

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament: Myths and Facts

prof. Florentino García Martínez
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Biblical Studies
Oude Markt 13, Bus 5005 3000 Leuven

One of the main reasons of the interest and the fascination that the Dead Sea Scrolls have originated among the public since their discovery on 1947 is the expectation that the new materials could illuminate the dark spots in our knowledge of the origins and development of early Christianity on the second half of the first century.

This hope was well grounded. Both entities (Christianity and the group which copied and preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls) share the same general chronological frame and certainly co-existed until the year 68 of the First century, when the settlement of Qumran was destroyed; both are located at a very short geographical distance: Christianity developed in Jerusalem, at about 15 miles of the shore of the Dead Sea, where the settlement was located; both developed in the same Palestinian society in a crisis situation.

Let start thus with the most often heard questions:

a) "Have the Christian Churches cover up the evidence discovered in order to protect themselves?"

This question was very often asked before the complete publication of all the scrolls, and it was grounded on the delay of the full publication of the Scrolls. The Scrolls, written between the second century before Christ and the first century after Christ, were discovered, as you know, between 1947 and 1956. But until 1992 only a small part of the materials found were adequately published (to give you an idea: the 900 manuscripts, written mostly in Hebrew and Aramaic, have now been published on 39 volumes of the same big format but until 1992 only seven volumes were published). Since until the nineties the international team of editors was formed by Christian scholars, the delay in publication was attributed to the influence of the Churches which were afraid that the contents of the manuscripts may endanger the Christian faith. The real reasons of the delay were, of course, many, and had nothing to do with the assumed cover-up. The reasons were - technical:

the difficulty of putting together and making sense of many thousand very small fragments; - economic: there were no financial arrangements done and the editors need to do other work to assure their living [teaching at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, for example]; - poor organisation of the team: to some of the editors were allotted so many manuscripts that several lives were need to complete the task; - even political, since the occupation by Israel of East Jerusalem complicated the work on the Rockefeller Museum where the manuscripts were keep. Of course, once all the manuscript have been published, it has been evident that nobody has attempted to hide nothing, because there is nothing to cover-up.

Since I was one of the editors accused in the nineties of not having published with due speed my share of manuscripts of Cave 11, I used to answer the journalists who posed me the question of the cover-up with a very simple argument. The cover-up was impossible, because the Churches do not have any way to put pressure on the editors: the only who may have put some pressure on me, was the one who was paying my salary, the University of Groningen, thus, and if among my manuscripts there were some thing that could endanger the Christian faith, this would have been the first thing I would have published, because it would have promoted my carrier at my University, and made me and my University famous. The answer to the first question is thus a resounding no.

b) *“Have some parts of the New Testament been found among the Dead Sea Scroll?”*

A great Spanish papyrologist, José O’Callaghan, launched in 1972 the hypothesis that certain unidentified Greek papyri from Cave 7 would contain remains of what had been the oldest copies of several books of the New Testament. He claimed that in these tiny remains of papyri was be possible to identify fragments of the gospel of Mark, of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Romans, 1 Timothy and even the 2 Peter and the Epistle of James. These fragments would thus provide the proof that towards the year 50 CE in Palestine the Gospels and the whole New Testament had already acquired the form we know.

These are indeed very important claims... if they proved to be true. If they will proved true, they will provide the evidence that not only that the New Testament was written before 68, the year of the deposit of the manuscripts in the caves, but because of the palaeographic dating of the script, even before the year 50 of the first century. The opinions of the critics that assume a long period of oral transmission before the New Testament was put in writing would be disproved, as it would be disproved the accepted (and much later) date of many of the writings of the New Testament. They would allow to prove that the gospel of Mark was written originally in Greek, without the assumed first redaction in Aramaic. And they will establish an

undisputed link between the inhabitants of Qumran and the early Christian community.

But are they true? Let us look to the "best case", which is the biggest of the fragments in question: 7Q5, assumed to correspond with Mark 6:52-53.

