

*The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible*

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## **1. Introduction**

The events of the first century AD were very important for the development of the following centuries. Christianity has its origins in this highly relevant time. We would like to know much more about that time, but until recently our sources were very limited<sup>i</sup>. Through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls a new light has been shed on that time and through the material gathered from the Caves around the Dead Sea our understanding of the historical background<sup>ii</sup> and the texts of the Old and New Testament has been significantly enhanced<sup>iii</sup>.

The following paper gives an overview on the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls on biblical Studies. The major concern here is the Qumran-Sect and the events up to 68 AD. The term Dead Sea Scrolls (or the abbreviation DSS) is used in the following text to refer to the scrolls and fragments found at Qumran and not to scrolls found at other places around the Dead Sea. References to the Septuagint are abbreviated using the common LXX.

The dates set for the Qumran Scrolls by Paleographical Analysis (analysis of the development of the styles of writing over time) and archeological context were confirmed by Radio-Carbon dating to be mostly from the late Second Temple Period (before 68 AD). The testing was made possible after new Radio-Carbon methods were developed that did not require a large amount of material from the Scrolls.<sup>iv</sup>

The Essenes had a large settlement in the immediate vicinity of the Qumran caves up to the first century AD as some ancient writers (Josephus, Philo of Alexandria) tell us. The Qumran texts are very close to the thought of the Essenes.<sup>v</sup>

Therefore we can be sure that this material is really originating from the first century AD and possibly is identical with an already known movement of that time.

## **2. Old Testament**

### **2.1. Textual Problems**

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls resulted in the availability of very ancient copies of books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and of commentaries thereof. These might be directly used to correct the Hebrew Masoretic Texts. But in the Corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves different versions of the texts for the same book are preserved. Therefore a careful examination is necessary before a judgment on the final Hebrew Text can be made.<sup>vi</sup>

The DSS Hebrew texts were found to often agree more closely to the LXX than to the Masoretic Text. We now have support in the Hebrew for readings of the LXX which are frequently used and quoted in the New Testament.

For example in Exodus 1:5 one Scroll reads 75 as the number of Jacob's offspring in Egypt rather than 70 as transmitted in the Masoretic text. The larger number is also found in the speech of Stephen recorded in Acts

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<sup>i</sup>Shanks 1991 p.20

<sup>ii</sup>Stauffer p.VI

<sup>iii</sup>Stauffer p.5, Shanks 1991 p. 26-

<sup>iv</sup>Stephen Goranson, p.172

<sup>v</sup>Stauffer p.2, Black p.164 The identification of Qumranis with Essenes is the best working theory so far advanced. There is little doubt about the identity with the descriptions of Josephus, Philo and Pliny the elder.

<sup>vi</sup>Brownlee p.5

7. We now have proof that this reading existed in the ancient Hebrew Texts. The often put forth assumption that Christianity was heavily influenced by Greek culture and therefore based on the LXX rather than on the Hebrew Text (Bultmann)<sup>vii</sup> has to be put aside.<sup>viii</sup>

Another example is Deuteronomy 32:8. The Masoretic Text here mentions the "sons of Israel" contrary to the Qumran Texts which reads (again in accordance with LXX) "sons of God" commonly understood as referring to angels. The book of Daniel mentions angels that are set over nations. The source of this understanding can now be understood as based on the ancient Hebrew text.<sup>ix</sup>

Some scholars content now that the Masoretic text is full of errors and omissions which is proven by the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is a tendency to trust the LXX more than the Masoretic text.<sup>x</sup>

Sometimes puzzling situations develop through the availability of the scrolls. In the case of Jeremia two version seem to have been extant<sup>xi</sup>. Before the DSS were discovered Scholars were puzzled by the discrepancies between the LXX and the Masoretic Text. Commonly it was held that the LXX was not carefully translated, but that the LXX shortened the text. Yet the finds at Qumran show support for two distinct Hebrew Texts of Jeremia. One of them could be the basis for the LXX translation since the LXX accurately reflects one of the variations of the Jeremia Text found. Therefore it seems that at least two version of Jeremia existed in the Hebrew. The question is now which is the original text and which text should be included in our Bible.<sup>xii</sup>

The question of the historical background for the book of Daniel - a supposed very late book - is also illuminated by a non-biblical text found at Qumran. The text found among the Aramaic Texts of Cave 4 tells of an illness of Nabonidus - King of Assyria - that forced him into seclusion for seven years. This may be the basis for the story in Daniel about Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>xiii</sup>

## 2.2. The History of the Texts

Most pre-Masoretic texts known to us come from the caves at Kirbat Qumran, near the Dead Sea. Some of the Scrolls closely resemble the consonantal skeleton of the later Masoretic version and are therefore called proto-Masoretic texts. The Qumran-Manuscripts are the oldest substantial corpus of biblical texts. The printed texts of the Hebrew Bible are still based on the Masoretic Texts since the Qumran-Manuscripts are fragmentary.<sup>xiv</sup>

The Masoretic text is fairly recent therefore Qumranic Texts and ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible play a major role in reconstructing the original texts. Translations began in the later part of the first millennium BC. The Translations are the Septuagint (Greek), the Vulgate (Latin), the Targumin (Aramaic), the Pershitta (Syriac) and others.<sup>xv</sup>

