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WHAT IS IMPLIED BY THE VARIETY OF MESSIANIC FIGURES?

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EVERYONE who has read much of the literature on the Dead Sea scrolls is aware of the large part played in it by discussions of passages supposedly concerned with "the Messiah."

In a number of instances, to be sure, the concern has proved to be that of the interpreters, rather than the text. Dupont-Sommer's unfortunate discovery of messianic references in the Habakkuk commentary is a case in point.¹ Another is the passage in the War of the Children of Light (xii.6 ff.) which says, כִּי־אֱדֹנָי וּמֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד אִתָּנוּ עִם קְדוּשִׁים. This has been translated, "For the holy one of Adonai and the King of glory is with us, with the holy angels."² But the meaning is, "For Adonai is holy, and the King of glory is with us, who are a people of holy men." This is argued not only by Ps 24 10 'יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְכִי־אֱדֹנָי, but also by the fact that the War itself contains a parallel passage where the reading is כִּי־אֱדֹנָי, "For holy is our mighty one."³ (As for עִם קְדוּשִׁים, it is an interpretive comment on Deut 7 6: Israel's claim to be a holy people is justified only by the fact, which is a people of holy men, and it is with them, therefore, that the holy King of glory dwells.) Yet another instance is the passage in Hodayot iii.6-18, in which the prophet compares himself to a woman in travail who will, however, give birth to a first-born son, a "wonderful counselor," in the words of Isa 9 5. The fact that Isa 9 5 is usually taken as messianic has resulted in the same significance being foisted onto this section of the Hodayot.⁴ But the prophet is here following that OT tradition⁵ which compares the anguish

¹ See the refutation by B. Otzen, "Die neugefundenen hebräischen Sektenschriften," *Studia Theol.*, VII (1954), 125 ff., esp. 149 ff.

² Most recently, by M. Black, "Messianic Doctrine in the Qumran Scrolls," in *Studia Patristica*, edd. K. Aland & F. Cross (Berlin, 1957; = *T. u. U.*, 63), I, 441 ff. esp. 454, cf. 455, n. 1; the earlier literature on the passage is cited by Black.

³ 1QM xix.1: Black's "the holy one, our glorious one" is hardly plausible. Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War* (Jerusalem, 1955), pp. 328 ff., has now shown conclusively, by a full commentary and many parallels, that the hymn of xii.6 ff. refers to God himself.

⁴ Again a recent example is Black, "Doctrine," p. 449, with references to his predecessors; further bibliography in Silberman's article, cited in the following note.

⁵ Jer 4 19, 20 9; Ezek 3 3, &c. L. Silberman, "Language and Structure in the *Hodayot* (1QH3)," *JBL*, LXXV (1956), 96 ff., pointed out that the passage was a simile, but

of prophecy to that of a woman in travail; the child to whom he⁶ will give birth will be the word of the Lord (a mighty counselor),⁷ and therefore the passage is of especial interest in showing that the author did not (or, at least, did not always) attribute messianic significance to every word of Isa 9.

Beside such instances where no messiah whatever is to be found in the text,⁸ there are a number of passages where the word "messiah" does appear, but refers to some anointed functionary who may have nothing whatever to do with the End, and in any case owes his title to a position quite other than that normally, in modern usage, called messianic. Thus, for instance, when the War refers to "thy messiahs" (in xi.7) the term probably means the prophets of the OT, as it sometimes does in the Zadokite Documents,⁹ and — if we follow Kuhn in thinking that these documents refer to two messiahs, from Aaron and Israel¹⁰ — it is altogether probable that the messiah from Aaron is the anointed High Priest.¹¹ This variety of usage derives, of course, from the OT, where prophets¹² and priests,¹³ as well as kings,¹⁴ are anointed, and the term "my messiahs," equated with "my prophets," is even used to refer to all Israelites.¹⁵ The same variety of usage is found in the pseudepigrapha — in particular Kuhn has argued persuasively that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs show the same expectation of two messiahs as do the Qumran texts mentioned above.¹⁶ Even greater variety appears in rabbinic literature, where a messiah may be an "anointed" (high) priest, or another priest anointed for a special function, or any past or future king of Judah or Israel who has been or is to be anointed,¹⁷ to say nothing

discredited his case by an implausible interpretation of the Hebrew and failure to recognize the OT source of the comparison.