In this fragment some twenty letters are preserved, of which only fourteen are certain and undisputed. O'Callaghan reads the remain other six differently than other scholars. This is, in itself nothing especial, when only part of a letter (Greek or Hebrew) has been preserved, it can be read in different ways because the remains could fit several letters. But in view of the small amount of text preserved, this already says that O'Callaghan's identification (or any other identification for that matter) is unsure at least by some 25 %. In addition (and staying always with 7Q5 the "strongest case" of the hypothesis of O'Callaghan) even reading the fragment as he would like, it can only be made to agree with Mark 6:52-53 by supposing a textual variant (the omission of three letters) not witnessed by any other manuscript. This, again in nothing unusual, because this sort of variant occur often in old manuscripts. But again, it sensibly reduces the probative force of the argument. And, even more important, several other alternative identifications of the same fragment 7Q5 have been proposed (such as several texts of the Old Testament or of the Apocryphal literature) which are equally possible for the few letters preserved, and which are even more probably because they do not require neither a different reading of the fragmentary letters nor an unattested variant in the known texts, and are compatible with the two Greek fragments from the same cave which have been certainly identified respectively with the book of Exodus and with the Letter of Jeremiah. And as you have probably concluded already, if several identifications are equally possible, none of them can be considered as conclusively established. O'Callaghan hypothesis has such a meagre foundation and implies so many questionable factors that nothing solid can be built on it. But there is even more. The second biggest of the unidentified fragments from cave 7 (7Q4) was identified by O'Callaghan with 1 Timothy 3:16-4:3 and 7Q8 with James 1:23-24. Or, a new analysis of the fibres of the papyrus of both fragments done by E. Muro and published in one of the latest issues of the *Revue de Qumrân*, has show that these fragments have horizontal fibres that slope slightly downward to the right at an angle of about 4 degrees, both in relation to the vertical fibres and to the lines of Greek texts. His analysis has proved that both fragments (as well as fragment 12 not identified by O'Callaghan) come not only from the same scroll, but from two consecutive columns of this scroll. The three fragments form now an ensemble and need to be considered as only one larger fragment. Of course, this has facilitated the identification of the remains, and it is now certain that the three of them come from the known Greek translation of the latest part of the Book of Enoch, exactly corresponding to 1 Enoch 103:3-4 and 7-8. Muro's proof has

stimulated the research on the other unidentified fragments, and already four more have been located in different chapters of the same composition. Of course, this identification of 7Q4, 7Q8 and 7Q12 with the *Epistle of Enoch* does not prove that the identification of 7Q5 with the gospel of Mark is definitively wrong, but it certainly reduces even more the probability that it was, and in my opinion it makes O'Callaghan hypothesis definitely highly improbable. The New Testament has not been found at Qumran.

c) *"Was Jesus a member of the group of Qumran?"*

This question arises from the compatible time-frame, from the close geographical setting, and from the congruity of many of the ideas attributed to Jesus in the New Testament with ideas which appear in the Scrolls. Since the Jesus of the New Testament appears well formed in the biblical tradition, it seems logical to assume that he received somewhere his biblical formation. And since the New Testament is silent about the forming years of Jesus, what better place can we assume for its forming than the biblically centred community of Qumran?

But the simple fact is that neither the New Testament refers to the people to which we own this collection of manuscripts, nor is in the Scrolls any single allusion to the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. We may indeed make very long lists of similarities and dissimilarities of which we know about Jesus and what we know about the Scrolls (and there hundred of books dedicated precisely to do this), but the fact remains that on what the texts do not say, we only can speculate. If you allow me to speculate a little, I would say that it is highly unlikely that Jesus could have been a member of the group of Qumran or have been in touch with them. Jesus address himself to all Jews (to the sinners as well as to the righteous, without distinction) and even to foreigners. At Qumran on the contrary, the message is exclusively addressed to the "sons of light" and all the unrighteous Jews are excluded. There is a well known parable in the Gospels, on which a King invites all his friends to celebrate the wedding of his son. One by one, all the guest decline the invitation, and refuse to come for one reason or another. The father of the house then sent his servants to bring to the banquet "the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame" as it is put by Luke. Or, in the description of those who may and who may not became members of the group of Qumran, precisely "the cripple, the blind and the lame" are among those excluded forever.

