

FURTHER NOTES ON THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS¹

The two bronze scrolls discovered in March 1952 in a cave near the Khirbet Qumran² were found by a joint expedition of the French Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, the American School of Oriental Research, and the Palestine Museum. The object of this expedition was the thorough exploration of the whole vicinity of the Khirbet Qumran. Some forty caves or rock-recesses were examined, and all of them showed evidence of use, many of them containing pottery of the same kind as the jars used for storing the scrolls in the original cave of 1947. It was in one of these caves that the bronze scrolls were found, and they are now in the possession of Père De Vaux, O.P. One of them, consisting of two pieces joined together by rivets, is about 160 cm. (somewhat over five feet) in length, the other about half that length; the width of both is some 30 cm. (nearly a foot), and they seem to have been originally joined together in one piece. Both are inscribed in columns with letters about 1 cm. in height, which appear to be Aramaic, though it is impossible to read anything yet. It seems probable that they originally constituted a panel which was perhaps set up in a building (presumably the community-centre at Khirbet Qumran), and was removed during a time of danger, rolled up and stored for safety in the cave. The unrolling of these remarkable objects presents serious difficulties, for they are not only tightly rolled, but the bronze is completely oxidised and very brittle.³

The finds in the Wadi Muraba'at in the winter of 1951-2, which are now being examined and assessed,⁴ have no direct connexion at all with the Khirbet Qumran sect and the 1947 scrolls; however, the precise second-century A.D. dating of this new material will serve as a valuable term of comparison in forming a more accurate estimate of the date of the Khirbet Qumran documents.⁵ The exploration of the Khirbet Qumran, with its unique cemetery of more than a thousand graves,⁶ makes it probable that this was the "Mother house" of a sect

¹ The following notes are by way of supplement to the article that appeared in the January 1953 number of *Scripture* (VOL. V, 112-22).

² *Art. cit.*, 113.

³ Note by G. Lankester Harding in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, LXXXIV (1952), 59. See also *Biblical Archaeologist*, xv (1952), 44-5.

⁴ Above, VOL. V, 112-13.

⁵ On the exploration of the Khirbet Qumran and Wadi Muraba'at, see G. Lankester Harding, "Khirbet Qumran and Wady Muraba'at", in *Pal. Exp. Quart.* LXXXIV (1952), 104-09.

⁶ Above, VOL. V, 119-20.

of the Essenes, and that it was they who deposited the scrolls in the cave about A.D. 70. Moreover, the fact that the scrolls in question give evidence of long usage strongly favours their pre-Christian origin. Features of script and orthography which might seem to indicate a later period can be satisfactorily explained by bearing in mind the separatist and esoteric character of the sect responsible for the scrolls; in any case, our information on ancient Hebrew writing is meagre.¹ Hence, of the many theories proposed to explain the origin of these writings, those which assign their composition to the second century B.C. (Maccabean period), or to the first (time of Alexander Janneus, or of Pompey and Herod), have much to be said in their favour. However, certainty on this question is not yet possible, and we must await further evidence and research.²

This further evidence, it may be hoped, will be provided in the first place by the full publication of the texts already known. Of these, the so-called "Lamech Scroll" has not yet been unrolled, the scrolls in the possession of the Hebrew University have not been fully published, nor have the numerous fragments in the possession of the Palestine Museum. The new bronze scrolls have yet to be unrolled, and there is always the possibility that some of the material found in 1947 and subsequently is still in private hands. The numerous caves and hiding-places in the Wilderness of Judaea may yet yield further texts; an announcement in the press tells of an expedition organised by the Catholic University of Louvain, which left Belgium in January of this year to explore caves in the Palestine desert. Finally, there is the very plausible theory proposed in varying measure by Eissfeldt, Kahle, De Vaux, Driver, Rowley and others, that a large portion of the original library in the Khirbet Qumran cave was removed in A.D. 800, as recorded by the Patriarch Timotheus of Seleucia,³ and that some of it found its way into the hands of the Jewish Karaite sect; in this way, copies worn out with use were eventually deposited in the Genizah (store-place for disused MSS) of the Karaite synagogue of Cairo, which was explored in 1896-7. If this theory can be proved by careful examination and study of all the material found in the Genizah, then a wealth of new material will be available to the scholar.

¹ The presence of Syriac characters on some of the fragments collected in 1949, and the existence of fragments written on both sides (i.e. deriving from a codex), are alleged as proof that the scrolls cannot antedate the second century A.D. However, the Dominican Fathers who have examined the fragments in question point out that the "Syriac characters" are really cursive Hebrew forms, with occasional letters resembling the Syriac; and where fragments are inscribed on both sides, the writing is not due to the same hand.

² On these theories, see the review of Professor Rowley's book below, pp. 26 ff.

³ Above, VOL. V, 121. The full text in English and further details regarding the A.D. 800 discovery and also that referred to by Origen are to be found in Professor G. R. Driver's little book, *The Hebrew Scrolls* (Oxford 1950), 24-7.

Though much remains to be done, we cannot but be grateful for the really valuable and extensive contributions that have been made on this question in the last five years by scholars of every nationality and shade of belief.

In conclusion, we must record with regret the death in Jerusalem on 28 February 1953 of Professor E. L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University. Already well known as a leading authority on ancient Jewish synagogues and tomb-inscriptions in Palestine, Professor Sukenik will be remembered particularly for the part he played in the acquisition and early publication of several of the 1947 scrolls, and for the scholarly zeal he displayed in defending their genuineness. Many will recall his visit to this country and his lectures on the scrolls just over three years ago. His son is at present studying archaeology in England.

POSTSCRIPT

In the current number of the *Revue biblique*,¹ Père de Vaux, O.P., confirms the rumours of yet a third discovery, or rather discoveries, of cave MSS in the area west of the Dead Sea.

