

THE QUMRÂN SCROLLS: A GENERAL SURVEY¹

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UP to a few years ago it used to be said that it was still far too early to make more than a cautious interim evaluation of the importance of the Qumrân scrolls. Today one feels almost that the opposite is true, that in a certain sense it is too late. It has been done so often already. So many popular presentations of the subject have appeared, many of them highly competent, some few sensationalist in approach and grossly misleading, but all of them attempting to answer the same basic questions: What exactly has been discovered and how? What sort of people were the members of that strange Jewish sect who owned, and in many cases who must actually have written the scrolls? What is the bearing of these documents on the origins and on the sacred books of Judaism and Christianity? These are, I think, the questions everyone would like answered. My excuse for going over the same ground again must be primarily that the answers suggested have often been so bewilderingly different.²

I

First, then, what has been discovered is the relics of a sect whose history in its total span (c. 125 B.C. to 68 A.D.) overlapped the lifetime of Christ, and the emergence of the Christian Church from Judaism. These relics are of two kinds: documentary, and archaeological, and the one exactly complements the other. Coins and pottery from the community building which has been found are identical in type and date with coins and pottery found in the caves which contained the documentary remains. Of these eleven caves, Cave Four, which incidentally has alone yielded eight to

¹ A talk given at the Aquinas Centre, London, in January 1959.

² Two particularly useful books have appeared recently. In his latest book, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Secker and Warburg); Dr Millar Burrows gives an exhaustive survey of the more important interpretations which have been suggested, especially with regard to the bearing of Qumrân on Christianity. This author's absolute mastery of the whole complex subject, and the cool balance of his judgments make his contribution unsurpassed. The sole defect that must be noticed in this work is the vagueness and inadequacy of its references to other works cited. As a shorter and more popular survey of the whole subject, Fr Van der Ploeg's new book *The Excavations at Qumrân* (Longmans; 16s. od.) is most warmly to be recommended.

ten thousand scraps of manuscript, is situated only a few yards away from this building, across a little ravine, while the rest of the caves in this otherwise desert region are all fairly near to it. A jar discovered sunk in the floor of the community building is of exactly the same peculiar type (otherwise unknown in Palestine) as the jars in which the first scrolls were placed. The building was equipped with what was certainly a 'scriptorium', complete with special writing tables and ink-wells. The cumulative evidence is overwhelming. The documents and the community building 'belong' to one another, in the sense that they are relics of the same community. It follows that we can use the evidence of the one to complement the evidence of the other. This is, it seems to me, one of several factors which make Qumrân uniquely important. Firstly it enables us to establish the date after which the documents could not have been written. The building was certainly occupied up to 68 A.D., and no less certainly destroyed then by the Romans in the first Jewish war (68-70 A.D.). Given the connection between the building and the documents, it follows that no document can be later than 70 A.D. at the very latest. This conclusion can be disputed only by those who choose to discount (as admittedly some do) the clearest possible archaeological evidence. Secondly, this connection between the documentary and the archaeological evidence places us in an uniquely advantageous position for investigating the beliefs and ideals of the Sectarians themselves. The documents reveal to us vividly and in some detail what those ideals were. The archaeological remains disclose to us hardly less vividly how the Sectarians put their ideals into practice in their daily lives. Here then we have a sect which diverged from the main stream of Judaism, just as Christianity was to diverge about a century and a quarter later, and which seems to have died out soon after Christianity as a world movement had really established itself. The sect resembles Christianity in this respect also, that its driving force is messianic belief. Obviously there are vital differences, and those who slur over those differences do a very ill service to the cause of truth. Still, Qumrân and Christianity do seem to have overlapped in time, to have drawn inspiration in many cases from the same books, to be characterized by a common interest in the messianic prophecies, and to evince a certain similarity of thought and expression, and even of rite, in the sacred books and sacred ceremonies

peculiar to each religious movement. These common factors, general though they are, do invite further investigation and comparison.

Let us return to the first basic question: What exactly has been discovered? The total collection of documents comprises about a dozen substantially complete manuscript scrolls, and the remnants (amounting in most cases to no more than a few words written on a mouldering scrap of leather) of about six hundred others.