The Septuagint was the earliest translation begun in the fourth or third century BC. Complete Manuscripts written in the fourth and fifth century AD still exist. The LXX is very important because this is the earliest

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<sup>vii</sup>Stauffer p.8

<sup>viii</sup>Brownlee p.7

<sup>ix</sup>Brownlee p.8

<sup>x</sup>Brownlee p.16

<sup>xi</sup>Cross p.279

<sup>xii</sup>Brownlee p.18

<sup>xiii</sup>Brownlee p.38

<sup>xiv</sup>Marc Brettler 1990 p.40

<sup>xv</sup>Marc Brettler 1990 p.40

existent reference to the continuous text of the Hebrew Bible. The Samaritan Pentateuch is also important since it differs in many places from the Masoretic Text.<sup>xvi</sup>

The Dead Sea Scrolls are important for evaluating the ancient translations. Before the DSS were discovered people could claim that the Masoretic text (end of first millennium AD) was the only one worth interpreting. It was claimed that the variants were due to mistranslation. The DSS have confirmed that Hebrew texts existed that were the basis for the variations of for example the LXX. An example is 4QEx<sup>b</sup> which contains a fragment from Exodus 1:1-5 which agrees to the LXX. See also above.<sup>xvii</sup>

The Qumran evidence suggests that there was no unified biblical text until 68 AD when Qumran was destroyed. Commentaries were found on different versions of the Hebrew text. This suggests that the texts were regarded as authoritative although they differed.<sup>xviii</sup>

It is not known how exactly the text stabilized. The method of Bible Interpretation - developed in the Midrash in the second century AD - seems to presuppose that there is only one fixed form of biblical text. Second century texts discovered in Wadi Murrabba'at and elsewhere evidence texts that are very close to our Masoretic Text. The Hebrew Text must have been stabilized by the second century.<sup>xix</sup>

The scrolls from Qumran only represent the consonantal shell of the Hebrew text. Vowels must be supplied from later texts from the end of the first millennium AD. or the Greek Text of the New Testament. Vowels are therefore highly ambiguous.<sup>xx</sup>

### 2.3. The Canon

Definition: The canonical books are those included in contrast to the others excluded. Canon refers to a measure or a measuring rod to be included in a literary collection. This implies a process of choosing various books. The idea of "canonical writings" is a radical idea for the ancient near east. No other Semites did attempt to do anything like this except for the Jews. We do not know exactly how the process of choosing these books was performed. We can just try to reconstruct what happened based on hints and guesses.<sup>xxi</sup>

The canonization seemed not to have occurred in a short time but was probably a longer development since the Hebrew Bible is separated into three different sections: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets) and Kethubim (Writings). That these separate sections of the Hebrew Bible existed is also reflected in the New Testament in Luke 24:44. Some books do not fit into the category they are assigned to (like Daniel - a prophetic book - in the Kethubim) therefore it can be deduced that the Hebrew text was not canonized at a single time but in different steps. The LXX - the origin of our current order of books in the Bible - does not adopt this order but sorts them thematically and orders Daniel with the prophets. The canonization for the other two prior sections must have been closed already so that Daniel could not be fit into these sections. Therefore we can assume that the Torah was canonized first, then the Nevi'im and finally the Kethubim.<sup>xxii</sup>

There is a lot of discussion about the dates when these sections were finished. Some events in the history of Israel stand out which would have required a consolidation of the Hebrew canon. Especially the experiences of being exiled, living in exile and the return to Israel must have involved the asking of the question: What is

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<sup>xvi</sup>Marc Brettler 1990 p.41

<sup>xvii</sup>Marc Brettler 1990 p.41

<sup>xviii</sup>Marc Brettler 1990 p.41, Shanks 1991 p.61ff

<sup>xix</sup>Marc Brettler 1990 p.41, see also Brownlee p.47-50. A very good analysis can be found in Cross p.280ff. Also Shanks 1991 p.64ff

<sup>xx</sup>Marc Brettler p. 42, Shanks 1991 p. 66

<sup>xxi</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.12

<sup>xxii</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.12

authoritative? This seems to have been especially important for the exilic community under pressure since several prophets had predicted that destruction would result from unbelief. The ones chosen were canonized and therefore regarded as the yardstick for the community in exile and therefore in crisis. This is assumed to be the development of the section called the Torah.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Canonization involved the rejection of certain traditions which were forgotten, but it did not produce an uniform monolithic work. Canonization was an inclusive process so that different conceptions of Creation or different laws would result to coexist side by side. It is suggested that this was made in order to include different groups within ancient Israel. No group had enough power to enforce their text as the legal ones on the others. The final result was a diverse and somewhat contradictory work incorporating different traditions.<sup>xxiv</sup>

