

THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY

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ESSENES. A Jewish sect which is known to have flourished from the mid-2d century B.C.E. to the time of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66–70 C.E.). They are described by a number of Greek and Latin authors, of whom the most important are the Jewish writers Philo and Josephus and the Roman Pliny (see *HJP* 2:555–74). The site of Qumran is widely believed to have been an Essene settlement, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are thought to have once constituted an Essene library. See also QUMRAN; DEAD SEA SCROLLS.

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A. Etymology

The name of the sect is variously given as *Essaioi* (Philo) or *Essēnoi* (Josephus, Dio, Hippolytus) in Greek, *Esseni* in Latin (Pliny). Epiphanius mentions both *Essēnoi*, which he identifies as a Samaritan sect, and *Ossaioi* or *Ossēnoi* from the vicinity of the Dead Sea (*Adv. Haer.* 19.1–4). The etymology of the name remains an enigma although several proposals have been put forward. Philo suggested that it was derived from the Gk *hosiotēs*, “holiness” (*Quod Omn* 75). Josephus seems to imply a pun on *semnotēs*, “sanctity” (*JW* 2.8.2 §119). Most scholars have assumed that the name is of Semitic origin, like Pharisee and Sadducee. The more popular suggestions include the following.

(a) The word *Essenes* could be derived from the Aram *ḥsy* (pl. *ḥsyn* or *ḥsyy*), “pious,” the equivalent of the Heb *ḥasîd*. This would suggest a connection between the Essenes

and the *ḥasīdīm* (*asidaioi*) mentioned in 1 Macc 2:42; 7:12–13 and 2 Macc 14:6, but this idea is open to the objection that *ḥsy* is never used in this sense in Jewish Aramaic.

(b) The Aramaic *ḥsy*, “healers” has been proposed especially by Vermes. Philo says that they were “therapeutae of God” (*Quod Omn* 75) and describes another community called Therapeutae (*Vita Cont*), but he understands the word in the sense of religious service rather than healing. It is not apparent that healing was such a dominant interest of the Essenes that they would derive their name from it.

(c) The Hebrew verb *ʿśh*, “do” yields a participial form *ʿōśin* in rabbinic Hebrew. It has been suggested that this might be an abbreviation for “Doers of the Law” or some such phrase (Goranson 1984). This form suggests the name *Ossēnoi* given by Epiphanius, but the word is too general and is not related to the Essenes by specific evidence.

(d) The word *ḥsh*, “to trust” is likewise only of general relevance. Other suggestions, such as *ḥzzy*, “seers” or *ḥšyy*, “silent ones” are likewise inconclusive.

It should be noted, however, that the name Essene is only attested in Greek and Latin, and hence the possibility of a Greek derivation deserves serious consideration. Two possibilities deserve mention.

(a) Josephus (*Ant* 3.7.5 §163–71) uses the word *essēn* for the high priest’s breastplate (Heb *ḥošēn*) and says that the word signifies *logion*, “oracle.” He adds that God foreshadowed victory in battle by means of the shining of the 12 stones, which the high priest wore upon his breast stitched into the *essēn*; hence the signification “oracle.” The *essēn* ceased to shine about 200 years before the time of Josephus, i.e., in the late 2d century B.C.E. We will see below that Josephus attributed to some Essenes the ability to foretell future events. He does not, however, say that they used the *essēn*, or that their name was derived from it. A composition dealing with the shining of the *ḥošēn* has now been found at Qumran (Strugnell *fc.*). It was not necessarily composed there, however, and it does not prove that the community attached any more importance to the *ḥošēn* than did Josephus. An association of the name Essene with the priestly *essēn* is an intriguing possibility, but no more.

(b) The term *essēnas* is attested as a designation for functionaries in the cult of Artemis at Ephesus, who had to observe an ascetic lifestyle while in office (Paus. 8.13.1; Jones 1985: 97; Kampen 1986: 61–81). We will see that the accounts of the Essenes in Philo and Josephus were written for hellenized readers and were assimilated to Hellenistic models to some degree. Nonetheless, the cult of Artemis at Ephesus seems a rather remote model for the identification of the Jewish sect.

B. The Sources

Philo provides two descriptions of the Essenes, in *Quod Omn* 75–91 and *Hypothetica* 11.1–18. There is considerable overlap between these accounts. Philo does not claim to have firsthand knowledge of the Essenes, and he is evidently dependent on a source or sources. Further, he portrays the Therapeutae in *Vita Cont* as people who bear some similarity to the Essenes but are located in Egypt and lead a less active life.

