

## CANONICITY AND QUMRAN: EVIDENCE FROM THE *DAMASCUS DOCUMENT*

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For nearly four hundred years Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions have included apocryphal writings in their Bibles, while Protestants have flatly refused to place any other writing alongside of the sixty-six books of the Bible. This is changing for some in the rising movement called the *emerging church*.<sup>1</sup> In this

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<sup>1</sup> The *emerging* or *emergent church*, as it is sometimes called, should not be called a movement according to proponents of its ideas. It is more a “conversation” with postmodern man, allowing for a wide divergence of opinion. Therefore, it may be observed that some advocates would feel quite comfortable using noncanonical writings in their church services, while others would not. Some books advocating emerging church perspectives include Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Jonny Baker, Doug Gay, and Jenny Brown, *Alternated Worship: Essential Tools for the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004); and Steve Case, *The Book of Uncommon Prayer: Contemplative and Celebratory Prayers and Worship Services for Youth Ministry* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2002). A surprising development is the publication of a Bible which includes the Apocrypha (Roman Catholic canon) by one of the founders of the emergent church movement, Richard Foster, a Quaker by theological persuasion. Foster is the editor of *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, a study Bible (NRSV) that mixes mystic meditative techniques of the Quakers with the postmodern emphasis on sensory experience (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989). It is no surprise that the NRSV includes the Apocrypha, but it is a surprise that some Protestants are openly supporting its inclusion in the Bible. For a critique of the emerging church see D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); and Scott Smith, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian: The Emerging Effect of Postmodernism in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

postmodern church paradigm believers are challenged to return to the ancient methods of worship, presumably the worship of the apostolic church, which means for some a return to the ancient documents: this would include readings from the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the church fathers, and from other ancient texts.

The matter of canonicity in bibliology is second in importance only to the doctrine of inspiration. If one believes that the books of the Bible were given not only by divine providence, but as the actual communication of God to man, then it follows that one should know which books are to be considered so. And although this task may have appeared to have been a “done deal” long before the twenty-first century, it is clear that the matter has been re-opened today.

This article does not attempt so broad an objective as to argue against the validity of the apocryphal books as Scripture; others have done so admirably in numerous tomes.<sup>2</sup> Nor does this essay deal with the complex matters of NT canonicity, or even broader Jewish concerns about the Jewish “Bible.” Rather, it is narrowly focused on the view of scriptural authority of one sect that organized during the Second Temple period: the Essenes.<sup>3</sup> The Dead Sea

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate: The Origins and Formation of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002); J. Barton, “The Significance of a Fixed Canon of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Saebo, vol. I/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 67–83; Bruce Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); and R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (London: Clowes, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> I assume that a sect known as the Essenes lived at Qumran, a strict isolationist group that had left mainstream Judaism over the installment of a non-Zadokite as the high priest over Israel. Since I argue this view more extensively elsewhere (“The Value of the Dead Sea Scrolls for New Testament Study: An Historical Introduction” [unpublished Ph.D. paper, Baptist Bible Seminary, March 2006]), I will not elaborate here. In addition, it may be inferred that the scrolls are integrally connected to the Qumran community and that they tell researchers about the beliefs and habits of the settlement. If the scrolls were part of a library collection in Jerusalem, delivered only to the caves at Qumran at the last moment to keep them out of the hands of the Romans [ca. A.D. 66], then it is pointless to speak of a view of canon that is expressed in the scrolls. Although I would admit that the

Scrolls<sup>4</sup> of Qumran provide the “window” that allows the researcher to see what the Essenes believed in this regard. And although not necessarily representative of all Judaism, Essene beliefs demonstrate nonetheless that certain views were *possible* during the Second Temple period. Therefore, if it may be demonstrated that the Essenes at Qumran viewed certain texts as Scripture, thereby excluding the “non-canonical” writings, then one could see that the formative establishment of an OT canon could have preceded the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. This assertion would militate against the view of such Dead Sea Scrolls scholars like Frank Moore Cross, who insisted that there is no sense of a fixed canon outside of the Pharisees in first-century Palestine.<sup>5</sup>

How then does one establish the necessary criteria needed for canonicity? Can one count the copies of the texts found at Qumran and conclude that the more popular books must be the inspired ones? If this were so, the *Community Rule* would have to be considered as Scripture since twelve copies were found at Qumran.

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scrolls do not present a monolithic theology, they do, nonetheless, present a narrow set of beliefs and practices.

<sup>4</sup> Although the designation “the Dead Sea Scrolls” properly applies to scrolls from several locations around the Dead Sea, this paper will use this term to apply to the scrolls found near Qumran.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Moore Cross, “The Text behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible,” in Hershel Shanks, *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Biblical Archaeology Review Series (New York: Random House, 1992), 152. Cross reasons that the history of the text may not be separated from the establishment of canon: “Ultimately, the strategies that initiate the fixation of the biblical text lead to the *de facto*, if not *de jure*, fixation of a canon” (ibid., 154). He argues that three textual streams are evident during the first century because of the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He observes that the scrolls which came from the southern locations (Nahal Hever, Wadi Murabba’at, and Masada) are later than those from Qumran and exhibit the characteristics of textual control that are consistent with the Rabbinic Recension, the textual stream that resulted in the MT. But texts from Qumran exhibit differing readings, therefore bringing Cross to the conclusion that three basic texts exist during this period. Finally, he proposes that the Rabbinic Recension, or the official Pharisaic text, was finalized by A.D. 70 (ibid., 149). So not only was the Hebrew text fixed at this time, the books that could be called Scripture were fixed. According to Cross, Hillel is the central figure in both endeavors (ibid., 154).

