

PROBLEMS REGARDING
THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS¹

THE ESSENIAN ORIGIN OF THE QUMRAN

Our knowledge of ancient history has been tremendously enlarged in the last hundred years. Ancient civilizations, formerly scarcely glimpsed or completely unknown, have emerged from the obscurity in which they were buried. In other domains, already more or less well known, the discovery of documents year after year has shed a clearer—sometimes even a harsh—light upon the great pages of the human past. These discoveries, which reveal to us what the man of earlier days was like and which enable us to achieve a better understanding of the man of today, have at times been due to the purest chance. The manuscripts we are discussing here as well as many others belong in this category.

Let us recall the initial fact. In 1947, eleven years ago, a Bedouin accidentally discovered a grotto in the wilderness of Judah not far from some ruins called Kirbet Qumran, where an entire collection of ancient Hebrew

Translated by Elaine P. Halperin.

1. This article, with a few additions, is the text of a series of six lectures delivered by the author in November and December, 1957, over Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française.

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scrolls² was preserved. Soon to become famous as the Dead Sea Scrolls, they certainly represent one of the most important findings that has been made for a long time in the field of the historical and philological sciences.

What is the actual date of these manuscripts? From what milieu, from which Jewish sect, did they come? Why had they been hidden in a grotto in the middle of a desert? Such were the first questions that came to mind when this astonishing discovery was announced.

The character of the Hebraic script in itself attested an ancient date, approximately the first century B.C. or A.D. But from the beginning the very site of the discovery suggested a more exact hypothesis: that these ancient rolls came from a community of Essenian Jews who had settled in the region and that they were the remains of an Essenian library, hidden there at the time of a political crisis which forced the members of the community to flee.

Actually it was known that the Essenes, a mystical Jewish sect which flourished in Palestine during the two centuries prior to the capture of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, were indeed in possession of an important establishment, a kind of tabernacle or temple in the region where the manuscripts were discovered. Pliny the Elder—the Latin author who perished in A.D. 79 at the time of the tragic eruption of Vesuvius which buried Pompei—has apprised us of this. In his *Historia naturalis* (v. xvii. 4), after describing the Dead Sea and its eastern shore, he refers to the Essenes in the following terms:

West [of the Dead Sea], the Essenes draw far away from all shores that are harmful. They are a unique kind of people and more admirable than any other in the world: they include not a single woman, having entirely renounced love; they are without money; their company consists exclusively of palm trees. Each day their dead are replaced thanks to the mass of new arrivals; indeed, they come in great numbers, those who, exhausted by the fluctuations of fortune, are led to adopt their customs. Thus, for thousands of centuries, unbelievable as it may seem, a people subsist who are eternal and yet among whom no one is born: so fecund for them is the repentance which others feel for their past life!

What a priceless description by this pagan author! Briefly but strikingly it brings these strange ascetics to life. This passage calls attention to their celibacy, their contempt for wealth, their penchant for solitude, their distaste for earthly life, their practice of penitence, the considerable size of

2. There is some question about the date 1947 because of a statement signed by a certain Bedouin, a man called Muhammad ed-Deeb, and published in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XVI, No. 4 (October, 1957), 236 ff., by William H. Brownlee; according to this evidence, the discovery goes back to 1945.

their following. But no less interesting is Pliny's reference to their habitat: near the western shore of the Dead Sea, he says, and specifically on the northern part of this western shore. For, having spoken of the Essenes, Pliny describes Engedi and Masada. Engedi, he remarks, is situated on the same shore but "lower," in other words, down the river, farther south. Masada is even farther south. Therefore, the Essenes must have lived west of the Dead Sea and north of Engedi, which corresponds exactly to the region of Kirbet Qumran itself.

Apart from the account by Pliny the Elder, the Essenes were known to us mainly by several rather lengthy passages by two Jewish writers who also lived during the first century A.D.: Philo Judaeus³ and Flavius Josephus.⁴ These passages contain a good deal of information about the particular features of the Essenian beliefs and customs; but we had no texts that were directly and indubitably derived from the Essenes and that would have enabled us to check and verify the accuracy of these accounts. Consequently, prior to the Dead Sea discoveries, the Essenes remained especially obscure and were regarded by historians as presenting a difficult problem. To be sure, no historian, not even the most critical, ever dreamed of denying their existence. This sweeping hypothesis, which has been suggested only very recently, runs counter to the converging multiple evidence relating to the Essenes and is therefore completely devoid of scientific validity. One might as well deny the existence of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, or the Zealots, and even, why not, that of the Dead Sea! Rather, the discussion has centered on the credibility of this or that characteristic described by the ancient authors, on the nature and essence of Essenianism and the kind of foreign influences that might have affected it, on the importance of the role that it was to play in the Jewish world, and, finally, on its relationship to early Christianity.

As soon as some of the Hebrew texts discovered at Qumran were published, it seemed to me that in many typical and fundamental respects their very content lent support to and explained the hypothesis of their Essenian origin—a hypothesis suggested from the outset by the very site of their discovery. Since then the Qumran findings have been regarded with tremendous interest; we are finally in possession of authentic writings on the ancient and mysterious Jewish sect.

It seemed to me, moreover, that, while these texts gave us direct, im-

3. *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, pars. 75–91; *Apologia pro Iudaeis* in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio evangelica* viii. 11.

4. *The Jewish War* ii. 8. 2–13 (pars. 119–61); *Jewish Antiquities* xviii. 1. 5 (pars. 18–22).

mediate knowledge of the history, beliefs, and rites of the Essenian sect, they also brought out singularly well numerous and precise similarities between it and the early Christian church. In my *Aperçus préliminaires sur les manuscrits de la Mer Morte*, published in 1950, I feel I was justified in defending not only the thesis of the Essenian origin of the scrolls but also the position that Essenianism, as revealed by the scrolls, had, more than any other Judaic movement, paved the way for Christianity. I went on to state that in many respects it had served as a model and also that the birth of Christianity, thanks to these new texts, would hereafter seem "more firmly rooted in history." The Dead Sea Scrolls thus cleared up one of the most captivating problems in the history of religions: that of the origins of Christianity.

It was entirely natural that these two theses should encounter some opposition in the beginning. But very quickly those people who initially were the most hostile reversed themselves. Today, after only a few years—a very short time for this kind of controversy—the Essenian thesis has been accepted by a considerable number of the most authoritative scholars of varying tendencies in every country, becoming, despite some lack of unanimity, in a way the classical thesis. The objections which, here and there, are still raised against it serve only to demonstrate, by their inconsistencies, its validity and solid foundation in fact. As for the importance of the Qumran documents in connection with the origins of Christianity, it is scarcely disputed today by anyone. A large group of specialists is currently engaged in examining the new texts with an eye to determining with the greatest possible accuracy the extent and nature of the influence which the Jewish sect exerted upon the budding Christian church. In such a delicate matter it is inevitable that the views held should exhibit a good deal of diversity in matters of detail; but the results already obtained, even if one takes into account only those on which there is a fair amount of agreement, prove that we are on the right track, and a singularly fruitful one at that.