A similar process must have occurred for the other sections of the Hebrew Bible. It is assumed that the development process for the Nevi'im occurred between the fifth century BC (the suggested date of the latest prophetic book) and the second century BC (suggested date of Daniel)<sup>xxv</sup>. This time the process already had a yardstick in the already canonized Torah. The same process was at work as for the Torah and again different traditions were incorporated.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The Kethubim (Writings) are difficult to date. The latest book is the Book of Daniel (late to mid second century BC). The earliest reference to the 24 Books of the Hebrew Bible is found in the Fourth Book of Ezra (dated late first century AD.). Josephus (also late first century) seems to confirm this. Josephus claims that the Bible contained 22 Books (probably putting some books together). The Kethubim reflect the same diversity as the Torah and the Nevi'im. Again multiple perspectives were incorporated because they were important to different groups.<sup>xxvii</sup>

This suggests that the Hebrew Bible's final canonization occurred between the second century BC and the first century AD. Most scholars used to claim that the canonization took place at the council of Jamnia in the first century AD.. Nothing is known of such a council convening to discuss this and scholars now abandoned this view<sup>xxviii</sup>. The discussions among the Rabbis about Books that "defile the hands" were often misunderstood. The rabbinical debates were not on canonicity but whether to de-canonize these books. These are theoretical arguments of putting these books away. No one would really think of removing these books. The Canon reflects the judgment of popular rather than rabbinical groups.<sup>xxix</sup>

A criteria for exclusion from the canon was a recent origin. This gave rise to the pseudoepigrapha. Books that claimed to have been written long before they actually were by attributing their authorship to an important biblical figure. The fate of books not included in the canon was to be forgotten or - like some - be preserved in our modern day apocrypha.<sup>xxx</sup>

## 2.4. The Translation of the Septuagint

The LXX (translation from Hebrew into Greek) was made in the third century BC from even earlier Hebrew manuscripts. It is clear that the Hebrew texts from which the translation was made varied considerably from

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<sup>xxiii</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.12, Shanks 1991 p.64

<sup>xxiv</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.13

<sup>xxv</sup>Horsley p.9. Some good ideas on how this happened.

<sup>xxvi</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.13

<sup>xxvii</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.13

<sup>xxviii</sup>**Gerhard Hasel** "Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate" *Fourth Edition*,1991 p.55

<sup>xxix</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.13

<sup>xxx</sup>Marc Brettler 1989 p.13

the Masoretic Text. Therefore sometimes scholars prefer the reading of the Masora and sometimes the reading of the LXX.

There exists a letter of Aristeas about the origin of the LXX. It was written in Alexandria by Aristeas to Philocrates, called his brother, on the subject of the translation of the Pentateuch (Books of Moses) into Greek. Ptolemy II. (285-247 BC.) wanted his library to contain a copy of every book in the world. After over 20.000 volumes were gathered the librarian hoped to reach 500.000 soon. Some of the Books still missing were the lawbooks of the Jews. They needed translation to be included in his library and experienced knowledgeable men were requested from the Jews for this purpose and taken to an island in the Mediterranean where they completed their work in 72 days.<sup>xxxix</sup>

We have to ask: Is this letter accurate? The earliest copy of this letter is from the 11th century AD. It was compared with earlier references and it is supposed that it approaches the original letter of Aristeas. He claims to be an eyewitness to this but most scholars are skeptic towards this claim. Most scholars now assume mid-second century BC as the most likely date of writing. Notable is also that Aristeas claims that the initiative for the translation did not come from the Jews. Scholars content that it is much more likely that the Jewish communities in Alexandria needed a translation for their own needs. It seems to be unlikely that a translation on the initiative of an outside force could have developed to be authoritative. But there seems to be no motive for Aristeas to have invented this story.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The decisions on disputes in the translation seem to have been settled by vote. Almost the same procedure was followed as today. The translation included only the Torah not all books of the Hebrew Bible. The letter contains no embellishments, as were made later by Jewish and Christian sources. The names of the scholars have been shown to be valid for the third century BC. The author shows familiarity with the customs in Ptolemaic Egypt. The LXX seems to have been accepted as the authoritative Holy Scripture in the same way the Pentateuch was accepted before. It was regarded as inspired like the KJV is regarded as sacred by many believers today. Did the author of the letter feel the need to defend the LXX against critics or emendations?<sup>xxxix</sup>

### **3. New Testament**

#### **3.1. Early Christianity**

Krister Stendahl of Harvard collected 13 studies on the Qumran Sect and had the following conclusion: "It is true to say that the Scrolls add to the background of Christianity, but they add so much that we arrive at a point where the significance of similarities definitely rescues Christianity from false claims or originality in the popular sense and leads us back to a new grasp of its true foundation in the person and the events of its Messiah".<sup>xxxix</sup>

The church as a community living in anticipation of the Kingdom of God is not a uniquely Christian phenomenon, but the Essene communities were antecedents of Christian forms and concepts.<sup>xxxix</sup>

We now have the ability to recognize that the Intertestamental Period contained a mixture of different cultures that was necessary to produce Christianity.<sup>xxxix</sup>

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<sup>xxxix</sup>Greenspoon p.35

<sup>xxxix</sup>Greenspoon p.36

<sup>xxxix</sup>Greenspoon p.41

<sup>xxxix</sup>James C. Vanderkam in BR p.17, Stendahl p. 4, Yadin p.242 The dichotomy between light and darkness is especially striking and apparently was the first reason to come to this opinion.