Another approach is to examine the introductory formulas to citations in the Dead Sea Scrolls texts that were written by the sect itself. Thus, if an introductory formula is used before a citation, perhaps that cited work may be considered Scripture. But if this be the case, the *Testament of Levi* and *Jubilees* could be regarded canonical since they both are quoted with the introductory formula “as He (or it) said.”<sup>6</sup> This author will argue that introductory formulas do not provide an absolute guide, but each work must be examined for its own merit.

Since no “canonical” list of texts exists at Qumran, one can only speak in terms of likelihood. Nonetheless, given the evidence in the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is likely that the sectarians had a canon of books that they regarded above all others.

How might this likelihood be established? This article will discuss features related to canonicity in the chief sectarian writings<sup>7</sup> of the Qumran community: the *Damascus Document* and the *Community Rule*, focusing more attention on the former. These two texts are the most important of the sectarian writings, for they prescribe the goals and way of life for the sect. Alex Deasley agrees, “. . . The *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Rule* are the two fundamental texts which give us knowledge of the organization and theological interests of the sect.”<sup>8</sup> It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that

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<sup>6</sup> Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 167. Lawrence Schiffman observes that the rabbis, although later, quoted Ben Sira with the same formula, but nonetheless rejected it as Scripture. This merely illustrates the point that the Jews could quote noncanonical works with introductory formulas, irrespective of the texts’ canonical status (ibid.).

<sup>7</sup> DeSilva divides the Dead Sea Scrolls into three basic groups: (1) writings of the sect itself; (2) writings that were read by the sect and by other groups within Judaism; and (3) books of the Hebrew Bible considered Scripture (David deSilva, “Reading the Bible at Qumran, Alexandria, and Ephesus,” *ATJ* 35 [2004]: 19). The sectarian scrolls are generally considered to be composed by the residents of Qumran, whereas most of the biblical, apocryphal, or pseudepigraphal works were perhaps copied at Qumran but not composed there.

<sup>8</sup> Alex Deasley, *The Shape of Qumran Theology* (Carlisle, Cumbria, Great Britain: 2000), 211. The *Damascus Document* explains who the righteous are, what it means to be in the covenant, ethical principles for

these texts reflect the mainstream thought of Essenism. It may be inferred, then, if these books acknowledge the scriptural authority of texts that they cite, there is a strong likelihood that the community agreed with this assessment.

### CANONICITY AND THE *DAMASCUS DOCUMENT* AND THE *COMMUNITY RULE*

Although it is not entirely necessary to affix the authorship of the *Damascus Document* and the *Community Rule* to writers in the Qumran community—the members may have brought the texts to the settlement and adopted their teachings—it provides a stronger case if they actually composed the documents; but proving such a supposition goes beyond the scope of this essay. It may be reasonably assumed that based on paleographic evidence,<sup>9</sup> material

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remaining pure, rules for priests, maintaining purity, harvest, oaths, offerings, and restitution. It adds rules for judges, Sabbath keeping, sacrifices, foods, a hierarchy for the community, and finally rules for overseers, contributions, and punishment for offenders. For a cogent discussion on the significance of the *Damascus Document*, see Michael Knibb, “The Place of the Damascus Document,” 149–62, and Samuel Iwry, “The Exegetical Method of the Damascus Document Reconsidered,” 329–38, in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, ed. Michael O. Wise, Norman Golb, John J. Collins, and Dennis G. Pardee (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994). The *Community Rule* describes what the ideal community looks like, the role of the teacher, initiation of new members, an annual review of membership, the struggle between good and evil, the danger of outsiders, rules for public meetings, laws about speech, discipline of members, rules for instructors, and rules of prayer. Wise, Abegg, and Cook call the *Community Rule* a “Charter of the Jewish Sectarian Association” (Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* [New York: HarperCollins, 1996], 123).

<sup>9</sup> For cogent discussions on paleography and the Dead Sea Scrolls, see James C. VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance For Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 22–27; and especially F. M. Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in G. E. Wright, ed. *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor, 1961), 133–202.

dating techniques,<sup>10</sup> and internal considerations,<sup>11</sup> both texts were composed during the formative period of the Essenes, probably in the second century B.C., at the settlement called Qumran.

Once this is accepted, one may observe that these documents have one compelling theme, *perfectionism*. Since the keeping of the law is the central concept of this perfectionism, it may also be seen that the Torah is central to the concerns of the Qumran community; one would expect then that the Pentateuch would be quoted more frequently than any other book in the sectarian texts.

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<sup>10</sup> A recent authoritative assessment of Carbon 14 testing and the Dead Sea Scrolls may be seen in G. Doudna, "Dating the Scrolls on the Basis of Radiocarbon Analysis," in P. W. Flint and J. C. VanderKam, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1998–99), I.430–71. For a brief non-technical summary of the findings Carbon 14 and Accelerator Mass Spectrometry testing see VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 27–33.