When information about the manuscripts was first divulged in 1948, attention at the outset centered almost exclusively on the two biblical scrolls of Isaiah which the grotto had yielded:⁵ a marvelous discovery because it places in our hands two examples of this book of the Old Testament about one thousand years prior to the oldest known manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, the traditional text of the Synagogue! The Qumran

5. The first scroll was published in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol. I (New Haven, Conn., 1950); the second was published in the posthumous work of E. Sukenik, *Oçar ham-Megillot hag-genouzot . . .* (Jerusalem, 1954), English ed.: *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1955), Strips I–XV.

biblical manuscripts are of considerable and incontrovertible interest; thanks to them, a truly new phase has been opened up in the field of biblical scholarship—or more precisely in that of philological criticism of the text. But the other, non-biblical, manuscripts, highly significant for history—the religious history of humanity—are the ones we shall deal with exclusively here.

We must recall that the grotto discovered in 1947 contained five scrolls in addition to the two of Isaiah—five parchments hitherto unknown which neither the synagogue nor the church had transmitted to us. All seven scrolls have now been published; they have become the property of the state of Israel. Last July I was able to study them on the spot—one might almost say in the sanctuary that has been set up to house them at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Besides the two scrolls of Isaiah, there are the *Manual of Discipline*, the *Habakkuk Commentary*, the *War of the Sons of Light*, the *Hymns*, and the *Apocrypha of Genesis*.

However, since the initial 1947 discovery there have been other findings which greatly enrich our documentation; ten other grottoes in the region of Qumran yielded a multitude of manuscripts, all of which are likewise relics of the Essenian library. These manuscripts, for the most part fragmentary and as yet unpublished, number more than three hundred. The most recently acquired batch, discovered in 1956, includes a scroll of Leviticus, one of the Psalms, an ancient *Targum of Job*, and, finally, an Essenian Apocalypse. All the documents collected since 1949 belong to the state of Jordan. At present they are deposited in the Palestinian Museum at Jerusalem but in the Jordan zone, which is separated from the Israeli zone by an almost insurmountable wall. A few months ago I was able to examine a large number of these precious fragments in the room of the museum where they have been placed and where a small group of scientists is busy studying them. How exciting it is for the historian to hold in his hands and decipher, line by line, manuscripts that are two thousand years old and that contain the secrets of the mysterious sect that settled near the Dead Sea in the very wilderness where Jesus the Nazarene encountered John the Baptist!

THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

Of the various scrolls that come from the Qumran grottoes, the *Manual of Discipline* should be read first.⁶ It was the book that served as a basis for

6. The script was published in 1951 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol. II, Fasc. 2: *Plate and Transcription of the Manual of Discipline* (New Haven, Conn.).

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both the spiritual and the juridical conduct of its diverse communities. It introduces us forthwith to the very core of the sect, to the intimacy of its communal life, to the secret of its ceremonies and rites.

To this fundamental work another must be added. Entitled *The Damascus Document*,⁷ its discovery antedates in a sense the Dead Sea findings, going back to the end of the last century, when it was found among a mass of other Hebrew manuscripts, in the *genîzah*, the secondhand bookshop of a synagogue in ancient Cairo. When the first Qumran texts were published, it soon became plain that they possessed the closest affinities with these writings. Since then fragments of the same work have been discovered in many of the Qumran grottoes, and its origin is no longer a matter of doubt: it stems from the Essenes themselves, a sect which came into being in Damascus, where this Judaic group must have had to seek refuge from persecution and where it remained for a while. It should be added in its entirety to the collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In Judea as well as in Damascus the disciples called the sect the "Alliance" (*berît*) or, rather, the "New Alliance"; in their eyes these Jews, as distinguished from all others, represented the only Alliance acceptable to God, eternal and definitive. The ancient Alliance, the one concluded under Moses, had been broken as a result of Israel's unfaithfulness. The new mystical society was "the little that remained" described by the Prophets, the true Israel.

In the Qumran scrolls this "New Alliance" is also very often spoken of as "the Council of God," "the Holy Council," and "the Council of the Community." The initiated are called "men of the Council of God." This word, "Council," *‘êtzā* in Hebrew, which is so typical and so conspicuous in our texts, is perhaps recognizable in the term "Essene," whose etymology has remained most enigmatic.

Be that as it may, the members of the Alliance constitute a "community" in the strongest sense of the word. This characteristic, which found expression in the practice of sharing property communally, is greatly emphasized in the accounts of both Philo and Josephus. The Qumran documents, moreover, constantly stress the basic notion of "community"; the Hebrew word that corresponds to it, *Jahad*, is employed in these texts with characteristic frequency; it is the exact equivalent of the Greek word *koinônia*, which Philo and Josephus employ. All life is led in

7. Published by S. Schlechter as *Fragments of a Zadoqite Work* (Cambridge, 1910) and again by C. Rabin as *The Zadoqite Fragments* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).

common among the brothers: "In common they will eat, and in common they will worship and in common they will deliberate," one reads in the *Manual of Discipline* (VI, 2-3). "And all the volunteers dedicated to His truth will bring all their intelligence and all their strength and all their property to the Community of God." Thus the faithful, their souls as well as their property, belong unreservedly to the Community.

The regulations for admitting new members that prevailed at Qumran were practically identical with those described by Josephus in regard to the Essenes: one year as postulant, then two years of novitiate; this preceded definitive admission, which alone permitted the initiated to partake of the communal repast. Josephus specifies, moreover, that the initiated, "before touching the communal food, makes impressive promises in the presence of his brothers." He lists after a fashion all the obligations imposed upon him by this solemn oath,⁸ which is required for admission to the sect and which is very clearly described in the Qumran texts.⁹ The *Manual of Discipline* even gives us the ritual for the ceremony and the catechumens involved by such an oath.¹⁰

According to Josephus, one of the essential obligations which the new member thus assumes is "to conceal nothing from the members of the sect and to report none of their secrets to others, even though tortured to death."¹¹ This passage indicates in unequivocal fashion the strictly esoteric nature of the Essenian sect. And this same characteristic is also emphatically stressed in the Qumran texts: the sect has orders which are its own and which it is forbidden to make known to postulants without authorization from the "inspector";¹² it withholds secret doctrines, reserves revelations for the initiated alone—a Gnosis of salvation, or, one might say, a superior Knowledge which is the privilege of the chosen. Initiation into this revealed Gnosis must be progressive: "Each according to his spirit, according to a determined moment of time, will be guided toward Knowledge; and similarly he will be taught the marvelous and true Mysteries in the midst of members of the Community."¹³ To those on the outside, on the contrary, nothing was to be communicated: We will conceal the decisions of the

8. *The Jewish War* ii. 8 (pars. 139-42).

9. *Manual of Discipline*, V, 7-11; *The Damascus Document*, XV, 4-XVI, 9.

10. I, 6-II, 18.

11. *The Jewish War* ii. 8 (par. 141).

12. *The Damascus Document*, XV, 10-11.

13. *Manual of Discipline*, IX, 18-19.

Law from the sinful," it is ordered;¹⁴ and each of the faithful proclaims: "With wise reflection I will hide Knowledge. . . ."¹⁵

The Essenian congregation is ruled by the principle of rigorous obedience: "They do nothing," Josephus explains, "without orders from their superiors."¹⁶ These "administrators" are mentioned several times in the *Manual of Discipline*. In Hebrew they are called *mebaqqer* ("inspectors"); *The Damascus Document* describes their jurisdiction in rather lengthy passages.¹⁷ This religious society is like an army, subject to the strictest, the most systematic, and singularly perfected discipline. Each of the brothers is inscribed on the list of the militia with a number that corresponds to his merits and which is fixed annually in the plenary sessions; each owes strict obedience to his elder and superior, also designated by a number. Every Essenian, heavily surrounded, attached to his post, ever ready to do battle for the struggles of God, is a soldier in the army of the "sons of light."