For Jews or Christians, the fragments of biblical manuscripts are, of course, far the most important. The remains of rather more than one hundred of these have survived. Among them every book of the Jewish canon of Scripture is represented except Esther. Of the first five books of the Bible (known as the Torah), the first four books are represented by fragments of between six and nine manuscripts apiece, while of Deuteronomy the remains of no less than fourteen manuscripts have been found. Several of these are in archaic script, and were certainly written before 50 B.C. The group of Old Testament books known as the 'former prophets' (Joshua to Kings) has fewer manuscripts to represent it, but this group does include the most ancient, and in many ways the most interesting example of all, relatively substantial portions of a manuscript of I-II Samuel, dating from the late third century B.C. Among the 'Latter Prophets' (Isaiah to Malachi) Isaiah was evidently far the most popular. This book is represented by two virtually complete scrolls, and fragments of eleven more, as well as by commentaries. The 'Writings' (Job to Chronicles) are less well represented, except for Psalms, of which fragments from seventeen manuscripts have survived. Among the relatively complete scrolls found in Cave Eleven (the cave that was found last of all in 1956) a scroll of Psalms and an Aramaic Targum (paraphrased translation) of Job promise to be especially interesting and important. Mention should also be made of Daniel, of which seven manuscripts have come to light. In addition the deuterocanonical books of Ecclesiasticus and Tobit are represented by fragments of Hebrew or Aramaic text. This is the first time that a version of Tobit has come to light in what now appears to have been its original language, Aramaic.

The supreme importance of these biblical texts, all of which are, it will be remembered, earlier than 68 A.D., lies in the field of textual criticism. To appreciate this fact we must briefly recall

where we stood in this field up to twelve years ago, and where, presumably, we would still be standing, if it were not for Qumrân.

The manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible available to us before Qumrân, suffered, from the text critic's point of view, from two basic defects: they were not old enough, and they were not independent enough one of another or of a common source. The oldest and probably the best complete Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament dates only from about 1008 A.D. What is still worse, all the extant Hebrew manuscripts derive from one and the same process of artificial unification and standardization, a process which started at the Jewish Synod of Jamnia at the end of the first century A.D., and culminated in the rabbinical schools of the Massorettes in the seventh-eighth centuries. By this process, a single 'authorized' text was declared to be correct, and all others which disagreed with it were eliminated. Up to twelve years ago, all the extant manuscripts of our Hebrew Bible were simply copies of this 'authorized' Massoretic text. The consequence was that the text critic found himself far too dependent on the judgment of the Massoretic schools as to what was, or was not, the best reading in a given passage. It seemed to him at once highly desirable, and quite impossible, to reach back beyond this process of artificial standardization, and to find witnesses older than, and independent of it, by which to test its worth. Eleven years ago Qumrân supplied him with exactly what he had been longing for, and had despaired of ever finding: the remnants of literally hundreds of biblical manuscripts, not one of which is, if one accepts the archaeological evidence, less than twenty years older than Jamnia. At one blow the text-critic has by-passed Jamnia and the Massorettes, and found witnesses at least a thousand years older than those on which he had previously been forced to rely.

Second only in importance to the Massoretic text, as a witness to the original text of the Hebrew Bible, is the Septuagint, the Greek version made probably at Alexandria in the course of the third century B.C. This is certainly older than, and independent of, the 'authorized' text of the Massorettes, and where it diverges from this, the independent text underlying it can be reconstructed. Nevertheless, its value as a witness has been seriously called in question. According to one modern theory, the Septuagint as we know it never existed before the second century A.D., when it was compiled by Christians from a number of unofficial and

unreliable Greek translations of sections of the Old Testament. If this theory were correct, the Septuagint would represent no one distinct and definitive tradition, generally held by non-Palestinian Jews, and capable of bearing its own independent witness to the original text. It may be said at once that the Qumrân discoveries have rendered this theory quite untenable. The claims of the Septuagint to be an independent witness of the utmost value have been more than vindicated.