<sup>11</sup> According to the *Damascus Document*, Geniza Manuscript A, 1.1–14 (Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* [New York: HarperCollins, 1996], 51–52), Israel came under the judgment of God during the "era of wrath" for three hundred and ninety years. This time of punishment began under Nebuchadnezzar's subjugation of Israel (ca. 601 B.C.). At the end of this era God provided a "root of planting," a reference to the faithful remnant residing at Qumran. For twenty years this group wandered aimlessly until God provided the Teacher of Righteousness to guide the remnant in the "way of His heart." Although this time reference in the *Damascus Document* cannot be relied upon entirely, the approximate time of the remnant's founding was in the early second century to late first century B.C., while the Teacher of Righteousness joined the faithful between 190 and 150 B.C. According to Michael Knibb, "The emergence of the reform movement (the 'root of planting') mentioned in the *Damascus Document* has often been associated with the emergence of the Hasidim, who played a leading role in the resistance to the measures imposed by Antiochus Epiphanes. The Hasidim are, however, only mentioned three times in our sources (1 Macc 2:42; 7:13; 2 Macc 14:6), and we know far less about them than is often assumed" (*The Qumran Community*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 7–8).

## Perfectionism at Qumran

Alex Deasley argues that perfectionism is the key goal of the Qumranites.<sup>12</sup> It may also be asserted that the ritual perfectionism that is advocated in the sectarian documents is equivalent to “salvation” for the community.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, a member of Qumran would strive to achieve perfection so as to be presentable to God on two levels: “There was a perfection which was attainable in the present; nonetheless, a fullness of perfection lay ahead which would be the work of God at the end of days.”<sup>14</sup>

How is this perfectionism attained? It is the keeping of the law that provides the key component for this formula of perfectionism.<sup>15</sup> For example, the Qumranites kept the Sabbath to an extreme: “Whereas the rabbinic law permitted a walk of 2000 cubits on the Sabbath, the *Damascus Rule* cuts this in half (CD X.20).”<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the *Community Rule* emphasizes the keeping of the Torah. In one of the most significant passages of the scrolls as pertaining to the sectarian community, the *Community Rule* claims that Isaiah 40:3 is fulfilled by the sect; therefore, in the wilderness the community “prepare[s] the way of the Lord” (VIII.14).<sup>17</sup> How is this done? The settlement does this by keeping the Law of the Lord (VIII.12b–16).<sup>18</sup> In summary, the mission of the Qumran community is fully expressed by keeping the Torah.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Shape of Qumran Theology*, 214.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> According to Deasley “atonement” is another key component of this perfectionism (*ibid.*, 219–28).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>17</sup> Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 138. All quotations of the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls in this paper are taken from this publication, unless otherwise noted and are cited by column and line numbers.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>19</sup> A number of other texts in the *Damascus Document* and the *Community Rule* teach the importance of the law in the life of the community:

## The Tripartite Division of the OT

Having established the primacy of the Torah in the Qumran community, it may be seen that two other categories of texts are accepted as Scripture, corresponding with Luke's "law of Moses," "prophets," and "psalms" (24:44–45). The *Community Rule*, in describing the covenantal obligation of its teacher to communicate the truth of God, makes it clear that the teacher must present what God "commanded through Moses and all His servants the prophets" (I.3).<sup>20</sup>

In a similar reference, the *Community Rule* may also point to the first two divisions of the OT in its explanation of the mission of the Essenes: "This means the expounding of the Law, decreed by God through Moses for obedience, that being defined by what has been revealed for each age, and by what the prophets have revealed by his holy spirit" (VIII.15–16). Although it is possible that the relative clause "what the prophets have revealed by His holy spirit" may refer to prophetic utterances by individuals of the Qumran community, it is more likely that the text is speaking of the canonical prophets of the OT, for the *Community Rule* always presents the primacy of the Law—that it was "decreed by God through Moses for obedience." After that, the Prophets are accorded their status as Scripture because they affirm the Law. The canonical prophets, therefore, are seen by the Qumranites as only having applied that Law "for each age." So it would seem that the Qumran community perceived the Law as the center of Scriptural revelation, with the prophets tightly connected to it. This feature provided the latter with its scriptural authority.

But what of Luke's third category, the "Psalms"? It is likely that Luke referred to the entire corpus of the Writings by this designation, since the Psalms occupied more space than the others. In addition, the LXX lists the Psalms at the beginning of the section

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see the *Damascus Document* 4QD<sup>a</sup> I.9–17 (ibid., 51); *Damascus Document*, Geniza A, IV.8; *Damascus Document*, VII.16, where the tent of David that is to be restored is the books of the law (Amos 9:11); and especially *Damascus Document*, Geniza B, XX.3b–10 to see the connection between keeping the law and perfectionism (ibid., 59–60).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 127.

known today as the Writings. Since Luke's "Bible" was the LXX,<sup>21</sup> it seems reasonable that he might designate the whole by the first and largest of its writings. Could the Essenes have done the same? Schiffman believes that they did, citing the *Halakhic Letter*, another sectarian document: "We have [written] to you in order that you should understand the Book of Moses [the Torah], [and the words of the Prophets, and David, and the chronicles of each] and every generation" (*Halakhic Letter C*, 9–11).<sup>22</sup>

