

The Intertestamental Period

THE purpose of this article is to trace in broad outline some of the developments which have taken place over the past ten or fifteen years or so in the intertestamental field and to indicate some of the more important books written during this time which have a bearing on this study.

Apart from the more general "Histories" of Israel, several volumes dealing with the history and religion of the intertestamental period have appeared in recent years. Werner Förster's *Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times* (Oliver and Boyd), published in English in 1964 from the third German edition of 1959, is a reliable and fairly comprehensive guide. To be recommended also is F. F. Bruce's *Israel and the Nations* (Paternoster, 1963) which, though it covers the whole period of Israelite history, concentrates on the post-exilic and intertestamental periods. Two volumes which make fascinating reading are Stewart Perowne's *The Life and Times of Herod* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1956), and *The Later Herods* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), the latter having been reprinted as a paper-back with the title *The Political Background of the New Testament* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1965). Covering somewhat the same ground, but in small compass, is the relevant section in F. V. Filson's *A New Testament History* (S.C.M., 1965), whilst the new *Peake's Commentary* (Nelson, 1962), edited by M. Black and H. H. Rowley, contains several most useful articles dealing with the historical, cultural, religious and literary developments of the period.

Of first rate importance, however, has been the publication in three volumes of a major work, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Harvard), edited by V. A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks. The first, which appeared in 1957, covers the Ptolemaic period (323-30 B.C.); the second (1960) covers the early Roman period (30 B.C.-A.D. 117); the third (1964), dealing with the later Roman and Byzantine periods, falls outside the scope of this article. This publication represents the first attempt to gather together all published papyri and ostraka from Egypt relating to the Jews and Judaism in the early Christian and pre-Christian centuries and has much new information to give concerning the life and religion of the Jewish people both in the Dispersion and in Palestine. A balanced assessment of the evidence is given in a Prolegomena of 111 pages in Volume I, the material of which is set out at somewhat greater length and with valuable documentation in V. A. Tcherikover's *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961). These

papyri have much to reveal concerning commercial relations between Egypt and Palestine in the reign of Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) and also concerning the social and political conditions prevailing at that time. Of particular significance are the so-called Zeno papyri which contain the correspondence of one Zeno, an agent of the King's chief minister of finance, Apollonius. These were discovered as long ago as 1915 in the Fayum district of Egypt and have since been supplemented by the so-called Vienna papyri, first published in 1936. Together they help to fill in an otherwise blank space in Jewish history and show that at this time not only was there close contact between Palestine and Egypt, but also that Palestine itself was divided up into small administrative units under the control of sub-officials appointed by senior officials in Alexandria. We read of certain agents of Apollonius who were responsible for commercial and trade relations between the two countries and are given information about a trade mission, despatched by Apollonius in 259 B.C. (perhaps with Zeno at its head), whose commission it was to tour Palestine with a view to establishing better trade relationships with the local inhabitants.

Of particular interest is the reference in the Zeno papyri to a Jew called Tobias (Hebrew, Tobiah), who is described as a man of great wealth and commander of a military colony of Ptolemaic soldiers in "the land of the Ammonites" in Transjordan. This same name appears in Aramaic characters in a rock-hewn tomb at Araq-el-Emir in Transjordan which may date from the third century B.C. and presumably refers to "our" Tobias; some argue for a date about 500 B.C. in which case the reference is to one of his ancestors. The papyri themselves describe the district as "Tobias's land" and his agents as "Tobias's people" and make him out to be a most influential general who had the ear not only of Apollonius but also of Ptolemy himself. There can be little doubt that this Tobias was a descendent of that "Tobiah the Ammonite" about whom we read in the story of Nehemiah. His chief interest, however, lies not so much in his ancestors as in his successors, and more especially in his son Joseph (nephew of the High Priest Onias II) whose family ("the sons of Tobias") was to play such a leading part in Jewish affairs in the fifty years or so preceding the Maccabean Revolt.

Altogether nearly forty papyri are known to us from the Zeno collection with a direct bearing on the social and economic life of Palestine under Ptolemaic rule. A bill of sale concerning the purchase of a slave girl, a list of Greek and Semitic names, a letter informing Apollonius of a gift to him of four young slaves, and an inventory of rare animals despatched to the King—these and many more build up a fascinating picture of Palestine over several decades about which other sources of information have practically nothing at all to say.

