

A NEW BOOK ON THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS¹

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THE Dead Sea scrolls are still, and for a long while yet will continue to be, a matter of major interest. And now Penguin Books have devoted a volume by J. M. Allegro to this subject.² The author is Lecturer in Comparative Semitic Philology at Manchester University, took part in the editing of manuscript fragments which are assembled at the Palestine Museum of Jerusalem, and has already published some of these fragments in technical journals. Up to now it has been his broadcasts and the resultant controversies that have made him known to the general public. These alone would suffice to draw attention to this book which, further, is well-written, lively, pleasant to read. As it is published at a moderate price in a series of wide circulation, the book is straightway sure to be a success. I may say that the success is deserved by reason of some real qualities in presentation and facts. But this very success may unfortunately give credit to some conclusions which are hazardous or quite simply erroneous.

The first half of the book covers the history of the Qumrân discoveries, the work of editing, and the excavations (pp. 15-93); this part is generally excellent despite some small errors which we need not dwell on here. Mr Allegro furnishes us with new information from reliable sources on the long-drawn negotiations which enabled certain lots to be bought; yet this new information needs to be correlated with the narratives of other writers. It will be found to complement rather than contradict. The four appendices (pp. 163-184) on John the Baptist, on ancient finds related to the Qumrân documents, on Murabba'at and the other caves outside Qumrân, on the copper scroll, are all useful and only have a few inexactitudes. Finally, there is a good up-to-date bibliography, a general index and a biblical index. An index of the many Qumrân texts cited in translation might profitably have been added.

So far so good. But the second part of the book, the more important part as touching on ideas, is to my mind less satisfactory.

¹ Translated from the original French by Roland Potter, O.P.
² J. M. Allegro: *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Penguin Books; 3s. 6d.).

It is known that there have been many discussions, sometimes acrimonious, on the origin and history of the Qumrân sect, on the person of its leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, and on the identification of his adversary, the Wicked Priest. The limits of this small book did not enable Mr Allegro to refute all the theses which he rejects; yet he might have established more lengthily and more solidly his proposed solutions. He identifies the Wicked Priest with Alexander Jannaeus. This opinion, which I have held myself from the beginning, remains plausible but is not absolutely certain, despite the new *Nahum Commentary* which Mr Allegro has studied and to which he refers. There are also good arguments in favour of Hyrcanus II. As for the Teacher of Righteousness Mr Allegro suggests no identification with anyone known on other grounds; but he does suggest (p. 95) that 'his actual name, real or assumed, seems to have been Zadok'. No published text supports this hypothesis. It is true that the Qumrân community called themselves 'sons of Zadok', but that was because of the priestly origin of their group (cf. Ezechiel 40, 46; 44, 15). Among the unpublished texts which may be known to Mr Allegro, there is only, in the copper scroll, a mention of the 'tomb of Zadok'. If he is basing himself on this text, the clue is tenuous, for there is nothing to link the Teacher of Righteousness with the 'tomb of Zadok', which, according to the context, is presumably in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and is apparently the tomb, real or imagined, of the high-priest of the time of David and Solomon.

The Qumrân documents tell us that the Teacher of Righteousness was persecuted by the Wicked Priest. In broadcasts at the beginning of this year, Mr Allegro had said that apparently the Wicked Priest had had the Teacher crucified by his mercenaries. When criticized on this point, he recognized that this was only an 'inference' drawn from the texts. He has since then³ published several new texts which, it might be thought, would give a basis to his theory. But there is nothing there to support it. In this little book he is more guarded; he recalls that, according to Josephus, Alexander Jannaeus had 800 Pharisees crucified; he finds an allusion to this in the *Nahum Commentary*, and he adds (p. 100): 'one might surmise that the Sectarrians had particular cause to recall this activity of Jannaeus, since their Teacher had suffered the same cruel death, the recognized punishment of a rebel'. This is

3 In the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXV, 1956, pp. 89-95.

still going too far: there is no justification for relating this historical notice to the Teacher of Righteousness, who is not even mentioned in the passage concerned. We must repeat again: there is no text, published or unpublished, which, proximately or remotely, speaks of the crucifixion of the Teacher of Righteousness. There is not even proof that he died a violent death; and it is not even sure, as I have said, that his adversary was Alexander Jannaeus.

In the same broadcasts Mr Allegro had added that the body of the Teacher of Righteousness—so it seemed to him—had been piously recovered by his faithful ones who awaited his resurrection. In this book he merely says (p. 149): 'Again, the Sect seem to have expected that the Last Days would see the punishment of the Wicked Priest and the vindication of the Teacher, both long since dead. They must therefore have looked forward to a general resurrection, to *judgment* of the type envisaged in Daniel and the New Testament.' Despite the new texts adduced by Mr Allegro,⁴ it remains doubtful whether the Qumrân community believed in the resurrection of bodies. And anyway, such a general resurrection, which would affect the Teacher of Righteousness, the Wicked Priest, and all the dead, is something absolutely different from the resurrection of the Teacher awaited by his yet living disciples.

Mr Allegro (pp. 149-150) identifies this Teacher of Righteousness *redivivus* with one of the two Messiahs awaited by the Sect, the Messiah Priest as distinct from a Davidic Messiah. This opinion has already been held, but it is very improbable. True enough, the Messiah to come will teach righteousness and will be a perfect interpreter of the Law, like the Teacher of Righteousness. Yet this latter is never given the title of Messiah, nor any messianic prerogatives; he is one of a great body awaiting salvation, and he appears to be explicitly distinguished from the future Messiah in the *Habakuk Commentary* which has the expression: 'from the gathering in of the Unique Teacher to the arising of the Messiah from Aaron and from Israel'. Thus collapses a parallel set up between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus; neither can we accept the thesis, elaborated on pages 150-154, that 'in Jesus, the various functions of both Messiahs have been combined'.