Thus, it may be summarized that the *Community Rule* acknowledges two of the three divisions of the canonical OT.<sup>23</sup> The *Damascus Document*, although only referring to the Torah, does cite books of the prophets and of the writings. It is difficult to say if the Essenes at Qumran accepted the last category as Scripture from these findings. It is not possible, given this evidence, to know which texts they accepted as writings. Schiffman is more convinced: "The Torah and the Prophets and most of the Writings were fully canonized. Only a few books of the Writings remained in dispute, and their status would be resolved early in the mishnaic period, soon after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E."<sup>24</sup> Schiffman's point is not that OT canon was fully established at Qumran; but rather, the Essenes did not demonstrate a wide acceptance of noncanonical books.

### Quotations in the *Damascus Document*

Ten copies of the *Damascus Document* have been found at Qumran in three caves, eight of which were discovered in Cave 4,

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<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the LXX contains a number of noncanonical writings, none of which Luke cited. For a discussion on this point see James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, and Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 49–74; and Karen H. Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 194–95. DeSilva says that the Alexandrian Jews, although they included books of the Apocrypha in the Greek translation of the Bible, did not believe that these books were inspired. He references Philo in particular, who only cites as Scripture the Pentateuch in addition to occasional references to prophets and writings.

<sup>22</sup> Schiffman, *Reclaiming*, 166.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

suggesting that this writing had considerable importance for the Qumranites.<sup>25</sup> This text was originally discovered in a genizah<sup>26</sup> in Cairo, Egypt, by Solomon Schechter in 1896. Since the beginning and the ending of the genizah documents had deteriorated, the discovery of copies at Qumran allowed the text to be made known in its entirety for the first time.

The *Damascus Document* may be outlined under two major headings: Exhortations and Laws.<sup>27</sup> Its purpose is to provide guidance for the faithful during an era of wickedness, as expressed in its concluding words:

This is the exposition of the regulations that they shall follow during the era of wickedness [... so that they can] stand firm during all the times of wrath and the stages of the journey made by those [who live in camps and all their cities.

All of this is on the basis of the most recent interpretation of the Law. (4QD<sup>a</sup>, 18 V.18b–20)

This summary statement, occurring at the end of the *Damascus Document*, suggests first that the readership of this text was not limited to men who lived in isolated communities like Qumran.<sup>28</sup> Although the phrase “who live in camps and all their cities” is supplied by the editor, another text in the *Damascus Document* demonstrates the possibility of this reading, instructing those who “live in camps according to the rule of the land and marry women” (DD VII.6–9a). This is germane to the discussion on canonicity

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<sup>25</sup> VanderKam and Flint (*Meaning*, 215) provide this number (ten copies), but Wise, Abegg, and Cook cite only nine copies (*Dead Sea Scrolls*, 50).

<sup>26</sup> Since it is against Jewish law to destroy a writing that contains God’s name, such documents that deteriorate to the point that they can not be used any longer must be buried or stored in a room dedicated to this purpose. This room is called a *genizah*.

<sup>27</sup> Wise, Abegg, and Cook observe that reading the *Damascus Document* can be a frustrating experience due to its lack of clear transition between points. They do, nonetheless, follow the scheme as given above (*Dead Sea Scrolls*, 49).

<sup>28</sup> Another reference in the *Damascus Document* shows that the Essenes were not all celibate, living throughout the land (VII.6–9).

only in the sense that if the Essenes were scattered throughout the land, and if the Essenes held to a canon of certain books, it is possible that that view was widely known in Palestine.

Second, this text acknowledges that the *Damascus Document* is in essence an *interpretation* of the Law. In fact, it is called the “*most recent interpretation*” of the Law. Therefore, it is this characteristic that gives this writing authority among the Essenes. It is only in this sense that its statutes are binding, for its statutes are believed to be accurate interpretations of the Law.<sup>29</sup>

It might be expected, then that this text would contain many references to the Torah. The *Damascus Document* quotes the Pentateuch twenty-four times, the Prophets twenty-four times, and the Writings only once (Prov 15:8). In addition, there are five extensive summary/interpretations of the Law.<sup>30</sup> There is an obscure reference to Jeremiah in Geniza A,<sup>31</sup> in addition to a quotation from an unknown passage.<sup>32</sup> Also interesting are references in the *Damascus Document* to the *Book of Jubilees* and the mysterious *Book of Meditation*.<sup>33</sup>

### *Introductory Formulas*

The author(s) of the *Damascus Document* adhere to no particular formula for introducing quotations. It may be observed in the following that the OT is cited in six different ways.

#### **“God speaks by ‘x’ the prophet”**

III.21, “as God promised them by Ezekiel the prophet, saying...” (Ezek 44:15)

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<sup>29</sup> This is a key point that will be elaborated later, as all authority at Qumran seems to emanate from the Torah.

<sup>30</sup> Leviticus 13–14, 4Q272 1 I.1–13; Leviticus 15, 4QD<sup>a</sup> 9 I.14 and 4Q272 1 II.7; Leviticus 12, 4QD<sup>a</sup> 9 II.5–6; Ezekiel 45:11–15, 4Q271 1 II.1–7; and Leviticus 11:32, 4Q271 1 II.10b–13. Wise, Abegg, and Cook list Deut 7:25 as a possible source for 4Q271 1 II.8–10, but this connection is not very strong (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 64).