However, the essential aim of the militia in which he serves is purity and saintliness, and the battle he wages is first and foremost a spiritual one. Josephus has described the two principal daily rites of Essenian life: the bath of purification and the communal repast; in other words, the baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is perhaps the place to discuss both briefly.

According to Josephus, the Essenian had to bathe daily. In addition, he had to engage in ablutions on various occasions. The documents of Qumran also mention these rites of purification by water. *The Damascus Document* contains detailed instructions about them.¹⁸ The *Manual of Discipline* also makes frequent allusion to the baptismal practices of the followers of the Alliance. It says: "Let [the impious] refrain from entering the water and having contact with the Purification of holy men; for one is pure only if he is converted from malice."¹⁹ In another passage of the *Manual of Discipline* a long and eloquent tirade warns that baptism and ablutions do not suffice; the spirit of man must also embrace the necessary attitudes, and only the wholesome spirit participates in purification.²⁰ This passage expresses no tendency to deny the legitimacy or necessity of practices of purification by water; rather, it warns against a totally materialistic and

14. *Ibid.*, 17.

15. *Ibid.*, X, 24.

16. *The Jewish War* ii. 8 (par. 134).

17. XIII, 7-16; XIV, 8-12.

18. X, 11-13.

19. V, 13-14.

20. III, 4-9.

magical interpretation of these rites. Only if the spirit is truly oriented toward God can the flesh be purified. These spiritual preoccupations are quite extraordinary, but obviously this kind of instruction has meaning only if the sect is essentially a baptist one.

As for the communal repast, Josephus apprises us of its primordial importance in the day of the Essene: it is a truly sacred meal of which no one partakes until he has bathed and has clothed himself in holy garments. The place where the brothers eat is “like a sacred inclosure,” forbidden to the profane, in which a silence of imposing mystery reigns. A priest is present to preside and say the prayers before and after the meal, and no one is allowed to eat until after the first prayer.²¹ Actually, the Essenian repast is a sacrament, the holiest sacrament of the sect; it is even holier than the baptism. Whereas the baptismal rite is open to novices, participation in the sacred meal is reserved for the brothers who have been permanently accepted. The Qumran *Manual of Discipline* not only attests the sect’s practice of holding communal repasts but also give us its essential liturgy.

The following is a passage from the *Manual*:²² “When they ready the table for the meal or [prepare] the wine to drink, the priest first holds out his hand to pronounce the benediction over the firstlings of bread and wine.” These features—the initial blessing and the role of the priest—correspond exactly to Josephus’s account. However, he adds a detail whose importance cannot be ignored: it is the *bread* and the *wine* that the priest blesses.

The same observation occurs in another passage, this time in the *Supplementary Manual of Discipline*.²³ The main item of interest here is the description of the ideal Lord’s Supper, over which, until the end of time, both the Priest and Israel’s Messiah will preside; the former is clearly subordinate to the latter. Now the Priest in question is the Messiah–Priest, the Messiah of Aaron, in other words, the Priest who founded the sect and who was called “The Teacher of Righteousness” by his faithful. This holy teacher was put to death,²⁴ but he continues to live on, and the faithful await his return just as they await the advent of the Messiah of Israel, the Messiah–King, at the end of time. And the Lord’s Supper, which the followers of the New Alliance celebrate daily, is essentially related to the Lord’s Supper to be cele-

21. *The Jewish War* ii. 8 (pars. 129–33).

22. VI, 5–6.

23. Published in *Qumran Cave*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1955), No. 28. The passage in point is to be found in Col. II, ll. 17–22.

24. This point is discussed by a few authors; cf. my article, “Le maître de justice fut-il mis à mort?” *Vetus testamentum* (Leyden), I, No. 3 (1951), 189–99.

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brated later, when the Kingdom of God will have arrived. Therefore it is a constant reminder of the revered Teacher; the priest who presides over it is, in a way, the representative of or substitute for the true Priest. At the conclusion of the passage we read: "And when at least ten people gather together, they will proceed in accordance with this rite." What a sublime interpretation of the humble daily meal!

THE DOCTRINES OF THE QUMRAN SECT

The faithful of the Qumran sect boasted of possessing a superior Revelation, a Gnosis of salvation. What doctrines did they profess?

Philo Judaeus reports that for the Essenian "the divinity is the cause of all good but not of any evil,"²⁵ and Josephus cites their favorite saying: "One must rely upon God in all things."²⁶ He also speaks of their characteristic dogma: "Destiny is the master of everything, and nothing happens to men which is not in harmony with its dictates."²⁷ The basic significance of each of these three widely and frequently made statements is to be found in the Qumran documents. They summarize with accuracy the most typical attitudes of the Qumran faithful in respect to God.

Indeed, the primordial doctrine of the sect is that the cause of all evil is clearly the Spirit of Evil, also called the Prince of Darkness, or the Angel of Darkness—Belial or Satan. God is the cause of all good. We read in the *Manual of Discipline*:²⁸ "In His hands are the laws of all beings, and it is He who sustains them in their need." God intervenes in all good works through the intermediary of the Spirit of Good, also called the Prince of Light, the Angel of Truth. "God," it continues, "loves this Spirit of Good for all times and delights in all its acts forever."²⁹ Throughout the world and in every human soul the two Spirits, Good and Evil, are unceasingly at war. But it states that³⁰ "the God of Israel as well as his Angel of Truth comes to the aid of all the Sons of Light." We must point out that this doctrine of the two Spirits, a truly fundamental one in the Qumran sect, is not exclusively the product of Jewish speculation; it is borrowed

25. *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, par. 84.

26. *Jewish Antiquities* xviii. 1 (par. 18).

27. *Ibid.* xiii. 5. 9 (par. 172).

28. III, 16–17.

29. III, 26–IV, 1.

30. III, 24–25.

from the Mazdean religion and bears the particular imprint of Iran.³¹

The faithful, the “sons of light,” are therefore assured the assistance of the holy Spirit and divine protection even when they are plunged into despair or anguish: to follow God’s will in all things, to abandon one’s self completely to God—such is the leitmotiv of Qumran spirituality. We shall cite only two brief passages at this point. The first is taken from the *Manual of Discipline*:³² “He will obey God’s will in any occupation of his hands so that His domination may be in all things as He has ordained; and he will willingly delight in all things created by Him and outside of God’s will he will desire nothing. . . .” And here is a passage from the *Hymns*, praising God’s paternal benevolence:³³

. . . and until old age it is thou who wilt care for me; for my father did not know me,

and my mother abandoned me to thee.
For thou art a father to all thy sons of truth;
and thou hast infused them with thy joy,
like a mother her suckling babe,
and like a nurse (who sustains the infant) on her breast,
thou carest for all thy creatures.

