

A Beginner's Guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls

Steven Voorwinde

The year 2000 has been a big year for the Dead Sea Scrolls in Australia. In July the weekly religious television programme *Compass* featured the Scrolls in a two-part series. From July to October the Art Gallery of New South Wales hosted a major exhibition of the Scrolls courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. In October the exhibit moves from Sydney to Melbourne. With the exhibition also came some of the world's leading experts on Scroll research, such as Lawrence Schiffman of New York, Geza Vermes from Oxford and Emanuel Tov from Jerusalem. As a result the Australian public was exposed to scholarly opinion on the Scrolls as perhaps never before.

But what does it all mean? What impact does the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have for the historical reliability of Scripture? How do these ancient documents cast light on the New Testament in general and the life of Jesus in particular? Do they further indicate – as is sometimes suggested – a common heritage to Christianity and Judaism, and they therefore form a bridge between the two faiths?

The very least that can be said is that since the discovery of the Scrolls in 1947 our knowledge of inter-testamental Judaism has been considerably enriched. On the basis of these finds, however, some scholars have made large claims. James Charlesworth, for example, boldly states: “The Dead Sea Scrolls have revolutionized scholars’ understanding of Early Judaism (Second Temple Judaism) and Early Christianity (Christian Origins).”⁶⁶ As these documents date from the period prior to the fall of Jerusalem, so the argument runs, they were not subject to the censorship of either the Church or Rabbinic

⁶⁶ J. Charlesworth, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations*, volume 1, Tübingen/Loiusville: Mohr/Westminster, 1994, XXI.

Judaism. Hence they provide us with clearer and unbiased insights into the world of Jesus and his disciples.

Among the more radical claims are those which associate the DSS with the origins of early Christianity. Of particular interest for us here in Australia are the creative speculations of Sydney University's Barbara Thiering. She has been promoting the unlikely hypothesis that the Scrolls' Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest are John the Baptist and Jesus respectively. She further speculates that Jesus was married, divorced and remarried and fathered four children.⁶⁷ Although soundly refuted in the media and elsewhere she keeps writing and her books keep selling!

But once we cut through the hype and scholarly sensationalism aroused by the DSS, what is their considered contribution to our knowledge of the NT and what can we know about the community that produced them? For this we need to know something about the discovery of the Scrolls and seek to reconstruct the history of the sect with which they are associated.

I. The Discovery of the Scrolls

Of greatest interest for our purposes are the scrolls found at Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea, some 15 km south of Jericho, since 1947. It must be remembered, however, that the designation "Dead Sea Scrolls" includes other leather and papyrus manuscripts of great antiquity discovered in the wilderness of Judea. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*⁶⁸, for example, also mentions the Bar Kokhba letters dating to a time shortly before 135 AD as well as Samaritan documents deposited in a cave by group who were massacred there by Alexander the Great's soldiers in 331 BC. The latter are the earliest extensive group of papyri ever found in Palestine. They are legal documents, mainly in Aramaic, dating from 375 to 335 BC.

⁶⁷ B. Thiering, *Jesus the Man: A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London and New York: Doubleday, 1992.

⁶⁸ P.W. Goetz, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, volume 3, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1991, 938.

The first Qumran manuscripts were accidentally discovered by a young Bedouin shepherd. Further discoveries quickly followed between 1947 and 1956. Eleven caves yielded documents which are all presumed to have belonged to the nearby religious community whose buildings have been extensively excavated. The most significant collections were found in Caves 1, 3, 4, and 11. Cave 1 contains an Isaiah scroll, *The Rule of the Community*, *The War Scroll*, and a commentary on Habakkuk among others. Cave 3 yielded the Copper Scroll which gives a list of temple treasures and their hiding places (probably fictitious). Cave 4 is impressive in terms of the sheer number of manuscripts it contained. A total of 575 titles has been listed. Of these about 100 are biblical and represent the entire Hebrew OT, except the Book of Esther. Several well-preserved documents were recovered from Cave 11 including a scroll with canonical, apocryphal and unknown psalms, as well as a copy of Leviticus and *The Temple Scroll*.

