Inner- and Extra-Jewish Polemics: The Parting of the Way Once Again*

* Armin Lange

In his long and exceptional career John Collins has distinguished himself in many ways and many functions. I was honored to serve with John as one of the editors of the *Dead Sea Discoveries* journal. Aside from such editorial responsibilities, I benefited much from John’s insights in his critiques of my scholarship. John Collins is one of the few scholars who from the very beginning of their work on the Dead Sea Scrolls studied them in the larger contexts of Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity. It is therefore a pleasure for me to honor John’s scholarship by way of this small comparison of Essene anti-Pharisaic polemics with the anti-Jewish polemics of early Christians. For this purpose I will discuss one Essene text, 4QpNah 3–4 iii 1–8, and one passage from the letters of Paul, 1 Thess 2:13–15.

In comparing these two polemical texts, I am not interested in whether and how far earlier Jewish literature might have influenced early Christian thought. Instead, I hope to gain new insights into the Judeo-Christian schism. Much effort has been spent in the last two decades on this question. The overall tendency of scholarship has been to see both religions intertwined in a complicated relationship, not parting ways until late antiquity. An example for this position is Daniel Boyarin’s book *Border Lines*.1 Boyarin thinks that only the birth of orthodox Christianity and the dominance of rabbinic Judaism resulted in the final split between the two religions. In his book *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways*, Marius Heemstra connects the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity with Nerva’s reform of the *fiscus iudaicus* in 96 CE. He argues that Nerva would have more sharply defined who is Jewish and who is not for the sake of his tax reform.2 These are just two examples of many studies and different approaches to the question of the so-called parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. There is no disagreement

---

* This article was written during a stay at the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies. I am much obliged for the wonderful research environment the Institute and its staff provided me.
that, in the first stages, early Christianity and the Jesus movement regarded themselves as a part of Judaism and need to be understood that way. What is debated is how long Christianity remained a Jewish group, and at what point it began to stand in opposition to Judaism.

In my opinion, the comparison of Essene anti-Pharisaic polemics with Pauline polemics against Judaism sheds new light on this question. The comparison demonstrates, in my opinion, that Christianity began to separate itself from Judaism as early as the middle of the first century CE. To argue my case, I will first analyze the anti-Pharisaic polemics in Essene texts from Qumran by way of the example of 4QpNah 3–4 iii 1–8. Afterwards I will discuss Paul's harsh criticism of Jews and Judaism in 1 Thess 2:13–15.

1 Anti-Pharisaic Texts in the Essene Literature from Qumran

Before I can engage with the anti-Pharisaic polemics of Pesher Nahum, I would like to give an example of the hermeneutic strategy of pesher exegesis. The continuous pesharim from Qumran quote passages from various prophetic books or the psalms. Sometimes these quotations are brief and sometimes more extensive. Each quotation is followed by an interpretation, which is introduced with the word פֶּשֶר, “meaning/interpretation.” A good example is the quotation and interpretation of Nah 2:12 in 4QpNah 3–4 i 1–3:

4QpNah 3–4 i 1–3:  
אַשָּׁר הַנַּל אָרַי לְלוֹנָא שֶם נוּר אָרִי [וַאֲזַי מַחֲרֵי מְפָשַׁר עַל דֵּרְכָּם] vacat…  
1 מָלֵךְ וֹאֶשָּׁר בַּקֶּשׁ לְלוֹנָא יְרֵשֵׁלָם בְּעַצָּת הָורֵישׁוּת הָהלַקְוֵהוּ 3 פַּדְמָלֵךְ וּמַמְנַצָּכָם  
אַשָּׁר הַנַּל אָרַי לְלוֹנָא שֶם נוּר אָרִי  
where the lion walks, to bring the lion cub 2 [and no one frightens it. (Nah 2:12) Its meaning regards Demetrius, the king of Jawan, who seeks to come to Jerusalem, because of the counsel of those who interpret regarding smooth things […] the kings of Greece from Antiochus until the rising of the rulers of the Kittim. And afterwards she will be trampled.

The quotation of Nah 2:12 and its Essene interpretation seem to have nothing to do with each other. But this first impression is misleading. The interpretation mentions the Greek king Demetrius. In Jewish literature from the second and first centuries BCE Jawan designates the Greco-Hellenistic world.

3 For אַשָּׁר as an abbreviated hiph’il infinitive (הַלָּכָה), see Shani L. Berrin, The Pesher Nahum Scroll from Qumran: An Exegetical Study (STDJ 53; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 134 n. 13 and the literature quoted there.