Greek or Hebrew themselves.

There is, of course, a genuine need for such works, and nothing illegitimate about writing them; but it has its price. For when a book for popular readership sets forth the author’s views it is one thing, but when it also undertakes to distinguish them from those of other scholars but does not present their views fully, due to a need or desire to avoid philological (or other) details, the result will perforce leave careful readers wondering how the others could so often be so wrong, and thus leaves the author’s arguments more suggestive than conclusive. But suggestive they are, and Klawans’s arguments are worth reading, whether they bring us to give up long-held opinions or only to re-examine their foundations.

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Joan Taylor’s book is divided into two parts that are largely independent of each other. The first part examines what we know of the Essenes from ancient sources apart from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The second concerns the manner of preservation of the Scrolls: it advances an hypothesis about the nature of the collection and offers a novel proposal about the purpose of the Qumran site. Contrary to what might be expected from the title, the book does not examine the content of the Scrolls in general, but only some aspects that most scholars have considered marginal.

The book begins with a brief review of scholarship on the Essenes before the discovery of the Scrolls. Christian scholarship generally emphasized the differences over against Pharisaic and rabbinic Judaism. Taylor attributes this to theological bias. The Essenes did not fit the Christian (especially Lutheran) view of Judaism as lacking in spirituality, and must therefore be marginalized. Taylor sets out to undo this misperception, and argues that the Essenes were a highly esteemed group at the centre of Judean life.

Philo’s statement that the Essenes have become servants of God, not by sacrificing animals but by rendering their minds holy is often read as a rejection of animal sacrifice. According to Taylor, this ‘simply cannot be right’ (p. 28) since Philo portrays them as exemplary Jews. His statement that ‘even if the older men … happen to be childless’ they are looked after’ (p. 44), is taken to imply that most of the Essenes had produced children prior to their commitment to celibacy. Philo does not, according to Taylor, portray a separate ‘sect’ but rather a superior level of advancement within Judaism. Similarly, when Josephus refers to the Essenes as a hairesis, this does not mean ‘sect’ but rather an option that a person like Josephus might consider. ‘We need to remember’, she argues, ‘that Judaism in Josephus was primarily a system of religious law, founded on Torah … by which the land was governed. Given this, the different “battalions” and “apprehensions” cannot
be anything but schools or societies of law’ (p. 51). So she avoids the word ‘sects’ and renders *haireseis* as ‘choices’, ‘seizures’, ‘legal schools’ or ‘societies’. Indeed, argues Taylor, the Essenes are Josephus’s primary paradigm of what it means to be Jewish. She claims that Josephus ‘indicates they had actual juridical authority at the heart of public life. Josephus states that the Essenes had their own courts to decide verdicts, even a sentence of death for blasphemy’ (p. 78). She notes that according to Josephus the Essenes sent offerings to the temple, even if they observed different purifications. She also pays considerable attention to Josephus’s account of individual Essenes, especially Menahem, who predicted the rise of Herod, and John the Essene, who was a commander in the war against Rome.

The late Hartmut Stegemann had suggested that the Herodians in the Gospel of Mark were in fact the Essenes. Taylor devotes a whole chapter to this suggestion. In Mark 3:6, the Pharisees conspire with the Herodians to destroy Jesus. The catalyst for this conspiracy is a healing on the Sabbath. Taylor infers that the Herodians, like the Pharisees, were religious authorities who held an interpretation of Sabbath laws different from that of Jesus. Since Josephus says that there were three *haireseis*, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, and the Gospels list the opponents of Jesus as Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, she infers that ‘Herodians’ was a derogatory name for Essenes, and proceeds to treat this identification as established fact in the remainder of the book.

Pliny’s account of the Essenes is described as a ‘caricature’, but his claim that they occupied a region west of the Dead Sea is taken seriously. Pliny does not specify an exact location, and Taylor infers that he is referring to a large area. Taylor argues that Dio Chrysostom is an independent witness to the presence of Essenes in that area.

The second part of the book begins with a history of the Dead Sea. Important here is the expansion of Hasmonean control of the region, and the exploitation of its resources. These resources, and the fortresses built by the Hasmoneans passed to Herod when he became king of Judea. Taylor argues that there would have been no place for the Essenes in the region while the Hasmoneans were in control, and that ‘it would prima facie be most natural to assume that the arrival of the Essenes in the region had something to do with Herod’ (p. 247). She dates the occupation of the site to the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, but argues that the Essenes only occupied it when Herod came to power in 37 BCE. At that point ‘there seems no good reason to doubt that Essenes lived here, as the literary sources attest’ (p. 260). She posits ‘a regional Essene locality in which Qumran was one of many Essene settlements’. She also infers from Pliny and Dio that Essenes still occupied the site after 68 CE.

The discussion of the scrolls focuses on their material preservation. In addition to the use of jars, some scrolls were wrapped in linen, and in some cases bitumen was applied to the linen. Taylor infers that the scrolls were carefully buried. She concludes that ‘Essenes lived at Qumran with a view to finding localities in which ancient manuscripts either containing the name of God or otherwise having significant value could be buried and preserved in perpetuity’ (p. 303). Qumran was ‘a scroll burial centre’, in effect a Genizah, as suggested
initially by Eleazar L. Sukenik. A final chapter is devoted to the pharmacological resources of Qumran and indications of interest in healing in the scrolls.

