should be fostered in the privacy of our soul, while that course of action is taken publicly which appears suited to benefit those to whom we ought to wish well', *Epistle* 138 (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 33, 529f.).

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A PROTOTYPE OF CHRIST?[1]

MONSIEUR DUPONT-SOMMER devotes the greater part of his book *Aperçus préliminaires sur les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte*[2] to the non-biblical texts discovered in 1947. These texts are the work of a Jewish sect called the New Covenant, to be identified with the 'Sons of Sadoq' or 'Sect of Damascus', known to us through the Damascus Document published in 1910. These sectaries would seem to be Essenes. Our author sets out to reconstruct their history and teaching to show that we have here a foreshadowing of Christianity. This thesis has aroused great attention and controversy in France which has been duly reported in the Press, both religious and secular.[3]

THE THEORY OF M. DUPONT-SOMMER

The New Covenant had its origin about the year 103 B.C., in the opposition to the Hasmonean princes who usurped the High-Priesthood till then in the exclusive possession of the Aaronic line of Sadoq. Towards the year 63 B.C., the founder of the sect, priest and prophet, entitled the 'Master of Justice', was condemned to death and executed by Aristobulus II, the 'impious priest' supported by the Sadducees. Our author identifies the victim with a certain Onias the Just of whom Josephus speaks (*Antiquities*, xiv, 22–24, ed. Reinach), and who was stoned to death by the Hasmonean troops.

The sect had to take refuge in Damascus. The Kittim (or Romans) were the instruments of God's vengeance on Aristobulus II (as shown

[1] The Editor apologizes for the delay in publishing this article.

[2] Collection *L'Orient ancien illustré*, no. 4, 125, Paris, Maison-neuve, 1950.

[3] *Temps modernes*, January 1951; *le Figaro littéraire*, 24th February 1951; *L'Observateur*, 1st February 1951. And here are some Catholic articles we have been able to consult: J. Bonsirven, *Révolution dans l'histoire des origines chrétiennes*, Etudes, February 1951; pp. 213–18. A. Gelin, *Le Christianisme avant le Christianisme?* in l'Ami du Clergé, 1951, pp. 101–03. A. Vincent, *Les manuscrits hébreux de la Mer Morte*, in La Croix, 13th, 14th and 15th March 1951; G. Vermes, *Apropos des 'Aperçus . . .'* de M. Dupont-Sommer, in Cahiers Sioniens, March 1951, pp. 58–69. G. Lambert and G. Vermes, *Les Manuscrits du Desert de Juda, Les 'Aperçus . . .'* de M. Dupont-Sommer, in Nouvelle Revue Théologique, April 1951, pp. 385–98; R. de Vaux, *Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et les origines chrétiennes*, in La Vie Intellectuelle, April 1951, pp. 60–70.

by the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 B.C., and the poisoning, while in prison, of Aristobulus II in 49 B.C.). But his successor Hyrcanus II continued the persecution ; and this new 'impious priest' held power until 40 B.C. The New Covenant returned to Palestine only in 37 B.C., with the accession of Herod the Great who restored the high priesthood to the legitimate family. The sect disappeared in the war of A.D. 66–70, the period in which the Scrolls were consigned to their recently discovered hiding-place.

But if the sect and its leader have disappeared, they live again in Christianity and Jesus. It is above all the Commentary on Habakkuk, published in 1950, which furnishes M. Dupont-Sommer with his arguments. In this work a scribe of the New Covenant explains allegorically the first two chapters of Habakkuk. He interprets them of contemporary events, but expresses himself in terms of oracular ambiguity, and his historical allusions are based on uncertain foundations. He is familiar with the punishment of Aristobulus by the Kittim, but he is ignorant of that of Hyrcanus II. He wrote therefore at Damascus, towards the year 41 B.C.—that is, at the same place and time (45–40 B.C.) as witnessed the appearance of the Damascus Document.