This absolute confidence in the soul of the faithful springs from the conviction that they are part of “God’s destiny.” God, in his marvelous Council, has chosen them for all eternity just as he has condemned the wicked to damnation, to “the lot of Belial.” The Hebrew word *gôrâl* (“lot,” “fate”) is repeated constantly—a typical word in the various Qumran texts. Its frequency is due to the truly dominant notion of an inexorable predestination. Even before birth men are assigned either to the “destiny of light” or to the “destiny of darkness.” Their lot is forever fixed. It is even inscribed in the stars—a most curious fragment in Grotto IV contains a real horoscope, which determines the spiritual destiny of each human being, depending upon his day of birth, and apportions his share of the Spirit of Good and the Spirit of Evil, which will intermingle and be at war within him. This fatalism obviously betrays the influence of astrological beliefs

31. On this important point see my article, “L’Instruction sur les deux Esprits dans le *Manuel de Discipline*,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions*, CXLII (1952), 5–35; cf. also my comment about “le problème des influences étrangères sur la secte juive de Qoumran” (*La Bible et l’Orient* [Paris: Cahiers de la Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, 1955], pp. 75–92).

32. IX, 23–24.

33. IX, 34–36. The scroll of *Hymns* is published in its entirety in *Oçar ham-Megillot ha-genouzot* . . . , Strips XXXV–LVIII. The reader will find the French translation in my work: *Le Livre des Hymnes découvert près de la Mer Morte* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1957).

which enjoyed tremendous favor at that time throughout the entire Hellenistic world.

Josephus explains that, for the Essenes, "Destiny was master of everything. . . ." They confused Destiny with the all-powerful God. How often, in the *Manual of Discipline* and in the *Hymns*, the faithful of Qumran sang the enthusiastic praises of God's omnipotence! How often they contrasted him with the nothingness of man, "that creature of clay, that cause for shame and source of impurity, that receptacle of iniquity and monument of sin!"³⁴ How many times did they proclaim that justification is entirely the work of God, not that of man at all. By their entry into the sect, the faithful savor the immense joy of finding themselves part of "God's destiny," among the chosen. They are "sons of light," objects of divine benevolence and grace. Only good things can happen to them. They are the "men of God's Council"—those whom a divine plan has singled out for salvation. We read in *The Damascus Document*,³⁵ "God's Alliance is for them the assurance that they will live for thousands of generations." As has been written: "He reserves Alliance and Grace for those who love Him and obey his commandments for a thousand generations."

For our mystics salvation and eternal life are the purpose of existence on earth. The *Manual of Discipline* describes the rewards to follow in the hereafter: "Eternal joy in perpetual life like an honored garment in the eternal light."³⁶ Quite different is the destiny of the damned. For them: "abundant lashings administered by all the angels of destruction, the eternal Grave . . . perpetual terror and endless shame and the opprobrium of extermination by the fire of the regions of darkness."³⁷ This twofold description corresponds in the main with Josephus's summary of the Essenian beliefs regarding the hereafter,³⁸ an exposé in which we must allow for a certain Hellenic overelaboration.

Perhaps this Hellenic overelaboration explains why neither Josephus nor Philo mentions the Essenian belief in the resurrection of the body; but this omission is offset by the account of Hippolytus of Rome, an early author who attests their belief in resurrection, in the final judgment, and in the consumption of the universe by fire at the end of time.³⁹ These three

34. *Hymns*, I, 21–22.

35. VII, 5–6; XIX, 1–2.

36. IV, 7–8.

37. IV, 12–13.

38. *The Jewish War* ii. 8 (pars. 154–58).

39. *Elonchos* ix (par. 27).

themes are clearly expressed in the Qumran documents. The notion of Judgment or of the divine Visitation recurs on almost every page. The idea of an ultimate conflagration is developed principally in the *Hymns*.⁴⁰ As for the resurrection, it is explicitly affirmed in the scroll of the *War of the Sons of Light*.⁴¹

The Essene was constantly obsessed by these notions of the hereafter as well as by the idea of an invisible but supremely real world entirely peopled by supernatural beings—angels and demons. His mind, overwrought by an extremely austere way of life, was unceasingly nourished by apocalyptic visions, some joyful, others terrifying. Referring to the Essenian oath, Josephus observes that the brothers promised to preserve unchanged “the names of the angels.”⁴² This suggests that the world of angels was of capital importance in the mystical life of the Essenes. Indeed, the Qumran scrolls mention the angels at every turn. They call them “the Saints,” “the Spirits,” “the Gods,” “the Venerables,” “the Sons of Heaven.” Convinced that the Community of the Alliance was one with Angelical society, the church of men with that of angels, the faithful constantly seek the companionship of these celestial spirits.

Here below all the members of the Essenian church, consecrated to an identical ideal of absolute saintliness, must be united with one another by the most delicate and scrupulous charity; they must possess but a single heart and soul. Josephus observes that the Essenes were “more closely united than others by mutual affection.”⁴³ The *Manual of Discipline* frequently refers to the duty of “affectionate benevolence”; it designates as one of the manifestations of the Spirit of Good “the immense love for all the sons of truth.”⁴⁴ This fraternal benevolence of exceptional fervor is the hallmark of the Essenian Community. But the brothers are held to a number of other virtues which we can only enumerate here: the renunciation of pleasure, vigilant chastity, contempt for wealth and veneration for poverty, love of truth and hatred of lies, modesty and humility, sweetness and patience, penitence and contrition. The diverse writings of the sect praise these essential virtues at every turn: “I will retaliate with evil against no

40. E.g., cf. III, 29–36.

41. XII, 5. This scroll was published in *Oḡar ham-Megillot hag-genouzot . . .*, Strips XVI–XLVII. See my translation in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, CXLVIII (1955), 25–43 and 141–80, and see the excellent study by Y. Yadin, *Megillat Milhamat benê or bibenê hosheq* (Jerusalem, 1955).

42. *The Jewish War* ii. 8 (par. 142).

43. *Ibid.* 8 (par. 119).

44. IV, 5.

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man: I will seek out everyone through goodness," we read in the *Manual of Discipline*.⁴⁵ And, again: "My soul will not passionately covet wealth. . . . From my lips no one will hear criminal falsehoods, nor hypocrisies nor lies."⁴⁶ The faithful spoke of themselves as "the Poor"; it was explicitly said that their sect was "the congregation of the Poor."⁴⁷ Actually how close they were to evangelical morality! And, as Renan had foreseen, what a "foretaste of Christianity!"

THE MONASTERY OF QUMRAN

In every respect, be it a question of rules for communal life, of sites, doctrines, or customs, the comparison between the Essenian sect as we know it from the accounts of Philo and Josephus and the mystical Jewish sect which the Qumran findings made known brings out so many common characteristics on essential and typical points that we can draw but one conclusion. The sect of the Qumran scrolls must properly be identified with the Essenian sect; in other words, the Qumran scrolls are truly of Essenian origin.

The site of Qumran had been visited earlier by explorers, particularly by the French Orientalist Clermont-Ganneau in 1873. A few crumbling walls, a cistern, all kinds of potsherds scattered over the ground, and a vast cemetery of about twelve hundred tombs—tombs of a surprising kind, neither Jewish, Christian, nor Moslem. The French scientist did not venture a hypothesis on the nature or the date of these strange remains. After him the German archeologist Dalman spoke of a small Roman fort. But why was there such a vast and singular cemetery near a small Roman fort? As early as the middle of the year 1951 I suggested another hypothesis: If the scrolls found in the grotto near these ruins were of Essenian origin, if they came from the Essenian community described by Pliny the Elder and located by him near the western shore of the Dead Sea and even in the northern section of this western bank, in the very region of Qumran, would not the ruins of Qumran be precisely the relics of this ancient Essenian establishment?