<sup>xxxix</sup>James C. Vanderkam in BR p.17

### 3.1.1. Historical Frame of Mind

In this framework parallels developed in three areas: Theological Language (for example John), Eschatological Motifs (for example in the understanding of themselves as people of the new covenant and in their messianic outlook) and in their order and Liturgical Institutions (baptism, liturgical meals, community of goods, leadership). The Qumranites and the early Christians shared essential viewpoints since they belonged to the same time.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

It is questionable if a more direct connection can be shown. Some scholars have assumed that Jesus stayed in the area of Qumran during his temptation and during his recession into the desert, since the area of Qumran is in the immediate vicinity<sup>xxxviii</sup>. But it seems to be more reasonable to look for a connection through John the Baptist (see below). The Qumran site is only 14 miles away from Jerusalem. Therefore a connection on some level is highly likely<sup>xxxix</sup>.

Both the Qumran-Sect and Christianity seem to be offspring of a common tradition in Judaism. This view has been stabilized over time and is accepted except by a few isolated scholars like Eisenmann who maintains that Qumran is a Zadokite movement in which major New Testament figures played a role and Thiering who identifies figures from Qumran directly with New Testament personalities.<sup>xl</sup>

### 3.1.2. A slain Messiah at Qumran?

The theory of Eisenmann about "piercings" in the Qumran literature - which caused some media stirrup - associated with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is very suspect. It was not published in scholarly Journals and therefore not subject to scholarly scrutiny<sup>xli</sup>. The fragment 4Q285 used by Eisenmann cites Isaiah 11:1 and Isaiah 10:34 and does not refer to the slaying or piercing of a Messiah but seems to apply to a triumphant victory of the Messiah over the enemies. This interpretation is also harmonious with the War-Scroll. J.T. Milik already advanced this view decades ago.<sup>xlii</sup>

### 3.1.3. Oral Tradition only?

The theory that the people of the New Testament were unliterary people that possessed only "oral tradition" has been called into question by Stauffer since the findings of Qumran show that a wide variety of literature existed. Even the writer of Ecclesiastes already mentions that there is no end to the making of books (Eccl 12:12)<sup>xliii</sup>.

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<sup>xxxvi</sup>Allegro p.190

<sup>xxxvii</sup>James C. Vanderkam in BR p.17

<sup>xxxviii</sup>Stauffer p.1

<sup>xxxix</sup>Thiering p.5

<sup>xl</sup>James C. Vanderkam in BR p.18

<sup>xli</sup>Geza Vermes, Journal for Jewish Studies p.86

<sup>xlii</sup>Geza Vermes, Journal for Jewish Studies p.90

<sup>xliii</sup>Stauffer p.6

Therefore one has to suppose that people were much more literary than was suspected so far. There is no reason to suppose that these people were significantly less intelligent than we are today<sup>xliv</sup> and that they were unable to express themselves in writing. There are reasons to suppose that even the simple people had forms of organizing themselves and that these people had a significant impact on the contemporary thought and literature that developed.<sup>xlv</sup>

#### 3.1.4. The dating of the last supper

The DSS have also shed an interesting light on an old problem of Gospel Research. The Synoptics and the Gospel of John have a different date for the last supper. The Synoptics place it on a Friday while John places it on Thursday. With the DSS we have evidence that different calendars were in use in the first century. This might explain the difference since John might have followed a different calendar in telling his story. The calendar system used is mentioned in neither of the Gospels, so that it is very hard to come to a definite conclusion with this theory.<sup>xlvi</sup>

### 3.2. Common Language and Symbols

#### 3.2.1. Vocabulary

The discovery of the DSS has it made possible that we can identify the Semitic or Hebrew language background for many terms used in the New Testament. For a lot of terms identical Hebrew terms can be identified. For example an analogy between "Guardian" (רִבְמוֹן) and "Overseer, Bishop" (ἐπίσκοπος) used several times in the New Testament was found.<sup>xlvii</sup> This also establishes a common way of organizing the members of the respective groups.

A lot of vocabulary can be identified like this in the New Testament. Christians and Qumranis both were using such names as "the Way", "Church", "Sons of light" and described their leader as the "righteous one".<sup>xlviii</sup>

Some passages of the New Testament have an especially striking resemblance to Qumran. For example the language found in 2 Cor 6:14-15 is very equivalent to the language found at Qumran. The same is valid for some elements of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).<sup>xlix</sup>

#### 3.2.2. Community of goods

Traces of Qumranian practices can be found among the early Christians. For example the community of goods was customary for the Qumranis. This was also true for the first Christians in Acts 4.

#### 3.2.3. Bread and Wine

Another example is the meal that the Qumranis were to enjoy in which bread and wine are mentioned. This is very much reminiscent of the Eucharist. It is debatable if similarities went beyond serving "bread and wine"

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<sup>xliv</sup>An example of Scholars treating first century people as primitive may be found in **Werner Georg Kümmel** "Introduction to the New Testament" (17th edition) p.123. He doubts a person from the circle of Jesus could have written such a "systematic" and "structured" book on the grounds of intellect and education.