The most extensive account of the Essenes is preserved by Josephus (*JW* 2.8.2–13 §119–161). A parallel to this account is found in the *Philosophoumena*, which is attributed to Hippolytus (*Haer.* 9.18.2–28.2). Many scholars have held that Hippolytus is dependent on Josephus, but Morton Smith has shown decisively that this is not so. Some of the differences between the two accounts are due to confusion on the part of Hippolytus (he identifies the Essenes with the Zealots) or to editorial censure (he deleted apparent references to sun worship). Hippolytus' account of Essene eschatology, however, may well include authentic information which is omitted by Josephus. Some minor differences between the two accounts can be explained by positing a common source which was originally in Hebrew (Smith 1958: 290–91). Josephus confirms most of the points mentioned by Philo but goes into greater detail. Another, shorter, account is provided by Josephus in *Ant* 18.1.5 §18–22. He also refers to individual Essenes at several points (*JW* 2.20.4 §566–68; 3.2.1 §9–12; *Ant* 15.10.5 §371–79) and once to the “Essene Gate” in Jerusalem (*JW* 5.4.2 §142–45).

Despite Josephus' claim that he personally made trial of the three major sects (*Life* 9–11), he can never have been a member of the Essenes. He claims to have undertaken the three courses at age 16, then spent three years with Bannus in the wilderness, and returned to Jerusalem at age 19. He evidently then did not have time to complete even the initial year of the Essene process of admission. With the possible exception of the testimony to their endurance in the war against Rome (*JW* 2.8.10 §151–52), his knowledge of the Essenes was based on sources. These sources were probably available to him in hellenized form. Both Josephus and Hippolytus make comparisons with Pythagoras and with the Greek conception of the isles of the blest.

The most important notice by a pagan author is that of Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History* (5.15.73), which was completed in 77 C.E. Pliny had probably been in Palestine with Vespasian in 68 C.E. He speaks of the Essenes in the present tense, but his information was probably gathered before 70. He mentions them in the context of a topographical survey of Judea and locates them on the W bank of the Dead Sea between Jericho and En-gedi (En-gedi is said to be “below” them; this should be understood as southward, in view of the direction in which the description moves). Pliny's one-sentence description of the Essenes confirms some aspects of the accounts in Josephus and Philo, but he exaggerates their rejection of worldly goods when he says that they live “without money” and also the duration of the sect as through “thousands of centuries.”

Except for the enigmatic (probably confused) notice in Epiphanius which we have mentioned in connection with the etymology, the other ancient notices (Synes. *Dio* 3.2; Heges. *Hypomnemata*, *Apos. Con.* 6.6.1–8; Jerome, *vir. ill.* 11 and *adversus Jovinianum* 2.14) add nothing of significance to the 1st-century sources. (All these and some later witnesses are conveniently collected by Adam and Burchard; note also the Syriac account of Dionysios Bar Salibi discussed by Brock.)

C. Description of the Sect

The classical sources are primarily concerned with the customs of the sect. Josephus also provides some information about its organization and discipline. We are given relatively little account of doctrines and beliefs.

1. Location and Extent. Both Philo and Josephus say that the Essenes were spread throughout the country. Philo says that they lived in villages and avoided the iniquitous cities; Josephus, on the contrary, says that many lived in each city, but they had none of

their own. The discrepancy here may be due to an idealizing tendency in Philo. Pliny, as we have noted, located the Essenes by the Dead Sea. Dio, as reported by Synesius, repeats this location but may depend on Pliny. Epiphanius says the Essenes were from Samaria but puts the *Ossaioi* in the vicinity of the Dead Sea. In view of Pliny's notice, we should assume that there was a major settlement by the Dead Sea; but evidently Essenes were not confined to one location. Both Philo and Josephus give their number as "more than four thousand." This figure was presumably derived from a common source which must have been extant in the early 1st century C.E.

2. Organization. Josephus introduces the Essenes as one of three Jewish "philosophies." They are listed among the *haireseis* (whence heresies) of the Jews by Hegesippus and Epiphanius. (Josephus refers to the *hairetistai* of each philosophy—i.e., those who choose to follow it.) The modern term *sect* is influenced by the Christian usage and has the disadvantage of implying a normative orthodoxy, which is anachronistic for Judaism in the era before 70 C.E. Nonetheless, *sect* is accepted as a more appropriate label for the Essenes than for the Pharisees or Sadducees, since it is clear from Josephus that they had a distinct organization with clear procedures for admission and expulsion and also that they were at variance with the Jerusalem temple, which was the focal point of Judaism at the time. We have as yet no better term than *sect* to describe this organization.

