The Textual Growth of the Damascus Document Revisited

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In this essay to honour many years of friendship and collaboration with George Brooke, I focus on the most scripturally infused of all the Qumran compositions, the Damascus Document (D). This composition lies at the heart of two related problems that still lie unresolved at the centre of much Qumran research. In previous research (including my own) D has seemed to provide the key to the origins of a discrete community, in which the interpretation of scriptural law was intrinsic to its self-understanding. But entailed in—and always complicating—this agenda is D’s relationship, literary and historical, to the Serek ha-Yaḥad (S), which exhibits a degree of textual overlap whose precise relationship remains frustratingly elusive.1

D employs scriptural words, phrases, and imagery in an astonishingly rich way. The second part (the Laws) contain many regulations directly drawn from scriptural texts. The Serek displays a much lesser degree of allusion to scripture, especially to scriptural law. Indeed, the function of scriptural law in communal self-definition constitutes perhaps the most distinctive difference between the two works. While S includes injunctions for the laws of Moses to be observed (1QS 1:3; 5:8; 8:15, 22) and studied (6:7), their content is not explicated. One hesitates to use the word “lip-service” of this attitude, but any reader of the Two Spirits Discourse will appreciate that S in its fullest form suggests a move towards a quite different understanding of the rules of human existence.

Scriptural Law in the Qumran Archive

Prompted in particular by the manuscripts collective known as 4QMMT, alongside the Temple Scroll (11QT) and the Damascus Document, a majority of scholars have come to accept that the issue of interpretation of Mosaic law lies

1 The literature on this is enormous and reflects a wide range of options. For a recent assessment (from a rather skeptical viewpoint), see Gwynned de Looijer, The Qumran Paradigm: A Critical Evaluation of Some Foundational Hypotheses in the Construction of the Qumran Sect (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015) and the bibliography provided there. In particular, I would single out the work of Sarianna Metso, Charlotte Hempel, and Alison Schofield in this regard.
at the origins of movements or groups behind the production of the Scrolls. Accordingly, the Laws of D have in recent years received more attention than the Admonition, where scholars had sought to discover the identity and history of its community. Most commentators recognize, furthermore, that the *Laws* are not a coherent collection, but a compilation of different kinds of rules. Rubinstein distinguished “urban halakhah” from “camp rules,” the latter being regulations governing a particularly disciplinary form of communal life. Davis developed a chronological scheme or three kinds of material: first, “pre-Qumranic”—or perhaps we should rather say “pre-sectarian” or even “before the establishment of segregated communities”; then organizational and disciplinary rules that apply to “camp” or “city” communities; and finally material emanating from a redaction associated with the material in the S texts, that is, presumably connected to the *Yahad*). Most recently Hempel, who has studied this material and the relationship of the legal material in D and S more intensively than any other, employs a basic distinction between community legislation and “halakhah” (of general application), the latter being further subdivided by adding a number of miscellaneous rules. The “halakhah,” characterized by a “strong scriptural orientation,” shows no sign of redaction, is devoid of polemic and may be compared with the contents of 11QT and 4QMMT. Rules of communal organization are indicated by references to camps (מחנות, cf. 4QMMT [4Q394 3–7 ii 15, 17; 8 iv 10]) and “congregation” (עדה), and dictate the responsibilities of an “overseer” (מבקר) and “judges” (שופטים) in governing the community, along with priests and Levites. The array of authority figures is apparently disturbed by the double mention (CD 12:21; 13:22) of the *משכיל*, leading Hempel to suspect an editorial intrusion. There is certainly little place in D for another official alongside the judges, priests, Levites, and the *mebaqqer*. But while Hempel may well be right, *משכיל* in D may be a term for a community member, in line with its use in Dan 11:33, 35 and 12:3, 10 to designate one of an elite community. This interpretation, in fact, makes the best sense of

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