We will never know for sure, but it seems to me reasonable enough to conclude that Jesus was not a member of the Qumran group, nor had he any contact with the people who preserved the collection of manuscripts.

d) *"Did Christianity developed from the Jewish Essene sect?"*

According to the so called "Gronngen Hypothesis" the community of Qumran was formed by a splinter group of Essenes, a group which at the end of the second century before Christ separated from the essene move-

ment to live in isolation in the desert of Judah. That the Scrolls do not mention Jesus or the first Christians is easy to understand, because the people who wrote them were not interested in the outside world and considered all other Jews not member of the group as “sons of darkness” as they call them, and avoided all contact with strangers. The Scrolls do not mention other largest groups of contemporary Jews, like the Pharisees or the Sadducees. The people of Qumran do not only have broken with the Temple of Jerusalem, but they have retired to the desert in the expectation of the end, avoiding all contact with strangers. That the New Testament do not mention the group of Qumran is thus easy to understand. After all Qumran was a small marginal settlement in the desert. But the silence of the New Testament over the Essenes who were present on all the cities of Palestine, is more surprising, particularly when the New Testament speaks many times of the two other Jewish groups which with the Essenes were the main parties of the Judaism of the time: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is not this silence a conscious cover-up by the writers of the New Testament of the true origins of Christianity which would have developed from the Jewish Essene movement? Or as Ernest Renan put it: Is not Christianity an Essenism which has succeed?

The development of Christianity from the Jewish Essene movement is perfectly possible even if Jesus had not contact at all with the group of Qumran. But are the origins of Christianity rooted on this particular form of Judaism we call Essenes and that we now know better thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls? Also here my answer will be no. But you will understand better my answer after I have presented my own way of envisioning the general relationship of the Scrolls to the New Testament. To which we proceed now.

II.

A positive answer to the question of the Essene origins of Christianity was not uncommon on the first twenty years or so of research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Perhaps the best representative of this understanding was the French Scholar André Dupont Sommer, and his views were popularised by the journalist Edmon Wilson in a series of articles in the *New Yorker* and afterwards in his wonderful and very influential book *The Scrolls form the Dead Sea*. But this early positive answer suffered from three fundamental shortcomings: - it was based only upon a small fraction of the manuscripts found at Qumran (most of the manuscripts from Cave 4 have been published only lately); - it considered all these manuscripts as the product of the Essenes, who were identical with the people of Qumran; - and it was assuming that there were direct connections between the two literary corpora, the Scrolls and the New Testament, or between the Essenes and the early Christians.

Now, we know better, not because we are clever, but because we have new and much more information. After 1992 we are no more dependent exclusively of the manuscripts from Cave 1, but thanks to the complete publication of all the scrolls we can appreciate the collection as a whole.

We know now that only a small part of the writings found at Qumran were written by the people living there, and that the biggest majority do not have any element which allows to consider them “qumranic,” “essene” or whatever. They are simply Jewish religious writings, on which for the first time we have access to the developments that had happened within Judaism before the birth of Christianity.

Since the Dead Sea Scrolls explicitly present themselves as based on the Hebrew Bible but are clearly different from it in a great many theological and legal aspects, it is logical to consider these differences as a witness that documents the evolution of the theological ideas and the legal norms reflected in the Hebrew Bible that have already taken place within Judaism during the period of at least two centuries which elapse between the writing of the latest book of the Hebrew Bible and the deposit of the manuscripts in the caves around Qumran.

Since the New Testament also presents itself as based on the Old Testament but is clearly different in many theological and legal aspects from it, it is also logical to consider also these differences as witnesses of the evolution and changes which have taken place in Judaism during the same period.

And since there is no proof of any direct relationship among the two corpora of writings (those from Qumran and the writings which form the New Testament), a genetic relationship among both corpora is not the most logical explanation of the similarities or of the differences we can find among them. Therefore, I consider the relationship among these two corpora in terms of different phases of evolution from a commonly shared ground (the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament). I do not think thus that Christianity developed from the Jewish movement of the Essenes, but I see both movement (the Essenes and the first Christians as represented by the New Testament) as different expressions of the multifarious reality that was the Palestinian Judaism.

Between the two parts of the Christian Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, there was a tremendous gap, not only of chronology (more than two hundred years) but on the development of the religious ideas. In the Old Testament we have only, so to speak, the starting point of a long process of development, and in the New Testament one of the final forms this process has taken. When the first manuscripts from Qumran Cave 1 were published they proved that several of the key ideas of the New Testament were already developed and were present in those Jewish writings which

were attributed to the Essenes. It was thus logical to postulate a genetic relationship between the Essenes and Christianity. We know now that the reality was much more complex, and that the phases of the growing process many and variegated. We now that many of the elements we thought were "original" to the New Testament, were already achieved within Judaism in general, and not within the form of Judaism we call "Essenism."