<sup>31</sup> *Damascus Document*, Geniza A, VIII.19–21.

<sup>32</sup> *Damascus Document*, IX.8b–9.

<sup>33</sup> This essay will examine these peculiarities later.

IV.13–14, “Just as God said by Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, saying” (Isa 24:17)

**“God said” (no prophet mentioned)**

VI.13, “for God said” (Mal 1:10)

VIII.9–10, “of which God had said” (Deut 32:33)

IX.7–8, [called the commandment of God] (Lev 19:17)

**“the prophet said”**

V.8, “Moses said” (Lev 18:13)

VI.7–8, “of whom Isaiah said” (Isa 54:16)

VII.10–11, [calls the prophecy of Isaiah an oracle which came true] (Isa 7:17)

Geniza B, XIX.7–8, “When the oracle of the prophet Zechariah comes true” (Zech 13:7)

Geniza B, XIX.11–12, “as Ezekiel said” (Ezek 9:4)

VIII.14–15, “But as Moses said” (Deut 9:5 and 7:8) [conflates the two texts]

**“It is written,” or “of whom it says”**

IV.20, “of whom it says” (Mic 2:6)

V.1, “it is written” (Deut 17:17)

Geniza B, VII.5, “as it is written” (Deut 7:9)

VII.14–15, “as it says” (Amos 5:27)

VII.16, “as it says” (Amos 9:11)

VII.19–21, “as it is written” (Num 24:17)

VIII.3, 4Q268 adds “as He has said” (Hos 3:4)

XX.16, “as he said” (Hos 3:4)

4Q271 1 I.4–5, “and the verse that says” (Lev 25:14)

4Q271 1 I.9, “which says” (Deut 27:18)

XI.18, “for so it is written” (Lev 23:38)

XI.20, “for it is written” (Prov 15:8)

XIII.23, “as it says” (Isa 7:17)

4QD<sup>a</sup> 18 V.3–4, “it is written” (Lev 26:31)

4QD<sup>a</sup> 18 V.4b–5, “in another place it is written” (Joel 2:13)

4QD<sup>a</sup> 18 V.5, “and” [connected to Joel 2:13 reference] (Joel 2:12)

**“the passage that says”**

XVI.6, “as for the passage” (Deut 23:24)

XVI.10, “the passage that says” (Num 30:9)

XVI.15–16, “for that is referred to by the passage” (Mic 7:2)

IX.2, “as for the passage that says” (Lev 19:18)

IX.5, “It says only” [continues thought of IX.2] (Nah 1:2)

X.16, “this is what is meant by the passage” (Deut 5:12)

**No introduction**

- IV.12 (Mic 7:11)
- IV.21 (Gen 1:27)
- V.1 (Gen 7:9)
- V.13 (Isa 50:11)
- V.14 (Isa 59:5)
- V.16 (Isa 27:11)
- V.17 (Deut 32:28)
- VI.3–4 (Num 21:18)
- VI.16–17 (Isa 10:2)
- Geniza B, XIX.9 (Zech 11:7)
- XX.3 (Ezek 22:21)
- XX.19–20 (Mal 3:16)
- XX.20–21 (Mal 3:18)
- XX.21–22 (Exod 20:6)
- 4Q270 9 II.10 (Lev 27:31)

As can be seen, the primary way to introduce quotations in the *Damascus Document* is by the more simple formulas, “it is written” or “of whom it (or he) says” or with no introductory formula at all. The six instances where quotations are introduced with the term *passage* are grouped here because they represent the same level of semantic simplicity as in these categories.<sup>34</sup> In thirty-seven instances the canonical OT is quoted in this way, seventeen times coming from the Law and nineteen times coming from the Prophets. The final instance is drawn from the Writings.

The category whereby the prophet is named with no mention of God is evenly mixed between quotations from the Law (3 times) and from the Prophets (4 times). One of these, a conflation of two texts from Deuteronomy, is counted as two. Likewise, in texts where God is credited with the quotation and the prophet is not mentioned, there are examples from both categories. Finally, in the most paraphrastic of introductory formulas where both God and

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<sup>34</sup> The use of the term “passage” seems to be restricted to just one area of the *Damascus Document*, although this does not seem to be indicated by the numbering scheme that the Dead Sea Scrolls scholars placed upon this texts. I surmise, therefore, that one of the authors of the *Damascus Document* favored this particular way of introducing Scripture. It is likely, given this feature, not to mention others, that the *Damascus Document* as it was at Qumran and later at Cairo is the result of multiple authors.

prophet are credited with the saying, only two quotations are given, both from the prophets. In summary, the Law is quoted twenty-two times, while the Prophets are cited twenty-six times, and the Writings are quoted only once.

The author(s) of the *Damascus Document* tended to “string” OT quotations together to garner support for certain rules that were to be maintained in the sect. For instance, four texts—two from Genesis, one from Deuteronomy, and one from Micah—are joined together as an apologetic against polygamy (V.2–6). Similar stringing together of texts from the Law and the Prophets are given in five other places in the *Damascus Document*.<sup>35</sup> Once again, texts cited from the Prophets are accorded the same authority as those from the Law, being mixed together with the same implications of Scriptural character.