These examples show that Mr Allegro is haunted by parallels

⁴ *ibidem*.

between Qumrân texts and the New Testament. His chapter 9, on the doctrine of the Sect, consists of only ten pages (pp. 124-133) and seven of these are filled with comparisons with the New Testament. A better method would have been to present a complete exposition of the Qumrân doctrine as it is in itself (and Mr Allegro has not given us this), before any attempt at comparison. The last four chapters of the book show the same tendency: 10, The use of Scripture Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament; 11, the Qumrân Community and the Church; 12, The Messianic Conceptions of Qumrân and the Early Church; 13, The Qumrân Sect and Jesus. Unfortunately, Mr Allegro is here returning into a domain which is difficult and not too well known to him: he is not a specialist in the Old Testament, to which the Qumrân doctrines are so closely related; nor is he a specialist in Judaism, of which they are an expression; nor in the New Testament—to which he compares them.

I have pointed out elements open to criticism in these chapters. Now I will set out two general objections which to me seem fundamental.

The book concludes as follows (pp. 161-162):

‘For the faith which broke through the bounds of Judaism and became a living fount of inspiration for the western world was far removed from Qumrân Judaism. Despite the mention of the “son-ship” of the Davidic Messiah in Qumrân literature, nothing found there approaches the Christology of Paul. The whole concept of the God-Man, readily acceptable to the Greek, would have been as abhorrent to the Covenanter then as it is to the Jew and Muslim today. Again, a Gospel of salvation for the Gentile would have been equally difficult for the Covenanter, whose future Kingdom was strictly a Jewish foundation. But at the heart there was an even greater difference. For Paul the whole of his faith hinged on an historical Resurrection of Jesus. For him the Messiah had come, been put to death, and had risen again, and the way of the believer to salvation was by faith in this risen Lord. The Covenanters were presumably still waiting for the Resurrection of their Master when they were swept away and, like the Jewish-Christian community itself, became extinct. But by then the basic elements of their faith had been given a far wider setting, and a significance for all mankind.’

I concur in all the contrasts which Mr Allegro establishes between Qumrân doctrine and Christianity. I would add others: the love of enemies as opposed to the hatred of enemies which was asked of the Community; the universality of Christian salvation as opposed to the exclusive character of the Sect. But these contrasts are not, as Mr Allegro says, new creations of Pauline doctrine. They represent the doctrine of the oldest strata in the Synoptics, of St John's Gospel, and already, as regards a certain universality, the doctrine of John the Baptist. Points of contact (without direct affiliation) between John the Baptist's and the Qumrân doctrine have been rightly stressed by Mr Allegro (pp. 163-165); but he has neglected the differences which are important.⁵

Against this opposition which he claims to find between the Judæo-Christian Church and 'hellenized' Christianity in their relationships with Qumrân, we should note that the formal resemblances with Qumrân doctrine are insignificant in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Synoptic narratives, but they are considerable in the Pauline epistles (especially Ephesians), and very numerous in the Joannine writings.

Mr Allegro had said previously (p. 133): 'for the early Jewish-Christian Church an "objective" life of Jesus would have been as pointless as one of the Teacher for the Qumrân community'. To this we say No! for the situations are quite different. There is nothing at Qumrân which resembles a 'gospel' focussed on the Teacher of Righteousness; what is asked is fidelity to his teaching, faith in his mission as interpreter of the Word of God—but his own person is not an object of faith. Quite other is faith in Jesus, and already in the Judæo-Christian grouping at Jerusalem; there would never have been a Christian Church, had not the disciples of Jesus believed, objectively and historically, that their Master had lived, had proclaimed himself Messiah and Son of God, had died and had risen again.

Let us take up again and correct the penultimate sentence in this book: the Qumrân community disappeared while still awaiting its Messiah; meanwhile the Church was growing, based upon a belief that the Messiah had come, and he was Jesus, the Son of

⁵ cf. the very detailed study of J. Schmitt, *Les Ecrits du Nouveau Testament and les textes de Qumrân*, in *Revue des Sciences religieuses* (Strasbourg), XXIX, 1955, pp. 381-401; XXX, 1956, pp. 55-74; 261-282.

God made man. Here is an essential contrast; points of contact in detail can in no way attenuate it.

I end with a general criticism which in effect could be applied to other recent studies wherein Qumrân and New Testament are compared. People seem to forget that both the Qumrân Sect and the primitive Church have close links with the Old Testament and with Judaism; many of the resemblances can be explained in terms of common antecedent. The Qumrân finds have thrown abundant light on one of the aspects of that Judaism which was contemporary with the New Testament. But we know that there were, apart from Qumrân, other *milieux*, less well-known to us, wherein prophetic inspiration came to life again, other community groups, other baptist movements, in fact a whole total which we must bear in mind if we would justly appreciate the relation between the primitive Church and Qumrân. There are affinities, a certain relationship. These are undeniable and justify the importance of the Qumrân texts in present and future study of the New Testament. Yet there are divergencies, even profound contrasts, which serve to show Christianity as a new religious fact. This new element was not the fruit of subsequent development, but stemmed from the person and teaching of Jesus.