For this reason I do not think that the Dead Sea Scrolls would show us that Christianity arose from the Jewish Essene movement. The Scrolls reveal us that in the two or three hundred years that separate the writing of the last book of the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament many and various developments did take place and were put into writing. But because these writings were lost the major part of these developments were unknown to us. Now that, at least some of them have been revealed by the Dead Sea Scrolls, we can understand the relationship between the Scrolls and the New Testament not as genetic dependence of one of the other, but as different developments from the same basic ground, the Hebrew Bible.

III.

Now, in this third part of my lecture, I will illustrate my understanding of these relationship with a couple of examples. The first concerns the sabbath law, the second the works of the Messiah, and the third the idea of the Messiah on itself.

1) *The sabbath law.*

Both in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament we find long discussions about the observance of the sabbath law. You probably are familiar with the text of Luke 14, when Jesus after having cured a man who suffered from dropsy, ask the Pharisees: "If one of you has a son or an ox and he falls into a pit, will he not immediately rescue him on the sabbath day?"

The question is really surprising for a Jew who knows his Bible, because since Exodus 20:9-10 it is crystal clear that no work should be done during the sabbath day, without any exception, and that for the transgressor the penalty is death, as it is specified in Exodus 31. We know, of course, that after the killing of the pious Jews who refused to defend themselves when attacked during the sabbath day in the time of the Maccabees (as it is told in 1 Macc), Judah and his followers decided that they should defend themselves in the future if attacked during the sabbath, although another Jewish writing from the same time (the Book of Jubilees) clearly states that even in this case the interdiction of work cannot be broken. But the distance between Exodus 20 and in the New Testament is enormous, even greater than the distance of the rabbinic teaching according to which the *pikua nefes*, the defence of the life, clearly prime over the sabbath rest. How could the Pharisees and Jesus agree that an observant Jew could rescue from a pit a son or a ox which has fallen there?

The Dead Sea Scrolls help us to understand the developments which have already taken place from the basic texts of the Old Testament and that have lead to a different understanding of the sabbath law within pre-Christian Judaism. In the *Damascus Document*, which dedicates two columns to discuss the sabbath law, we read: *"No-one should help an animal give birth on the sabbath day. And if he makes it fall into a well or a pit, he should not take it out on the sabbath... And a living man who falls into a place of water or into another place, no-one should take him out with a ladder or a rope or a utensil."*

This text shows that the argument of Jesus perfectly fit within the discussions on the interpretation of the basic precept of the sabbath rest. The Qumran text quotes the basic principle: "no-one should do work on the sixth day, for this is what he says: Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy". But our text also show that the case of a person (a living man) is already seen as different from an animal. If an animal fell in a pit, all action to take him off is prohibited. And if it is a person who falls, no work (such as taking him off with a ladder or with a rope) is allowed; but the text does not exclude the possibility that the person could be helped if a way is found which could no be considered as work. That this is not a clever exegesis of this text is proved by a later text also found at Qumran, 4Q265 (a sort of mix of the 1QS and CD). There we read: *"No-one should take out an animal which has fallen into water on the sabbath day. But if it is a man who has fallen into water on the sabbath day, his garment should be thrown to him to lift him out with it."*

This two texts shown clearly that the discussion with the Pharisees in the gospel of Luke, far removed as it is from the basic text of the Old Testament, can be perfectly understood within the context of the discussions on the interpretation of the precept existent within Palestinian Judaism. In the text of the gospel, Jesus and the Pharisees partake a legal position different from the one represented in the Scrolls (even an ox can be help out of water) but the development and distance from the Old Testament text has been clearly bridged by these texts.

2) *The works of the Messiah*

My second example is even clearer, because it explicitly refers back to the biblical text. In the book of Isaiah the expected liberation from the people in exile is described as the result of the mighty works of God. Among the many metaphors used by the prophet to symbolise the divine action, we can read, for example, in Isaiah 35:5: *"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf cleared; Then will the lame leap like a stag, the tongue of the dumb will sing."* And in Isaiah 61: 1: *"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad things to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners. To announce a year of favour from the Lord."*

If we try to listen to these texts with the ears of the people to whom they were addressed, I think it is fair to say that for them the prophet, as consolation of the present situation, describes the mighty works the Lord will make in the future, works which announce the coming of a year of grace and of the end of exile. His call, as a prophet, is to announce this message, a message which is confirmed by the anointing he has received and by the spirit of the Lord which rest in him. These two elements guarantee the accomplishment of his words, the end of exile and the return to Zion.

