

## *Holy Spirit in the Qumran Texts*

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In the Hebrew Bible the phrase 'holy spirit' (*rûah haqqōdeš*) is of infrequent occurrence. In Isa. lxiii 10 the people of Israel, rebelling against Yahweh, are said to have 'grieved his holy spirit', so that Yahweh became their enemy and afflicted them, until he called to mind his earlier deliverance of them at the time of the Exodus:

'Where is he who brought up out of the sea  
the shepherds of his flock?  
Where is he who put in the midst of them  
his holy spirit,  
who caused his glorious arm  
to go at the right hand of Moses...?' (Isa. lxiii 11 ff.).

In this content Yahweh's 'holy spirit' is probably synonymous with 'the spirit of Yahweh' who gave his people rest, according to verse 14. In Ps. ii 10-12 the penitent prays:

'Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from thy presence,  
and take not thy holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.'

Here it is difficult to dissociate the 'holy spirit' of God from the 'new and right spirit' and the 'willing spirit' for which the speaker prays.

These few instances of the phrase could not provide a basis for a study of 'the Old Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit', and it would be unreasonable to restrict such a study to the passages quoted, for Yahweh's spirit, so frequently spoken of throughout the Hebrew Bible is, almost by definition, his 'holy spirit'. It is remarkable, nevertheless that a phrase so seldom used in the Old Testament should become so familiar in the New Testament and other Christian literature, and also in the Qumran texts.

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According to Mark i 8, John the Baptist proclaimed that the one mightier than he would, when he came, baptize Israel not with water, as John had done, but 'with the Holy Spirit'. Taking this Marcan reference along with the 'Q' prediction of a baptism of fire, some commentators have concluded that what John really foretold was a baptism of wind and fire—the wind to blow the chaff away and the fire to burn it up (cf. Matt. iii 11 ff./Luke iii 16 ff.)—and that the phrase 'the Holy Spirit' ascribed to him is a later theological construction. But since both wind and fire appear in the Hebrew Bible as figures of the spirit of Yahweh, we cannot exclude the possibility that John did expressly speak of the Holy Spirit, and that he did so becomes all the more probable when we view his preaching in the light of Qumran usage.

The Qumran usage may be illustrated by means of a few examples, classified according to the various functions assigned to the holy spirit. We shall not expect to find the holy spirit treated as a person in the Qumran texts, and so it is best not to capitalize the initials and write 'Holy Spirit' as is normally done when the New Testament presentation is under discussion.

### **1. *The two spirits***

In 1QS iii 18-iv 26 we have the well-known passage about the two spirits who between them have received all mankind as their lot. The one is the spirit of truth, of light, of holiness; the other is the spirit of falsehood, of darkness, of impurity. There is a formal parallel here with such a passage as 1 Cor. ii 12, where Paul says, 'Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God'—but the parallel is more formal than material, because Paul does not think in terms of a predestined division and because he has in mind the ability to understand spiritual truth which the Spirit of God imparts. To this last idea there are certainly parallels in Qumran thought, as we shall see below, but hardly in the passage where the two spirits are contrasted. To this passage there is a notable parallel in the *War* scroll, where the priests, Levites and elders bless God and curse Satan, expressing their gratitude to God for appointing the Prince of Light to come to their support against the Angel of Hostility (*maštēmá*) who governs the realm of darkness and is destined for the Pit (1 QM xiii 1 ff.).

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### **2. *The spirit of prophecy***

In CD ii 12 the prophets of God are called his 'anointed ones' (*m<sup>e</sup>šībāw*) through whom he made known to Israel his holy spirit. Perhaps, however, with E. LOHSE, we should read instead of *mšyby* and vocalize as the construct plural *m<sup>e</sup>šībāē*, in which case, the meaning will be that God taught his people through the 'anointed ones of his holy spirit'—those who have been anointed with his holy spirit to impart his truth to their fellows. So, in Is. lxi 1, the prophet says, 'The spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted.' So too, in Acts i 16, mention is made of something that 'the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David', while a Christian prophet can preface his utterance in the church with the words: 'Thus says the Holy Spirit' (Acts xxi 11). In one place, where messianic prophecy is more particularly in view, the spirit of prophecy is called 'the spirit of the Messiah' speaking within the prophets (1 Peter i 11; cf. Rev. xix 10, 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'). This reference to 'the spirit of the Messiah' is specially relevant to the Qumran understanding of prophetic revelation, according to which the revelation was not complete or intelligible until the time of its fulfilment was made known, as it was to the Teacher of Righteousness (cf. 1QpHab vii 1-8). So, in 1 Peter i 10 ff. the prophets searched and inquired what person or time might be indicated by 'the spirit of the Messiah' making predictions through them, but Peter and his fellow-Christians, living as they did in the time of fulfilment, had no need to inquire; they knew that the person was Jesus and the time was now.

