

Timothy H. Lim and John H. Collins, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, Paperback edition, 2012). Pp. xviii + 785. \$ 45. ISBN 978-0-19-966308-8

### HENRYK DRAWNEL SDB

Institute of Biblical Studies, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
address: Aleje Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland; e-mail: hdrawnel@kul.pl

As stated by Lim and Collins, the two editors of the *Oxford Handbook*, the publication “seeks to probe the main disputed issues in the study of the scrolls” (p. 1). The thirty essays written by eminent scholars from different fields of specialization contain not so much a general overview of the interpretative problems related with the Qumran findings, but rather a cumulative reflection on diverse opinions, numerous points of disagreement, and promising directions for further research. The book is composed of eight parts, each of uneven number of contributions. The archeology of Khirbet Qumran (part 1) has been presented in only two essays dedicated to the Khirbet Qumran itself (E.M. Meyers) and to its cemetery (R. Hachlili). Much attention is paid to the scrolls and Jewish sectarianism (part 3, six essays) and to different religious themes in the scrolls (part 5, six essays). The book also discusses the biblical texts found at Qumran together with interpretative and language issues (part 4, five essays); a separate section (part 6, three essays) has been dedicated to the relationship between the scrolls and early Christianity. The impact of the scrolls on the understanding of Jewish history in the Second Temple period has been scrutinized by three essays (part 2), while the relationship with later Judaism was presented in relation to halachic issues, ancient Jewish liturgy, and manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah (part 7, three essays). The last section of the book deals with new approaches to the scrolls (part 8, three essays), that deal with rhetorical criticism, literary theories of Roland Barthes applied to the scrolls, and finally, loosely linked with the section, the legal definition of authorship in relation to the dispute concerning the publication of 4QMMT by H. Shanks. Each article in the section is followed by a substantial bibliography concerning the debated topic.

Most of the opinions expressed in the volume are equilibrated and in some areas do not depart significantly from what the first generations of Qumran scholars have established. On the other hand, new proposals and

interpretations have emerged and sharpened the focus on the sectarian writings from the trove of the Qumran scrolls. Eric Meyers (“Khirbet Qumran and its Environs”) stresses that “there is a connection between the caves and the settlement of Khirbet Qumran” (p. 41), which constitutes the fundament of the Essene hypothesis that since the first manuscript discoveries explains the relationship between the manuscripts and the archeological settlement. After having reviewed the evidence concerning the recent excavations of the Qumran cemetery area, Rachel Hachlili (“The Qumran Cemetery Reassessed”) concludes that “the finds at the cemetery reinforce the thesis that the Qumran Community was a specific religious group, a separate Jewish sect, who fashioned their own divergent practices as well as some typical Jewish customs” (p. 73). Michel Wise (“The Origins and History of the Teacher’s Movement”) proposes his thesis according to which the sectarian writings from Qumran mostly point to the first century BC as to the period, in which the Teacher’s movement developed, and to which it was confined. “The most natural conclusion from the silence in the scrolls is that by the beginning of the Common Era the Teacher’s movement had lost vitality, perhaps even died out altogether (p. 118). John Collins (“Sectarian Communities in the Dead Sea Scrolls”) stresses that “the *yahad*, however, cannot be identified simply with one settlement in the wilderness, ‘the Qumran community’” (p. 159). It should rather be conceived of as an association dispersed in multiple settlements, one of which was the Qumran site.

Sacha Stern (“Qumran Calendars and Sectarianism”) plays down the importance of the 364-day calendar attested in the Qumran scrolls as an important matter that was critical to Qumran sectarianism. The 364-day calendar, with the complex literature describing it, should therefore be regarded as just one of many peculiarities of the Qumran literature and perhaps community. “But it does not appear, in Qumran sources, as a polemical issue, nor does it appear to have played a particular role in forging the Qumran community’s sectarian identity (p. 250).” It is surprising that in Stern’s overview of the calendrical manuscripts from Qumran there is no mention of 4Q208-4Q209 that clearly belong to the discussion about the calendars at Qumran and in the pseudepigraphic *I Enoch*. Additionally, together with the Aramaic fragments of *I Enoch*, the formation of calendrical issues at Qumran certainly belongs to the pre-sectarian period, which means that much in Qumran calendrical scrolls has been inherited from the early Enochic tradition. Thus the explication of the Enochic tradition should play a much more prominent role in the explanation of the calendrical phenomena in the Qumran writings.