<sup>xlv</sup>Horsley p. 3

<sup>xlvi</sup>Shanks 1991 p.34-35

<sup>xlvii</sup>James C. Vanderkam p.19

<sup>xlviii</sup>Thiering p.5

<sup>xlix</sup>James C. Vanderkam p.20

and a blessing<sup>l</sup>. There is no indication that the meal was a Passover or that there was any sacred significance to it. Nevertheless a common custom existed.<sup>li</sup>

#### **3.2.4. Laying on of hands**

The Genesis Apocryphon mentions that the Pharaoh in Egypt was healed through Abraham's laying on of hands. This means that laying on of hands was a contemporary healing custom which was adopted by Christianity. The laying on of hands for healing is not found in our known Old Testament and rabbinic sources except in the New Testament. Healing by laying on of hands must have been practiced among Jews although we have no definite proof that it was done in the Qumran-Sect. We can now locate the Jewish word used for it.<sup>lii</sup>

#### **3.2.5. Celibacy**

Was celibacy at Qumran a unique feature? This is the first time celibacy can be encountered in this historical context. Traces of the custom of celibacy are found in the New Testament in Revelation 14 and 1 Cor 7. As far as we can know from his epistles Paul also practiced celibacy. Scholars assume that these passages almost certainly derive the custom from this nonconformist style of Judaism at Qumran.<sup>liii</sup>

#### **3.2.6. Exegetical Customs**

Scholars were often puzzled by the way Old Testament passages were used in the New Testament and how the passages were interpreted. Similar approaches were found in Qumran and it seems that interpretations for a lot of passages are only deviating in nuances from the Qumran understanding. One example is the figure of Melchizedek mentioned later.

There was a lot of freedom in interpreting scripture. One verse did not always have to be interpreted the same way<sup>liv</sup>. Yet certain passages were used consistently to support theological views<sup>lv</sup>.

### **3.3. Differences**

#### **3.3.1. The role of the Cleric**

Qumran had a developed clergy. The priests play a larger role here than in any other Jewish texts known to us before. The dynasties of the priest are of superior importance. We do not find this emphasis on genealogy and a priesthood in the in the New Testament. Jesus never depended on something like a priesthood to communicate his message.<sup>lvi</sup>

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<sup>l</sup>Flusser p.203

<sup>li</sup>Shanks 1991 p. 33

<sup>lii</sup>Flusser p.21-22 (107-108)

<sup>liii</sup>Black p.167

<sup>liv</sup>Brooke p. 354

<sup>lv</sup>Brooke p.356

<sup>lvi</sup>Stauffer p.12

### 3.3.2. Ritualism

Ritualism was prevalent at Qumran. Formal rites had to be followed exactly because they were established by God. Nothing like this can be found in Jesus' message. Instead he proclaims a critical view of the purity laws and offers a totally distinct approach to the law.<sup>lvii</sup>

### 3.3.3. Secret teaching

The Qumran-Sect was only open for an elite. Secret teachings could only be learned at certain stages of initiation. Again nothing like this exists in the New Testament. Quite contrary teaching was readily available and only restricted by the comprehension of the hearer.<sup>lviii</sup>

### 3.3.4. The Messianic line

The Qumran-Sect expected a special Messiah from the House of Aaron who was a clerical and priestly Messiah. Jesus was of a different line, his ancestor was David and he assumed no special clerical or priestly function in the Old Testament sense.<sup>lix</sup>

### 3.3.5. Position to the Jerusalem Cult

The Jerusalem Cult was strongly opposed by the Qumran Sect and they totally separated from the regular Jews. Jesus had nothing in common with the extreme criticism of the Jerusalem Cult but participated in ceremonies at the temple (John 10:22-23)<sup>lx</sup>.

### 3.3.6. Gospel and Law

The biggest difference between Jesus and the Qumranis is the attitude toward the law. Would the Qumranis have met Jesus they would have killed him because of his attitude towards the law. Jesus opposed the Qumranis as well as the Pharisees because of their way of using the law to oppress people.<sup>lxi</sup>

The contrast between Qumran and Jesus expresses the age old difference "between Law and Gospel in the most sharply defined formulation conceivable".<sup>lxii</sup>

The Qumran covenant was a renewal of the Old Testament one and made life even more burdensome than what the Pharisees put on their people. It was especially legalistic.

The background of Christianity in a Qumran Style Judaism seems indisputable since the critique of the law fits almost exactly.<sup>lxiii</sup>

## 3.4. Unity of the New Testament

Surprisingly both the Pauline and the Johannine literature of the New Testament can be understood based on the Jewish Roots found in Qumran. A lot of the scholarly conjecture of the past centuries about the roots in

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<sup>lvii</sup>Stauffer p.14

<sup>lviii</sup>Stauffer p.16

<sup>lix</sup>Stauffer p.17-18

<sup>lx</sup>Stauffer p.18-19

<sup>lxi</sup>Stauffer p.20-21

<sup>lxii</sup>Stauffer p.34

<sup>lxiii</sup>Black p.168

Greek mysticism and philosophy were interesting but - as it is now clear - not applicable to the New Testament. There is no reason anymore to draw a sharp distinction between Paul and John.<sup>lxiv</sup>