It may be summarized that no difference is evident in the way that the Prophets are introduced as compared to quotations from the Law. Therefore, quotations of the Prophets seem to carry just as much scriptural authority as those of the Law. In addition, a quotation from Proverbs is given in the same manner; can it be inferred then that the Writings were considered on the same level? This may be saying too much, given the paucity of citations from the Writings in the *Damascus Document*. What is more noticeable, however, is the paucity of quotations from noncanonical books in this text. If the Essenes maintained an “open canon,” one might expect frequent references to these writings.

### *Problem Texts*

Problem texts related to canonical matters are relatively few in the *Damascus Document*, given the length of this document. Only one reference involves a possible citation, while the others refer to titles of whole works. So the question is, does the *Damascus Document* accord scriptural authority to those works? If not, why would they find their way into a text that is so centered around making sure that the sect is obedient to the law?

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<sup>35</sup> V.16–17, Isa 27:11 and Deut 32:28; Geniza B, XIX.7–13, Zech 13:7, 11:7, and Ezek 9:4; XX.13b–22a, Hos 3:4, Mal 3:16, 18, and Exod 20:6; and IX.2–8, Lev 19:18, Nah 1:2, and Lev 19:17.

### Citation from an Unknown Passage

One finds an obscure quotation in the *Damascus Document*: “About oaths. The passage that says, ‘You may not seek a remedy by your own power’ a man who makes someone take an oath out in the countryside and not before judges or at their bidding: such a one has ‘sought a remedy by his own power’” (IX.8b–10a). Apart from some grammatical problems, the chief difficulty with this quotation is finding its source. A. Dupont-Sommer claims that its source is 1 Samuel 25:26<sup>36</sup> where Abigail praises David for not taking justice into his own hands “because the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand.”<sup>37</sup> The problem with this correspondence is that it exists only on the broadest level: both texts in some way encourage the faithful to let God mete out justice. If it is possible that the *Damascus Document* text finds its source in David’s life, it is best regarded as an allusion; this author does not see a connection between the two texts.

Dupont-Sommer further claims that this same text is cited in the *Community Rule* (VI.27) for the purpose of trying to limit oath-taking in Palestine.<sup>38</sup> But the text that Dupont-Sommer cites has nothing to do with oath-taking. At best, it speaks of the “usurped authority” that occurs when one person goes against the orders of a higher ranked comrade.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it seems best to regard this reference to 1 Samuel in the *Community Rule* as doubtful. As in Paul’s writings, some citations remain a mystery as to their origin.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, trans. G. Vermes (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), 149.

<sup>37</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version, 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Dupont-Sommer, *Essene Writings*, 149.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> E.g., 1 Cor 2:9; Eph 5:14, et al. See E. Earl Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

## **Jubilees**

The book of *Jubilees* is one of the more popular texts at Qumran, being found in five of its caves.<sup>41</sup> It is only exceeded in number of manuscripts by Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Genesis, having fifteen scrolls in total.<sup>42</sup> Much of its popularity most likely stems from its teaching on the Jewish calendar.<sup>43</sup> Not adopting the lunar calendar of national Israel (354 days in a year), the Qumran community followed a solar calendar (364 days), remembering feast celebrations on entirely different days. As can be seen in the following passage from the *Damascus Document*, the sect felt that this was a defining issue for its community:

[...] with a covenant, and with all Israel. Therefore let a man take upon himself the oath to return to the Law of Moses, for in it everything is laid out in detail. But the specification of the time during which all Israel is blind to all these rules is laid out in detail in the "Book of Time Divisions by Jubilees and Weeks." On the day a man promises to return to the Law of Moses the Angel of Obstruction will leave him, if he keeps His words. That is why Abraham was circumcised on the day he gained true knowledge. (XVI.1–6)

This exhortation is given to those who have veered from the Law of Moses; thus, they are encouraged to take an oath to return to the Lord by the keeping of the Torah. The *Damascus Document* explains that all of the details may be found in the Law itself, but the "Book of Time Divisions by Jubilees and Weeks," clarifies details regarding the observance of the Jewish calendar. It can be observed that the sect's observation of this calendar was entirely contrary to the general practice of Jewish Palestinians. According to the *Damascus Document*, Israel was "blind to all these rules" as they were spelled out in *Jubilees*. Clearly, *Jubilees* represents an interpretation of the Torah in this respect.

But everyone has an interpretation of the Law, so how does one know the correct one? This explains the existence of texts like the *Damascus Document*, *Jubilees*, and the *Community Rule*. They,

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<sup>41</sup> VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning*, 198.

<sup>42</sup> This number is debated because it is not certain whether or not several fragments came from the same scroll (*ibid.*, 197).

<sup>43</sup> DeSilva, "Reading the Bible at Qumran," 21.

and others, provide correct interpretations of the sect's most important text, the Law. They act in some respects like the Mishnah did for Rabbinic Judaism later on. Although it was considered authoritative, it was not ever considered as Scripture.