When discussing the relationship between the Qumran scrolls and *I Enoch*, James VanderKam (“The Book of Enoch and the Qumran scrolls”) critically

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scrutinizes the theory elaborated by Gabriele Boccaccini, according to which Enochic Judaism emerged as a protest movement out of Zadokite Judaism. The created world order, according to Enochic Judaism, has been disrupted by the sin of the Watchers, the Mosaic covenant was reduced to a minor role, and prediluvian wisdom accorded to Enoch has been emphasized. Enoch and Levi became the examples of a pure pre-Aaronic priesthood, in opposition to the Zadokite priesthood. Finally Enochic Judaism, according to Boccaccini, “becomes flesh and blood in the sociology of the Essene group” (p. 267). Eventually the Qumran community broke from the Essenes in protest and lived as a marginal reality apart from the parent movement. VanderKam rightly criticizes the systemic reconstruction of the historical circumstances for the development of the Enochic and Qumran literature (pp. 268-275). He notes that Daniel, *Jubilees* or Qumran texts hardly take the form of systematic theologies. The myth of the fallen Watchers, classified by Boccaccini as a defining element for the Enochic tradition, finds no traces in the Astronomical Book of Enoch both in its Aramaic and Ethiopic versions. It can hardly be considered as a mark of Enochic Judaism valid for all its elements. Boccaccini claims that the split between the Zadokites and the Enochians was caused by the belief that the creation has suffered harm at the time of the sinful angels and the flood, and that the damage would be undone only with the new creation. The Zadokites, on the contrary, emphasized the existence of an ordered creation that continued to operate in obedience to the divinely ordained laws. As VanderKam points out, the sharp distinction proposed by Boccaccini is denied by the Enochic texts themselves that, for example in *1 En.* 72:1, stress the order of creation as discernible in the movement of the heavenly luminaries. Finally, the Qumran texts do not suggest that the Teacher and his followers left the larger Essene community in anger and subsequently developed a theology markedly different from Enochic Judaism, that is from the Essenes. VanderKam’s criticism of Boccaccini reconstruction is excellent in its clarity and in its indications of unfounded claims related to the relationship between Enochic Judaism, Zadokites, and the Essene movement.

Albert de Jong presents an excellent overview of the problematic and not universally accepted Iranian influence in the Dead Sea Scrolls. He stresses the contact of Jewish religion and culture with the Persian empire during the Achaemenid period that is detectable in the biblical books such as Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, and in the extrabiblical texts from Elephantine. De Jong underlines the positive character of the mutual relationship attested by these sources. Concerning the Qumran texts, he notes several Iranian loanwords attested there, together with the Iranian setting of the fragmentary

texts originally termed as “4QProto-Esther.” Since he is keenly aware of the problematic comparison between the late Avestan texts and some Qumran scrolls, especially the Tractate of the Two Spirits (4QS 3:13-4:26), he prefers to compare the two traditions on the basis of the similar structure of the theological thinking: “The only possible direction of research can be a structural one, which should first try to answer the question why the sectarian texts from Qumran present so many *more* parallels with Iranian notions than the rest of Jewish literature” (p. 498). On the other hand, he rightly notes that what in the Qumran scrolls appeared in the eyes of the first generations of Qumran scholars to stem from the Iranian influence, especially the perceived dualism in the spiritual world, begins to be explained from within the Jewish tradition, that is with the exclusion of a possible “Iranian influence”. It seems that this path of research should first of all be pursued in order to find an answer to the pressing question concerning the origin of Qumran dualism. Even if the dualism in the spiritual world can be structurally paralleled with the late Iranian texts, or with what the Greek classical sources say about the Iranian religion, the reason for such a borrowing is not at all clear. It is certain that even the structural approach proposed by de Jong indicates similarities and plenty of differences, but does not give any reason for the purported borrowing.

It is impossible to assess the important points made in many other essays in this excellent collection, the breadth of the discussed topics is simply too large to fit into one short review. There is however no doubt that the book itself presents a balanced view on the most important exegetical and historical problems related to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and as such will certainly continue to influence the lively discussion concerning the sometimes fragmentary but nonetheless fascinating image of Second Temple Judaism that has emerged from the Qumran caves.