All in all, the eleven caves at Qumran yielded one scroll embossed on copper and a dozen written on leather, plus countless fragments on leather or papyrus. According to Geza Vermes: "About eight hundred documents are fully or partly represented. ... Most scrolls are written in Hebrew, a smaller portion in Aramaic and only a few attest the ancient Greek or Septuagint version of the Bible."⁶⁹

The publication of the Scrolls is a story in itself. Although they were discovered in the mid-twentieth century, only a fraction of the material had been published by the early nineties. Some scholars began speaking of a conspiracy and were suggesting that vested interests were keeping the contents of the Scrolls a mystery. Geza Vermes went so far as to speak of the tardy publication of the scrolls as "the academic scandal *par excellence* of the twentieth century."⁷⁰ His discussion of the history of publication from the 1950s to 1990 is understandably irate, but he is honest enough to put the delay down

⁶⁹ G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, revised and extended fourth edition, London: Penguin, 1995, xxii.

⁷⁰ Vermes, *Scrolls*, xix.

to nothing more sinister than lack of organisation and an unfortunate choice of participants. In 1991 a new editorial team was appointed – composed of sixty scholars, rather than a mere seven! The aura of secrecy was removed and the complete photographic archive of the Qumran Scrolls was opened to qualified scholars.⁷¹ Currently a project is under way to publish all the Scrolls with English translation and to produce a concordance to the DSS. It goes under the official designation of “The Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project” and comprises a team of experienced scholars working under the direction of James Charlesworth. The envisaged work will be made up of ten volumes of text and translation. It promises to be the standard scholarly version of the DSS. To date volumes 1,2 and 4 have been published.⁷² In a television interview midyear Charlesworth claimed that the work was proving to be laborious and painstaking, an assessment with which few will disagree.

J. The Dead Sea Community

Although scholars have worked on forming an accurate portrait of the Qumran community, the enigma of the sect is by no means solved. As Vermes points out: “Our perplexity is due to an absence in the documents, singly or together, of any systematic exposition of the sect’s constitution and laws. The Community Rule legislates for a kind of monastic society, the statutes of the Damascus Document for an ordinary lay existence.”⁷³ What is clear from the archaeological

⁷¹ All the DSS material is now accessible to the English-speaking public. Vermes has recently published *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1998), a translation of all the non-biblical Scrolls, but excluding small and mutilated fragments which cannot be rendered into meaningful English. In the preface to this latest edition he writes: “Following the ‘revolution’ which ‘liberated’ all the manuscripts in 1991 – until that moment a large portion of them was kept away from the public gaze – every interested person gained free access to the entire Qumran library. I eagerly seized the chance and set out to explore the whole collection” (p.xiii).

⁷² Volume 4A appeared in 1997 and volume 4B in 1999 (cf. footnote 1 above). The former contains Pseudepigraphic and non-Masoretic Psalms and Prayers, and the latter the Angelic Liturgy.

⁷³ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 1.

site at Qumran is that its population can never have been more than 150-200 at any given time. From the literature the following can be gleaned:

1. Its Organisation

The community at Qumran was to all intents and purposes a monastic order. They lived communally and sought to live in perfect obedience to the laws of Moses and the commands of the prophets. A fully inducted member of the sect renounced any claim to private property – all his belongings were amalgamated into with those of the community.⁷⁴ The discipline of the group was strict, if not harsh, eg. “If one of them has lied deliberately in matters of property, he shall be excluded from the pure Meal of the Congregation for one year and shall do penance with respect to one quarter of his food.”⁷⁵

The order was governed by a hierarchy of leaders. The highest office was vested in the person of the Guardian or Master. The council of the Community was made up of twelve laymen and three priests who were to be well versed in the law. It would appear that the order was exclusively male, and celibate. The members of this brotherhood at Qumran alluded to themselves as “the men of perfect holiness” and as the remnant of Israel in the last days.

2. Relationship to the Essenes

Were the Qumran sectaries Essenes? This is still a question over which scholars are divided. In his *Survey of the New Testament* Robert Gundry simply assumes that they were. He traces the historical roots of both the Essenes and the Pharisees back to the Hasidim of the Hasmonean period. The Essenes, he says, were a small sect numbering about four thousand. Then he continues:

⁷⁴ *Community Rule*, VI, 24.