### **3. *The holy spirit as the fount of knowledge***

As the holy spirit enabled the prophets to make known the divine purpose, so it is by the holy spirit that the worshipper of God at Qumran understands that purpose. 'I, as an instructor (*maškil*), have come to know thee, O God, by the spirit which thou hast set within me, and by

thy holy spirit I have listened faithfully to thy wonderful secret counsel' (1QH xii 11 ff.). Again, 'I, thy servant, have received knowledge by the spirit which thou hast set within me' (1QH xiii 18 ff.); 'I know through the understanding imparted by thee that in thy good pleasure [...thou hast given me] thy holy spirit and thus thou hast brought me near to thy understanding' (1QH xiv 12 ff.).

New Testament parallels are not difficult to find. In the upper

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room discourse of the Fourth Gospel one of the services which the Holy Spirit will perform for the followers of Jesus is to teach them all things and guide them into all the truth, since he is 'the Spirit of truth' (John xiv 26; xvi 13). The same Evangelist assures one group of readers that this promise has come true in their experience: you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know.... the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you' (1 John ii 20, 27). Similarly Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that things which the heart of man never conceived have been revealed by God through the Spirit: 'For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.... no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received... the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the spirit' (1 Cor. ii 9-13).

#### **4. *The holy spirit as guide and protector***

Repeatedly in the Qumran *Hymns of Thanksgiving* acknowledgment is made of the guidance and protection provided by the holy spirit to the faithful member of the covenant community. 'I thank thee, O Lord, because thou hast upheld me by thy strength, and thou hast poured out thy holy spirit on me so that I shall not be moved' (1QH vii 6 ff.). 'In steadfast truth hast thou upheld me and by thy holy spirit thou hast made me rejoice' (1QH ix 32). This language is in line with Ps. li 12, already quoted: 'uphold me with a willing spirit' (in all these passages 'uphold' represents Heb. *sāmak*). The New Testament takes over this aspect of the Spirit's work from the Old Testament in general terms: the Holy Spirit is the believer's *paraklētos*, his 'advocate' or 'helper' (John xiv 16, 26; xv 26; xvi 7); 'all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God' (Rom. viii 14), and the Spirit helps them in their weakness, interceding for them and in all things cooperating with them for good (Rom. viii 26-28). But in the New Testament this Old Testament teaching acquired a new dimension because the Holy Spirit now communicates the presence and power of the glorified Christ.

#### **5. *The holy spirit as purifier from sin***

It is through the spirit of God's true counsel that a man's ways

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namely all his iniquities, are atoned for, so that he may see the light of life. By the holy spirit, given to the community in his truth, he will be cleansed all his iniquities, and by the spirit of uprightness and humility his sin will be atoned for' (1QS iii 6-8). Here too something of the sense of Ps. li may be recognised, especially when we compare the following words of the

*Rule*, prescribing ritual washing in water for those who are inwardly purified from sin, with the Psalmist's prayer in verse 7:

'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'

The idea is common in the New Testament, but the closest verbal parallel is in Acts xv 8 ff., where Peter at the Council of Jerusalem says that God gave the Holy Spirit to Gentile believers as well as to Jewish believers, 'and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith'. We may recall also Paul's words to the Corinthian Christians: 'you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spot of our God' (1 Cor. vi 11)—where, however, the new element in the New Testament teaching, its relation to Jesus the Messiah, is manifest.