We find these two texts often quoted in the New Testament. But what these texts there say is something quite different from what we hear in the words of Isaiah. In Luke 4:16-21 we find Jesus reading in the synagogue of Nazareth precisely the second of the texts quoted. The gospels text goes on so: *"Rolling upon the scroll he gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began by saying to them: 'Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'"*

What clearly means: What the prophet has said is an announcement of what I am doing. The words of Isaiah which describe his function as a messenger (to bring glad tidings to the poor) describe in reality what I am doing. And in Matthew 11:2-6 we also read; *"Now John in prison heard about the works Christ was performing, and sent a message by his disciples to ask him. 'Are you 'He who is to come' or do we look for another?' In reply Jesus said to them: 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them.'"*

In this text, unlike in the one of Luke, the words of Isaiah are not quoted as such, but their use is evident, as it is evident the interpretation given which is the same as given in the synagogue of Nazareth. The answer of Jesus combine elements from the two passages of Isaiah quoted and presents the whole as the proof that the promises of Isaiah have been fulfilled. Besides, it adds a new and significant element which does not appears in the words of the Prophet: the dead are raised to life. According to the interpretation of the New Testament the texts of Isaiah does not announce the end of the exile but they refer to the time of the Messiah, and they are used to show that this time has arrived and that the works of Jesus are the proof that he is the expected Messiah. What in the biblical text was presented as a sign of the coming of "a year of grace from the Lord" is now understood as a sign of the coming of the Messiah; the works of God and the signs of the prophet are now the signs of "Christ", that is of the "anointed", the Messiah in Greek.

In fact, the New Testament does two different things to arrive to this interpretation: it transfer the meaning of the biblical text from its historical context to the messianic era, and it understand the words of the Prophet as an announcement of what is happening now, in the present. The distant between what Isaiah said and its interpretation within the New Testament is as

great as the distance between the "You shall do no work in the sabbath day" of Exodus and the pulling off of a pit an ox in the sabbath of the previous example. And as it happens with the previous example, also here the Dead Sea Scrolls help us to gap this distance, because in these texts we do find already the transformation we saw in the New Testament. The same words of the Prophet Isaiah were already transfert to the Messianic age.

A very nice poetic fragment (4Q521) published as "A Messianic Apocalypse", show us which interpretation was given to the words of Isaiah at the end of the second century or at the beginning of the first century BCE at Qumran: *"1 [for the heavlens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, 2 [and all] that is in them will not turn away from the holy precepts. 3 Be encouraged, you who are seeking the Lord in his service! Blank 4 Will you not, perhaps, encounter the Lord in it, all those who hope in their heart? 5 For the Lord will observe the devout, and call the just by name, 6 and upon the poor he will place his spirit, and the faithful he will renew with his strength. 7 For he will honour the devout upon the throne of eternal royalty, 8 freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted. 9 Ever shall I cling to those who hope. In his mercy he will jud[ge,] 10 and from no-one shall the fruit [of] good [deeds] be delayed, 11 and the Lord will perform marvellous acts such as have not existed, just as he said] 12 for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the meek 13 give lavishly [to the needy, lead the exiled and enrich the hungry."*

The first lines of this fragment re-use the Psalm 146; the last ones quote explicitly the same text of Isaiah used in the New Testament, and in both cases the author introduces some new elements. The one to whom heavens and earth listen is the Messiah, a figure who does not appear at all in Psalm 146, but whose presence in the first line of this fragment governs the interpretation the author makes of the two passages. The works of God which symbolise his justice and the works of Isaiah which promise the end of exile have been transformed in the works the Lord will make in the time of the Messiah. They are no longer the promise of national restoration and bringing the people back from the exile, but they the mighty works of God in the messianic time which are the reward of the faithful.

In this text we found a good part of the elements we were missing and that were need to understand the developments in the interpretations of the words of the prophet done in the New Testament. The mighty works of God which symbolised the end of exile, are presented here as the action God will make in the time of the Messiah. We can discuss if these works are presented in the texts as the direct work of God, or as the works of God through his Messiah; we can discuss if the text talks of one or of several Messiahs; we can discuss the precise profile of the messianic figure involved, etc. But what is completely clear is that the words of Isaiah are no more read as words of consolation for the people who attend the end of exile, but as a description

of the works of God which should characterise the messianic age. The transposition of the prophetic words from the time of the prophet to the messianic ages is already completed. And besides, this text also proof that rising dead men to live is already considered as one of the mighty works God would make in the time of the Messiah. The precision of the text "as he says" which the author makes explicit the biblical reference, allow us also to understand the addition of the resurrection of the dead to the list of mighty works of God as contained in the New Testament.