⁷⁵ *Community Rule*, VI, 25.

“Some of the Essenes lived in monastic communities, such as the one at Qumran, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.”⁷⁶

F.F. Bruce sees many similarities and parallels between the two groups, but offers a more nuanced answer than Gundry: “The identification of the men of Qumran with Essenes – not with the whole Essene order, but with one group of Essenes – satisfies more of the evidence than does any rival identification.”⁷⁷ He admits there are striking similarities and provides an impressive list – but they do not amount to complete identity.

Geza Vermes argues for the identification of Essenism and the Qumran sect. He seeks to correlate what we know of the DSS sect with what we know of the Essenes from other sources. The primary sources for our knowledge of the latter group are threefold: the Greek writings of two Jewish authors, Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus, and the Roman geographer and naturalist, Pliny the Elder – all of whom wrote in the first century AD. (The Essenes are not mentioned in either the NT or rabbinic literature.) He then bases the identity of the Qumran sect with Essenes on three principal considerations:⁷⁸

- (a) *Geographical* - Qumran corresponds to the settlement mentioned by Pliny between Jericho and Engedi.
- (b) *Chronological* - Josephus describes Essene activity as occurring between the time of Jonathan Maccabaeus (*ca.* 150 BC) and the first Jewish war (66-70 AD). This also provides a very likely time frame for the writing of the Dead Sea materials and the duration of the community at Qumran.
- (c) *Organisational* - there are similarities between the common life and customs of the two groups. This makes the identification of the two bodies extremely probable “as long as some of the

⁷⁶ R. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, third edition, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994, 75.

⁷⁷ F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, New York: Doubleday, 1969, 118.

⁷⁸ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 21, 22.

differences can be explained.”⁷⁹ Some of the main differences have to do with community of goods versus private property and marriage versus the celibate state. The most probable solution would seem to be that the Essenes lived both in towns throughout Judea *and* in the monastic community at Qumran.⁸⁰

If this identification is correct, then what Josephus says about the Essenes in his *Jewish Wars*, Book 2: 119-161,⁸¹ would apply to the Qumran sect as well. There he describes the “three philosophical sects among the Jews”, namely the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. In this section he devotes far more space to the Essenes than to the other groups. He praises them for their austere manner of life and their extraordinary piety towards God. He also claims that they “seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have” (119).⁸² They are also commended for their generous hospitality towards one another and for their diligent study of the Scriptures: “They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body” (136).

⁷⁹ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 21.

⁸⁰ While plausible, the identification of the Qumran community as Essenes is by no means a unanimously held viewpoint. After reviewing various options, Jeffery Sheler draws a cautious conclusion: “...while the Essene theory continues to dominate the field in explaining the identity of the Qumran community and the origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the question is far from settled. It may well take the discovery of additional ancient manuscripts to remove the remaining uncertainties” (*Is the Bible True? How Modern Debates and Discoveries Affirm the Essence of the Scriptures*, Harper: San Francisco, 1999, 148).

⁸¹ *The Complete Works of Josephus*, translated by W. Whiston, complete and unabridged, new updated edition, Hendrickson Publishers, 1987, 605-607.

⁸² In par. 166 the relationships within the other two sects are described as follows: “... the Pharisees are friendly to one another and are for the exercise of concord and regard for the public. But the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild; and their conversation with those who are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them.”

3. *History*

The origin of the sect can be most convincingly traced back to the Maccabean period. The events that most likely gave rise to the sect's formation probably had to do with the transfer of the high priesthood from the Zadokite line to the Hasmoneans. In 153-152 BC Jonathan Maccabeus accepted pontifical office. In 140 BC his brother Simon was appointed as high priest and hereditary leader of the people. From then on (till Pompey's Roman invasion in 63 BC) Judea was ruled by the Hasmoneans who were essentially a dynasty of high priests and later priest-kings. It is into this course of events that the early history of Qumran can be most reliably inserted.