The procedures for admission are described by Josephus (*JW* 2.8.7 §137–42). For the first year the postulant was required to follow the way of life but remain outside the community. After this there was a further probationary period of two years before final admission. Upon admission "tremendous oaths" were required. These included promises to "forever hate the unjust and fight the battle of the just," to be loyal to those in authority, to conceal nothing from other members, and to guard their secrets, including their books and the names of the angels. There was also provision for expulsion, which had dire consequences, because the expelled person was still prevented by oaths from partaking of common food.

The sectarian way of life was characterized by some form of communal property. According to Josephus (*JW* 2.8.4 §122) "the individual's possessions join the common stock and all, like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony." Philo comments that "they stand almost alone in the whole of mankind in that they have become moneyless and landless by deliberate action" (*Quod Omn* 77). Pliny states that they live "without money." All three 1st-century witnesses also attest the celibacy of the sect. Josephus says that they shun marriage but do not condemn it in principle (*JW* 2.8.2 §120–21) but also informs us of a second order of Essenes that practiced marriage (2.8.13 §160–61). Philo declares categorically that "no Essene takes a wife" (*Hypothetica* 11.14) and is apparently unaware of exceptions. Pliny says that they live "without any woman" and renounce sex. He marvels that a community in which no one was born could still perpetuate itself through generations. Philo gives as a reason for celibacy that marriage was perceived as a threat to communal life.

Much of the lifestyle of the sect follows from the requirements of communal living. Josephus emphasizes the hospitality extended to sectarians from other communities. Avoidance of wealth and distinction led to rejection of oil (which was also considered defiling) and to extreme frugality in dress (*JW* 2.8.4 §123–27). The cohesion of the community was ensured by strict obedience and deference to elders (*JW* 2.8.9 §146) and by a well-defined hierarchical order (2.8.10 §150). Both Philo and Josephus mention the

rejection of slavery (*Quod Omn* 79; *Ant* 18.1.5 §21). Philo suggests that they also avoided weapons or at least refrained from making them (*Quod Omn* 78), but Josephus reports that they carried weapons on their journeys for self-defense (*JW* 2.8.4 §125). A figure called John the Essene appears as an officer in the war against Rome (*JW* 3.2.1 §9–12; 2.20.4 §566–68).

3. Religious Practices. The attitude of the Essenes to animal sacrifice and temple worship has been a matter of much controversy. Philo says that they worshipped God “not by offering sacrifices but by resolving to sanctify their minds” (*Quod Omn* 75). This would seem to imply a rejection of sacrifice in principle, but it may mean only that sacrifice was not central to their piety. The testimony of Josephus is confused by textual variation. The Gk mss say that they “send votive offerings to the temple, but perform their sacrifices employing a different ritual of purification. For this reason they are barred from those precincts of the temple that are frequented by all the people and perform their sacrifices by themselves” (*Ant* 18.1.5 §19). The *Epitome* (an abbreviation of the *Antiquities* which is thought to date from the 10th century) and the Latin translation of Cassiodorus read a negative: “they do *not* perform their sacrifices.” (Cassiodorus, however, only says that they did not sacrifice in the temple; see Black 1961: 40.) From this evidence it would seem that the Essenes were excluded from the official temple cult. However, the evidence could be interpreted to mean that they still offered sacrifice, either in a special part of the temple area or elsewhere, on their own.

The preoccupation of the Essenes with purity is evident in many of their practices, including celibacy and avoidance of oil (see above). Josephus mentions their ritual baths in cold water (*JW* 2.8.4 §129), notes that novices were allowed to share a purer kind of holy water after their year of postulancy (2.8.7 §138), and mentions that if a senior member of the community was touched by a junior, he had to take a bath “as after contact with an alien” (2.8.10 §150). He also reports their custom of burying their excrement (so as not to offend the rays of the deity) and of avoiding bowel movements on the Sabbath (2.8.9 §148). Even those expelled from the community were apparently still bound by purity regulations (2.8.8 §143–44).

Perhaps the most distinctive custom noted by Josephus is the custom of praying towards the sun before dawn “as if entreating him to rise” (*JW* 2.8.5 §128). They are said to pray “towards” (*eis*) not “to” (*pros*) the sun and so should probably not be regarded as sun worshippers. Nonetheless, the practice is surprising in a Jewish context and is reminiscent of the custom condemned in Ezek 8:16. The parallel passage in Hippolytus makes no reference to the sun, a fact which is probably due to editorial intervention.

A more conventional aspect of the Essenes’ piety is their devotion to the law. They are said to hold Moses in reverence second only to God (*JW* 2.8.9 §145) and to display an extraordinary interest in the writings of the ancients (2.8.6 §136). Philo claims that the exposition of the law at the sabbath services was allegorical (*Quod Omn* 82), but his description of the Essene assembly does not differ greatly from his account of the assembly of the Therapeutae in the *Vita Cont* (75–78) or of the Jewish people in *Hypothetica* (7).