To verify this hypothesis, it was obvious that archeological diggings at the site of Kirbet Qumran were in order. The first took place in November and December, 1951. This was followed by four others in the springs of

45. X, 17-18.

46. X, 19, 22.

47. "Fragment d'un Commentaire du Psaume, XXXVII, Vol. II, l. 10," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, LXXXVI (May-September, 1954), 69-75.

1953, 1954, 1955, and 1956. They were conducted by Lankester Harding, then director of the Jordanian Service of Antiquities, and by R. P. Vaux, director of the French archeological school at Jerusalem. The results of these diggings were of considerable importance.⁴⁸ They finally lifted the veil of this enigmatic habitation in the desert. Numerous coins found at the site indicate a main period of occupation that extends approximately from the end of the second century B.C. to the period of the Jewish War (A.D. 66–70). This confirmed with exactness the system of dates that I had suggested in 1950 for the historical framework of the sect. As for the archeological relics, they agree so well with the Essenian hypothesis that the archeologists themselves who, before the diggings, had denied it, now are its primary champions. A few months ago, during the course of a study trip to the Near East, I had the privilege of visiting not only the field where the diggings had taken place but also the various grottoes and the region that extends to Ras Feshkha. I was accompanied by R. P. Vaux and some of his collaborators, and I shall summarize here what I saw.

The whole establishment as it is revealed today includes silos and shops, a baker's oven, a kitchen, a dyeworks, a washhouse, a potter's studio, and, finally, numerous cisterns together with a system of canals that connects them. In short, here was everything necessary to the material life of an isolated desert community far from any urban center and therefore compelled to do whatever was required for subsistence and upkeep.

The members of the community could not have lived in these buildings on the terrace which include neither dormitories nor bedrooms and which were reserved for community services. Rather, they must have dwelt nearby, in tents or huts and also in the many grottoes of a neighboring cliff. Remember those "bays" which later, during the Christian epoch, multiplied in Egypt and also in Palestine, and particularly in the Wilderness of Judah itself; they were a species of religious hamlets inhabited by monks who gathered in the communal house for liturgical rites and the other ceremonies of communal life.

Besides the diverse installations that we have enumerated, there were also large rooms in these communal buildings. They correspond exactly to the essential requirements of religious life in an Essenian community. In particular, discovery was made of the remains of a scriptorium, a narrow but very long table (approximately five meters), as well as the relics of one

48. These results are included in the preliminary reports published by R. P. Vaux in *Revue biblique internationale*, LX (1953), 540–61 (first campaign); LXI (1954), 206–36 (second campaign); LXIII (1956), 533–77 (third, fourth, and fifth campaigns).

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or two shorter ones. Without any doubt these were writing tables, since two inkwells, one made of terra cotta and the other of bronze, were found in the same spot. It was precisely here, or so it seemed, that the scrolls discovered in the grottoes had been copied. Even a few potsherds covered with writing were found among the ruins. One of these ostraca is very interesting: it is a small Hebrew primer in which the character of the script is identical with that of the scrolls from the grottoes. This little document is the work of a pupil-scribe. One or two letters have been gone over. In order to copy the Essenian books, which were sacred and secret, scribes had to be recruited from the members of the sect. It was only after a long apprenticeship that the scribes of Qumran could acquire the mastery in the art of writing which all the manuscripts attest.

There is also a large room, twenty-two meters long, whose ceiling is supported by columns. At one of the extremities, toward the east, there is a kind of stone platform. This was doubtless a dais destined for whoever presided at the meeting and also for the lecturer. However, the room was not used exclusively as a study hall. To the south is a smaller, connecting room; at the back of it a whole mass of plates and dishes are carefully stacked: earthen pots, porridge dishes, bowls, goblets—in all, more than a thousand pieces. This table service suggests that the large neighboring room served as a refectory for the community or, rather, as a cenaculum, given the holy nature of the Essenian communal repast.

Now, as Josephus apprised us, the Essenes had to take a bath of purification, a baptism, before entering the cenaculum. Are there any baptismal fonts in the ruins of Qumran? We mentioned earlier that many cisterns have been uncovered—a dozen in all. Certainly in this desert a good deal of water was required for the material needs of the community. However, it seems most probable—this is the opinion of R. P. Vaux—that at least two of these cisterns, given their particular position, were intended for something else—that they were actual baptismal fonts for the community.

Moreover, during the spring of 1955, excavators brought to light some curious relics: about forty bones of animals sealed in jars and carefully buried in the earth. For the most part they were the bones of sheep, goats, and lambs and of a few calves and cows. These remains doubtless came from sacred, perhaps even from sacrificial, repasts. In any case, such plainly ritual accumulations affirm the sacred nature of the Qumran establishment; it was surely a holy place.

On the terrace itself, at the eastern end, a large space separated from the buildings by a long wall extending north and south was reserved for burial

of the dead. Forty-three tombs have already been opened. Beneath a small sepulchral mound, oval in shape and covered with shingles, at the bottom of a rectangular pit, the body rests on its back in a small recess, the head toward the south, with no funeral offering, no ornamentation, no inscription. It seems natural to assume that these tombs in the middle of the desert must have constituted the cemetery of a religious community. In fact, in the surrounding earth of one of these tombs fragments of an entire jar were found, corresponding to the jars encountered in the ruins and grottoes. The simplicity of these graves is in keeping with the ideal of poverty and humility so dear to the Essenian sect. And the care with which the holy bones were buried and protected bears witness to a faith in the resurrection of the body.

We should add that during the last excavations (spring of 1956) the archeologists also explored the zone immediately to the south of Kirbet Qumran. This is an area irrigated by a few more or less abundant rivers, particularly the Aïn Feshka. Here the archeologists discovered traces of an agricultural settlement. The pottery and coins that were unearthed suggest that this settlement was connected with the one at Qumran from which they were only two or three kilometers distant. We can therefore assume that it was an annex of the Essenian community. It included a few gardens and plantations which the members of the community must have cultivated and exploited themselves and whose products they must have consumed. Ancient accounts apprise us that the Essenians had a predilection for manual work, particularly agriculture, resembling in this the present-day Trappists of Chartreux.

On the basis of all the archeological relics, it seems legitimate to conclude not only that there is nothing which contradicts the Essenian hypothesis but also that it alone provides a satisfactory explanation of all the relevant data. In fact, this is the view now held by most writers who have studied the problem. We have finally rediscovered the famous Essenian retreat so fortunately called to our attention by the writings of Pliny the Elder! The cenaculum where the Essenians celebrated their mysterious feast, the tables where they religiously recopied their holy books, the very baptismal font where they took their baths of purification, the oven where they baked their bread, the workshops where they labored, the grottoes they inhabited on the side of a cliff, the pathetic burial ground where they laid their dead to rest and whose straight lines and identical graves still reflect the discipline and fervor of a communal life—all this we have seen today with our own eyes. And in this torrid and severely beautiful desert,

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amid this solemn silence, we can visualize the penitents who led such a harsh, such a terribly austere, life—those grave, mature men whom Philo has described, the strange superhuman race which to Pliny the Elder seemed to have perpetuated itself in this spot “for thousands of centuries.”