A third benefit which Qumrân has conferred on text critics has been to afford them an invaluable insight into the actual process by which a text is transmitted. It is only when a scribe is convinced that the book he is copying is 'sacred' or 'revealed', that he will strive to copy it exactly and without alteration. Now normally an interval elapses between the original writing of the book and the point at which its 'sacred' character becomes generally recognized. This interval we may call the 'fluid' period of transmission. During the fluid period the text is copied not necessarily inaccurately, but far more freely, and with far less regard for verbal exactitude. Applying this to the Qumrân texts themselves, we find certain texts, notably the early manuscript previously referred to of I and II Samuel, which seem to represent this more fluid stage of transmission. The variant readings involved are not such as to make a notable difference to the meaning, but they are invaluable in enabling the text critic to examine for the first time what happens to a text just as it is emerging from the 'fluid' stage. One manuscript of Daniel is also interesting in this respect, since it can hardly be more than fifty years younger than the original, and may not yet have acquired 'sacredness' or canonicity.

By contrast it is evident that the text of the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy) has long been sacred and so 'fixed'. Apart from one or two manuscripts which are closer to the Hebrew archetype of the Septuagint, the Qumrân witnesses for these books agree closely and consistently with the Massoretic text of our Hebrew Bibles. The 'Former Prophets' (Joshua to Kings), on the other hand, are predominantly 'proto-Septuagintal', that is they conform more closely to the Hebrew archetype from which the Septuagint is derived. It is of course immensely impressive and reassuring to see so many of these ancient texts conforming to one or other of the archetypes which underly our existing

Hebrew and Greek versions respectively. There are variant readings; there is even a third prototype which appears in a few texts, namely the Samaritan. But it is clear that the Massoretic and Septuagintal prototypes are far the most important. The manuscripts of the two remaining groups, the 'Latter Prophets' and the 'Writings' are mainly 'proto-Massoretic', the second being far nearer to the 'fluid' stage than the first.

Of these biblical manuscripts, it will be noticed that Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms seem to have been far the most popular, for they are represented by more than ten manuscripts apiece. This is interesting for our comparisons with Christianity, because it is precisely these books which appear to have exercised the greatest influence on the New Testament.

II

As far as the Sectarrians are concerned, one can relate their special interest in these books to the nature of their beliefs. Deuteronomy is *par excellence* the book of Israel's election, and so would recommend itself especially to a sect which regarded itself as the 'elect' of God, the 'true Israel'. Psalms is the book of Israel's piety, that is to say the book of those who strive by personal prayer to steep themselves in the holiness of the God who has chosen them. This was certainly the chief daily preoccupation of the Qumrân Sectarrian. The thought of First Isaiah seems above all to have exercised a creative influence. This book is, as Dr Fichtner has so well shown,³ dominated by an awareness of Yahweh's plan for Israel now approaching its consummation. The three essential factors in the divine plan are firstly the purging, or testing of Zion, secondly the theme of the righteous remnant, thirdly the expectation of the messiah-figure, Immanuel, in and through whom the plan is to be implemented. The relation of all this to the beliefs of the Sectarrians is clear. They regarded themselves as the righteous remnant, the true Israel living through a time of testing, and awaiting the consummation of Yahweh's plan through the coming of the Messiah. Another biblical concept which pervades their thought is the idea of the New Covenant predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer. xxxi, 31-34; Ezek. xxxvi, 22-28). But the idea of Yahweh's plan, now on the point of being accomplished, seems to have been the chief creative factor in

3 J. Fichtner: 'Jahwes Plan in der Botschaft des Jesaja', *Z.A.T.W.*, 1951, pp. 16-33.

their beliefs. Their founder (probably, though not quite certainly, the figure referred to as the 'Teacher of Righteousness') had been vouchsafed secret knowledge of this plan, especially in its application to himself, to his followers, and to the contemporary world.