Finally, the common meals of the community had religious significance. Josephus comments that, after their ritual bath, “pure now themselves, they repair to the refectory as to some sacred shrine” (*JW* 2.8.5 §129). The meal is ritualized by the prayers of a priest both before and after. Philo mentions the common meals as factors which further

the unity of the members (*Quod Omn* 86; *Hypothetica* 11.5); but in his description of the related group, the Therapeutae, he dwells at length on the meal, which he calls a “sacred symposium” (or banquet) (*Vita Cont* 71).

4. Religious Beliefs. The 1st-century accounts of the Essenes are primarily concerned with the practices of the sect. Philo gives us scarcely any information about their beliefs but he does state that they believed that the godhead is the cause of all good things and nothing bad (*Quod Omn* 84). This belief may imply a dualistic view of the universe. The main account of the beliefs of the sect is found in Josephus (*JW* 2.8.11 §154–58), and there is some additional information in *Ant* 18 and in Hippolytus.

Josephus clearly asserts that the Essenes believed in the immortality of the soul and regarded the body as a prison house (compare *Ant* 18.1.5 §18). He compares their idea of the abode of the virtuous souls to the Greek isles of the blest and the murky dungeon of the wicked to Hades. The parallel account in Hippolytus, however, goes beyond this and says that they also believed in the resurrection of the body. The sojourn of the soul in the “isles of the blest” is “until the judgment,” which would be followed by the *ekpyrosis*, or universal conflagration. Some have suspected that the reference to resurrection is intended to bring the Essenes into line with Christian teaching, but it is by no means clear that Hippolytus would have wanted to make a Jewish sect look like an anticipation of Christianity. The account in *Ant* 18.1.5 §18 emphasizes the determinism of the sect: they are wont “to leave everything in the hands of God.”

Josephus and Hippolytus say that some of the Essenes professed to foretell the future. Josephus elsewhere relates incidents involving three different Essene prophets (*JW* 1.3.5 §78–80; 2.7.3 §111–13; and *Ant* 15.10.5 §373–79). In each case the prophecy concerns the fortunes of a king: in the first case, Judas the Essene predicted the murder of Antigonus (about 104 B.C.E.); in the second, an Essene named Simon interpreted a dream of Archelaus (about 6 C.E.); and in the third, Menahem foretold the kingship of Herod and earned the despot’s respect for the Essenes. In Hippolytus the notice about prophecy follows immediately on the reference to the final judgment and may have apocalyptic overtones. Josephus also notes their interest in medicinal roots and the properties of stones (*JW* 2.8.6 §136).

Hippolytus also ascribes to the Essenes a fanatic aversion to idols, an inclination to kill the uncircumcised, and an unwillingness to recognize any lord except God. Throughout this passage, however, he appears to have confused the Essenes with the Zealots or Sicarii. Despite this militant portrayal Hippolytus says that they swore not to hate anyone—in sharp contrast to the oath in Josephus which promises always to hate the wicked. It is possible that Hippolytus has introduced some elements of Christian morality into the text in this instance.

D. Correlation with the Qumran Scrolls

The identification of the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls as the Essenes rests on two primary considerations: the location of the Essene settlement according to Pliny and the descriptions of the process of admission both in Josephus and in the Qumran *Rule of the Community* (1QS).

1. Location. Pliny located the Essene settlement between Jericho and En-gedi (assuming that “below” means “to the South of” in accordance with the direction in which the description is moving). The only oasis between Jericho and En-gedi, is the Ain Feshka oasis, at the N end of which stands Qumran (M.R. 193127). The excavations at

Qumran have shown that there was a settlement at the site from the mid-2d century B.C.E. to the time of the Roman conquest (except for an interruption immediately before the turn of the era). The period of occupation at Qumran corresponds well to the period within which the Essenes are mentioned in Josephus. Since there is no other known site which would fit the location given by Pliny, it is reasonable to conclude that he was in fact referring to Qumran. See also QUMRAN.

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the ruins at Qumran were thought to be part of a military fort. This theory has recently been revived by Golb (1985), who points out that Qumran was violently destroyed and so had presumably been defended. The standard Essene interpretation, however, can account for the military adaptation of the site, whether by the sect itself or by Jewish revolutionaries, in the face of the Roman threat. On the other hand, the “military fort” theory leaves us with no identification for the site mentioned by Pliny. The assumption that Qumran was an Essene settlement remains the most economical way to account for the evidence.

2. Admission Procedures. The second basic argument rests on the correspondence between 1QS and the description of the Essenes in Josephus. Evidently 1QS is the rule for a distinct community. See COMMUNITY, RULE OF THE (1QS). It is simpler to suppose that this community was located at Qumran, rather than at some other unknown location. The correspondences with the description of the Essenes, then, further confirm the identification of the site. These correspondences are not complete or without problems; but, nonetheless, they are impressive.

