

his heel.' Also the enmity was to exist, not only between the serpent and the Seed of the woman, but between the serpent and the woman herself; and here too there is a correspondence in the Apocalyptic vision. If then there is reason for thinking that this mystery at the close of the Scripture record answers to the mystery in the beginning of it, and that 'the Woman' mentioned in both passages is one and the same, then she can be none other than St Mary, thus introduced prophetically to our notice immediately on the transgression of Eve.¹¹

In other words, as the Cardinal has already reminded us, and as the earliest and most constant tradition of antiquity insists, the special prerogatives of our Blessed Lady are intimately involved in the doctrine of the Incarnation itself. The Fathers of Ephesus summed them all up in the one pregnant word *Theotokos*, Mother of God. When you have said that you have said all.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 415-6.



THE QUEST FOR GOD IN THE JUDEAN DESERT

I. The Men of Qumran

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

IT is an age-old commonplace of spiritual writers that God is mysteriously nearer to those who would flee 'the world' and seek him alone in solitude. Such writers can justifiably point to the origins of monastic life in the deserts of Egypt, as also to the constant renewal of a monastic ideal by a return to the desert as can be seen in Cîteaux's efforts. In our own day a Père de Foucauld lived and died like an eremite of old; and that precious life and death would seem to have begotten a thriving new spiritual movement in the Church. That solitudes and deserts can foster and nurture spiritual realities is certainly a traditional and valid theme. We can always retain the doggerel-like text 'O

beata solitudo, O sola beatitudo' ('Blest solitude, our solitary bliss').

But now, in the Judean desert, a completely new area of spiritual productivity has become known to us in the last ten years. A new world of prayer and of prayerful people have been revealed. At least a preliminary chapter needs to be added to all our histories of the monastic life or of spirituality (in so far as such can be written).

In the Judean desert there lived the men of Qumrân, seemingly from 164 or 150 B.C. till 70 A.D., with a notable break in 31 B.C., the year of a devastating earthquake, till 4 B.C. We say the 'men of Qumrân' because 'community' might be a little misleading. Terms such as 'the Assembly' or 'the Elect' represent rather better how they looked at and thought of themselves. In origin they were devout Jews who, under the leadership of the 'Teacher of Right', voluntarily exiled themselves to the desert of Juda, and notably to that portion immediately West and North-West of the Dead Sea. The centre of the area is about twelve miles, as the crow flies, from Jerusalem.

We can gain from considering this region which is so special in so many ways. From Jerusalem to the north-west shore of the Dead Sea the ground drops rapidly from 2,500 feet above to over 1,000 feet below sea-level. The whole region is broken up and rocky, growing more and more desolate as you walk down the gullies towards the Dead Sea. Several wadis or occasional torrent-beds break through the rock formations from west to east; thus the wadi of the Cedron can be followed from Jerusalem itself, down past the fourth-century monastery of Mar Saba, and on to the Dead Sea. This wadi forms a southern boundary for the principal area of the Scrolls, though other finds were made in the Wadi Murabba' at further south. The centre of the headquarters of the men of Qumrân has been found and excavated at Khirbet Qumrân. That centre and all the adjacent region is well below sea-level, and for the most part dry and barren and sinister. The very jagged hill ridges are honey-combed with caves which for centuries have been hot and dark. Five miles north of the region is and was the oasis and copious water of Jericho; to the south was an almost equally famous oasis at Ain Gedi (or Engaddi, of our Bible texts). Even when there are torrential downpours at Jerusalem or Bethlehem or the hill ridges above, little rain is known in this lower region. We have mostly dry and more

Egypt-like conditions. Because of these very special conditions, a great number of scrolls (of animal skins), some cloths, and innumerable fragments of papyri have survived, in a way which has never been thought possible in Palestine. Remains of at least one large library (community library?) and several individuals' books have been found; in effect, there are ten complete scrolls, and fragments of some six hundred different works have so far been recognized.

From the remains and fragments of so much writing we can reasonably arrive at an identification of the 'men of Qumrân'. There is still some debate possible¹; yet it seems true that the majority of scholars now agree that the men of Qumrân were Essenes, who so far had been only known to us in the fulsome descriptions of Josephus, from Philo, and from a few almost casual references in classical writers. One should be particularly noted. Pliny the Elder visited Palestine and Syria; and of his two-page description of the region he devotes one whole page to this Qumrân area, saying: 'West of the Asphaltite lake (Dead Sea) are installed the *Essenes*, some way from and above the noxious banks of the shore. A solitary people they are, and most extraordinary, without women, without love, without money, and whose only company is the palm-trees. Yet they regularly renew themselves, and recruits come in plenty, either people tired of life or those whom reverses of fortune have driven to this mode of life. And so, for thousands of years, however unbelievable it may seem, a people among whom no one is born lives on unendingly. In this way, thanks to them, those who repent of their lives can do so profitably.'