From his childhood the Teacher of Righteousness is endowed with special graces and God takes the place of his natural parents (IQH ix, 29-32, 34-36).⁴ He is a priest (IQpHab. ii, 5), endowed with mystic enlightenment (IQH iv, 53), and as a result becomes a spiritual guide for others (IQH iv, 27 f.; xiv, 17-19). He undergoes trials (IQH ii, 8-10, 13-15) and exile (IQH lv, 8-11) but is eventually granted peace. 'Thou hast rescued the life of the afflicted man in the den of lions . . . so that the life of thy servant was not destroyed' (IQH v, 10-15). It is his steadfast loyalty throughout these trials which makes him father of the 'Pious' (IQH vii, 19-23, 25). He repeatedly thanks God for having given him, a mere 'creature of clay' . . . 'knowledge of thy true plan' (IQH xi, 2, etc.). 'By the spirit thou didst put into me, which is trustworthy, I have listened to the wondrous plan' (IQH xvii, etc.). God has made him know 'all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets' (IQpHab. vii, 4-5), that is, to discern the deeper meaning of their oracles, a meaning of which they, and everyone else until the Teacher himself, had been unaware. Again he writes in the Manual of Discipline: 'All that is, and that is to be, comes from the God of knowledge; and before they came into being he established the whole plan of them; and when they come into being for their testimony according to his glorious plan, they fulfil their work. . . .' (IQS iii, 13 ff.).

This pervasive sense of being admitted to secret knowledge of the divine plan is also characteristic of apocalyptic writing, another *genre* which was significantly popular at Qumrân. Broadly speaking the apocalypticist is one who represents himself as having been assumed into the 'other world', and admitted to the company of angels. He himself has been supernaturally endowed with what might be called an 'angel's eye view' of the universe. It is given to him to survey the whole of God's plan in history, and to see how it leads up to its final consummation in his own epoch. Then he returns to explain the deeper significance of contemporary events to his fellows, in the light of what he has

4 IQH is the recognized abbreviation for the *Hodayot* psalms found in Cave I. IQpHab. is the Habacuc Commentary. IQS is the 'Manual of Discipline'.

seen. The three most popular apocalyptic works at Qumrân, the Books of Jubilees and Henoch, and the Testaments of Levi and Naphtali, are of exactly this type. The numerous astrological texts which have been found are especially revealing in this regard, for the laws governing the movements of the planets are considered the key to understanding the divine plan. The fact that some of these texts are in code indicates the secret and esoteric nature of the knowledge they impart.

This esoteric insight enabled the Qumrân Sectarrians to see how the Old Testament prophecies applied to themselves, to their leader, and to their contemporary world. They alone were the righteous remnant of Israel, the heirs to the promises, and the rest of the world, not excluding their fellow Israelites, constituted the 'Sons of Darkness', the workers of iniquity destined to be destroyed in the approaching consummation. By means of an artificial esoteric exegesis, inner meanings called 'interpretations' (*pesarim*) were drawn out of Habakkuk, Micah, Nahum, Isaiah and Psalms. Thus it is from the biblical commentaries in particular that we see what part the Sectarrians themselves are to play in the accomplishment of the divine plan.

The consummation of the divine plan is to take the form of a supreme cosmic 'holy war' which will bring the present age to an end and inaugurate a new and infinitely more glorious one. The Sectarrians are the 'Sons of Light', the warriors of God. Having conquered the 'Sons of Darkness', they are to preside for ever, under their two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel, over the whole world in the ensuing golden age. The approaching conflict is fore-ordained by God, and its outcome is predestined. He himself created the spirits of good and evil who are to lead the two armies, and presides over the conflict between them. Thus we encounter one of Israel's ancient and most deeply rooted traditions, the tradition of the holy war, here projected on to the eschatological plane in the Sectarrian scroll entitled 'The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness' (so called by Dr Sukenik, its original publisher). Recently Dr von Rad has described in detail the essential characteristics of the 'holy war' tradition,⁵ and it seems to me amazing and deeply significant that these characteristics should reappear one after another in this first-century scroll, merely being magnified to fit the eschatological context. The

5 G. von Rad: *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel*. Zürich 1951.

strict ritual purity prescribed for the warriors, the elaborate prayers and the sounding of the sacred trumpets by the priests, the numinous battle-cry (*terou'ah*) uttered by the warriors to 'strike terror into the heart of the enemy', and above all the sense that it is 'the right hand of God' rather than the army itself that overthrows the powers of evil, are examples of such 'holy war' characteristics.