But these papyri are even more important for our understanding of the Jewish community in Egypt. Here too we find a fascinating picture of life in the various villages of the Fayum and in Upper

Egypt in the middle of the third century B.C. and on into the second century. We see a people living together for the most part in semi-political groups, permitted by the authorities to live (like other ethnic groups) "according to their ancestral laws". Though not forced to live together in ghettos they in fact chose to settle together in autonomous organisations with their own laws and customs, leaders and officials.

These papyri are particularly helpful in illustrating the economic conditions of the Jews in Egypt at this time, most of whom it would seem (contrary to the commonly accepted view) were not all rich and had very little, if any, connection with money-lending. Their names are associated with a number of trades and professions, among them those of the army and the police, whilst their participation in tax-gathering is indicated by a number of ostraka from Upper Egypt in the form of receipts issued by banks, granaries, tax collectors, etc.

We find ample evidence here also for the rise of anti-semitism during the Ptolemaic period which in the Roman period developed into a well-organised programme for the removal of Jews from positions of authority both in commerce and in politics. Such activity was particularly marked in Alexandria as the so-called Boulé papyri (20 B.C.) and others clearly reveal. The Greek community, it is stated, must keep itself undefiled by any foreign influence, the allusion no doubt being to the Jews of Alexandria. The tension between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria is shown in a private letter, dated A.D. 41, from a Greek merchant to a friend warning him against Jewish money-lenders. It was in this same year that the Emperor Claudius wrote to the Alexandrians putting an end to the claims of the Jews to the rights of Alexandrian citizenship.

These papyri, moreover, provide a good barometer indicating the pressure of Hellenisation to which Egyptian Jews were subjected during the intertestamental period. One sign of this is the preponderance of Greek over Hebrew names given to Jewish citizens; another is that, though Aramaic continued to be spoken down to the first half of the second century, it came to be replaced by Greek both as a literary language and as the language of commerce, and in a city such as Alexandria gradually disappeared as the language of everyday conversation. More significant still is the evidence of many legal papyri showing that, although the Jews were permitted to live according to their own ancestral laws, they made free and full use of Hellenistic law, as, for example, in the matter of marriage and divorce. Many Jews were anxious to send their sons to the Greek gymnasiums where they would receive a liberal Greek education and to enrol them in the *Epheboi* or Guilds of Youth so as to ensure their claim to Alexandrian citizenship. It was this desire for civic recognition which, as we have seen, was opposed by the native Greeks and which in due course led to great bitterness and open opposition.

Several references are made to Jewish synagogues in these docu-

ments, and inscriptions from Schedia, dedicated to "King Ptolemy" (presumably Ptolemy III, 247-221 B.C.), provide the earliest dated evidence of this kind which we possess. Further information is given concerning the existence of synagogues in at least twelve other places in Egypt during the Greek and Roman periods, the most important being Alexandria.

From these papyri and ostraka we turn to evidence of a quite different kind—the sensational discoveries in the caves of Qumran and neighbouring sites. The books on the subject of the Dead Sea Scrolls are legion and continue to roll off the press with embarrassing frequency. It is quite impossible within the scope of this article even to mention the more important volumes which have appeared on this subject within the past ten or fifteen years. Quite early on two valuable contributions, containing translations of the principal Scrolls, were published by Millar Burrows—*The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Secker & Warburg, 1956) and *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Secker & Warburg, 1958). At about the same time a more comprehensive translation and commentary was given in T. H. Gaster's *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect* (Secker & Warburg, 1957). There has subsequently appeared an even more comprehensive work still which, in addition to providing translations of all the chief documents, also gives a full account of the discoveries and a detailed evaluation of their significance: this is A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (Blackwell, 1961). The handiest volume for consulting the contents of the Scrolls is G. Vermes's *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Pelican, 1961) which also supplies a brief but useful introduction to the several types of literature contained in them.

The discovery of these Scrolls has made no small contribution to Old Testament scholarship; but it has become increasingly clear that their value is even greater for our understanding of the intertestamental period and for our study of New Testament origins. Many sensational things have been written in this connection, particularly by writers such as Dupont-Sommer in his earlier days, by Edmund Wilson and by John Allegro. Despite this, however, it can be confidently claimed that nothing in fact has emerged out of these discoveries to alter in any substantial way the picture we already have from the New Testament itself concerning the nature and beliefs of the early Christian Church or indeed concerning the Person and ministry of our Lord.

Among the many books recently published dealing with the relation of the Scrolls to the New Testament Church there may be singled out for special mention: Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Nelson, 1961), a scholarly book which deals very ably with the historical as well as with the religious and theological problems involved; F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (Duckworth, 1958), an informative and eminently readable book; and K.