3) *The idea of the Messiah*

My final example will deal with one of the core elements of the New Testament: the proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as the expected Messiah.

As you know, the Messiah of the New Testament is presented as a figure with many faces: it is a man, a descendent or son of David, it is also a priest who atones for the sins of the redeemed, it is a prophet as Moses who proclaims the new law, but it is also a heavenly figure, a son of God. It has been always difficult to understand how the early Christians could have arrived to the expression of such a complex figure from the very limited indication of messianic expectations we can find within the Old Testament. Thanks to the Scrolls, we know now that these "messianic seeds" of the Old Testament had growth and developed in a plethora of messianic figures, expected "at the end of days". In the *Rule of the Community* we can read: "*They should not depart from any counsel of the law in order to walk 10 in complete stubbornness of their heart, but instead shall be ruled by the first directives which the men of the Community began to be taught 11 until the prophet comes, and the Messiahs (in plural) of Aaron and Israel.*"

Here we do find the expectation of the coming of the prophet and of two messiahs, a priestly messiah, son of Aaron, and a messiah of Israel, the traditional messiah son of David. In this text (as in all other messianic texts from the Scrolls) these individual figures are clearly distinct one from the other, of course. They are not different aspect of a single messiah.

We do not find in the quoted text the expectation of the coming of a heavenly redeemer figure of the type which appears in the Melchizedek text, but in another Aramaic text we do find a whole series of expressions which are familiar to us from Luke 2:32-35 and which introduces a mysterious personage of heavenly origin who appears at the end of history and unleashes the final phase of the eschatological battle which will be followed but everlasting peace, very much alike, in my opinion to the heavenly Son of Man figure we find in the *Fourth Book of Ezra* and in the *Parables of Enoch*. In the second column of 4Q246 we read: "¹ He will be called son of God, and they will call him son of the Most High. Like the sparks ² of a vision, so will their kingdom be: they will rule several years over ³ the earth and crush everything: a people will crush another people, and a city another city. ⁴ Blank Until he rises up the people of God (or: the people of God arise) and makes

everyone rest from the sword.⁵ His kingdom will be an eternal kingdom and all his paths in truth and uprightness]⁶ The earth (will be) in truth and all will make peace. The sword will cease in the earth⁷ and all the cities will pay him homage. He is a great God among the gods (?) (or The great God will be his strength).⁸ He will make war with him; he will place the peoples in his hand and cast away everyone before him.⁹ His kingdom will be an eternal kingdom, and all the abysses.”

The text breaks here, and we also must close this lecture. We can not discuss further this mysterious figure; but it seems to me that it gives us the proof that also the most surprising element of the description of Jesus, as Son of God and son of the Most High, was also developed from the references to the Son of Man of the Daniel text which is echoes here.

What I want to say is not that the complex figure of Jesus as Messiah, as presented in the New Testament, was already anticipated and presented as such in the Scrolls (as in the books *The First Messiah* by Michael O. Wise, or *The Messiah before Jesus* by Israel Knohl). What I conclude from the many allusions to different messianic figures in the Scrolls is that the seeds of messianic expectations, present in the Hebrew Bible, were already developed in pre-Christian Judaism where different messianic figures were expected: a King Messiah son of David, a Priestly Messiah, a Messiah who will atone for “his inheritance,” be the ultimate saviour of “the men of his lot,” and destroy the kingdom of Belial in the eschatological battle restoring eternal peace as presented in 11QMelkizedek, and even a heavenly Messiah call “son of God.” Thanks to these previous developments it was possible to the writers of the New Testament to express their faith in Jesus as such a complex messianic figure, and to its Jewish readers to understand what they meant.

If you allow me to summarise in a single sentence what are the myth and what are the facts of the Dead Sea Scrolls in their relationship to the New Testament, I would say that the greatest contribution of the Scrolls is that they have filled up the gap between the Old and the New Testament and they have revealed to us the Jewish background from which Christianity was born and from which it took the language, the style, the halakhah and the theology necessary to express itself. The Scrolls would not explain the New Testament, but they will make us understand why the New Testament expressed the beliefs of the first Christians the way it did. These are the facts. The rest are myths.