I have dwelt on this factor at some length because 'Preparation for the eschatological holy war' seems to me to be the fundamental attitude inspiring the whole quasi-monastic movement of Qumrân. Elsewhere⁶ I have suggested that monasticism as a way of life is a reformulation in Christian terms of this same ancient 'holy war' ideal. At Qumrân we find a pre-Christian formulation of this same ideal. These Sectarians, like Christian monks, separate themselves from the world and go to live in community under a rule of life laid down by a leader who is conceived to be saintly. Like Christian monks, they are inspired by two fundamental ideas: the holiness of God, and the menace of the powers of evil. To fight the enemies of God, to be his warriors in the 'holy war', they must first steep themselves in his holiness, and so, necessarily, participate in his 'otherness' to the profane, the 'this-worldly'. For that is what holiness in its most elemental terms implies. Every detail of their lives must be governed by these two ideas. The 'Rule of the Community' tells them in detail how they are to achieve the holiness they need in order to fight the eschatological war. This document opens with a general exhortation to do good and avoid evil, to love the Sons of Light and hate the Sons of Darkness. Those who enter the community must bind themselves by a most solemn covenant to its discipline. Each year the covenant is renewed. Blessings are invoked on those who observe it, and curses on those who infringe it. Then follows the famous description of the two spirits of good and evil who are for ever striving to draw men into their respective spheres of influence. The 'modified' dualism apparent here ('modified' because both spirits are created by God) has been held to be one of the most significant factors in the beliefs of the Sectarians. This introductory section is followed by regulations concerning precedence and authority, by which the righteousness of God's will is to be

6 cf. 'The Religious Vows and the Holy War', in *The Life of the Spirit*, November 1958, pp. 203-212.

applied to the organization of the community. The rule goes on to prescribe for constant ritual purity, obedience to superiors, sacred meals to be eaten in community, and the study of the Law. 'Community of goods' is obligatory, as it is in Christian monasteries, and, I suggest, for the same reason: because property belongs to the profane sphere, and is therefore, though good in itself, alien to the state of strict holiness enjoined upon those who live constantly in the immediate presence of God. In Christian monasticism these ideas are of course transformed and elevated, but they do seem to me to be rooted in the same Old Testament earth, the tradition of the holy war in Israel. Obedience to superiors is also strictly enjoined as a means of holiness. Did the Sectarrians also practise celibacy? The rule does not say so, yet there are considerable grounds for believing that they did for one phase at least of their existence. It seems overwhelmingly probable that the Sectarrians belonged to the Jewish sect of the Essenes, of whom three independent witnesses, Pliny the Elder, Philo and Josephus explicitly assert that they remained celibate. Pliny in particular locates the Essene community known to him west of the Dead Sea, at a certain distance from its shore, and above Engaddi. There are certain difficulties, but on the whole it is extremely hard to avoid the conclusion that Pliny is here referring to Qumrân. Again, in a great area of the community cemetery only male skeletons have been discovered. The few female skeletons which have been found were buried in an adjoining area. Then too the Rule seems to visualize only men, though the Damascus document certainly does legislate for wives and families too. On the whole it seems reasonable to conclude that *some* of the Sectarrians at any rate remained celibate, perhaps during the strictest phase of the community's existence.

The excavations have thrown vivid light on the manner in which these rules were applied in the Sectarrians' daily lives. Their preoccupation with ritual purity was catered for by an elaborate system of fresh-water conduits and cisterns. The cleanliness of the 'refectory' where the sacred meal was taken was the object of special care. By means of an ingenious device, a stream of fresh water could be directed at will over the whole floor, including the 'pantry' where piles of dishes were found. Peculiar shallow basins have been found in the 'scriptorium', and it has been presumed that the scribes would have used these for ritual washing

before and after coming into contact with the sacred text. In fact the requirement of ritual purity governed every phase of the Sectarian's life. His day was divided principally between manual labour for the support of the community, and assemblies to read the Book, expound the sense of it, and spend time in communal prayer. These religious duties continued during 'a third part of the night'. Thus he strove to prepare himself for the approaching eschatological conflict.