Most important of all the Qumran texts where this idea is expressed is the (unfortunately ambiguous) passage in 1QS iv 20 ff. which states how at the appointed time of judgment (according to the more usual translation) 'God will purify by his truth all the deeds of man, and will cleanse for himself some of mankind, so as to destroy every evil spirit from the midst of his (their) flesh and cleanse him by the holy spirit from all his wicked deeds. He will sprinkle the spirit of truth upon him like water that purifies (*mê niddâh*) from every false abomination.' Thus translated, this may be regarded as a re-wording of the promise in Joel ii 28 that when the day of wrath is past God will pour out his spirit on all flesh—the promise whose fulfilment at the first Christian Pentecost is recorded in Acts ii 16 ff. But it is possible to translate the passage, 'God will purify by his truth all the deeds of a man, and will cleanse him for himself more than the sons of men' (taking the *min* in *mibb<sup>e</sup>nê 'iš* as comparative, not partitive).

J. A. T. ROBINSON, who adopts this rendering (*Twelve New Testament Studies*, 1962, pp. 23 ff.), points out that it provides a striking affinity with John the Baptist's language about the mission of the

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Coming One, in the record of the Fourth Evangelist (John i 29-34), and that in fact it may make 'surprising sense' as an interpretation of John's work. But the ambiguity of the Hebrew wording precludes certainty on this point; we can, however, be reasonably sure that it foretells the eschatological outpouring of the spirit of Yahweh.

### **6. *The holy spirit defiled by sin***

According to Qumran thinking, the holy spirit is defiled when men, and especially the people of God, are guilty of sin. The majority of the religious leaders in Israel 'have defiled their holy spirit' by a wrong attitude towards the commandments of God (CD v 11 ff.); by contrast, the members of the covenant community undertake that each of them will avoid all forms of uncleanness 'and not defile his holy spirit' (CD vii 3 ff.). In these two places the holy spirit belongs to the persons concerned, but it is holy because it is the spirit that God has placed within them, and its holiness is polluted by disobedience to him, especially (as the contexts suggest) in matters of sex and food. The Old Testament source says simply 'you shall not defile yourselves' (Lev. xi 43), but 'his (their) holy spirit' in the *Damascus Document* is more than a variation on the reflexive pronoun.

In 2 Cor. vii 1—in a section where particularly close affinities with Qumran terminology have been discerned—the readers are exhorted to cleanse themselves ‘from every defilement of body and spirit’; but it is not the Spirit of God that is meant here. Two passages in 1 Corinthians are closer in sense to the Qumran text: ‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is holy...’ (1 Cor. iii 16 ff.); and, in relation to sexual offences, ‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?’ (1 Cor. vi 19). The temple figure is also found in the Qumran texts (cf. B. GARTNER, *The Temple and the Community and the New Testament*, 1965), and that in association with the holy spirit in a passage which must finally engage our attention.

### **7. The holy spirit indwelling the holy community**

In 1QS ix 5 ff. the covenant community, like the temple in Jerusalem, is divided into two parts—the lay members corresponding to the outer compartment, the holy place, and the priestly members corresponding to the inner compartment., the holy of holies. The sentence

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immediately preceding runs: ‘When these things take place in Israel according to all these ordinances for a foundation of (the) holy spirit, for eternal truth, to make atonement for the guilt of rebellion and the work of sin, and to procure divine good pleasure for the land more than (or apart from) the flesh of burnt offerings and the fat of sacrifice; the heave-offerings of the, lips duly presented will be as a savour of righteousness and perfection of way as an acceptable freewill offering’ (1QS ix 3-5). This appears to envisage the establishment of a living temple as a habitation for the holy spirit, where the offering of obedient lives and praising lips replaces animal sacrifices, and approaches the New Testament concept of the age of the Spirit replacing the age of law.

In the Qumran texts, then, we find a remarkable development of the Old Testament treatment of *rûah haqqōdes* and a number of parallels to the New Testament doctrine. Among the principal New Testament *differentiae* are these: (i) in the New Testament the messianic age has come, whereas at Qumran it is impending; (ii) in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is closely associated with the person of Christ; (iii) in the New Testament, and more particularly in the writings of Paul, the Holy Spirit is the pledge alike that the new age has dawned and that it will be consummated in resurrection and glory.