This is an erudite book, full of rare information and bold suggestions. Much of the information (on scholarship on the Essenes, the region of the Dead Sea etc.) is valuable even if the suggestions are not, or not fully, persuasive. It is to Taylor’s credit that she examines the ancient accounts of the Essenes independently of the Scrolls. She is surely right that the Essenes were not as isolated as scholars have often maintained, and they certainly were not confined to the site of Qumran. Whether the exaggeration of their isolation can be entirely attributed to Christian bias is not so clear – the accounts of the Essenes are anomalous in the context of ancient Judaism, and were all the more so before the discovery of the Scrolls. But all our sources, especially Josephus, emphasize that the Essenes were at pains to separate themselves from their fellow Judeans, and in light of this it is difficult to maintain that they were at the centre of Judean life. Taylor rejects the language of sectarianism, but she never discusses what would constitute a sect. It is amply clear that Esseneism was a voluntary association, with rituals of admission and expulsion. Taylor herself suggests that they did not accept the authority of the High Priest’s court (p. 78). It is not entirely clear what is entailed by describing this association as ‘a legal society’. They were certainly concerned with the interpretation of the law, but to describe them solely in terms of that concern is highly reductive (as indeed it is reductive to say that Judaism was primarily a system of religious law, even in the writings of Josephus). There is nothing to indicate that they had juridical authority over anyone who was not a member of their association, so it is misleading to say ‘they had actual juridical authority at the heart of public life’ (p. 78). While Josephus observes that Herod treated them with reverence, he does not claim that Herod ceded legal authority to them, in the way that Salome Alexandra ceded it to the Pharisees after the death of Jannaeus.

The argument that the Herodians in the Gospels are the Essenes by another name remains a shot in the dark. There is little to suggest that the Essenes would have made common cause with the Pharisees. The argument that the Herodians were legal authorities, concerned with the observation of the Sabbath, is strained. In Mark 3:1–5 it is the Pharisees who take offence at the healing on the Sabbath, and they then approach the Herodians, whose concerns may have been quite different. In Mark 12:13, the trap set by the Pharisees and Herodians concerns the payment of taxes to Caesar, a matter of obvious importance for the Herodian dynasty. The juxtaposition of ‘the leaven of the Herodians’ and ‘the leaven of the Pharisees’ in Mark 8:15 is too elliptic and allusive to bear much weight. Taylor wants the identification in order to show that the Essenes were active in public life, but the evidence is extremely tenuous.

On the interpretation of Qumran, Taylor is surely right to note that Essene occupation during the Hasmonean period is highly implausible. This point has been made by others (not acknowledged here) beginning with Norman Golb, but is still not widely recognized. She adds the intriguing suggestion that the Essene occupation of Qumran was connected with the rise of Herod, a suggestion well worth considering.
The discussion of the ‘burial’ of the scrolls is also of interest, but the suggestion that this was the *raison d’être* of the Qumran settlement joins a long line of eccentric explanations of the site. Burying scrolls must have been hazardous work, to judge by the number of graves in the cemetery. Taylor does not really argue the merits of this interpretation over against others; she simply presents it. The care taken with sealing jars is quite compatible with the more usual view that the scrolls were stored for safe-keeping. The last chapter on ‘the healing arts’ is flawed by the apparent acceptance of Allegro’s *4QTherapeia*, which was debunked decades ago.

The greatest shortcoming of this interesting book is the failure to engage the content of what are usually considered the sectarian scrolls, which would complicate the argument that the Essenes were ‘a legal society’. Would the Essenes deployed at Qumran live as a *yahad* while they were engaged in their scroll-burials? Taylor is right that the site of Qumran should not be taken as the norm for an Essene community but the relevance of the scrolls to the site requires further discussion.

In all, this is an interesting book with a lot of useful information, but its main theses are likely to prove controversial.

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To the numerous general introductions to the Dead Sea Scrolls written over the years by acknowledged Qumran specialists, the reader now finds a welcome addition in James VanderKam’s excellent volume, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible*. Six of its seven chapters correspond to the author’s memorable ‘Speaker’s Lectures’, delivered at the University of Oxford in 2009, which I had the pleasure of attending. Only chapter 4, ‘New Copies of Old Texts’, was not part of the spoken presentation. The lectures ranged over the main themes of the Qumran field: ‘The Biblical Scrolls and their Implications’, ‘Commentary on Older Scripture in the Scrolls’, ‘Authoritative Literature according to the Scrolls’, ‘Groups and Group Controversies’, ‘The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament Gospels’, and ‘The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Letters of Paul’. The additional chapter 4 discusses parabiblical documents (*Jubilees, Aramaic Levi, Book of Giants* and *Enoch*), and some Apocrypha (*Ben Sira, Tobit*, etc.).

James VanderKam, John A. O’Brien Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame, was one of the pillars of the by now completed Qumran Publication Project and an upholder of what is usually called the mainstream hypothesis concerning the origins and nature of the Qumran finds, namely that the buildings and manuscripts date to the late Second Temple Period, and that the deposit of the scrolls is linked to the nearby archaeological site. He also holds that