⁶ There is no justification whatever for intruding "the community of Israel" into the passage.

⁷ Ps 167

⁸ Other examples could easily be added, e. g., 1QpHab v.4, where בְּחִירוֹ is to be read as a plural (cf. Rabin's note in *The Zadokite Documents* [Oxford, 1954], p. 8, on ii.12); 1QS iv.20, on which cf. Y. Yadin, "A Note on DSD IV 20," *JBL*, LXXIV (1955), 40 ff.

⁹ CD ii.12, probably to be read מְשִׁיחֵי רוּחַ קֹדֶשׁ, "those anointed by his holy spirit" (the usual confusion of *waw* and *yodh*); vi.1, again read מְשִׁיחֵי רוּחַ, probably to be supplied in the following gap.

¹⁰ K. G. Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs," in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (N. Y., 1957), pp. 55 ff.

¹¹ Kuhn's theory, *loc. cit.*; see also L. Silberman, "The Two 'Messiahs' of the Manual of Discipline," *VT*, V (1955), 77 ff.

¹² I Kings 19 16; Isa 61 1; cf. Ps 105 15 (= I Chron 16 22).

¹³ Exod 29 7, 29; Lev 4 3, 5, 16; Num 35 25; &c.

¹⁴ I Sam 9 16, 10 1, 15 1, 17, &c.

¹⁵ Ps 105 15 (= I Chron 16 22), cf. Isa 45 1 if "Cyrus" is an interpolation; Hab 3 13; Pss 28 8, 84 10 (or the High Priest?).

¹⁶ Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs," pp. 57 ff.

¹⁷ Horayot 12a, bottom.

of the other meanings inherited from the OT. And here, by the way, as in the Dead Sea documents,¹⁸ the anointed high priest takes precedence; he is actually defined as “that messiah who is chief among messiahs.”¹⁹

Faced with this embarrassment of messianic riches, the Christian exegete will probably try to define the object of his interest as “*the* Messiah” — the one whose coming is to be the major event in the End. But this brings us to the fact that just as there are messiahs without Ends, so there are Ends without messiahs. The War, for instance, gives us a detailed account of military goings on so extraordinary that they must be eschatological, but it says nothing whatever of any messiah.²⁰ Similarly, there is no reference to a messiah in the Hodayot,²¹ nor in the Habakkuk commentary,²² where we should expect one.

Here again, the state of affairs in the scrolls is a heritage from the OT and a parallel to the pseudepigrapha and the rabbinic literature. Many OT prophecies of the coming kingdom or world have no messiah,²³ and there is none in Jubilees (though chap. 23 contains a prophecy of the coming age from which the messiah’s absence is conspicuous, and the blessings of Levi and Judah in chap. 31 are on the very verge of messianism), nor in Enoch 1–36 and 91–104, nor in the Assumption of Moses, nor in the Slavic Enoch, nor Sibylline Oracles IV, though all of these contain prophetic passages in which some messiah might reasonably have been expected to make an appearance. As for rabbinic literature, the comparative rarity of messianic references in the older material is notorious, and the independence of the terms, “the days of the messiah” and “the coming world” makes it possible that by some, at least, the one or the other may have been used exclusively. Certainly it is not safe to assume that the harmonization of the two concepts, which now prevails in rabbinic material, was customary and universal from the beginning.

This is *not* to say, of course, that the Dead Sea sectaries were generally without what would commonly be called messianic expectations. On the contrary, in their literature, as in the OT, the pseudepigrapha, and the Christian and rabbinic material, there are many passages in which the coming of some sort of messiah (or messiahs) is definitely associated with

¹⁸ 1QS_a, adopting the restoration of Kuhn in “The Two Messiahs,” pp. 54–56 and notes, underlying his comments in “The Lord’s Supper,” in *The Scrolls and the NT*, pp. 70–71.

¹⁹ Horayot, *loc. cit.*, (The change of vowels is noteworthy, but does not really change the sense.)

²⁰ On xii.6 ff. see above.

²¹ On iii.6–18, see above.

²² On v.4, see above, n. 8. The text is to be translated, “And (God) will commit the judgment of all the gentiles to his chosen (ones) and at their rebuke shall all evil doers of his people be found guilty, because they (his chosen ones) kept his commandment(s) when they were persecuted.”