THE TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Damascus Document and especially the various biblical commentaries discovered in the Qumran grottoes, particularly the *Habakkuk Commentary*,⁴⁹ make frequent allusions to an eminent person whom the faithful venerated as their legislator and leader, the Builder of their Community of the Chosen. They called him the “Teacher of Righteousness,” since, out of respect, they did not dare to pronounce his true name. This Teacher was for them the mediator of the New Alliance. It is his story that the Essenian commentators, systematically interpreting the biblical texts in the light of the events of their period, perceived throughout the entire Bible. The Teacher of Righteousness, the essential object of their faith, appeared to them as the center of and key to all the ancient oracles. This tremendous work of exegesis demonstrates very well the incredible place—this is doubtless the most astonishing revelation of the Dead Sea Scrolls—which the Teacher occupied in the memory and piety of his faithful. In the absence of a biography of which until now no traces have been found, the Qumran commentaries allow us to glimpse the principal facts of his career and of his tragic destiny.

The Teacher of Righteousness was a priest—a zealous reformer, filled with ardent mysticism, the resolute enemy of the official priesthood which he reproached for its impiety and contempt for the Law. He broke with official Judaism and with the Temple service, which he considered contaminated. Many priests and laymen joined him in this schism. In the solitude of Qumran, surrounded by his faithful, he organized the community of the New Alliance. It was to represent, in contrast to the “congregation of perverse men”—he alluded thus to the official synagogue—the true Israel, the Israel of God. A reformer such as he was naturally the butt of the hostility of the Jewish authorities. Endlessly, he denounced their defection and

49. This script was published as early as 1950 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol. I (New Haven, Conn.). It was this publication that gave the impetus to the historic researches on the place of origin of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Cf. my *Observations sur le Commentaire d'Habacuc près de la Mer Morte*, a communication read before the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres on May 26, 1950 (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1950). Since then various works and reviews have published fragments of many other biblical commentaries (on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Hosea, Isaiah, the Psalms, etc.) that come from Grottoes I and IV.

turpitude. They could but react in a more or less violent fashion. In fact, the Qumran documents repeatedly describe a bloody persecution against the sect—a persecution “by the sword,” in the course of which the Teacher was finally arrested, judged, tortured, and very probably put to death.

The period of his ministry is rather difficult to fix. In my opinion it was approximately the first third of the first century B.C. During the first part of this period the king-priest Alexander Jannaeus governed Jerusalem. Upon his death he was succeeded by his wife, Alexandra; after her death his son, Hyrcanus II, governed. It seems that the person mainly responsible for the persecution of the sect, the one designated in the texts as the “impious Priest,” must have been Hyrcanus II, who came to power in 67 B.C. The death of the Teacher probably occurred a little before the capture of Jerusalem by the Roman Pompeius in 63. This was an event of major importance, often mentioned in the Qumran documents. The sect believed it to be a providential punishment of the sinful synagogue.

Although the biblical commentaries and *The Damascus Document* contain only incomplete allusions to the history and character of the Teacher of Righteousness, another product of the sect brings us fresh information about his mystical role and personality. This is the scroll of the *Hymns* or, to be more precise, *Hymns of Acts of Grace (Hôdâyôt)* which was published only recently and is still little known. The author of this collection of writings, one of the most classical and highly prized of the sect, was probably the Teacher himself. In a highly lyrical style of remarkable literary quality he gives us his mystical “confessions” and meditates upon his own destiny. He pictures himself, in turn, as Prophet, Man of Sorrows, and Leader of the Essenian church.

Let us consider him as Prophet first of all. We read in the *Habakkuk Commentary*⁵⁰ that “God has revealed the Mysteries of his servants, the Prophets,” to the Teacher of Righteousness. Similarly, in the *Hymns*, the Teacher calls himself “the interpreter, fully informed about the marvelous Mysteries,”⁵¹ and, again, “the man thanks to whom God founded his doctrine, in the heart of whom He placed intelligence in order to open up the source of Knowledge to all the intelligent.”⁵² He is the great Scholar of the Essenian Gnosis, the Hierophant par excellence.

But he was also explicitly the Prophet, in the biblical sense of the word. The Spirit of God was in fact his, as passage after passage affirms: “And I,

50. VII, 4-5.

51. II, 13.

52. II, 17-18.

your servant, I know, by the Spirit which you have put in me"; "And I, your servant, have been blessed with the Spirit of knowledge"; "For you have lavished your holy Spirit on your servant."⁵³

The term "your servant" is so frequently repeated and stressed in these passages that we cannot help relating them to the famous poem called "Songs of the Servant of Yahweh [Jehovah]" which are in the Book of Isaiah. Yahweh introduces the mysterious Prophet, his Servant, in the following manner:⁵⁴

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect,
My Chosen one, in whom my soul delighteth,
I have put my spirit upon him,
He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

We must recall that the early Christian church explicitly applied the "Songs of the Servant Yahweh" to Jesus, thus defining his mission as prophet and savior. Approximately one century earlier the Teacher of Righteousness applied them to himself. The following is an illustrative statement by him:⁵⁵ "And you taught me about your Alliance, and my language was like that of your disciples"; and, again:⁵⁶ "For the language of the disciples [was given] to me that I might restore the spirit of those who faltered and to encourage by word those who were spent." Here, very plainly, is the precursor of these words of Isaiah in the third Song of the Servant:⁵⁷

The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

The Teacher of Righteousness declared that God intrusted him with the mission of being "he who announces the good news according to His truth during a period of His Benevolence, Evangelizing the humble in accordance with His abundant mercy, steeping them in the well-spring of saintliness and consoling the afflicted and the contrite in spirit."⁵⁸ Is this not a direct allusion to that other passage in the "Songs of the Servant" which Jesus was also to apply to himself?

53. *Hymns*, XIII, 18-19; XIV, 25; XVII, 26.

54. *Isa.* 42:1.

55. *Hymns*, VII, 10.

56. *Ibid.*, VIII, 36.

57. *Isa.* 50:4.

58. *Hymns*, XVIII, 14-15.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek:
He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted . . .
To comfort all that mourn. . . .⁵⁹

Herald and champion of the New Alliance, the Teacher of Righteousness was like another Moses. He himself was aware of being a prophet like Moses, whose advent had been announced in Deuteronomy⁶⁰—the prophet of truth who puts the faithful to the test. Like Jesus, he was a symbol of contradiction: “And I was a snare for sinners but a healer for all those who were converted from sin,” he declared.⁶¹ And he goes on to say that, on Judgment Day, “God will distinguish between the righteous and the sinful, thanks to me.”⁶² The righteous are those who had faith in him; the sinful those who did not believe. Faith in him therefore meant salvation. This major doctrine was also to appear in the *Habakkuk Commentary*: God, it says, will deliver the righteous from the House of Judgment “because of their suffering and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness.”⁶³

If we cannot fail to associate the Teacher as scholar and prophet with the Servant of Yahweh, how much more closely must we link him with the sorrowful, reviled, persecuted, beaten Righteous Man! In truth he is a perfect replica of the Man of Sorrows whose tragic destiny is described in the fourth Song of the Servant, the famous chapter 53 of Isaiah—his valor in the face of blows and his final exaltation. Thanks to the *Habakkuk Commentary*, we know that the Teacher of Righteousness was persecuted with extreme violence by the “impious Priest.” In a singularly lively and concrete fashion the *Hymns* acquaint us with his endless struggles, his reversals, the attack of his enemies upon him. In this book he appears as a man who was constantly repudiated and hunted, who had to leave his country, his relatives and friends,⁶⁴ and was even betrayed by his own people.⁶⁵ Men “had no respect for him,”⁶⁶ just as they had none for the Servant of Yahweh. Like Yahweh’s Servant, he was weighed down with blows, humiliation, and illness.⁶⁷

59. Isa. 61:1-3; cf. Luke 4:18-19.

60. Deut. 18:18-19.

61. *Hymns*, II, 8-9; cf. Luke 2:34.