The general eschatological expectations of the community converge and focus upon the two protagonists of good and evil, the Teacher of Righteousness on the one hand, and the Wicked Priest on the other. The latter is the unjust persecutor of the former. A *peser* (interpretation) of Habakkuk xi, 4-8 runs: 'Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest who persecuted the Teacher of Righteousness to bring about his downfall in the indignation of his fury. In the house of his exile, and on the day of the solemn rest, the day of Kippurim, he appeared to them to reduce them to confusion, and to bring about their downfall on the Day of Fasting, the Sabbath of their rest.' The most convincing explanation of this has been suggested by Dr M. S. Talmon.⁷ The Wicked Priest is the High Priest of Jerusalem who has come on an official visitation to Qumrân. According to the divergent calendar of the sect it is the Day of Expiation, but the High Priest is attempting to enforce observance of the orthodox Jerusalem calendar on the Sectarrians. Other passages speak of chastisements and horrible scourges inflicted on the Wicked Priest in retribution for his crimes. (IQpHab. viii, 16-ix 2; xi, 12-15, etc.) No text comes anywhere near speaking of the Teacher of Righteousness himself having been crucified. It does seem probable however that the Wicked Priest is in one passage accused of the unprecedented cruelty of crucifying his fellow Jews (crucifixion being a common form of punishment among Gentile nations influenced by Rome). 'The interpretation of it is concerned with the lion of fury . . . who hanged men alive . . . in Israel before; . . . because for him who is hanged alive on a tree . . .' (QpNah. ii, 11-13). These are all the words that remain of the passage in question. There are no grounds whatever for supposing that they apply to the Teacher of Righteousness. The *Peser* of Psalms applies to him the verse of Ps. xxxvii, 33: 'Yahweh will not leave him in the hands of (the

⁷ In *Biblica*, xxxii, 1951, pp. 549-563.

impious'). The only explicit reference to his death speaks of the 'gathering in of the Unique Teacher', a phrase which could hardly refer to a violent death. In any case it will be noticed that the *peser* of Nahum refers to the crucifixion of a group of men rather than of an individual. It has been held to reflect an incident in the life of Alexander Jannaeus in which he crucified eight hundred Pharisees who had rebelled against him. A reference to 'Demetrius, king of Greece' (possibly Alexander's adversary of that name) makes this more probable, though the Wicked Priest has also been plausibly identified with the earlier Jewish leaders, Jonathan or Simon Maccabaeus. Nor is there any real justification for the supposition that the Teacher of Righteousness was expected to return again as Messiah in the last days. The Damascus Document does indeed speak of 'the arising of him who will teach righteousness at the end of days' (CD vi, 10 f.) and also in another passage of a *past* Teacher of Righteousness (CD i, 11; xix, 35-xx, 14), but as Dr Millar Burrows has shown, there is no means of knowing whether these texts refer to the same individual, or to different individuals by the same title. Neither the past nor the future Teacher is anywhere identified with the Messiahs of Israel or of Aaron. The sensationalist claims that 'precedents' and 'parallels' have been discovered for Christ's death and resurrection are based on these and similar over-facile equations of one figure with another, first pushed to fantastic extremes, and then further embellished with their authors' own invention.⁸ The whole tendency reflects a certain *a priori* eagerness to discover a natural explanation of Christianity in the Qumrân Scrolls at all costs. One has to be very eager indeed, it seems to me, to see the Teacher of Righteousness as prefiguring Christ or Christ as conforming to the Messianic ideal of the Teacher of Righteousness.