The frequent parallels between Qumran and John are of special importance because other New Testament Scripture often parallels Qumran too when passages become parallel to Johns Gospel<sup>lxv</sup>. Parallels between the Scrolls and Paul are of similar importance. Ethical Dualism appears all over the New Testament most clearly expressed in Paul and John.<sup>lxvi</sup>

No doctrine resembling Qumran theology (as for example Dualism or Election) is restricted to a single New Testament author. This indicates that no single author introduced such doctrines into Christianity. A common source of influence has therefore to be postulated. Therefore Christian thought was already influenced by the contemporary ideas. Christianity was based on "theological achievements" of the surrounding culture. The New Testament authors are united in their approach.<sup>lxvii</sup>

The resemblance to Qumran are most outstanding in Paul, John the Evangelist and the author of the Hebrews<sup>lxviii</sup>. If the authors mention peculiar features then the authors are generally not akin to Qumran-thought. Shared material is mostly parallel to Qumran leading to the conclusion that this was a common cultural background.<sup>lxix</sup>

### 3.5. John the Baptist

John the Baptist is the figure in the New Testament that has the most probable connections with Qumran. The mission of the Qumran Sect was to "In the wilderness clear the way of the Lord" the same mission that John the Baptist took upon himself . He also believed that the "way of the Lord" needed to be prepared in the desert (John 1:33).<sup>lxx</sup>

It is also significant that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in an area where John the Baptist used to live "in the wilderness" according to the gospels<sup>lxxi</sup>.

This also raises the question if John the Baptist might have been raised by the Qumran Sect. Luke mentions that John was going to the desert as a boy (Luke 1:80). He may have been adopted by the Qumranis and raised and educated by them. The Essenes were known to adopt children and raise them in their beliefs. They might have done so with John the Baptist.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Since John was very well aquatinted with the Qumran Thought this assumption is not at all improbable. This would explain a lot about his teaching. John could have become dissatisfied with the way the Qumranis were seeking to "clear the way" by staying separated and could have developed the understanding that he needed to call Israel to repentance rather than sitting in the desert and wait for the messiah.<sup>lxxiii</sup> He did not leave the desert but started preaching about the necessity of preparing the way through repentance and baptism. He operated under the assumption that the end was near the same view as held by the Qumran Sect.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

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<sup>lxiv</sup>Stendahl p. 5

<sup>lxv</sup>This gives rise to questioning if the established dependence between New Testament Authors is correct.

<sup>lxvi</sup>Flusser p.23-

<sup>lxvii</sup>Flusser p.24

<sup>lxviii</sup>Flusser p.24

<sup>lxix</sup>Flusser p.24

<sup>lxx</sup>Stendahl p.34

<sup>lxxi</sup>Stauffer p.1, Shanks 1991 p. 34

<sup>lxxii</sup>Stendahl p.35

<sup>lxxiii</sup>Stendahl p.35-36

<sup>lxxiv</sup>Shanks 1991 p.34

He implied that the Jewish society was corrupt and needed to return to God, the same attitude that was prevalent at Qumran. The Qumranis saw all outsiders as defiled and belonging to Belial (the devil).<sup>lxxv</sup>

Therefore Qumran must have been the spiritual home of John the Baptist<sup>lxxvi</sup>. Some of his teachings might have been handed over to Jesus when some of his disciples joined Jesus<sup>lxxvii</sup>.

### 3.6. Baptism

Water played an important role in the Qumran community for their baptisms and religious rituals. They might also have been purificatory ceremonies accompanied by liturgies for spiritual cleanliness.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

#### 3.6.1. The Symbol of the Dove

References to the Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10, Luke 3:21-22) by John the Baptist are found in all three synoptic Gospels. The Synoptics report that the "Spirit of God" came down on him. John adds "like a dove". It is believed that "like a dove" must have symbolic significance for the interpretation of baptism. Was the dove needed as a symbol to express of an end to a time of judgment comparable to Noah's sending out of a dove after the Great Flood?<sup>lxxix</sup>

Another interpretation is that the dove has to be understood as a motif of folklore. Can the dove be understood as a sign that God had chosen Jesus? There is a story in the apocryphal second century Book of James describing how a husband for Mary was chosen by a dove descending on Joseph's rod.<sup>lxxx</sup>

The dove is also used to symbolize Israel in different extra-biblical sources. The symbol of the dove could be understood as an emergence of a renewed Israel out of the waters.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

The dove could also be an allusion to Genesis 1:2 "The Spirit of God was hovering upon the water". Therefore Jesus brings a new kind of creation. When Jesus came into the world a new age commenced and God renewed creation. The Messianic Vision Fragment lends support to this view. It includes a line saying "And over the poor will His spirit hover and the faithful will He support with his strength". The wording is a clear allusion to Genesis 1:2 used to characterize eschatological redemption. This is the first time a Jewish precedent was found for the interpretation of the dove in terms of Genesis 1:2. Other early Christian Writings also contain evidence of this prevalent interpretation in the first century AD (1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 5:17).<sup>lxxxii</sup>