62. *Hymns*, VII, 12.

63. *Habakkuk Commentary*, VIII, 1-3.

64. *Hymns*, IV, 8-9; V, 5.

65. *Ibid.*, V, 22-25.

66. *Ibid.*, IV, 8, 23; cf. Isa. 53:3.

67. *Hymns*, VIII, 26-27; cf. Isa. 53:3-4.

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In the midst of all these misfortunes the Teacher knew that “God manifests His power in him.”⁶⁸ His soul was uplifted by a magnificent hope: just as Yahweh’s Servant was convinced that this “judgment is with the Lord and my work with God,”⁶⁹ so the Teacher of Righteousness awaited his final deliverance with heroic confidence:⁷⁰

And thou, Oh my Lord, thou dost succor my soul
And thou hast exalted my voice.
And seven times I will be resplendent with light
In the Eden thou hast created by thy glory,
For thou art for me an eternal light. . . .

This luminous transfiguration of the Teacher augments the reward promised to Yahweh’s Servant: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”⁷¹ The leader of the Community of the Sons of Light will not only “see the light” but, like Jesus on Mount Tabor, will become entirely light.

While awaiting this supreme victory, the Teacher of Righteousness was to achieve his work in sorrow—build up the Congregation, the Church of the New Alliance. This church was founded on a rock: “And you have founded my dwelling on a rock,” he declared.⁷² The Teacher said “my dwelling,” since this church was his work, and also because, in some fashion, he had identified himself with it.

He also calls it “the Offspring”⁷³ and “the eternal Plantation”⁷⁴—messianic expressions repeated in Isaiah. A passage in the *Hymns* thus describes the growth of the divine tree, symbol of the Essenian sect: “It will extend its shade over all the earth, and its topmost branches will rise to the heavens, and its roots will go deep into the Abyss. And all the rivers of Eden will irrigate its branches, and it will become an immense forest; and the glory of its forest will extend to the infinite world, to the *Sheol* forever.”⁷⁵ Such was the belief of the church founded by the Teacher of Righteousness; it hoped to become universal, eternal, established everywhere in the world;

68. *Hymns*, IV, 8, 16, etc.

69. Isa. 49:4.

70. *Hymns*, VII, 23–25.

71. Isa. 53:11. Such is the lesson in the two scrolls of Isaiah found in Grotto I at Qumran; it conforms with the lesson of the Septuagint. The Massorettes’ text suppresses the word “light.”

72. *Hymns*, VII, 8.

73. *Ibid.*, VI, 15; VII, 19; VIII, 6, 8, 10; cf. Isa. 11:1.

74. *Hymns*, VI, 15; VIII, 6, 10; cf. Isa. 61:3.

75. *Hymns*, VI, 15–17.

and it thought of itself as in communion with Eden and even with the *Sheol*.⁷⁶

THE QUMRAN SECT AND THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

In this same Judean Wilderness, quite close to the Qumran monastery, at a time when it was filled with Essenes, a prophet appeared—John the Baptist, “preaching in the wilderness,” says the Gospel according to Matthew.⁷⁷ He declared: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*. . . . They went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”

Certainly, the sermon on repentance, baptism, the confession of sins, the expectation of the Kingdom of God, the quotation from the text of Isaiah on preparing the way for the Lord, the Judean Wilderness through which the voice of the Prophet resounds—all this brings vividly to mind the Qumran Community. Perhaps John the Baptist was really a member of the Essenian Community. Perhaps he was a part of it for a brief time. Yet in his ministry he pictures himself as an independent prophet. His followers are a distinctive group—“John’s disciples.” The baptism he administers is explicitly “John’s baptism.” But, if this group is not, literally, Essenian, it is inspired, in any case, by the same ideal, moved by the same mystical impetus. And the flame which, for more than a century, was lit at Qumran, and continued to burn there, spread with renewed intensity over all Palestine at the sound of the Prophet’s voice.

Then Jesus of Nazareth appeared. Evangelical tradition clearly relates him to John the Baptist; it claims that he came from Galilee to Judea to be baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan; that after his baptism he withdrew to the Wilderness of Judah, where the devil tempted him. He, too, surrounded himself with disciples. During his ministry he was the victim of official Judaism’s hostility, as well as of the intrigues of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. He was hunted, forced at times to seek refuge outside his country, and, when the supreme crisis occurred, was abandoned by his own people—even betrayed by one of them. He was arrested in Jerusalem on orders from the high priest and judged and tortured under Pontius

76. The word *Sheol* in Hebrew designates the regions of the dead, inferno.

77. Matt. 3:1–5.

Pilate. After his death his disciples regrouped under Peter, and their faith gave birth to the Christian church.

It is plain that Jesus' earthly lot and work remind us in more ways than one of the Teacher of Righteousness who had been the great prophet of the Essenian sect; approximately one century later the same story was repeated. Moreover, Jesus applied to himself the mysterious oracles of Isaiah regarding Yahweh's Servant, as the Teacher of Righteousness had done a century earlier. The point is extremely significant: it establishes a very special kinship between the two prophets—a kinship that is unique in character.

However, I believe it would be wrong to use these affinities and similarities, remarkable and striking as they seem to be, in order to prepare a simple new version of the evangelical accounts about the history of the Teacher of Righteousness; to do so would be to make of it a piece of pure fiction, in which Jesus would be but a mythical double of the Essenian prophet. It would likewise be a mistake to identify the Teacher of Righteousness with Jesus himself, which some have attempted to do. Actually, along with similarities, differences exist; these are no less incontestable, and they make it impossible, I believe, to confuse the two. The following are among these important differences.

The Teacher of Righteousness was a priest from the tribe of the Levis; Jesus was a layman, not a priest, from the tribe of Judah. Although the Teacher of Righteousness was venerated as the Messiah-Priest, as Aaron's Messiah, Jesus was acknowledged as the Messiah of Israel, the Messiah-King, son of David. The Teacher of Righteousness, founder of the Qumran Community, performed his ministry in Judea; Jesus was a Galilean and preached principally in Galilee, on the banks of the Sea of Tiberias. The Teacher was a scholar, surrounded by disciples who held him in such superstitious awe that, like the disciples of Pythagoras, they never called him by name. Jesus was a friendly teacher; his disciples, and even the masses, approached him freely; his name was neither secret nor mysterious. The Teacher of Righteousness, to judge by the monkish regulations he imposed upon his initiates, was a rigid ascetic, doubtless charitable, but as hard on himself as he was on others; he avoided all contact with sinners as if they would contaminate him. More human, Jesus was to a greater extent involved in daily life. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."⁷⁸ The Teacher of Righteousness revealed a mysterious Gnosis,

78. Matt. 11:18-19.

elaborated with the help of the greatest minds available in the world at that time; it was intended for his disciples alone. Jesus was principally a popular preacher, born of humble people. He expressed himself in simple language, using analogies replete with the sweetness of life.