²³ E. g., Isa 2 2–5, 25–27, 29 17–24, 30 18–26; Ezek 38–39; Joel 4; &c.

the End.²⁴ Indeed — what proves most clearly the currency of the notion — the expectation even appears in passing references in legal texts, to indicate the terminus until which certain rules shall be valid: Backsliders shall not be readmitted until the messiahs come,²⁵ the laws governing camp discipline shall be observed until the messiahs come,²⁶ and so on. Even here, however, caution is necessary. For these instances show the expression coming to mean “forever” — and thereby losing its value as evidence of messianic expectation. A similar change in the meaning of other eschatological expressions appears in Tosefta Sotah xiii.2, on Ezra 2 63: Ezra reads, “The governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things until there should arise a priest possessing the urim and thummim.” The Tosefta comments, “As a man who says to his neighbor, ‘Until Elijah come,’ or, ‘Until the dead live.’” (Since the Tosefta here explains the meaning of a remark reportedly made at least 500 years prior to the time of the explanation, its words can hardly be taken as testimony for vivid eschatological hope.) That the same attitude was found in Christian communities is proved by II Pet 3 3: “You know that, in the latter days, mockers will come with mockery . . . saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’” Since the Manual of Discipline (1QS ii.11 ff.) devotes considerable attention to hypocrites in the Qumran sect, we have some ground on which to assume that, when the period until the messiahs’ coming was used to mean “forever,” there were some members who thought to themselves that “forever” would be a long, long time.

Now all this variety in the matter of messianic expectations is merely one detail — though a particularly striking one — of the even greater variety of eschatological expectations current in the two centuries before and after the time of Jesus. To say nothing of mere differences in personnel and program, these expectations run the whole gamut of concepts, from ordinary kingdoms in this world, through forms of this world variously made over and improved, through worlds entirely new and different, to spiritual bliss without any world at all.²⁷ But the point to be noted is that these contradictory theories evidently flourished side by side in the early rabbinic and Christian and Qumran communities which copied the texts and repeated the sayings. What is more, quite contradictory theories are often preserved side by side in the same document —

²⁴ E. g., 1QS ix.11; CD xix.10, xx.1, xii.23, xiv.19; J. Allegro, “Further Messianic References,” *JBL*, LXXV (1956), 174 ff.; “A Newly Discovered Fragment,” *PEQ* (1954), pp. 69 ff.; &c.

²⁵ CD xx.1.

²⁶ CD xii.23, cf. xiv.19; 1QS ix.11.

²⁷ For a description of the range of variation, and an attempt (admittedly unsuccessful, pp. 69 f.) to unscramble the several varieties, see P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde* (Tübingen, 1934), pp. 63–77.

the Book of Enoch is a glaring example and was evidently a very popular one, since it was widely used by early Christianity and current in the Qumran community, too.

Enoch, chap. 1, predicts that God will come down from heaven onto Mt. Sinai, the mountains will melt, the earth be split, all that is upon the earth will perish, then there will be a judgment on all men and the righteous will be rewarded. *Chap. 10* predicts that the archangel Michael will be sent to destroy the offspring of the evil angels and the spirits of the reprobate and all wrong from the face of the earth. Then the plant of righteousness and truth will appear and flourish forever; the righteous will escape and live till they beget thousands of children, and complete their years in peace; the earth will be planted with good trees and be marvelous fruitful; all nations will become righteous and worship God and live in sinless purity forever. *Chap. 38* predicts that the Righteous One (who evidently is not God) will appear in a blaze of glory before the righteous; the mighty of the earth will not be able to endure the light and will be killed by the righteous; sinners will be judged and driven from the face of the earth. *Chap. 45* predicts that God's Elect One will sit on the throne of glory and judge the works of men; the elect will then take courage and the Elect One will dwell among them; the heaven will be transformed into light and the earth into blessing; the elect will dwell on the earth and the sinners will be destroyed by God. *Chap. 46* predicts that the Son of Man will reveal the hidden treasures and destroy the mighty of the earth, the sinners, and the rich. *Chap. 56* predicts that the angels of punishment will stir up the Parthians to invade Palestine, but the invaders will fail to take Jerusalem, will begin to fight with each other, and so destroy themselves, and will finally (with all other sinners?) be swallowed up by Sheol. *Chap. 58* predicts that the righteous will be rewarded with eternal life (contrast Chap. 10, above) in endless light, and that darkness will be destroyed. *Chap. 90* predicts that the members of the sect (the sheep who can see, by contrast to the blind ones) will destroy the gentiles in war, then God will come and split the earth and the gentiles will be swallowed up in it. God will seat himself on a throne in Palestine and will judge the wicked angels and the former rulers of Palestine and the Jews who were not members of the sect. All these will be cast into the fiery pit. The second temple will be hidden away and a new temple built by God. All remaining gentiles will obey the members of the sect, who will all be virtuous and will be transformed into a higher order of beings (? — from sheep into bulls). *Chap. 91* 12 ff. predicts likewise that the end will begin with military victories by the righteous, but locates the building of the true temple before the judgment, and has two judgments, a first on human sinners, a second on the angels. These specimens are far from exhaustive, but suffice to suggest the diversity of the eschatological prophecies with which the book

