phase in Qumran calendar research, presenting a range of fresh questions and approaches, and a significant attempt to relate Qumran calendar texts to their broader, cultural and scientific context in the ancient Near East.

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This volume is devoted to a full examination of what can be said about the nature of the communities behind the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some of Collins’ contributions on these matters have appeared in several important articles and book chapters over the course of several years and are here developed and elaborated in a comprehensive fashion.

The study of the Community Rule, and in particular its relation also to the Damascus Document and the site of Qumran, has always been central in Qumran studies. The publication of numerous additional manuscripts of both the Community Rule and the Damascus Document from Cave 4 has injected new life into their study. This is why, after a brief introduction, Collins devotes the two opening chapters that deal with primary Qumran texts to the Damascus Document and the Community Rule. He rightly discounts the once fashionable idea that the Damascus Document catered for married Essenes, whereas the Community Rule represented a celibate branch, as too simplistic (p. 5). Instead, Collins advocates considering the Damascus Document and the Community Rule as indicative of ‘complementary branches of a larger movement’ (p. 6). Moreover, Collins favours an identification of the Yahad with ‘an association dispersed in multiple settlements’ rather than a single community that occupied the Qumran site (p. 68). He is persuaded by Alison Schofield’s recent suggestion that different editions of the Community Rule probably emerged from a variety of related settlements that were eventually brought to Khirbet Qumran at a time of crisis (pp. 68–9).

This line of argument is reminiscent of the now rejected model of local texts proposed by Frank Moore Cross to account for the plurality of biblical texts attested at Qumran. It is difficult to explain why Qumran should house all the Community Rule manuscripts found there after being brought there at a time of crisis. Several questions remain unanswered. Would the crisis not have affected Qumran as well? How far dispersed were the local outlets? Faced with the challenge of attempting to safeguard texts in a crisis, would one not head for a local hiding place rather than trek to a central one? Should we envisage, similarly, different local settlements transmitting two forms of the text of Jeremiah and then taking both to Qumran in a crisis? I do not think each manuscript needs to be associated with a different geographical Yahad sub-group. Instead, I have argued that the evidence of the Rule manuscripts is best understood in analogy to the textually pluralistic picture of the emerging Bible from

In subsequent chapters Collins considers the wider issues of the historical context of the emergence and early history of the communities dealing with the once dominant reconstruction of high priestly rivalries, the chronology advocated in CD 1, the pesharim and the question of the identity of the Wicked Priest, as well as the Prayer for or against King Jonathan and 4QMMT. Collins emphatically argues against a second century BCE date for the Teacher of Righteous and is sympathetic to Michael Wise’s identification of the Teacher’s adversary, the Wicked Priest, with Hycranus II of the first century BCE.

A fourth chapter closely examines the much debated evidence for and against an identification of the movement behind the Scrolls with the Essenes of the classical sources, particularly Philo, Pliny, and Josephus. While still convinced that the classical accounts do warrant an identification of the Essenes with the Yahad, Collins follows Steve Mason in acknowledging the enormous influence of Josephus’ and Philo’s own rhetorical aims in presenting their descriptions of this group. Two appendices on the origin of the name Essenes and the Therapeutae respectively round off this chapter.

The final chapter judiciously reviews a number of recent debates on the archaeological interpretation of the Qumran site. In this context Collins stresses the wealth of evidence for a communal occupation during the Herodian period and is willing to grant the possibility that the site had a different purpose during the Hasmonean period. This chapter considers recent challenges to de Vaux’s stratigraphy of the site (especially his identification of a meagrely attested Period Ia), the debate about the nature of the settlement, the cemetery, the large number of ritual immersion pools, the toilet in Locus 51, and the burial of animal bones. Concerning the latter Collins follows Schiffman’s suggestion that the burial of these bones was intended to prevent scavenging by dogs and other animals on the basis of purity concerns expressed in halakhic texts such as 4QMMT.

In short, Collins clearly demonstrates that the movement behind the texts cannot be neatly tied down to the site of Qumran, even though the evidence for a communal occupation of the site is strong, especially in the two centuries on either side of the turn of the era. The social phenomena attested in the texts go beyond the one site – both chronologically and geographically. This judicious panoramic treatment of the evidence clearly points to the first century BCE as the epicentre of the evidence from several rather different perspectives rather than the second century BCE as once firmly believed. Collins’ sharp grasp of the important details coupled with his gift of painting a large landscape picture of where we stand has resulted in a volume both scholars and students will read with great benefit.

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