Stendahl (ed.), *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (S.C.M., 1958), a symposium dealing mainly with matters of interpretation and their relation to New Testament study.

Affinity between the Scrolls and the New Testament has been found in such matters as organisation and officers, ceremonial and rites, interpretation of Scripture and perhaps most significantly their use of certain theological concepts and their theological vocabulary. Thus, we have frequent reference in the Scrolls to the two groups into which God has divided mankind, "the Sons of Light" and "the Sons of Darkness", with their corresponding heavenly counterparts finding expression in such phrases as "the Kingdom of God" and "the Kingdom of Satan". *The Manual of Discipline* (cf. also the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs) indicates, moreover, that in the heart of man, as in the life of the universe, there are two spirits at war with each other, the spirit of truth and the spirit of wickedness (or error), the righteous walking in the way of "the Prince of Light" and the wicked in the way of "the Angel of Darkness". The similarity of such references to the teaching of the New Testament, and especially that of the Johannine writings, has often been noted where the figures of Light and Darkness are common usage (cf. I John ii: 11) and allusion is made to the opposition of the spirits of Truth and Error (cf. I John iv: 6). These parallels and their like are of great interest; but it is easy to exaggerate their importance and to read into them much more than is actually there. The really significant fact which emerges from a comparison of the Scrolls with John's Gospel and their respective teaching concerning such matters as light, spirit, truth and knowledge is that the Fourth Gospel's affinities are not necessarily with Hellenism or even with Hellenistic Judaism, as has often been supposed, but may equally well relate to Palestinian Judaism of the first century. Without reaching any conclusion about the late or early date of the book, we can with greater assurance than in former years suppose that John may have emerged from an Aramaic or Hebrew background with Essene tendencies, where its theological language at least is concerned. Other parallels can be pointed out between Qumran on the one hand and, say, the Epistles to the Colossians, the Ephesians and the Hebrews on the other. Once again, however, we have to be careful not to claim too much or to postulate dependence on the people of the Scrolls. It is safer to conclude with W. F. Albright that the New Testament writers "drew from a common reservoir of terminology and ideas which were well known to the Essenes and presumably familiar also to other Jewish sects of the period". This caution, that Qumran ideas and language were shared by other Jewish parties of the time, must be given its due weight.

The chief value of the Scrolls for a study of the intertestamental period, however, is to be found in the contribution they make to our understanding of that complex Judaism which flourished at the

beginning of the Christian era. The people of the Scrolls were an apocalyptic community whose writings have much in common with apocalyptic books already known to us, fragments and larger portions of which have been found at Qumran and elsewhere. Now, under the influence of the great scholar, G. F. Moore, it was for a long time accepted that Judaism—even the Judaism prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—should be judged in the light of that “normative” Jewish faith which finds expression in the Oral Tradition of the Mishnah and which was fostered by the teachers of the Rabbinical line—the Sopherim, the Pharisees and the Rabbis, i.e. Pharisaism was the true norm, whereas apocalypticism was an alien or “sectarian” element on the fringe of Judaism, representing a “reactionary” movement which distorted the received Jewish religion and contaminated its theology. It is now seen much more clearly that this idea of “normative” Pharisaic Judaism in the years before A.D. 70 is very largely a myth and what we have in fact is a far more variegated picture.

The Judaism of the intertestamental period was very complex indeed, being comprised of many religious and political groups and a multitude of ordinary Jews who belonged to no identifiable party at all. It is important to observe that none of these groups was particularly interested in “orthodoxy” in the Christian sense of the word or the later Jewish sense. For this reason it is misleading, even if convenient, to speak about the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots as “sects” in the way that Josephus, for example, does. They were much more concerned about *orthopraxis*; right conduct in compliance with the Law was of much greater importance than right doctrinal statements or beliefs. Such practice varied widely throughout Palestine and the Dispersion where, it is clear, there were many splinter groups whose names have long since disappeared. Matthew Black describes the situation within Judaism in the first century B.C. as “one of a wide-spread and dangerously proliferating and fissiparous heteropraxis, a kind of baptising non-conformity, with many splinter groups, extending from Judaea to Samaria and beyond into the Dispersion itself”.

