champion of orthodoxy, was the only one of a group of four promising scholars to escape unscathed from it. Much of the pseudepigraphic literature lends itself to gnostic speculation, and I believe that the fixation of the canon and the weeding out of the old non-canonical literature had the same motive in both religions, though Judaism being in the greater danger did the task more thoroughly. But the old apocalyptic tradition flowed on, showing itself later in *Merkabah* mysticism, Qabbalah, etc.

If this is so, it would be wrong to look on the New Covenanters as necessarily heterodox. They will have been more interested in apocalyptic than the Pharisees, but once more it will have been a difference only in degree. At present it must remain a matter of speculation whether they reluctantly acquiesced in the banning of the pseudepigraphic literature, or whether they refused and became an unorthodox sect. If it were the former, Dr. Kahle may well be correct in his suggestion that the scrolls were hidden away to save them from ignominious destruction. If this line of thought is at all correct, the Pharisees were no enemies of the pseudepigraphic literature, but in the hour of Judaism's deadliest danger they saw clearly that only concentration on essentials could save it, and any book whose canonicity was seriously doubted was sacrificed to this end.

Mr. D. J. WISEMAN said: It is good to have a new approach to the much discussed subject of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and this paper goes some way in attempting this by relating the new material to the question of the Canon of Scripture. Yet to do this would seem to me to be impossible until the primary and difficult question of the date of composition has been settled. It matters much whether, for example, the Isaiah manuscripts are second century A.D. or B.C. if we are to place them in their correct relation to other Hebrew

literature, named rabbinic traditions and the sources used by the Massorettes. Unfortunately the further archæological work carried out in the Dead Sea area this year has shown that the support for the earlier dating, given by the so-called "Hellenistic" jars in which the scrolls were found, is unreliable evidence. Mr. Lankester Harding has excavated a settlement at Khirbet Qumrân, near the site of the cave in which the original find was made, and discovered the same type of jars in a context datable to the time of the Bar Kochba revolt. Further manuscript discoveries from a site further south near the Dead Sea must cause us to pause for a further examination of the material before safe deductions from all the related manuscript finds may be made. Mr. Roberts is obviously right in drawing our attention to the value of these documents for the early Christian period, whatever their dating within the generally conceded range of four centuries B.C.—A.D. may be. We are hindered still by a paucity of comparative material which precludes any sure comparison of the development of the script, vocabulary, grammar and even scribal methods upon which so many of the current arguments are based. It is surely wrong reasoning to make comparison with the Zadokite Fragment (Damascus Document) on the date of which scholars vary by as much as ten centuries and which, like many early and late Hebrew documents, draws largely on the Old Testament for its language and expressions.

Mr. W. E. FILMER said : Mr. Roberts has put forward good reasons for believing that the Isaiah scroll A is not as old as the original of our Massoretic text. This fact does not seem to me to detract from the importance of the find, as some would imply, but rather to enhance it. Dr. Birnbaum and others have stated on palæographical grounds that the date of text A is 150–175 B.C. (*Trans. V.I.* 82, 1950, p. 145). This opinion is not subject to the criticisms made against the dating of the Leviticus fragments, for it is not written in the Palæo-Hebrew script ; nor can it be questioned on account of archæological evidence showing a later date for the jars, for old manuscripts can be put into new jars. Isaiah text A clearly proves that the Massorettes preserved a text which dates back to at least 200 B.C., a conclusion which can only add weight and authority to the Hebrew text of our Old Testament as a whole.



## AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I have but very little to add except to thank the Chairman for his valuable comments and for his kind references to myself, and to say that the discussion has been very helpful. It has served mainly, I think, to underline the need for keeping an open mind on the great majority of issues raised by the discovery. One authority on the Scrolls some months ago observed that over 500 articles had already been published in learned journals alone, and to judge by the rate at which they continue to appear, the number might well be doubled before long. Since there is a considerable diversity of views among the recognized experts it is manifestly impossible to be anything but cautious when advocating any general point of view, though some kind of perspective is obviously necessary.

The extent of the latest (1952) discovery at Khirbet Qumrân still remains comparatively unknown, for, at the time of writing, there is little, if any, fresh information to add to the brief report in the *Manchester Guardian*, to which previous speakers have referred. Among recent publications on the Scrolls, however, I should refer to an important textual discussion by J.-T. Milik<sup>1</sup>, in which it is demonstrated that twelve of the fragments discovered during the archaeological examination of the first cache by Mr. Lankester Harding and Père de Vaux are part of a commentary on the book of Micah<sup>2</sup>, now, of course, in a very mutilated condition, but originally composed in the same style and with the same characteristics and features as the Habakkuk commentary. The identification supports very strongly the view put forward in the present paper that the party was devoted to Bible exegesis, and was very apocalyptic in its interpretations. Whether the party had marked contacts or an identity with the Essenes, as so many scholars suppose, or with the Pharisees, as Mr. Ellison suggests above<sup>3</sup>, or with any other known party must still, I think, remain an open question. My main objection to identifications already suggested is that the

<sup>1</sup> "Fragments d'un Midrash de Michée dans les Manuscrits de Qumrân," *Revue Biblique*, July, 1952, pp. 412-18.

<sup>2</sup> Among passages identified are the following: Micah. 1: 2-5, 5b-7, 8-9; 6: 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> It might be noted that the New Testament scholar, Dr. Bo Reicke, in an extremely interesting book on the scrolls, *Handskrifterna från Qumran* (Uppsala, 1952), argues for an identity of the sect with the Pharisees, withal at an early period in their history.

Messiah of the New Covenanters, the Messiah of Israel and Aaron, does not coincide with the Davidic Messiah who seems to be presupposed by any Judaistic party hitherto known. The same objection would hold even if it be argued that we are dealing with an early, more amorphous stage in the history of the sectarians, be they Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, or even Christians, on the one hand, or the earlier *Hasidim* and Maccabeans on the other.