The idea that dominates the Sectarian movement may therefore be summarized as 'Preparation for the consummation of God's plan in an eschatological "holy war".' The idea itself was of course current coin among the Jews of the last century or so before Christ. But in the case of Qumrân the leader of the sect has taught his disciples to draw from this apocalyptic idea a rule that commands every detail of their lives. That is his real function: to

⁸ For a forthright and refreshing condemnation of this sort of treatment, cf. H. H. Rowley's little book, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (London, S.P.C.K., 1957).

teach. He plays an important, but not an essential role in the divine plan, as the 'enlightened' Teacher of those who are to be the Sons of Light.

III

On this basis let us briefly compare Qumrân with the early Christian Church, as two apocalyptic and eschatological communities, both derived from the common stock of Judaism. We may ask ourselves the same questions about the Church as we asked about Qumrân: What was God's plan, as the Church saw it? What role was assigned to her own members in it? What rule of life did it impose on them? How did they put that rule of life into practice in their daily lives?⁹

Like the Sectarians the Church is preoccupied with the fulfilment of God's primordial plan. She too believes that it will be consummated in and through her. In and through her the divine will achieves its purpose, the ancient prophecies are fulfilled, and the eschatological age dawns. To her has been given the grace of perceiving the inner significance of those oracles, and to see how they really apply to herself and to her leader. Like the Qumrân community, she believes that she is the true Israel, bound to God by a new covenant, the righteous remnant tried in the fire of tribulation. Her ideals and hopes, like those of Qumrân, are centred on a messianic leader, who will arise in the last days. What the Sectarians await is the achievement in and through themselves of God's dominion over all the earth. What the Church awaits, too, is the establishment of the Kingdom of God in and through her members, to the utmost bounds of the earth. But for her the Kingdom is not of this world. Her warriors are to fight not the rulers of this world, but 'the spiritual hosts of wickedness' (Coloss. vi, 12). They are to conquer with spiritual weapons, 'the sword of the Spirit' and 'the whole armour of God' (Ephes. vi, 17, 11). The Kingdom is to embrace, not to destroy the Gentiles, and its God-given message is to be preached, not concealed. Its Priest is a new non-Levitical High Priest, of a new and eternal Covenant. The primacy of function and of honour which in the Qumrân writings is repeatedly ascribed to the Levites, is, in the Christian gospels, quite excluded. In the new Kingdom, ancestry

⁹ An invaluable collection of essays on this aspect of Qumrân is *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, edited by K. Stendahl (London, S.C.M. Press; 35s. od.).

counts for nothing; only rebirth in the Spirit can avail.

What then of the Christian rule of life? We find the essentials of it in the Sermon on the Mount. Under the inspiration of the new commandment of love, the terms of the Old Law are consistently re-interpreted and projected further into the realm of the interior spirit. The rule of Qumrân, on the contrary, is inspired by a spirit of harsh exclusiveness, and the material observance of the law, so far from giving way to a spiritual re-interpretation, becomes more rigidly literal and legalistic than ever.

How do Christians put their rule of life into practice? They, like the Qumrân Sectarians, strive to steep themselves in God's holiness. Like the Sectarians, they occupy themselves with psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles. The similarities in communal organization are even more striking. Both religious bodies seem to have practised 'community of goods'; that is to say, the members made over their property to the community on entering. At Qumrân this was obligatory, in the Jerusalem Church it seems to have been voluntary, but we are told that all the members without exception practised it. Authority in both communities is in the hands of a college of twelve, in which three are supreme. 'Overseers' (the Christian term '*episkopoi*' (bishops) and the Sectarian term '*mebaqgerim*' both mean this) presided over groups of 'elders' in the community centres of the two bodies. Both imposed a period of probation on their prospective members before admitting them. Again, the liturgical life of the Sectarians seems to centre on a sacred meal, in which bread and 'sweet' wine blessed by the presiding priest constituted the chief elements. This corresponds perhaps to the Christian *agape*. Ritual baptisms, of which one was an initiatory ceremony, and in which true interior repentance was enjoined upon the recipient, also seem to have been an important element in Sectarian worship, and again there is an obvious comparison to be drawn with Christian baptism.