This point is bolstered by two texts in the *Damascus Document*. First, in a warning passage regarding the three traps of Belial, the writer accuses those who have not observed God's law regarding fornication of the following: "... they have reviled the statutes of God's covenant, saying, 'They are not well-founded.' They continually speak abhorrent things against them." Perhaps the writer is simply saying that the unfaithful deny the truth of the law of God, but since the writer had just presented some interpretations of the Law, it is more likely that the unfaithful spoke out against those things. Convinced as they were regarding the correct interpretation of the Law, the Qumranites denounce any who did not agree with their view.

The second text, acting as a summary/conclusion of the "exhortation" section of the *Damascus Document* is more explicit in this respect:

But all who hold fast to these rules, going out and coming in according to the Law, always obeying the Teacher and confessing to God as follows: "We have wickedly sinned, we and our ancestors by living contrary to the covenant laws: just and true are Your judgments against us" and do not act arrogantly against His holy laws and His righteous ordinance and His reliable declarations and who disciple themselves by the old laws by which the members of the *Yahad* were governed and listen attentively to the Teacher of Righteousness, not abandoning the correct laws when they hear them—they will rejoice and be happy and exultant. (BXX.27b–33)

"The correct laws" are the interpretations of the sect, most particularly, of the Teacher of Righteousness, the spiritual leader at Qumran. In addition, as noted previously in this essay, the conclusion of the *Damascus Document* calls the writing the "most recent interpretation" of the Law. Therefore, at the close of both major sections of the *Damascus Document* the author(s) reiterate the point that the writing is an interpretation of the Law.

*Jubilees*, especially in regard to the Jewish calendar, was considered to be authoritative because it was considered the "true interpretation" of the Torah, but it was not considered as Scrip-

ture.<sup>44</sup> The fact that *Jubilees* is not quoted to buttress the authority of the *Damascus Document* is further evidence that the sect did not view the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works in the same light as they did the Law and the Prophets.

But VanderKam and Flint believe that *Jubilees* is cited in the *Damascus Document*: “No one above the age of sixty shall hold the office [sic] of judge of the nation, because when Adam broke faith, his life was shortened, and in the heat of anger against the earth’s inhabitants, God commanded their minds to regress before their life was over” (X.7b–10a).<sup>45</sup> The supposed citation is found in *Jubilees* XXIII.10–12a:

For Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life; and behold, he did not complete four jubilees in his life, when he had grown old by reason of the wickedness, and was full of his days. And all the generations which shall arise from this time until the day of the great judgment shall grow old quickly, before they complete two jubilees, and their knowledge shall forsake them by reason of their old age and all their knowledge shall vanish away.<sup>46</sup>

Points of correspondence include the idea of life expectancy being shortened due to sin, in addition to a diminishing of knowledge in old age, due to the same. But the *Damascus Document* argues that the shortening of life began with Adam’s sin, whereas *Jubilees* maintains that this cutting down of life expectancy was initiated at the time of Abraham (“from this time”). This amounts to an insurmountable point of dissimilarity if one would argue that the *Damascus Document* is deliberately citing *Jubilees*. Nonetheless, it seems quite possible that the *Damascus Document* expands

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Knibb, in *The Qumran Community*, disagrees. Referring to apocryphal or pseudepigraphal works, such as *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, he remarks, “These are works which were accepted by the Qumran community and in some cases may have been regarded as having canonical status, but they are not sectarian writings in the narrow sense of the term” (1).

<sup>45</sup> VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning*, 176.

<sup>46</sup> R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), <<http://www.piney.com/ApocJubileeBook.html>> (accessed 11 April 2006), 72.

on the teaching of *Jubilees* in respect to the idea of sin's negative consequences on man's longevity.

It may be summarized that no direct citation of *Jubilees* is given in the *Damascus Document*, although this writing is referenced due to its adherence to the Torah, especially in respect to the Jewish calendar. The Qumranites regarded it as the correct interpretation of the Law, therefore it was important to the sect.

### **The *Book of Meditation***

Knowledge of the *Book of Meditation* is given as one of the prerequisites for leadership positions among the Essenes in the *Damascus Document*. Judges had to know it along with basic covenantal principles (X.4–10); priests and overseers were required to learn its teachings (XIII.2). Priests who headed the general membership were obliged to be “learned in the *Book of Meditation* and in all the regulations of the Law, speaking them in the proper way” (XIV.7b–8a). But this writing is not known just to the *Damascus Document*; it is referred to in the “Charter for Israel in the Last Days”<sup>47</sup> (1QSa, 1Q28a): “From [early ch]ildhood each boy is to be instructed in the Book of Meditation. As he grows older, they shall teach him the statues of the Covenant, and [as his ability permits,] they shall [gro]und him in their laws” (I.6–8). It would seem then that this text is foundational for the development of each member of the sect. Nonetheless, it is difficult to say what this text actually is.<sup>48</sup> Wise, Abegg, and Cook call this writing “mysterious,” offering no idea of its identity.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the *Book of Meditation* is none other than the *Community Rule*. The *Community Rule* may have acted as a constitution for the Essenes.<sup>50</sup> Thus, it would need to be read, explained, and

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<sup>47</sup> This is the name that Wise, Abegg, and Cook assign to this text (*Dead Sea Scrolls*, 145). Dupont-Sommer refers to this work as the *Rule Annexe* (*Essene Writings*, 70).