#### 3.6.2. The Origin of Baptism

It is certain from the New Testament that Baptism originated with John the Baptist and was then taken over by Jesus. The question is where did he get this custom from? Baptism was known to be applied to Gentiles seeking admission into Synagogues. John might have introduced it to show to the Israelites that they too were impure and needed to be cleansed - just like the Gentiles- to come before God.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

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<sup>lxxv</sup>Stendahl p.37

<sup>lxxvi</sup>Stauffer p.7-8

<sup>lxxvii</sup>Fujita p.117 See John 1:37

<sup>lxxviii</sup>Allegro p.21

<sup>lxxix</sup>Dale C. Allison Jr. p.58

<sup>lxxx</sup>Dale C. Allison Jr. p.58

<sup>lxxxii</sup>Dale C. Allison Jr. p.48

<sup>lxxxii</sup>Dale C. Allison Jr. p.60

<sup>lxxxiii</sup>Stendahl p.36-37

### 3.7. Paul

#### 3.7.1. Cultural background

The effects of the discovery of the DSS on our understanding of Paul are very important. In the past Paul was understood against the prevalent Greek culture. This cannot be upheld any more. "Any attempt to understand Paul must take seriously his Jewish roots"<sup>lxxxiv</sup>.

Scholars have come to the understanding that "we must view the entire question of Hellenism against Judaism from a different perspective than has become habitual."<sup>lxxxv</sup>

The boundaries between Judaism and Hellenism are not to be that clearly defined and certainly not in sharp contrast as often held in the past. The background of Paul with multiple relations became evident especially through the DSS. Paul is no longer seen as a solitary figure that dominated the early church but in touch with his times and especially with the Jewish Culture.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

#### 3.7.2. A direct Qumran connection?

Some suggest a direct influence of the Qumran-Sect on Paul because Damascus was a city very hospitable to sectarian influences and the sect seems to have been stationed there at one stage. We cannot substantiate this more<sup>lxxxvii</sup>. It is certainly impossible to support a thesis that Paul was the "Wicked Priest" of Qumran as held by Teicher.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

#### 3.7.3. Flesh and Spirit

Some of the terminology used in Qumran and by Paul overlap. So do certain concepts like the understanding of "flesh" and "spirit". "Flesh" is used in Qumran both to denote the physical body as also with ethical connotations. In contrast to Greek usage where the "flesh" is in contrast to the spirit something to be escaped from, in Qumran the "flesh" can be cleansed. The "flesh" in itself does not imply perversion or sinfulness.

But "flesh" represents a human being in his weakness and mortality. This overlaps with Paul's usage of the "flesh". "Flesh" does not contain an abstract concept of sinfulness.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

The concept of spiritual dualism found in Paul has also its similarities in the DSS and seems to already have been firmly established in the Jewish culture of that time.<sup>xc</sup> Paul stands more on the essentials of current thought of that times Judaism than we previously assumed.

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<sup>lxxxiv</sup>Stendahl p. vii

<sup>lxxxv</sup>Stendahl p.19

<sup>lxxxvi</sup>Stendahl p.157

<sup>lxxxvii</sup>Schonfield p.1

<sup>lxxxviii</sup>Stendahl p.158

<sup>lxxxix</sup>Stendahl p.159-165. Davies discussion here is seriously hampered by his view of Paul categorically opposing the law rather than adopting the current view that Paul combated a misinterpretation of the law. See **Daniel P. Fuller** "Gospel and Law", **J.G. Dunn** "Paul, Jesus and the Law" *Chapter 7* and **Gerhard Hasel** "Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate" *Fourth Edition* 1991 p.173/175

<sup>xc</sup>Stendahl p. 172

### 3.7.4. Sons of light

One striking example of a parallel to Qumran is 1 Thess 5:4+5 "*for you are sons of light and sons of the day*". Here the same concept are handled as expressed in the Temple Scroll "*The sons of Righteousness shall be ruled by the prince of Light*" and "*Thou didst appoint from of old the Prince of Light to assist us*".

Another example of Paul's use of the Qumran concepts: "*For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial?*" (2 Cor 6:14+15)<sup>xc1</sup>.

Many Scholars have concluded that 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 is a paragraph in which Qumran ideas and expressions have been reworked into a Christian frame of mind.<sup>xcii</sup>

I would suggest that these ideas were common in the cultural background of the Jewish culture spread all around the Mediterranean and that Paul used it to illustrate his points.

### 3.7.5. The congregation as the temple

The concept of the body as the temple of God is found in Paul 1 Cor 6:16: "*We are the temple of God*". Similar symbolism as a house (or temple) is found in Qumran in the Manual of Discipline "*.. a House of Holiness for Israel, an Assembly of Supreme Holiness for Aaron ... I shall be that tried wall, that precious cornerstone, whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place*"<sup>xciii</sup>. Even Peter picks this up in 1 Peter 2:4-8.<sup>xciv</sup>

The idea of a community as the temple of God is prevalent at Qumran where the group spiritualizes the understanding the significance of the Jerusalem temple because it was denied access to it.<sup>xcv</sup>

## 3.8. Hebrews

The concern of the Book of Hebrews with Melchizedek was always a little bit strange and we wondered why the author argued like he did. The Qumran Texts give us some light upon this figure. It seems to have been commonly understood among the Jews of that time that Melchizedek was a heavenly priest. Therefore the argumentation using this figure is now much clearer.<sup>xcvi</sup>