'A little below the Essenes (i.e. further south) stood the town of Engaddi, second only to Jericho for its flourishing palm-groves, but today reduced to ruins. A little lower still in the fortress of Masada, in the mountain, and also withdrawn from the Asphaltite lake.'

There are fanciful elements in this text, but the geography is accurate, and we can take Pliny's evidence that the men of Qumrân were in fact the Essenes, or at least a branch of the Essenes. We can also note Pliny's amazement, almost shocked attitude when faced with what appeared to be large-scale

¹ Thus Professor C. Rabin argues that the Qumrân community maintained the pharisaic *haburah* of the first century B.C., etc. (Cf. *Qumrân Stories*, O.U.P., 1957.)

celibacy, which to him, as to many a present-day pagan, was incomprehensible and unnatural and nothing more².

The ideas and ideals revealed to us by the finding of the library remains and fragments deserve to be studied for their own sake and also as an important element in the back-ground of the Incarnation. For the moment let us consider some of the guiding principles and spiritual teachings of the men of Qumrân.

The Assembly of the Elect was ruled by a Manual of Discipline (several copies have been found); nowadays we would say 'constitutions'. Rules played a large part. There was a rigorous period of initiation, then tests, constant probation, and so to maturity of life—very much in terms of moral maturity. The regulations or rulings savour much of pharasaism; but we must not think of pharasaism in the pejorative sense alone. There was an inward Spirit, and the men of Qumrân were taught and realised that³ 'only through the Holy Spirit can we achieve union with God's truth and be purged of all iniquities. . . . For it is only through the spiritual apprehension of God's truth that man's ways can be properly directed. . . . Only by a spirit of uprightness and humility can his sin be atoned. Only by the submission of his soul to all the ordinances of God can his flesh be made clean. Only then can it really be sprinkled with waters of ablution. . . .'

There was indeed to be a Holy Spirit as the mainspring of all human living and loving, and the very rule itself is full of spiritual content, as we can gather from some of its noble opening words: ' . . . to seek God . . . to do what is good and upright in his sight, in accordance with what he has commanded through Moses and through his servants, the prophets; to love all that he has chosen and to hate all that he has rejected; to keep far from all evil and to cling to all good works. . . . Let all who would willingly serve God's truth bring all of their mind, all of their strength, and all of their wealth into the community of God, so that their minds may be purified by the truth of his precepts, their strength

2 Skeletons of women have been found in the outskirts of the cemetery at Qumrân. Josephus tells us that some Essene groups had families (B.J. 2, 8, 13), and the Zadokite document (several copies found at Qumrân) allows for the married (vii, 6a-9). Fr Milik likens these married Essenes to Tertiaries of a religious Order. (*Dix Ans de Découvertes dans le Désert de Juda*, pp. 44 and 111.)

3 Citations from the Scrolls are mostly in the rendering of T. H. Gaster, in *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect* (Secker and Warburg, 1957).

controlled by his perfect ways, and their wealth disposed in accordance with his just design. . . . ' (i, 1-15.)

From the beginning the novice, or 'initiate', is asked to be resolute in seeking the one true way which will maintain him in his election and God's friendship. Yet two ways were always possible, and the 'two ways' theme which was soon to reappear in Christian literature, notably in the *Didache*⁴. The Two Ways, set before all who would seek God, are represented as very much in the hands of God's all-seeing and irresistible providence and predetermination: 'all that is and ever was comes from a God of knowledge. Before things came into existence, he determined the plan of them; and when they fill their appointed roles it is in accordance with his glorious design that they discharge their functions. Nothing can be changed. In his hand is the government of all things.'

The characteristics of each 'way' are amplified and expressed in terms of the divergent activity of two groups of spirits: 'There is the way those spirits operate in the world for the enlightenment of man's heart, the making straight before him all the ways of righteousness and truth, the implanting in his heart of fear for the judgments of God. A spirit of humility and patience, abundant compassion, perpetual goodness, insight, discrimination, a sense of the Divine Power that is based at once on an apprehension of God's works and a reliance on his plenteous mercy. . . .'

'But to the spirit of perversity belong greed, remissness in right-doing, wickedness and falsehood, pride and presumption, deceit and guile. . . .'

The doctrine of *election* looms large, and the men of Qumrân often referred to themselves as the Elect, and were very conscious of this role for themselves. As examples let us cite a note on Psalm 37, 9: 'But they that wait upon Jahweh, those shall inherit the land'.

The reference of the word "those" is to the congregation of God's elect, the men who do his will' (fragment A. Col. 1).