The Teacher of Righteousness, a shadowy figure who stands at the head of the Qumran movement, seems to have been the priestly head of the Hasidim and opposed the new order. He and his followers were forced into exile in the 'land of Damascus' where they entered into a 'new Covenant'.⁸³ The Wicked Priest, on the other hand, was a pontiff who enjoyed good repute before he assumed office. He was victorious over his enemies both at home and abroad. According to the Habakkuk Commentary he rebuilt Jerusalem, and he was eventually captured and put to death by a foreign rival. The one who best meets all of these conditions would seem to be Jonathan Maccabeus. As Vermes points out: "... he qualified for the epithet 'Wicked Priest' when he accepted in 153-152 BCE from Alexander Balas, a heathen usurper of the Seleucid throne who had no right to grant them, the pontifical vestments which Jonathan was not entitled to wear. Captured later by a former general of Alexander Balas Tryphon, he was killed by him in Bascama in Transjordan (I Macc.xiii, 23)."⁸⁴

⁸³ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 28.

⁸⁴ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 36, cf. Bruce, *NT History*, 112. Not all would agree with this identification. The years 94-88 BC saw an uprising by the Pharisees against the Hasmonean priest-king Alexander Jannaeus. Alexander's lifestyle was profligate and his reign vicious. During this period he killed 50,000 Jews. For this reason some scholars identify him with the Wicked Priest and believe that this is when the Qumran community began. See P. Bolt and G. Clark, "Five things worth knowing about the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Briefing*, September 9, 2000, 10. This
Vox Reformata, 2000

More certain than the origins of the movement is the time of its demise. Although falling short of complete proof, it would appear that the Qumran settlement was destroyed by the Romans, probably in the Summer of 68 AD. Josephus describes the tortures the Essenes suffered at the hands of the Romans in vivid terms:

... our wars with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and they went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear.⁸⁵

4. *Theology*

The Essenes considered themselves not only the remnant of Israel in their time, but indeed the final remnant of all time. They were “the righteous remnant and the true Israel of God.”⁸⁶ Moreover, they saw themselves as the recipients of the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31. As Vermes explains:

As a reward for their conversion, the Teacher of Righteousness had been sent to establish for them a ‘new Covenant’, which was to be the sole valid form of the eternal alliance between God and Israel. Consequently, their paramount aim was to pledge themselves to observe its precepts with absolute faithfulness.⁸⁷

identification depends for its support on the Commentary on Nahum (4Q169) which seems to describe some of the atrocities carried out against the Pharisees (comment on Nahum 2:12). This document, however, is fragmentary and makes no specific mention of the Wicked Priest.

⁸⁵ Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, II, 152.

⁸⁶ Bruce, *NT History*, 113.

⁸⁷ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 43.

Hence they were an exclusive group and as members of the new Covenant identified themselves with God's elect. As such, they were guided by the spirit of truth in the ways of light. The non-elect, whether Jew or Gentile, were doomed to wander along the paths of darkness. Because they rejected the validity of the Jerusalem sanctuary they interpreted the Temple rituals in symbolic terms. For them the Council of the Community was the Temple, and the Community itself was the sacrifice offered to God in atonement for Israel's sins.⁸⁸

Having been born in an age of eschatological ferment, the community also saw itself as fulfilling the prophetic expectations of the salvation of the righteous. In the final war with evil the sons of Light would be supported by the archangel Michael or Melchizedek. They also held strong messianic expectations, but seem to have been awaiting two Messiahs rather than one. There was the royal Messiah of David's line who would defeat the kings of the nations. More important, however, was the priestly Messiah, the "Messiah of Aaron", to whom the royal Messiah was to defer in all legal matters. Together with these two Messiahs the community also expected "the Prophet" who was to be either an Elijah returned as a precursor to the Messiah or as a divine guide sent to Israel in the last days (a 'prophetic' Messiah). From the evidence available to us it is not clear what the sect expected to follow the days of the Messiahs.

If Josephus is correct, the sect believed in the immortality of the soul in much the same way as the Greeks: "For their doctrine is this:- That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal and continue forever."⁸⁹ While the souls of the good are eternally rewarded, the wicked will suffer immortal punishment after their death. There is little evidence for any belief in the resurrection of the body. However, there is one brief reference in the so-called "Resurrection fragment" (4Q521) which reads: "For He will heal the wounded, and *revive the dead* and bring good news to the poor." The fragmentary nature of the evidence is a salutary reminder that our knowledge of the sect's

⁸⁸ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 56-57.