<sup>48</sup> To this date, no Dead Sea Scrolls writing has been discovered that bears this name.

<sup>49</sup> Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 71.

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 8. Regarding the *Community Rule*, deSilva writes: “Though never considered ‘Scripture,’ it had a force more binding than

even meditated upon. Dupont-Sommer suggests that the popularity of the writing supports this view: “in addition to the scroll found in Cave 1, fragments of the same work corresponding to eleven different manuscripts have been found in Cave 4.”<sup>51</sup> But internal considerations in the *Damascus Document* may eliminate this theory from consideration. In the passage where priestly qualifications are given it is asserted that the presiding priest should be “knowledgeable in the Book of Meditation” (XIII.2). The text continues by insisting that he must abide by the “rules” that are given therein, and that the congregation will follow his lead. But more specifically the *Damascus Document* states, “But if it is a case of the law of skin diseases, then the priest must come and be present in the camp, and the Overseer shall instruct him in the details of the Law, and even if the priest is ignorant, it is he who must isolate the one suffering from skin disease, because that duty is the priests’ alone” (XIII.5–7a). From this it would seem that the *Book of Meditation* would provide some legislation on the proper handling of people with skin diseases.<sup>52</sup> Although the *Community Rule* discusses certain aspects of ritual purity, it does not speak directly about the matter of skin disease.

Could it be possible that the *Book of Meditation* is the book of Leviticus? Leviticus speaks extensively on the matter of purity as it relates to skin disease (chaps. 13–14). Since the Essenes consider themselves as the true priestly line, descendants of Zadok, it makes sense that they might call the book of Leviticus the *Book of Meditation*, the most “priestly” section of the Torah. Although this theory seems plausible, sufficient evidence is not available to confirm its validity.

It may be summarized that the identity of the *Book of Meditation* remains unknown, although it played an important role among the sect. If it is to be identified as the *Community Rule*, as Dupont-Sommer suggests, then its reference in the *Damascus Document* is

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Scripture, and its force was felt consistently throughout one’s time with the sect from initiation to death” (“Reading the Bible at Qumran,” 21).

<sup>51</sup> Dupont-Sommer, *Essene Writings*, 70.

<sup>52</sup> The *Community Rule* teaches on maintaining purity throughout, although it deals with the matter of cleansing only in III.9; IV.20–22; and V.13–14. None of these passages, however, deals with the matter of skin disease.

not surprising, given its core value to the Essenes. Since the *Community Rule* acted as the sectarian charter for the Essenes to provide guidelines for the fulfilling of the Law, its authority was derived from the Torah. But it was not necessarily accorded Scriptural authority, for the *Damascus Document* does not quote from it in any way. Like *Jubilees*, it was regarded as a “true interpretation” of the law, and so should be obeyed.

If the *Book of Meditation* is to be identified as the book of Leviticus, the problem is removed, for Leviticus was especially important to the sectarians, given their Zadokite lineage. Furthermore, Leviticus is quoted four times in the *Damascus Document*.<sup>53</sup> In four other instances, summary interpretations of passages from Leviticus are provided.<sup>54</sup> It occupied a key place in the Qumran “canon.” For this reason, this author believes that the *Book of Meditation* is best identified as canonical Leviticus.

## Summary

Of the problem texts in the *Damascus Document*, no serious affront to the concept of canon arises. This document references both *Jubilees* and the *Book of Meditation*, but does not quote either (unless one holds to Leviticus as the identity of the *Book of Meditation*). In any case, the Qumranites do not quote apocryphal or pseudepigraphal works, clearly distinguishing that which is Scripture from that which is not.

## CONCLUSION

Given the evidence as discussed above from the two chief sectarian writings, the *Community Rule* and more pointedly the *Damascus Document*, it is likely that the Essenes accepted as Scripture the canonical Law, Prophets, and possibly the Writings. Both the Law and the Prophets are quoted in the *Damascus Document* with five different introductory formulas. In addition, both the Law and the Prophets are introduced as being spoken by God in the *Damascus Document*. It is clear that the author(s) accorded Scriptural authority to these bodies of literature. Since only one quota-

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<sup>53</sup> Lev 23:38; 25:14; 26:31; 27:31.

<sup>54</sup> Lev 11:32; chaps. 12–15.

tion occurs from the Writings in this text, one cannot assume from this evidence that these compositions were fully accepted as Scripture at Qumran.

Above all things, the *Damascus Document* demonstrates the importance of the Law to the Essenes. The Torah forms the center for sectarian life at Qumran; all other writings are therefore judged according to their adherence to the Law. *Jubilees* and the *Book of Meditation* are regarded as correct interpretations of the Law, and so they are highly esteemed among the sect. But neither text is quoted in the *Damascus Document*, a characteristic that would lead one to believe that the sect understood that they did not carry the same authority as the Law and the Prophets. Furthermore, since no quotations from the apocrypha or the pseudepigrapha occur in the *Damascus Document*, it is difficult to see how one might argue from the *Damascus Document* that the inhabitants of Qumran accepted many different writings as Scripture.

Therefore, since no explicit statement exists from Qumran that would say which writings should be considered as Scripture, at best one can only speak in terms of probability. Given the evidence in the *Damascus Document*, it is likely that the Essenes rejected non-canonical works as Scripture.