swarms. A list equally diverse could be compiled with equal ease from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, of which at least parts were also read in Qumran.

Admittedly it is always dangerous to argue from silence. But we can hardly suppose that the men who preserved these books were unaware of the contradictions between the eschatological notions they contained. Nor can we suppose they thought such notions unimportant, for they went to the trouble of copying out the books which contained them, and the history of Palestine through the whole period testifies to the immense importance, even on the practical, political level, of eschatological speculation. Nor are we justified in supposing that there was some unknown higher synthesis by which these many and apparently contradictory opinions were reconciled in a single system.²⁸ First, there is no trace of such a synthesis, and second, we have occasional evidence of polemic, within single groups, between advocates of different opinions — for instance, the well-known rabbinic attacks on those who reckon the date of the End,²⁹ and Paul's attacks on Christians who either denied the resurrection of the body or held that the day of the Lord had already come.³⁰ Customarily, of course, such passages are dismissed as mere evidence of what is called "heretical" tendencies within the groups concerned. But "heretical" is probably an anachronism, for, as shown above, the groups themselves preserved, in their sacred or quasi-sacred literature, widely divergent and quite irreconcilable accounts of the course and very nature of eschatological events.

What faces us, therefore, is an unreconciled diversity, within single groups, of opinions which are nevertheless considered important, at least by many members of the groups concerned. Recognition of this diversity raises very far-reaching problems as to the organization of these groups and the significance of their ceremonies. If a group had no single eschatological myth, it cannot have been organized as a community of believers in the myth it did not have. Nor can its cult acts be seen as dramatic representations or realizations of events which there was no single myth, accepted by all the members, to predict. If the variety of eschatological prediction is any evidence, eschatology was, for the members of these

²⁸ Though unjustified, the tacit presupposition of uniformity is common, witness the many articles which take for granted that the data are to be harmonized. Thus R. Brown, "The Messianism of Qumran," *CBQ*, XIX (1957), 53 ff., identifies figures mentioned by different titles and supposes that, because the preserved sections of a work do not mention a particular figure, the sections not preserved probably did (! p. 58). It is not to be denied that such assumptions *may* sometimes be correct. But the manifest diversity of the material requires us first to make complete and distinct accounts of each separate title, and not to impose on any document any concept it does not clearly contain.

²⁹ Evidence collected by Strack-Billerbeck, IV.2.1013 ff.

³⁰ I Cor 15; II Thess 2 2.

groups, a comparatively arbitrary and individual matter — part, and an important part, of their general *Weltanschauung*, but a part about which the opinions of different members might, and did, differ quite widely, and about which some members might, and did, collect, in single MSS, many different opinions. Such an arbitrary and individual matter can hardly have been the basis of group organization and practice.

If we look for such a basis, we might do better to find it in agreement as to a common legal authority. This is not to say, a common code of laws. About individual rulings there is almost as much disagreement as about particular eschatological programs. But differences about legal questions are apt to lead to acceptance of some common authority, and this can easily become the basis of organization. Such organization may then express itself in communal meals and other forms of communal life, which individual members may interpret symbolically according to their individual eschatological notions, but which are primarily functions of the present organization, not anticipations of the end. This is clearly what happened in Rabbinic Judaism; to what extent it happened in the Dead Sea sect and in Christianity are separate questions which must be carefully (and separately) considered.