The most striking point of analogy between 1QS and the account in Josephus concerns the procedures for admission to the sect. According to 1QS 6:14–23 the candidate is first examined by the overseer, at the head of “the Many” or main body of the community. If he is accepted, he still cannot touch the “Purification of the Many” or mingle his property with that of the community for a year. At the end of this year, his property is handed over to the overseer; but he cannot partake of the drink of the congregation for another year. This account initially seems to posit a two-year, rather than three-year, candidacy. In Josephus’ account, however, the first year was spent outside the community. The initial examination by the overseer in 1QS 6 may in fact mark the end of such a postulancy. In Josephus’ account the candidate is allowed to share “the purer kind of holy water” after the year as a postulant. If this corresponds to the “Purification of the Many,” as seems likely, then there is a discrepancy between the two accounts: either 1QS envisages only a two-year candidacy or it places this stage of admission after the second year of three. The general similarity between the two procedures remains impressive, however, especially since we have no parallels for such a multiyear process of admission elsewhere in ancient Judaism. The discrepancy is most simply attributed to a misunderstanding on the part of Josephus’ source, but it is also possible that it reflects a change in practice at some point in the history of the Essenes.

3. Communal Property. Both Philo and Josephus emphasize the sharing of possessions in the Essene community. Some passages in 1QS have a similar theme: “All the volunteers that cling to his truth shall bring all their understanding and powers and possessions into the community of God” (1:11). Again, when a candidate has completed one year in the community, “his property and also his wages shall be handed over to the overseer of the revenues of the Many; but it shall be inscribed to his credit, and shall not be spent to the profit of the Many” (6:18–20). This latter passage does not clarify whether

private ownership persists after full admission to the community. The *Rule*, however, presupposes some form of private property, since it requires that a member reimburse the community for damage to the communal property (1QS 7:6).

Some scholars (e.g., Rabin 1957) have seen here a significant discrepancy between the Essenes and the sect of the scroll, since the classical accounts insist that “the individual’s possessions join the common stock and all, like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony” (*JW* 2.8.3 §122). Yet the similarity is more striking than the difference. Philo and Hippolytus mention the treasurer (Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11.10) or overseer (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.20.2, *proestōta*) who handles the community finances. The common meals, which are attested in the Gk sources and 1QS 6, required common funds. It is easy to see how the existence of a common treasury could have been perceived by a Gk ethnographer to imply a rejection of private property. Even the Gk term *anamemigmenon*, “mingled,” which is used by Josephus (*JW* 2.8.3 §122) for the communal pooling of funds, may well be a translation of the Heb *hit:areb* (1QS 6:17; see Black 1961: 33–36). Rabin argues that *hit:areb* in 1QS means “to do business,” as in 1QS 9:8 it is used of dealings with outsiders. This interpretation does not account for the role of the overseer in 1QS 6.

The role of the common treasury is further restricted in the *Damascus Document* (CD). There “the rule of the Many to provide for all their needs” specifies: “The wage of at least two days a month, this is what they shall pay into the hands of the overseer and the judges. They shall set apart a portion of this sum for orphans, and with the other they shall support the hand of the poor . . .” (CD 14:12–14). The remainder is presumably retained as private property. This, however, is part of the rule for the “camps,” for those who live throughout Israel rather than in a monastic settlement. There is no such specification of the amount of the contribution in 1QS. The Gk account of communal property among the Essenes is more likely to have been derived from the regulations reflected in 1QS than from the rule for the camps in CD.

4. Celibacy. Abstention from marriage and sexual activity was one of the hallmarks of the Essenes according to Philo, Josephus, and even Pliny. While Philo says flatly that “no Essene marries” (*Hypothetica* 11.14), Josephus adds, in an epilogue to his account, that there is a second order of Essenes which differs in this regard (*JW* 2.8.13 §160–61) and says that even the celibates do not condemn marriage in principle (2.8.2 §121). (The notice in the Syriac author Dionysios bar Salibi [cited by Charlesworth 1980: 216] that the Essenes did not approach their wives again after they had become pregnant, is evidently based on a misunderstanding of Josephus.) The scrolls never mention a prohibition of marriage, but 1QS does not mention the subject at all and makes no provision for women in the community. In contrast, the rule for the camps in CD assumes marriage and family life; and the “Rule for the End of Days” (the so-called “Annex to the Community Rule,” 1QSa) provides for sexual relations when a man has reached 20 years of age, which is late by rabbinic standards. Here again the variation probably lies between the two orders of Essenes. Thus 1QS is at least compatible with the celibate life described in the Gk sources, while CD and 1QSa can only pertain to the second order of Essenes. The bones of a few women and children have been found on the periphery of the cemetery at Qumran. Their presence may be explained by the hypothesis that Qumran served as a center for Essenes from other locations, and so these women may not have lived there. While the Qumran evidence on this matter gives no positive support to the

identification as an Essene settlement, it can be reconciled with this identification. (See further Vermes 1981: 108; de Vaux 1973: 128–29.)