⁸⁹ Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, II, 154.

teaching remains partial. We are certainly in no position to reconstruct the ‘systematic theology’ of the Dead Sea Scrolls!

K. Relevance

From the above discussion one can detect notes that will be echoed in the NT. There are all kinds of tantalising parallels and associations. Whether there are any definite links between the DSS and the NT is a question that will no doubt exercise scholarly minds for some time to come.⁹⁰ There are certainly some areas of biblical scholarship for which the discovery of the DSS has been especially helpful:

1. *The Text and Interpretation of the Old Testament*

Before 1947 the oldest Hebrew text of the whole of Isaiah was dated late in the ninth century AD. The DSS – with the complete Isaiah scroll from Cave 1 - have pushed this date back by about a millennium. Before his death in 1969 conservative OT scholar Edward J. Young made a helpful observation about this document:

Of the scrolls discovered at Qumran the most significant from the standpoint of OT studies is the great roll of Isaiah. ... On the whole the text is in agreement with the Masoretic text. There are, however, divergences, and these divergences have been the subject of much discussion. This scroll is probably to be dated in the late first century BC. ... The text is also of significance with respect to the question of the authorship of the prophecy. There is no major break between the close of chapter thirty-nine and the beginning of chapter forty. Chapter thirty-nine closes one line from the bottom of the

⁹⁰ An example comes from *The Temple Scroll* which displays some intriguing similarities with Rev.21:13,17: “The wall shall be seven cubits wide and forty-nine cubits high. ... There shall be three gates in the east, three in the south, three in the west and three in the north. The gates shall be fifty cubits wide and their height seventy cubits” (11Q19, XL).

column, and there remains on that line space for seven or eight letters. Chapter forty then begins on the last line of the column without any indentation. This clearly shows that there was no break at this point.⁹¹

The implications of this manuscript find are significant. The alleged existence of a “Deutero-Isaiah” (chs 40-66) now becomes more difficult to maintain.

More recently Jeffery Sheler has again highlighted the significance of the Great Isaiah Scroll. As the only biblical document to be salvaged fully intact from the Qumran caves it is a dramatic example of textual preservation:

Now on display at the Shrine of the book in Jerusalem, it contains all sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah that are found in the traditional Bible. Beyond some incidental copying errors, scholars have found only thirteen relatively small variations – a phrase or a verse or two missing or added – when compared to the modern text. ... For the most part, they do nothing to alter the meaning of the text, and taken as a whole they attest to the meticulous accuracy of the Masoretic scribes who hand-copied the Hebrew Bible through the first thousand years of the common era.⁹²

The scrolls are of more than textual interest, however. They also provide some insight into the ways in which a Jewish group contemporary to Jesus and the apostles interpreted the OT. Particularly significant in this regard is the Commentary on Habakkuk. This OT prophecy is wrenched completely from its historical context and is made to apply directly to the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers. F.F. Bruce, with his usual perception, has observed that these biblical commentaries found at

⁹¹ E.J. Young, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, volume 3, edited by P.E. Hughes and G.R. Jaffray, Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1972, 329.

⁹² J. Sheler, *Is the Bible True?* 151.

Qumran “throw no light on the meaning of the books expounded, but they throw much light on the beliefs of the commentators and their companions. They believed themselves to have entered the last days, the days to which all the prophets pointed forward; and they eagerly awaited the signal which would herald the dawn of the new age, the signal which would at the same time summon them to arms against the enemies of God.”⁹³

2. *Background to the New Testament*

While we need to guard against the danger of “parallelomania”, the DSS provide us with significant insights into the ethos and expectations of a significant group within first century Judaism. In seeking to correlate the NT and the DSS Vermes opens his discussion with a sensible observation: “Fundamental similarities of language, ideology, attitude to the Bible etc., may be due to the Palestinian atmosphere of the epoch, without entailing any direct influence.”⁹⁴ However, he then makes the unlikely suggestion that the monarchic administration of the early Jerusalem church and its practice of religious communism was modelled on Essene society. A closer examination of the evidence, however, hardly suggests a direct causal connection. The voluntary sale of property in Acts and sharing the proceeds with the poor hardly amounted to the “religious communism” of Qumran.