Some additional details are first given on the discoveries in the Wadi Muraba'at and the Khirbet Qumran in 1951-2. From the former locality, in addition to the fragments already mentioned, came a fragment of Isaias and a complete phylactery; all the Biblical texts from this source are in conformity with the Massoretic. In the exploration of the Khirbet Qumran area in March 1952 were found, in addition to the bronze scrolls already described, MS fragments in Hebrew and Aramaic; among these have been identified portions of *Exodus* (two MSS), *Isaias*, *Jeremias*, *Psalms*, and *Ruth* (two MSS). Further exploration of this area was to be undertaken by Père de Vaux and Mr G. Lankester Harding during the present season.

The latest discoveries, since March 1952, have been principally the work of the zealous Bedouin, now thoroughly "manuscript-conscious". Firstly a cave in the Wady en-Nar (the Cedron) has yielded a large collection of Arabic papyri, mostly private letters, belonging to the two or three centuries following the Arab invasion of A.D. 636. From the same source came fragments of uncial Greek codices of the 5th-8th centuries A.D., in which portions of the *Book of Wisdom*, the *Gospels* of St Mark and St John and *Acts* have been identified; there are also fragments of non-canonical writings, and other documents in the cursive script. Finally, the same cave has yielded fragments in Christian-

¹ LX (1953), 83-7.

Palestinian Syriac, frequently palimpsest in character ; so far, passages from *Josue*, the *Gospels* of St Luke and St John, and *Acts* have been identified ; there is also a Syrian letter on papyrus written by a Christian monk.

The second series of finds, apparently made during August 1952, came from a number of adjoining caves in a region not yet identified with certainty. Like the documents discovered in the Wadi Muraba'at earlier in the same year, these new MSS are dated, by means of internal chronological indications and from the coins that accompanied them, to the period of the revolt of Bar Kokhba (A.D. 132-5). There are just a few fragments in Hebrew, including portions of *Genesis*, *Numbers* and *Psalms*, together with a complete phylactery. Further, there is a letter in Hebrew addressed to Simeon ben Kozeba, leader of the revolt, two Aramaic contracts dated in "the third year of the liberation of Israel in the name of Simeon ben Kozeba", two Greek and two Aramaic documents dated in the era of the Province of Arabia, and a series of Nabataean papyri, some of considerable length, which furnish us with a greater abundance of continuous texts in this language than all previously-known inscriptions put together (however, the cursive text will prove difficult to decipher). Finally, the Palestine Archaeological Museum has acquired from this same source fragments of a parchment roll containing a Greek text of the Minor Prophets, written in a beautiful uncial script which can be dated with probability to the end of the first century A.D. : portions of Micheas, Jonas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias and Zacharias are represented. Père D. Barthélemy discusses this new MS in a separate article¹ and proposes certain very interesting conclusions on the basis of careful comparison with other Greek texts of the Minor Prophets. The new MS, he argues, represents a special "Palestinian recension" of the Septuagint, made between about A.D. 70 and 130. It is the work of educated Jews of Palestine, and is an attempt to bring the Septuagint in line with the existing Hebrew text. It is to be identified, firstly with the Greek text of the Jewish rabbis which St Justin cites in his *Dialogue against Trypho* ; secondly with the text that formed the basis of the work of the three Jewish translators of the second century, Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion ; thirdly with the text that provided the "hebraisms" of the early Coptic version ; and finally, with the "*editio quinta*" in the hexapla of Origen. Père Barthélemy finds confirmation for his theories by examination of the corresponding passage of Habacuc in the Hebrew Midrash discovered in 1947 ; there the text agrees rather with the original Septuagint than with the new Palestinian recension. Further research will, no doubt, test these conclusions, and provide useful information on the character

¹ In *Rev. bibl.*, LX (1953), 18-22.

of both the Greek and Hebrew texts used in the making of this new document.

The third, and perhaps most important, series of discoveries came from the immediate vicinity of the Khirbet Qumran itself. In a little cavity in the rock, the Bedouin found a number of fragments, among which has been identified a passage of the famous *Damascus* (or *Zadokite*) *Document*; the importance of this find need not be emphasised. Another discovery was made by the indefatigable Bedouin in a most unexpected place on the edge of the terrace on which the Khirbet is situated; and this time the Jordan Department of Antiquities was able to intervene, before the exploration was complete, and take over the work. With the assistance of the French Biblical School of Jerusalem and the Palestine Museum, the Department carefully explored the grotto in question between the 22 and 29 September 1952. The sum-total of the finds is considerable, and, in the opinion of Père de Vaux, probably surpasses that of the original find of 1947. The hoard comprises numerous Biblical fragments, including Hebrew and Aramaic portions of the *Book of Tobias* (hitherto known only in Greek and other versions), and, for the first time in this locality, several fragments in Greek; there are fragments of the Apocrypha and of sectarian writings, and of phylacteries. Another hiding-place was discovered by the expedition and was found to contain some MS fragments unfortunately in poor condition. The assessment of these new riches is only just beginning, and much still remains in the hands of the Bedouin and of dealers. The government of Jordan has generously granted a considerable sum of money for the purchase of all such material, so it is hoped that all the finds will eventually be recovered and made public.

Other recent reports quote Dr Tushingham, Director of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, as stating that the above-mentioned discoveries make the original 1947 finds seem rather "tame" by comparison; further reports state that 75 per cent of the books of the Old Testament are represented, and that the finds include the Aramaic original of the apocryphal *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Fuller details and confirmation of all these most interesting discoveries will be eagerly awaited, but, as Père de Vaux concludes, time and patience are essential if the work of assessing, reconstructing and interpreting is to be done properly.

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¹ *Biblical Archaeologist*, xvi (1953), 17-18.