5. Relation to the Temple. We have seen already that the evidence of Josephus is ambiguous, but at least it shows clearly that the Essenes were at variance with the rituals usually practiced in the Jerusalem temple. In 1QS there is silence on this issue (as there is in Josephus' main account in *JW* 2 and in the parallel in Hippolytus). The information in CD is also ambiguous, but can be reconciled with the data in Josephus. In CD 6:11–13 we read that “none of those who have entered the covenant shall enter the sanctuary to kindle his altar in vain.” This passage, like *Ant* 18.1.5 §18–19, is open to different interpretations but at least implies dissent from the official temple ritual. The ambiguity lies in the phrase *in vain*: it may be that sacrifice was permitted if the proper (sectarian) regulations were observed, or it may be that all access to the temple was prohibited. The archaeological evidence from Qumran has not clarified this situation. Carefully buried animal bones have been found; some scholars have taken these as evidence for the practice of sacrifice at Qumran (e.g., Cross 1961: 102), but others suppose that they were the remains of religious meals which had been ritually buried (de Vaux 1973: 14). A number of passages in 1QS speak of the life of the community as a substitute for the sacrificial cult (5:6; 8:3; 9:4). While this does not necessarily exclude the practice of sacrifice, it shows how the ritual could have been dispensed with. Josephus' statement that the Essenes sent offerings to the temple would seem to be in accordance with the situation envisaged in CD 11:19: “let there be sent to the altar of holocaust neither offering nor incense nor wood by the hand of a man defiled by any defilement whatsoever, permitting him thus to render the altar unclean . . .” Presumably offerings could be sent if the bearer was not defiled.

6. Religious Beliefs and Ideas. Josephus' statement that the Essenes are wont to leave everything in the hands of God (*Ant* 18.1.5) accords well with the deterministic theology of the scrolls (e.g., 1QS 3:15: “from the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be, and before they were, he established all their design . . .”). The main doctrinal issue in the Gk sources, however, is the immortality of the soul, which is mentioned in both *JW* 2 and *Ant* 18. There has been considerable debate as to whether this belief is attested in the scrolls, or even whether some more Semitic conception of an afterlife underlies Josephus' hellenized formulation. The problem concerns the rather vague formulation of personal eschatology in the scrolls. In 1QS 3:7–8 the visitation of all who walk in the spirit of life “consists of healing and abundance of bliss, with length of days and fruitfulness and all blessings without end, and eternal joy in perpetual life and the glorious crown and garment of honor in everlasting light.” The language of this passage is reminiscent of the Psalms (e.g., Ps 16:11: “thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy”) or of Proverbs (e.g., Prov 8:35: “he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord”), which are not usually thought to imply a belief in an afterlife. In 1QS, however, the lot of the Children of Light is contrasted with that of the Sons of Darkness. The visitation of the latter “consists of an abundance of blows administered by all the Angels of Destruction in the everlasting Pit by the furious wrath of the God of vengeance, of unending dread and shame without end, and of the disgrace of destruction by the fire of the region of darkness” (1QS 4:12–13). Since this passage clearly implies punishment after death for the wicked, it is hardly conceivable that the “eternal life” of the righteous does not also extend beyond the grave. The “eternal life” of the community

certainly involved present participation in the eschatological state, as can be seen from the *Hodayot* (Thanksgiving Hymns), but it also extended beyond death. (Compare also the contrast between the fates of the wicked and the righteous in CD 2:5–6 and 3:20. See further Nickelsburg 1972: 156–67.) This conception could well have been translated into Greek, though not quite accurately, as the immortality of the soul.

Hippolytus further claims that the Essenes believed in bodily resurrection, a final judgment, and universal conflagration (*Haer.* 9.27). A few passages in the *Hodayot* have been interpreted as references to resurrection: 1QH 6:34, “they that lay in the dust have raised up a banner”; 1QH, 11:12 “that this vermin that is man may be raised from the dust to [thy] secret [of truth].” Other scholars, more plausibly, take these passages as references to the present state of the community. Thus 1QS does not clearly speak of resurrection; it simply does not specify whether or not the body will participate in eternal life. Since the scrolls do not make the typical Greek distinction of soul and body, it is likely that they had in mind some conception of a “spiritual body” such as Paul has in 1 Cor 15:44. Here again we can see how an outsider might have construed this, inaccurately, as resurrection of the body. It is also possible that Hippolytus changed his source at this point, under the influence of his own Christian beliefs (see further Nickelsburg 1972: 146–69).