And so, at the very beginning of Christianity, there had been a new Prophet, a new Messiah, whose existence or original turn of mind it has never occurred to us to deny. But, once this point is settled, the Qumran documents reveal, with supporting evidence, that the early Christian church has roots in the Jewish sect of the New Alliance to an extent that one would never have surmised. It is from the Essenian sect that the church borrowed a good part of its organization and rites, its doctrines and modes of thought, its mystical and moral ideal. Much of this derivation, I think, must be self-evident to those who have read the foregoing pages, who have some knowledge of the Christian New Testament, and who are somewhat aware of the problems regarding the history of the origins of Christianity. In France and elsewhere, several works dealing with the influence of the Qumran Jewish sect on the budding church have already appeared. All these studies seek to show—even those whose authors are most anxious to safeguard the pre-eminence of the Christian religion—the many parallels yielded by a comparative study. These include communal life, the constitution of the early church, its concept, the basic rites for baptism and the Eucharist, the Sermon on the Mount, the writings of Paul the Apostle or the Gospel according to John, basic doctrines on justification and predestination, beliefs relating to the Messiah and to the end of the world. We can but mention here those various strands of research on which historians and theologians are at present collaborating. In this domain of the history of religions we are really dealing with a “revolution,” to use a term employed by one of the most authoritative American Orientalists, Professor W. F. Albright.⁷⁹

Some have even gone so far as to claim, in referring to the date of the Last Supper, that Jesus and his disciples did not follow the calendar of the official synagogue in celebrating religious holidays; rather, that they went by an entirely different one, the very same that regulated the liturgical life of the Qumran Community.⁸⁰ This thesis has been supported by several Catholic writers. If it is valid, it sheds unprecedented light on the contacts

79. Cf. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, Supplementary Studies Nos. 10–12 (1951), p. 58: “The new evidence with regard to the beliefs and practises of Jewish sectarians of the last two centuries B.C. bids fair to revolutionize our approach to the beginnings of Christianity.”

80. See A. Jaubert, *La Date de la Cène* (Paris, 1957).

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between the early Christian group and the Qumran sect. By employing the Essenian calendar for holy days, which specified dates that were different from those of the official calendar, and by thus necessitating a separate religious life, Jesus and his disciples signaled their close affinities with the Essenian sect.

To conclude, it is essential to note that, if the early church borrowed much from Essenianism, the process was never entirely passive. Institutions, rites, and beliefs were often subjected to considerable evolution by Christianity. This was due to the initiative and spirit of its founder, Jesus the Nazarene, and also to the circumstances of its historical development. Thus Christianity is not, properly speaking, Essenianism, even though it may spring initially from it. Furthermore, one should underscore the many features of early Christianity which seem to indicate a deliberate opposition to certain characteristic aspects of classical, authentic Essenianism which the Qumran documents make clear. But, in the history of religions, it is a well-known fact that, when a new sect springs up, it differs from the old one that inspired it by virtue of certain innovations that are in direct contrast to the character of its predecessor but which, at the same time, betray its origin: this is the rule for all movements of dissent. Even if, in a certain sense and given the importance of the similarities and derivations, the historian is led to consider the early church as an Essenian type of sect, as an emanation and a variation of Essenianism, nonetheless he is not inclined to neglect or underestimate the respects in which it differs from or even contrasts with classical Essenianism. His researches might even lead him to isolate more clearly and precisely than was possible in earlier days the distinctive originality and characteristics as well as the foundation of Jesus's message and of the church created through faith in him.

To tell the truth, the thesis of the Essenian origin of Christianity is not at all new. During the eighteenth century it was very widespread among the "enlightened," in the circle of the *philosophes*. Evidence of this—somewhat crude, it is true—is to be found, for example, in a letter from Frederick II to d'Alembert, dated October 17, 1770. The philosopher-king wrote: "Jesus was plainly an Essenian; he was imbued with the morality of the Essenes, a good part of which stems from Zeno." Stated thus, the thesis certainly lacked nuances. To the defenders of Christianity it had the sound of a call to battle; it seemed a diabolical argument designed to undermine the originality and the transcendence of the Christian Revelation. And so we understand the opposition it encountered thereafter from many Christian historians, both Catholic and Protestant, during the nineteenth century

and the first half of the twentieth. Just a few years ago, for example, one of these historians wrote: "Essenianism has left no trace in Christianity, neither in its doctrine nor in its institutions: it had no more influence on its founder than on its propagators."⁸¹

Today such an attitude is no longer possible. In order to indicate the progress made in this respect, it will suffice to cite a passage that comes from the pen of an eminently religious man and appears in a small book published in 1957. This passage will serve as our conclusion.

By making known the immediate milieu in which Christianity was born [that is to say, the Essenian milieu], the Qumran discoveries have cleared up a considerable number of problems which this exegesis was unable to resolve. . . . It is probable that the utilization of all the documents, and the comparisons to which this will give rise, will further increase the number of riddles answered. We can therefore say that the discoveries are the most sensational that have ever been made.⁸²

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The reader who wishes fuller knowledge of my research on the subject presented here may consult my earlier books and articles. I would like especially to mention the following:

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Le Livre des Hymnes découvert près de la Mer Morte: Traduction intégrale avec introduction et notes (collection "Semitica," Vol. VII [Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1957]).

I also published in the review *Evidences* (30, rue La Boétie, Paris, VIII^e), of January, 1956, to January, 1958, a series of articles introducing the annotated translation of the various Qumran manuscripts that have appeared currently. These articles, with numerous supplements, have been collected in a forthcoming work entitled *Les Ecrits esséniens découverts près de la Mer Morte* (Paris: Éditions Payot).

It is important to emphasize that, in the present state of research, many of the problems raised by these new texts are still being discussed, many, indeed, being the subject of rather lively controversy. While awaiting the publication of all the newly discovered documents, the scholar owes it to himself to pursue his research as far as possible. He must, however, refrain from claiming to contribute any absolutely defi-

81. L. Marchal, "Esséniens," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Vol. II (Paris, 1933), col. 1131.

82. R. P. Jean Daniélou, *Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et les origines du Christianisme* (Paris, 1957), p. 123.

Problems regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls

tive solution. Studies relating to the Dead Sea Scrolls are increasing all over the world at a rate that mounts from year to year, so that a complete list could not possibly be given here. It will suffice to call attention to the work of Ch. Burchard, *Bibliographie zu den Handschriften vom Toten Meer* (Berlin, 1957); this bibliographical list, which goes up to the beginning of 1957, includes no less than 1,538 titles, not counting purely popular articles. In the following list, which is necessarily limited, I shall indicate but a few selected works representing diverse opinions and tendencies:

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