This similarity extends itself naturally to the writings of the two communities. St John's Gospel in particular seems to plunge its roots into the same intellectual soil as that of Qumrân. This in itself is important. Characteristically Johannine ideas, once thought to derive from a late Hellenistic or Gnostic milieu, are now discovered in this early Palestinian Jewish sect. The author of this gospel, like the Sectarian writers, visualizes the world as divided

into two spheres, of light and darkness, good and evil, each with its own leader. This has been arranged by God the creator of all things, who now presides over the eschatological war between the two spheres. For Qumrân the two leaders are the two created 'angels' of light and darkness; for St John the leader of the forces of light is the Uncreated Word, while the forces of darkness are commanded by the 'prince of this world'. Both literatures hold that all men belong to one or other of the two spheres. In the Qumrân texts we find a curious mixture of determinism and free will, while St John's Gospel states quite unequivocally that men decide by their own free choice to which sphere they are to belong.

Again, St Paul in his epistles seems sometimes to draw upon, sometimes to presuppose in the minds of those whom he is addressing, ideas which are found in the Qumrân writings. Here too we occasionally encounter the 'two-sphere' mentality, though it is far less predominant than in the Johannine writings. More important is the idea of predestination and concepts connected with it. Man can do no good *merely* of himself; all the good that he does comes from God who had predestined his good actions before he created him. (II Cor. iii, 5, etc.; IQS 10-11). The Sectarian idea that man yields himself up to one of the two presiding spirits of good and evil (IQS iii, 13-iv, 26) is also important. We may compare Romans vi, 13: 'Neither present your members unto sin, as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God . . .', etc. For the Sectarians, as for St Paul, God in his primordial plan permits the wicked to exist so that in their ultimate overthrow his glory and greatness may be manifest (QH xv, 15-21; cp. Rom. ix). In Rom. xvi, 25-27, 'The mystery which was kept secret from eternity which is now made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets . . .' also reminds us strongly of the esoteric power of discerning God's plan in the scriptures which the Sectarians believed they had received. St Paul's ethical and moral concepts of 'sin', 'flesh' and the 'spirit', etc., are also expressed in terms reminiscent of Qumrân. Finally, valuable light is thrown on the Pauline 'angelology'.

For the synoptic gospels Qumrân seems far less important. It is my strong impression that the rabbinical texts previously available to us are still more valuable here in providing verbal and conceptual parallels. Parallels with Qumrân are far less frequent, and

those that there are seem far more superficial than in the case of St John and St Paul.

These are then, broadly speaking, the similarities. What we may safely conclude from them is that Christianity took over some of the raw material of its ideas, its language, its way of life, its communal organization and its liturgy either from Judaic sources which it held in common with Qumrân, or perhaps in some cases more directly from Qumrân itself. But this raw material was completely transformed. Where are we to look for the roots of this transformation? Where else but in the Person of Christ himself?

Qumrân looks forward exclusively to a *future* eschaton and a *future* messiah, who will bring the present world order to an end, and inaugurate a paradisaic age. Her eschatological ideal is, in other words, exclusively 'futurist'. Now Christianity looks not only forwards to the end of the world, but backwards too to an historical fact, the fact of the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of her Messiah, seen in retrospect as his messianic enthronement. Not only *will* Jesus come in the future, he *has* come already. Not only *will* he come in messianic glory at the end of the world, he *has already entered upon that glory*; already he sits enthroned at the right hand of God. Christian eschatology, that is to say, is both 'Realized' and 'Futurist'. In fact the Christian religion derives its fundamental meaning from a fact of the past: the Death and Resurrection of her Founder as *atoning*. The meaning of her sacraments is to make that past fact present in the lives of her members. Baptism for her is being born again into him, and living with his life. The Eucharist means that the Christian 'eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of Man'. Only so shall he have life in him. The Christian Church is what she is because her founder was not merely a prophet 'mighty in word and work', as the Teacher of Righteousness was conceived to be, not merely Messiah (if the Teacher of Righteousness was ever conceived to be that); she is what she is because truly this Man was the Son of God, and because his sacrificial Death as man has brought her as a community of men to divine life, by atoning for the sins of her members.