New light has been cast by these discoveries on the party of the Essenes, with whom, in all probability, the Qumran Covenanters are to be closely associated or even identified and whose origins are to be traced back to the Hasidim of whom we read in the Books of Maccabees and elsewhere. It has generally been thought that these Hasidim, because they were among those who refused to fight on the Sabbath day (*cf.* I Macc. ii: 36), formed a pietistic and pacifist group within Israel, intent only on religious reform and avoiding political and national entanglements as much as possible. This is now seen to be a misrepresentation, the evidence of the Scrolls supporting the picture given of them in I and II Maccabees as “mighty warriors of Israel” ready to fight in defence of the Law (*cf.* I Macc. ii: 42) who “keep

up war and stir up sedition" against the Syrians (*cf.* II Macc. xiv: 6).

The Essenes at Qumran were, of course, only one group among many in a wide-spread "Jewish non-conformity". We know from Philo and Josephus that in New Testament times Essenes of various hues were to be found in many villages and towns throughout Palestine as well as in separate communities away from the lawlessness of the cities. The most characteristic name by which they were known was *Ebhyonim* ("the poor"), a word used extensively in the canonical Psalms, for example, to indicate the "righteous remnant". Now there are many differences between the sentiment of, say, the Magnificat and the Benedictus on the one hand and that of the Scrolls on the other; but we find ourselves here in somewhat the same spiritual atmosphere and are tempted to draw the conclusion that it was in this milieu—even though not in this particular group—that we are to find the origins of the Christian religion. At any rate, the "quiet of the land" of that time had much in common with the pious Essenes. Similarities both in organisation and belief should not surprise us, for both religious bodies emerged from the same religious background and relied upon the same sacred Scriptures from which they drew so much of their inspiration.

Study of the Pharisees has inevitably taken second place to that of the Essenes in recent years. Interest, however, has been maintained by the publication of several books on the connection between Pharisaism and the New Testament. In 1955 there appeared a second edition, with additional notes, of an influential book which students of the New Testament have found of the greatest value—W. D. Davies's *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (S.P.C.K., 1948)—which examines with great skill and minute care some Rabbinic elements in Pauline theology, demonstrating that many of the theological expressions used by Paul can be traced back to Palestinian Judaism without necessary recourse either to Hellenism or to Diaspora Judaism. More popular, and covering a wider field, is James Parkes's *The Foundations of Judaism and Christianity* (Vallentine, Mitchell, 1960) which contains useful chapters on the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism. A veritable mine of information is provided by David Daube in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Athlone, 1956) which examines the thought not only of orthodox but also of "sectarian" Judaism of the time and demonstrates how deeply Hellenistic ideas had already penetrated Rabbinic thought and practice by the first Christian century.

Of value for an understanding of the cultural and religious background of this period are two books by F. C. Grant: *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament* (Oliver & Boyd, 1960) and *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (Oliver & Boyd, 1962). The first of these is a most readable book, giving in small compass an appreciation of the main tenets of historical Judaism and providing an assessment of its influence on the literature and thought of the early

Christian Church. The second is in a sense a complement to the first, demonstrating the extent to which the Gentile Church was influenced from an early stage by Greek philosophy; even the Judaism of Paul the Pharisee was not free from such influence both in its use of the Greek language and its consequent adoption of certain Greek modes of thought. A valuable contribution to the same subject is made by W. D. Davies in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962). This is a collection of studies in which the author examines in a scholarly manner different aspects of Judaism which have a bearing on the New Testament and the beginnings of the Christian faith. It is not a book about the Scrolls, but their relevance is obvious in almost every chapter. A much smaller book, whose importance is out of all proportion to its size, is T. W. Manson's *The Servant-Messiah* (Cambridge, 1956), whose opening chapters give a most valuable outline of the various parties in Judaism at the time of Christ and describe graphically the nature of the messianic hope then prevailing. These writings confirm not only that there was no "authoritarian" or "normative" Judaism in the years preceding A.D. 70 but also that there was no sharp cleavage at this time, as older scholars were apt to imagine, between the Judaism of Galilee and that of Jerusalem. Both communities were wide open to the influence of Hellenistic culture and ideas which, consciously or unconsciously, did much to shape the religious outlook of both Judaism and Christianity.

During the past fifteen years or so a new evaluation of the party of the Zealots has been attempted by both Jewish and Christian scholars. The contention of G. R. Driver in *The Judaean Scrolls* (Blackwell, 1965) that the Qumran sectaries are to be identified with the Zealots rather than with the Essenes has not met with general approval; nevertheless, the important role which they played in the first Christian century is becoming increasingly clear. A new assessment of their contribution to the life of Judaism has been made by W. R. Farmer in *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus* (Columbia, 1956) in which he argues cogently that Josephus has greatly underestimated their authority and that we are to see in them the true spiritual successors of the earlier Maccabees.