The final conflagration, in contrast, is strikingly illustrated in the description of the torrents of Belial in 1QH 3:29–36. In this case at least, the scrolls seem to support the account preserved in Hippolytus.

7. Further Correlations. There are several other points where the scrolls (esp. 1QS) correspond to the Gk sources (see Beall 1988). These include *ritual bathing* (*JW* 2.8.4 §129; 2.8.7 §138; 1QS 3:4, 9; 5:13); the *common meal* (*JW* 2.8.5 §131–32; *Quod Omn* 86; *Hypothetica* 11:5; 1QS 6:5); *study of the law* (*JW* 2.8.6 §137; 2.8.9 §145; *Quod Omn* 80; 1QS 6:6); the *prohibition of spitting* (*JW* 2.8.9 §147; 1QS 7:13); the requirement of *oaths upon admission* (*JW* 2.8.7 §139; 1QS 5:7–8); the *demand to hate the unjust as well as support the just* (*JW* 2.8.7 §139; 1QS 1:9–10); and to *conceal nothing from the members of the sect but divulge none of their secrets to others* (*JW* 2.8.7 §141; 1QS 9:17–19). In some cases we can speak of “verbal reminiscences in Josephus of theological clichés in the Qumran texts” (Cross 1961: 96): the use of the verb “hate” with reference to the unjust, the term “mingle” (*hit-areb, anamignusthai*) with reference to the finances of the community, and the description of the dark netherworld, where the wicked are punished.

Some other points which are not noted in the *Rule of the Community* are otherwise supported by discoveries from Qumran. Philo’s statement that the Essenes supported themselves by labor on the land and by crafts is supported by the archaeological evidence from Qumran and nearby Ain Feshka (de Vaux 1973: 60–87). The fact that the secrets of the sect include the names of angels (*JW* 2.8.7 §142) accords well with the general prominence of angels in the scrolls. The biblical commentaries or Pesharim may provide some basis for Philo’s assertion that they interpret their writings “through symbols” or allegorically, although Philo’s understanding of allegory is very different from that at Qumran. The discovery of horoscopes at Qumran (4Q186) may be of relevance to the Essene interest in predicting the future. A very obscure fragment, the so-called *4QTherapeia*, has been adduced as evidence of the Essene interest in superstitious medicine, but that interpretation has been decisively refuted (Naveh 1986).

8. Discrepancies. Apart from the problems noted above relating to the practices of the sect, the most significant discrepancy is that the scrolls provide considerable information about the self-understanding and beliefs of the sect which has no parallel in the Gk sources. Josephus mentions that a priest says grace at meals but otherwise does not hint at the prominence of priests in the community. The theology of the *Rule of the Community* is dominated by the dualistic opposition of Light and Darkness, which will endure until the final judgment. This dualism is never explicit in the Gk sources. It may be implied in Philo's statement that they held the divinity responsible only for good things (*Quod Omn*, 84), while the Essene reverence for the sun is highly appropriate for self-styled "Children of Light."

Yet there is no doubt that the Greek accounts proceed from an understanding of the sect very different from what we find in the scrolls. In broad terms the contrast is between Hellenistic mysticism on the one hand and priestly apocalypticism on the other. In the light of the scrolls, the asceticism of the sect can be seen to arise from a strict adherence to levitical purity, intensified by the conviction that the end of days was at hand. The reference to a final conflagration in Hippolytus suggests that some apocalyptic motifs may have been dropped by Josephus and Philo. Basically, however, the difference between the two portrayals must be attributed to the fact that the Greek accounts, and their immediate sources, were written for Greek readers and that they adapted their material accordingly. As Morton Smith has observed (1958: 290–91), the common source of Josephus and Hippolytus was already a document of Greek ethnography. Some of the material—references to messiahs or to a final war between the forces of Light and Darkness—may have seemed too hostile for gentile readers, or the Hellenistic writer may simply have failed to appreciate the importance of some sectarian beliefs which could not be assimilated to Greek models. Despite the differences the parallels between Josephus' source and 1QS are far closer than those with any other known document.

The discrepancies between the Greek sources and the scrolls, significant though they are, are outweighed by the similarities. The correspondence of geographic location and the extensive similarity of community structure make overwhelmingly probable the identification of Qumran, and of the *Rule of the Community*, as "Essene."