These two works are our principal sources of information on the New Covenant—the Covenant which announces and prepares the way for the New Christian Covenant. The Galilean Master, as presented to us in the writings of the New Testament, appears from many points of view, to be a most remarkable re-incarnation of the Master of Justice . . . Like Jesus Christ he was the Elect and the Anointed of God, the Messiah-Redeemer of the World. Like him, he was the object of the hostility of the priests, of the Sadducees. Like him, he was condemned and executed. Like him, he went up to heaven to the throne of God. Like him, he wrought judgement on Jerusalem, which was captured and destroyed by the Romans, as punishment for having put him to death . . .' p. 121.

And adopting Rénan's words : 'Christianity is an Essenianism which succeeded', our author foretells 'quite a series of revolutions in Bible studies', p. 117.

What are we to say of this ?

TEXTS BADLY TRANSLATED

The theory of M. Dupont-Sommer rests essentially on two texts of the Commentary on Habakkuk. Without going into the detail of the discussions, we give here in parallel columns the translation of M. D-S. together with the literal sense of the Hebrew as generally given by a considerable number of authors :[1]

[1] Cf. especially the articles of Bonsirven, G. Vermes, G. Lambert and G. Vermes, de Vaux. Cf. BASOR, December 1948 and December 1949.

D.-S. pp. 45 and 38. On Hab. ii, 7.	A.	*Hebrew*
(The explanation of this word con)cerns the Priest who revolted . . . (gap of two lines; towards the end of this gap, supply the following more or less: . . . and he persecuted the Master of Justice, who was) struck by him because of wicked judgments; and hateful, shameless men committed horrors on him and wrought vengeance on his body of flesh . . .		(The explanation of this word con)cerns the Priest who revolted (cf. infra) to strike him out of malice; and they wrought upon him the horrors of terrible evils and vengeance on his body of flesh . . .
Hab. ii, 15.	B.	
'Woe to him who gives his neighbour to drink, pouring out his fury, and also intoxicating drinks, in order that God may look favourably on their feasts.' The explanation of this concerns the impious Priest who persecuted the Master of Justice, in order to engulf him in the transport of his fury. Thou hast dared to strip him, but at the moment of the feast of the Day of Atonement, he appeared all glorious in order to swallow them up . . .		'Woe to him who gives his neighbour to drink, pouring out upon him his anger, even till he be drunk, in order that he may favourably regard their feasts. The explanation of this concerns the impious Priest who persecuted the Master of Justice, in order to engulf him in the transport of his fury and strip him naked. And it is at the time of the feast of the Day of Atonement that he showed himself to them (i.e., in all his wickedness) in order to swallow them up . . .

As regards the first text (A) and the gap of two lines, a comparison with the rest of the MS allows us to conclude that there is only *one* line missing of which several letters have survived. The space available is too small to permit us to insert the name of the Master of Justice.[1] Do these texts bear out the assertions of our author?

THE MASTER OF JUSTICE IS NOT THE MESSIAH

According to D-S. he is the Messiah, and even an incarnate divine Being, because there is mention of his body of flesh (text A), and of his glorious appearance (text B). Further, he is said to be the Second Person of the Trinity, according to the Damascus Document; 'God has made known the Holy Spirit by means of his Anointed'.[2]

Now, in this last text we find nothing more than is found already in the Old Testament. The OT refers to the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God,

[1] G. Vermes, loc. cit., p. 66. Cf. *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St Mark's Monastery*, Vol. I, ed. Millar Burrows (New Haven, 1950), plate LVIII.

[2] Israel Lévi, *Un Ecrit sadducéen antérieur à la déstruction du Temple*, in Revue des Etudes juives, 1911, p. 175.

whether as a gift or as an attribute of the Lord. Ezechiel puts this in sharp relief; and some texts (Agg. ii, 5; Zach. iv, 6; vii, 12; Neh. ix, 30; II Chron. xv, 1; and especially Isaias lxiii, 10–11) seem almost to personify the Spirit. On the other hand, the Anointed or Messiah is conceived as a historical personage who is to reveal the mysteries of God and restore his Kingdom on earth. The Damascus Document contains no new factor and it is impossible to see in it any strictly Trinitarian teaching.