Differences there obviously were between Zealots and Pharisees, but the connection between them is now seen much more clearly and makes more understandable the statement of Josephus that in their origin they were closely related. Here as elsewhere archaeology has come to the assistance of the historian and in recent years more light has been thrown on the part played by these Zealots in their valiant stand against Rome during the Jewish War of A.D. 66-70 and subsequently in A.D. 73 at the ancient Herodian fortress of Masada on the shores of the Dead Sea. Much publicity has been given to the excavations carried out there under the direction of General Yadin whose work is expected to produce useful supplementary evidence of

this important period in the life both of Judaism and of the Christian Church.

The relationship between the Zealot movement and the primitive Church is an intriguing one. Tantalising hints are given in the Gospels that some at least of Jesus' disciples may have had something to do with this party. This evidence, together with a history of the Zealot movement, is examined by S. G. F. Brandon in *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester, 1967). At the time when this article was written Dr. Brandon's book was not yet available, but the "blurb" indicates that it provides an "evaluation of Jesus' involvement in his nation's cause against Rome", the approach of the writer being "strictly historical, not theological nor apologetical". It should make interesting reading.

The actual documents dealing with the intertestamental period, apart from the books of the Apocrypha, are not easily accessible. There was ready welcome, therefore, to C. K. Barrett's *The New Testament Background; Selected Documents* (S.P.C.K., 1956), which, as the title indicates, consists of a well-chosen and well-arranged selection of documents relating to the period of late Judaism and early Christianity together with brief "introductions" and explanatory notes. Welcome, too, has been the reprinting of R. H. Charles's two volumes, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Clarendon, 1963), first published in 1913.

For more than fifteen years students of the apocryphal literature have been indebted to R. H. Pfeiffer whose *History of New Testament Times* (Harper, 1949) provides a comprehensive survey of this subject and offers an analysis of and introduction to the books of the Apocrypha. Meanwhile other books have appeared which have supplemented this work. A useful contribution is Bruce M. Metzger's *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1957), based on the Revised Standard Version, and under his editorship, *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1965). In smaller compass is L. H. Brockington's *A Critical Introduction to the Apocrypha* (Duckworth, 1961) in the well-known Duckworth series. This revived interest in the Apocrypha has shown itself not only among Christians but also among Jewish scholars who, for so long, have tended to neglect the period between the Testaments. One of the most evident signs of this new interest is to be found in the series of volumes on "Jewish Apocryphal Literature" now being produced by the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, beginning with *The First Book of Maccabees* (Harper, 1950), the English translation by S. Tedesche and introduction and commentary by S. Zeitlin.

Much interest has been shown also in the so-called Pseudepigrapha, more especially those of an apocalyptic character. This study obviously found great incentive in the work being done on the Dead Sea Scrolls with which, as has been noted, the already-known apocalyptic writings have much in common. As far back as 1944 H. H.

Rowley produced a small volume, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (Lutterworth) which met a greatly felt need and brought new understanding to this confusing and conflicting body of literature. His new and revised edition, published in 1963, brought the subject up to date and included a section on the Dead Sea Scrolls with an assessment of their relevance to apocalyptic. The present writer made a modest attempt to see this literature within the setting of the inter-testamental period in his book *Between the Testaments* (S.C.M., 1960) and, on a larger scale, in *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (S.C.M., 1964). In this latter volume an attempt was made to analyse the apocalyptists and their writings and at the same time to examine their teaching as a preparation for the message of the New Testament and the early Church, one important part of which deals with the messianic hope. This is the central theme of one of the most influential books to appear in this field in recent years—S. Mowinckel's *He That Cometh* (Blackwell, 1959), whose subtitle reads, "The Messianic Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism". The writer looks to the post-exilic era for the emergence of Israel's eschatological hope with its assurance of restoration and its re-interpretation of Israel's faith in terms of the saving activity of God in history. The expectation of a future ideal king became the basis of the Jewish messianic hope alongside which there developed the notions of the Suffering Servant and the eschatological Son of Man. The author's exhaustive treatment of these themes makes this book one of primary importance for any study of the teaching and consciousness of Jesus and in particular of the messianic expectations of the Synoptic Gospels.

During the past ten or fifteen years, then, the scholar (like the wise scribe in the Gospels) has been successful, by the help of new insights and remarkable archaeological discoveries, in "bringing forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew xiii: 52). Many obscurities remain, but in a way quite unforeseen by a former generation the blank page between the Testaments is now filled with exciting new information, theological as well as historical, bringing a fresh understanding both to the promise of the Old and the fulfilment of the New.

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