With the sense of election went a very firm consciousness of being in the tradition and faith of their fathers. Thus from the rather exotic writing on 'The Way of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness' we can extract a portion of the priestly blessing

⁴ Which, if we may accept the findings of the latest scholarly work, was contemporary with the later period of Qumrân, A.D. 50-70. (J. P. Audet, O.P., *La Didache, Etude Bibliques*, 1958).

(War xiii, 1-00): 'And now, God of our Fathers, we will bless your name for ever. We are the people (of Your inheritance). With our fathers you made a covenant, and you have confirmed it with their seed through all ages. In all the evidences of Your glory among us, there has always been the memory of Your covenant . . . You have made unto Yourself an eternal people, and You have cast our lot in the portion of light, that we may evince Your Truth; and from old You have charged the Angel of Light to help us. . . .'

The man of Qumrân would occupy his day with regular prayer, and meals in common, with manual labour: sheep and goat pasturing, pottery, tanning and skin preparation for books, and the constant copying and study of the Scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament. Rather more than a fourth of the texts and fragments found are Old Testament texts. A *scriptorium* or room for text transcription has been found, complete with desks and ink-well. Of special interest to us is that despite the rather piece-meal commentaries of the 'peshet' type, sc. 'This means . . .', 'this refers to . . .', there is all through an underlying devotion to truth; and 'truth' comes to be identified with the Torah, or Law of God, and serving or doing the Truth means keeping the Law: cf Comment on Habbakuk, 2, 3: '*Though it tarry, yet await it: for it will surely come, it will not delay*': 'This refers to the men of truth, the men who carry out the Law (Torah), whose hands do not flinch from serving the Truth, even though the final moment be long drawn out. For all the times appointed by God will come in due course even as he has determined in the secrets of his wisdom.' In this text, as in many others of this fragmentary literature, there is a strong undercurrent of Messianic expectation. The time was indeed ripe for the coming of a Redeemer whom the men of Qumrân never knew. Meanwhile they prayed and pondered deeply on the lovable truth of God. One of the finest utterances of these contemplative men seems to have survived complete (from the Book of Hymns, xi, 3-14. Translation of T. H. Gaster):

I give thanks unto thee, O my God,
for thou hast wrought a wonder with dust
and hast shown forth thy power
in that which is moulded of clay.

For thou hast made me to know the deep, deep Truth,
and to divine thy wondrous works,
and hast put in my mouth the power to praise,
and psalmody on my tongue,
and hast given me lips unmarred
and readiness of song,
that I may sing of thy lovingkindness
and rehearse thy might all the day
and continually bless thy name.

I will show forth thy glory
in the midst of the sons of men,
and in thine abundant goodness
my soul will delight.

For I know that thy mouth is truth,
and in thy hand is bounty,
and in thy thought all knowledge,
and in thy power all might,
and that all thy glory is with thee.

In thine anger come all judgments of affliction,
but in thy goodness pardon abounding;
and thy mercies are shed upon all
who do thy will.

For thou hast made them to know thy deep, deep truth
and divine Thine inscrutable wonders;
and, for thy glory's sake,
Thou hast granted it unto man
to be purged of transgression,
that he may hallow himself unto thee
and be free from all taint of filth
and all guilt of perfidy,
to be one with them that possess thy truth
and to share the lot of thy Holy Beings,
to the end that this worm which is man
may be lifted out of the dust
to the height of eternal things,
and rise from a spirit perverse
to an holy understanding,
and stand in one company before thee

with the host everlasting and the spirits of knowledge
and the choir invisible,
to be for ever renewed
with all things that are.

An immense amount has been written about the Scrolls of the Judean Desert; there has been much controversy, and much speculation. By contrast the love and faith of the men of Qumrân (not always appreciated) is for all time and is an inspiration and consolation to us now. When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote (Hebrews, II, 36-40): '*And others had trial of mockeries and stripes . . . being in want, distressed and afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth. And all these, being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise; God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us*'—was he not thinking of the men of Qumrân, coming at the end of a long and glorious tradition in Israel?



‘LEVIATHAN WHICH YAHWEH MADE TO LAUGH AT’

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

WHY does God permit evil? It is a fatal timidity which induces us nowadays to pre-occupy ourselves exclusively with the apologetic aspects of this problem. A significant train of thought in the Bible invites us to see it from a far bolder, and I think from a more sublime, point of view. If we follow this train of thought we shall want not so much to apologize (in any possible sense of the word) for the fact of evil in the world, not so much to ‘reconcile it with God’s goodness’ as to glory in its being there for him to conquer. For it pertains to God’s glory that there should be positive forces of evil in the world, and that they should strive actively against his holy will—and not only that they should strive, but that they should seem for a time to prevail against him. It is glorious that there should