The expression 'body of flesh' indicates the material element of the human person, and in no way suggests the Incarnation (cf. Eccles. xxiii, 16; Col. ii, 11). Moreover is it applicable to the Master of Justice? As for the glorious appearance, the verb used, hôphia', does not necessarily suppose a theophany and can refer to the showing of evil conduct by man.

Finally, the Damascus Document (ix, 8–10) clearly distinguishes the Master of Justice from the Messiah: 'From the day on which the unique Master was taken away until the coming of the Messiah of Aaron or of Israel'.

THE MASTER OF JUSTICE WAS NOT MARTYRED

There are no other grounds for applying to the Master of Justice the theology of the Word Incarnate, the Redeemer, the Risen Christ, the future Judge. Further, his 'Passion' or 'martyrdom' should be carefully scrutinized. In vain will one search the two texts quoted for any clear reference to his being put to death. Text B speaks of 'persecution', nothing more. Text A, if one refers to the course in the passage of Habakkuk of which it is a commentary, seems to refer much more probably to the punishment of one of the impious priests.

Like many other prophets, the Master of Justice met with hatred and persecution, but one can affirm nothing more, and one must conclude with M. E. Cavaignac: 'Not thus did the first Christians speak of the Passion of Christ . . . The supposition that he (the Master of Justice) was put to death enjoys no definite support in the texts, and in my opinion is psychologically improbable in the extreme. That sectaries of this kind should be persecuted is normal, since they opposed the high priests recognized as such by the whole nation. Perhaps some of them perished, but not any master of Justice; they would have told us.'[1]

THE DATE OF THE EVENTS AND THE DOCUMENTS

We have given the principal pieces of evidence for the theory, together with some estimate of their value. We must add that there is still no sort of agreement as to the dating of the documents and their

[1] *Quelques Réflexions sur les documents de 'Ain Fashka*, in Revue de l'histoire des Religions, October-November, pp. 156–7.

historical setting. The New Covenant cannot be connected with the Essenes for there are too many differences.[1] Perhaps also one should distinguish it from the Damascus Sect whose Document speaks of Javan (Greeks) but never of Kittim (Romans). It is true that this identification of Kittim with Romans is not absolutely certain. This ancient term is once *interpreted* as Romans in Dan. xi, 30, but usually at this period it refers to Greeks and Hellenists.[2]

To reach a date for the documents D-S uses Text B. The destruction of the wicked on the Day of Atonement would be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 B.C. Now we have seen that there is nothing about 'swallowing up' the wicked, there is no question of the capture of a city, but only of the persecution conducted against a sect.

Moreover, some passages of the Dead Sea Scrolls (including the Comm. on Hab.) could refer to the events of the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D 70.[3] In this case, these MSS would not be earlier than the end of the first century A.D. and would not refer to the invasion of Pompey.

Certainly these problems are by no means solved. The evidence of the MSS must be taken in conjunction with the results (still disputed) of Archæology. Physical sciences also must no doubt be taken into account.[4] Further prolonged and minute study is necessary before we can hope for a definite answer to these questions.

CONCLUSION

In view of all these reasons we must conclude that the brilliant theory of M. Dupont-Sommer is not merely too hastily constructed but is devoid of all solid foundation. The New Covenant is one Jewish sect among many others, which was expecting a national Messiah, and practised an exaggerated and soul-destroying legalism. It adds to our knowledge of Judaism, but it is not the source whence the Redeemer of Mankind drew his doctrine of all-embracing love.

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[1] Cf. Lagrange, *Le Judaïsme avant Jesus Christ*, pp. 307–37.

[2] de Vaux, loc. cit., p. 69

[3] G. Vermes, loc. cit., pp. 68–69. Cf. by the same author: La secte juive de la Nouvelle alliance d'après ses hymnes récemment découverts. In Cahiers Sioniens, September 1950, pp. 178–202.

[4] Cf. A. Bauchan; Radio-activité et âge des manuscrits du Desert du Juda, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 1950, pp. 515–17; Techniques de la physique moderne et âge des documents de Qumran, in NRT, 1951, pp. 524–6.