E. History of the Sect

The Essenes appear in Josephus' account from the mid-2d century B.C.E. to the time of the war against Rome. He gives no explanation of their origin; except that he notes their difference from the ritual of the temple; and we might infer that this had some bearing on their separation from the rest of Judaism. Attempts to fill out the history of the Essenes are based primarily on evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the archaeology of Qumran. Here we are concerned only with those points at which the Greek and Latin evidence has some bearing on historical reconstruction. There are three such points: (a) the early formation of the sect, (b) the interruption in its sojourn at Qumran, and (c) its survival after 70 C.E.

1. Early Formation. It is evident from the *Damascus Document* (CD) that the sect had some history prior to the settlement at Qumran. On the most widely accepted interpretation of CD 1, the sect arose in the early 2d century B.C.E. ("390 years" after the fall of Jerusalem, granted that the number is not exact). (On the alternative interpretation, which pushes the origin of the sect back into the Babylonian Exile, see the discussion of CD in DEAD SEA SCROLLS.) There was then a 20-year period of uncertainty which

ended with the arrival of the “Teacher of Righteousness.” Subsequently there was a split in the movement, when some people “departed from the way” and “turned back” with the “Man of Lies.” The settlement at Qumran is usually thought to have been initiated by the Teacher, but the evidence on this point is not clear.

The Greek evidence is relevant to this early history at two points. The first concerns the designation of pre-Qumranic material as “Essene.” The name, as used in the Greek sources, refers to an organized form of communal life. The designation is most fully warranted when we have a full community rule as in 1QS. It is probably warranted with reference to the “new covenant” of CD, which was probably formed before the arrival of the Teacher. It does not, however, seem to be warranted in the case of pre-Qumran pseudepigraphic works such as the early Enochic writings and *Jubilees*. While this material reflects incipient sectarian movements, which may have been forebears in some sense of the Essenes, it lacks reference to the distinct community structures which are a hallmark of the Essenes.

A second point concerns the split in the early Essene movement. We know from Josephus that there were two orders of Essenes. The evidence of CD, which makes special provision for “those who live in camps,” is compatible with this information. Neither the Greek nor the Hebrew evidence, however, suggests that the distinction of two orders was the result of a schism. In CD, those who live in camps are clearly regarded as part of the Teacher’s movement, while the followers of the “Man of Lies” are not. The suggestion that “non-Qumran Essenes” were those who refused to follow the Teacher (Murphy-O’Connor 1974: 235–36) and so were in opposition to Qumran, is not supported by the evidence.

2. Interruption of the Qumran Settlement. Two major developments in the history of the Qumran settlement are known from the archaeology of the site. The first was the expansion of the settlement in the time of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.E.), presumably to accommodate an influx of new converts. This development has been associated with the persecution of the Pharisees by Alexander Jannaeus reported by Josephus (*JW* 1.4.6 §96–98; *Ant* 13.14.2 §380–83) but is not reflected in the accounts of the Essenes.

The second major development was the destruction of the site and its subsequent abandonment in the reign of Herod. The destruction of the site has been variously attributed to an earthquake (which is known to have happened in 31 B.C.E.) or to the Parthian invasion of 40–39 B.C.E. (see de Vaux 1973: 20–24). We do not know where the community lived while the site was vacant. Since Josephus tells us that Herod held the Essenes in high respect (*Ant* 15.10.5 §378), the question has been raised “should we think of the Essenes as retreating to Jericho and living beside the magnificent Herodian structures that have recently been excavated and restored?” (Charlesworth 1980: 227). In view of the general asceticism of the Essenes, this question should almost certainly be answered in the negative.

3. Survival after 70 C.E. The majority of the Essenes lived at sites other than Qumran. (Philo and Josephus say that there were about 4000 Essenes; the capacity of Qumran was about 200.) It is therefore a priori unlikely that the destruction of Qumran would have brought the sect to an end, but it is possible that the sect dissolved in the general turmoil of the war against Rome. Evidence for the persistence of the Essenes after 70 C.E. is hard to find. The accounts of Josephus and Hippolytus were written in the present tense but

they were based on older sources. Pliny's information was probably gathered before 70 C.E. Epiphanius, who preserves some distinctive material, claims to rely on a tradition (*he eis hemas elthousa paradosis*) the origin of which is unknown. Alleged theological and thematic influences on Syriac Christianity (Charlesworth 1980: 231) do not require the continued existence of the sect. The suggestion of Vermes (1975: 28) that a passage in *Midrash Rabbah* 36 be translated to say that Rabbi Meir visited the Essenes and found no copy of Esther among them is intriguing in view of the absence of Esther at Qumran but is very slender evidence for the continued existence of the Essenes. (The usual translation says he visited Asia Minor.) In short, while it is certainly possible that the Essenes continued to exist after the 1st century, we lack firm evidence to confirm that they did.

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