More helpful at times is the detection of direct contrasts between Jesus’ teaching and that of the DSS. The Sabbath laws at Qumran were applied with great severity, so much so that a man was not even able to help an animal when it fell into a pit (1QS, xi, 13-14). This contrasts not only with Jesus’ more wholesome teaching in general on the controversial subject of Sabbath observance, but even more pointedly with the question he put to his hearers in Matt.12:11: “What man shall there be among you, who shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift

⁹³ Bruce, *History*, 113-4.

⁹⁴ Vermes, *Scrolls*, xxxii.

it out?” The question was addressed to Pharisees whose requirements were obviously not as stringent as those of the Essenes.

3. *The Historical Jesus*

Parallels between Jesus and the Dead Sea community can easily be overdrawn. Earlier suggestions that the Teacher of Righteousness was a forerunner of Christ and set a pattern for Christ to follow and – even more improbably – that he was also crucified, have now been abandoned. It is also unlikely that Jesus was much influenced by a group that was to the right of the Pharisees as far as their legalism was concerned. Vermes has suggested that the richest gleanings for comparison are to be found in the charismatic-eschatological aspects of the DSS. Yet even here Jesus’ teaching with his strong emphasis on the kingdom of God coming to expression in his own ministry – and indeed in his own person – is clearly without parallel in the Qumran literature. Within the Judaism of his day Jesus stands as a unique figure. He presents himself as the interpretive key that unlocks the true meaning of the OT. While the Teacher of Righteousness saw certain prophecies as having a direct bearing on his own time and circumstances, his stance is nowhere near as bold as that of Jesus. The Qumran community lived with messianic expectations. Jesus and his disciples clearly saw that the messianic age had already dawned. This is the fundamental difference – in spite of many apparent similarities – between Jesus and Qumran.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ The same caution needs to be exercised when comparing the Qumran writings to the remainder of the NT. While there are points of intersection, it becomes precarious to establish causal connections between the two. On this score Sheler makes a sensible observation: “... these points of intersection highlight the Jewishness of the apostles and the diversity of the Judaism from which Christianity emerged, rather than suggesting any direct link with the Qumramites – a link for which there is no real evidence. After a half-century of study, the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown more dramatically than anyone could have anticipated how deeply Christianity was rooted in the Judaism of its time” (*Is the Bible True?* 170).

Conclusion

The parallels between the DSS and the NT can easily be exaggerated.⁹⁶ It is difficult to establish any causal links between Jesus and the Teacher of Righteousness, while any connection between Jesus and the Wicked Priest would - on any sober estimation of the evidence - have to be regarded as entirely spurious. The greatest importance that the DSS have for the NT lies in the light that they shed on Judaism at the time of Jesus. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives a balanced assessment of the significance of the DSS:

These manuscript finds are among the more important discoveries of modern archaeology. Their recovery has enabled scholars to push back the date of a stabilized Hebrew Bible to no later than AD 70, to reconstruct the history of Palestine from the 4th century BC to AD 135, and to clarify the relationship between early Christianity and Jewish religious traditions.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ An obvious parallel is the use of the light/darkness contrast in such Dead Sea documents as *The Rule of the Community* and *The War Scroll* on the one hand and in the Johannine literature on the other. A methodical investigation comparing the imagery as found in these sources has been conducted by Richard Bauckham, "Qumran and the Fourth Gospel: Is There a Connection?" in S.E. Porter and C.A. Evans (eds.), *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 267-279. According to Bauckham, a close examination of the data does little for the hypothesis of some kind of influence of Qumran on John: "... the similarity between the use of light/darkness imagery in the two cases is almost entirely limited to the basic symbolism: light and darkness symbolize truth and error operating on a cosmic scale. The particular development of this symbolism in each case diverges widely. Characteristic terminology, dominant imagery and theological significance all differ to such an extent as to make the influence of Qumran on the Fourth Gospel unlikely" (275).

⁹⁷ *Micropaedia*, volume 3, 1991, 937.