The Qumran Text attest to the belief that the Messiah would be Melchizedek<sup>xcvii</sup>. Melchizedek will judge in the endtime. He will not only judge but also execute judgment. Melchizedek will separate the righteous - who are his - from the wicked and Belial and will have his vengeance on them for the sins they have committed. This is a similar concept to the son of man in the book of Enoch and of course in the gospels (for example Matt 25:31-46).<sup>xcviii</sup>

Melchizedek was considered to be pre-existent and eternal in Qumran. This picture lends itself quite nicely to a comparison with Christ as in the book of Hebrews.<sup>xcix</sup>

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<sup>xc1</sup>Yadin p.243

<sup>xcii</sup>Brooke p.213

<sup>xciii</sup>Brooke p.211

<sup>xciv</sup>Yadin p.251

<sup>xcv</sup>Brooke p.212

<sup>xcvi</sup>Vanderkam in BR p.46/47

<sup>xcvii</sup>Flusser p.186

<sup>xcviii</sup>Flusser p.188 (25)

<sup>xcix</sup>Flusser p.189

These items give us a tremendous insight into the spiritual atmosphere out of which Christianity developed. We know now that the name Melchizedek was known in Jewish circles and that his story expanded to be a pre-existent and immortal being. This proves that the time was ripe and expectation was there for the birth of Christianity in the Land of Israel and not in the pagan world.<sup>c</sup>

### 3.9. John

A lot of Qumran Style language and understanding can be found in John. For example in John 4:1-6 he mentions the two spirits of truth and falsehood. The Temple Scroll expresses similar ideas "*[God] has appointed for him two spirits of truth and falsehood. The origins of truth are from the source of Light and of the source of Darkness are the origins of evil.*"<sup>ci</sup>

Reim shows convincingly that the mindset of John is firmly rooted in the culture that was also prevalent at Qumran. For example he is able to tie in John 3:37ff with several Qumran passages that show what connotations "living water" carried over to the hearer.<sup>cii</sup>

John therefore has strong affinities to the Hebrew world and not to the Greek as often supposed in the past by scholars. "Its concepts of truth, knowledge, spirit, and even the Word must be seen, not as rooted in Greek or Gnostic thought, but as concepts emerging precisely out of Sectarian Judaism. So that rather than being the most Hellenistic of the Gospels, John now proves to be in some ways the most Jewish."<sup>ciii</sup>

Some assume that John was in close connection with priestly circles in Jerusalem (John 18:15 he gained access to the courtyard of the high priest and was known to him) as well as with the Qumran Sect<sup>civ</sup> and see his testimony as being very important since he might have brought a lot of the Qumranian concepts into Christianity.<sup>cv</sup>

### 3.10. The Synoptics

The Synoptics show few and comparatively unimportant parallels to the Qumran Sect. For example the term "sons of light" only appears in Luke 16:8.<sup>cvi</sup> From this reasoning many have conclude that Jesus and his followers were closer to Pharisaic Judaism than to the Qumran Sect.<sup>cvii</sup>

Yet some new insight for the Gospel of Matthew has been gained<sup>cviii</sup>. More the style than the content of some sayings like those of the Sermon on the Mount (Blessings and Rules) can be found in Qumran.

### 3.11. Apocalyptic Environments

Through the influence of the Scrolls from the Dead Sea an apocalyptic environment was discovered to be the frame of reference for Jesus' appearance and for his teaching from beginning to end conditioned by the historical background of the beginning of the first century AD.<sup>cix</sup>

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<sup>c</sup>Flusser p.192

<sup>ci</sup>Yadin p. 246-248

<sup>cii</sup>Reim p.72-

<sup>ciii</sup>Prof. Frank Moore Cross in Yadin p.249

<sup>civ</sup>John can be seen as one of the disciples in John 1:37. One of the disciples was Simon Peter. The other is not mentioned as seems to be John's custom in his Gospel as was also done in John 18:15.

<sup>cv</sup>Stauffer p.19 footnote 20

<sup>cvi</sup>Flusser p.150

<sup>cvii</sup>Flusser p.24 (216)

<sup>cviii</sup>Stauffer p.8

<sup>cix</sup>Stendahl p.7

The Qumranis were especially obsessed with the last days. They had a form of organizing for the last days in the Manual of Discipline. The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness similarly foresees the apocalyptic endtime war against the wicked. There is enormous concern with the apocalyptic and eschatology which can also be found in the New Testament.<sup>cx</sup>

Cross expresses it in the following way "The movements of John the Baptist and of Jesus of Nazareth must now be redefined as apocalyptic rather than prophetic in their essential character."<sup>cx</sup>

The study of the apocalyptic is necessary for understanding the Qumran Community. And vice-versa the study of Qumran is necessary for understanding the apocalyptic. <sup>cxii</sup>

#### **4. End**

The Dead Sea Scrolls have significantly altered our view of the New Testament times. Many scholarly conjectures of the last centuries has been proven to be off the track. Many other theories have been upheld and further refined by the findings at Qumran.

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<sup>cx</sup>Schonfield p.135-136

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