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# Lighting the Altar in Vain

## The ‘Visionaries’, the Dead Sea Sect, and Judeo-Christianity

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### Abstract

*The Dead Sea Scroll known as the Damascus Rule (CD 6:11-13) prominently cites a verse from the prophet Malachi (1:10) in a passage also attested by 4Q266 f3ii:18: “None who have been brought into the covenant shall enter into the sanctuary to light up His altar in vain; they shall ‘lock the door’, for God said, ‘Would that one of you would lock My door so that you should not light up my altar in vain.’” I will argue that the Malachi verse served as inspiration for the Qumran sect’s attitude (as it developed in the centuries to follow) toward the Temple, the Covenant, and the rest of Israelite society. It also provides a link between Qumranic literature and a diffuse and ill-defined class of disenfranchised priests, known to some contemporary scholars as the “visionaries”. Perhaps best understood as an “anti-establishment” movement that may be traced back to the Babylonian captivity and before, they found themselves in deep conflict with their fellow priests who ruled the rebuilt Temple – “hierocrats” in league with the Persians. The bitter critique of the prophet Malachi in turn helped to bring forth a wide range of sectarian currents that came to characterize the entirety of Jewish culture in late antiquity, including the Essenes/Dead Sea sect, the Enochians and perhaps most intriguingly, the Judeo-Christians.*

## 1. The Problem

Almost from the moment of their discovery in 1947, the meaning, significance and authorship of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been subjects of endless speculation in the world of biblical and related textual research. It is safe to say that while the dominant “Essene theory” of composition has markedly declined over the years, the scholarly world is no closer to consensus on an alternative identification.<sup>1</sup> We must still address multiple issues. What was the genesis of the Qumran sect? From what societal currents in ancient Judea did the Qumran corpus derive? In what specific movement or movements did the sect originate? What was its worldview? What was its attitude toward the Temple, the Covenant, and the rest of Israelite society?<sup>2</sup>

This analysis will focus on a single passage from the Dead Sea Scrolls, CD 6:13-14, attested by another Qumranic fragment, 4Q266 f3ii:19, and citing a verse in Malachi (1:10) which I believe to be seminal in the development of the sectarian worldview of the Qumran community, and in turn influencing other sectarian movements of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. I will assert that the linkage between these passages also represents a link between the sectarian corpus and an earlier “umbrella group” sometimes referred to as the “visionaries”. The latter, as Paul D. Hanson argues, represent an anti-establishment current dating almost to the beginning of the Second Jewish Commonwealth and consisting largely of disenfranchised Levites.<sup>3</sup> The natural tension between them and the Persian-supported theocratic “hierocracy” of those days gave birth to the sentiments voiced by the prophet Malachi, and ultimately to a whole gamut of sectarian Jewish thought during the Second Commonwealth, including nascent Jewish Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 For an overview of theories of composition, see Lena Cansdale, *Qumran and the Essenes: A Re-evaluation of the Evidence* (1997, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 12-18. See also F. Garcia Martínez, *Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis*, *Folia Orientalia* 25 (1988):113-36; F. Garcia Martínez, A.S. Van der Woude, A ‘Groningen’ Hypothesis of Qumran Origins and Early History, *RQ* 14:56 (1990):521-41; Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Significance of the Scrolls*, *BR* 6:5 (1990):18-27, 52; T.H. Lim, *The Qumran Scrolls: Two Hypotheses*, *SR* 21:4 (1992):455-66; Michael Wise, Norman Golb, John J. Collins, Dennis G. Pardee (Eds.), *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site; Present Realities and Future Prospects ANYAS 722* (1994, New York: New York Academy of Sciences).
  - 2 See F. Garcia Martínez and Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Beliefs and Practices*, trans.W.G.E. Watson (1995, Leiden: Brill).
  - 3 Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (1979, Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 209. See also Dan Merkur, *The Visionary Practices of Jewish Apocalyptists, The Psychoanalytic Study of Society 14* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1989):119-148.
  - 4 See Peter Ross Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (2000, Leiden:

## 2. The visionaries

Hanson theorizes that these “visionaries” likely galvanized around the sixth century, B.C.E.<sup>5</sup> Their roots (at least as far as the biblical narrative is concerned) extended back as far as the reign of King David, who, as Richard E. Friedman points out, took the unprecedented step of appointing, not one but two high priests, Zadok and Abiathar.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, one high priest ultimately plotted the demise of the other. Moreover, by the end of David’s reign, two of his sons (Adonijah and Solomon) found themselves in a struggle for succession. Each of the high priests backed a rival claimant of the crown, Zadok supporting Solomon and Abiathar promoting Adonijah. Upon David’s death and Solomon’s emergence as the victor, there was no question but that the new king would favor Zadok. Later, when Solomon turned to building his fabled Temple in Jerusalem, Zadok appears prominently in the narrative:

*And Zadok the priest took a horn of oil out of the Tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the ram's horn, and all the people said, Let king Solomon live! (1 Kings 1:39).*

The opposition priest, Abiathar, was banished, along with his supporters to the northern city of Anathoth.<sup>7</sup> These disenfranchised priests were relegated to the sidelines, excluded from any role in the Temple cult. With the elimination of Abiathar, Zadok and his descendants became the sole inheritors of priestly power and the sole officiators at the Temple.<sup>8</sup> The developing schism in the priesthood arguably helped precipitate the rebellion that led to ten of the twelve tribes breaking away, to form a rival kingdom – Israel – in the north, leaving Judah and its ally Benjamin alone in the south.

From 922 B.C.E., each kingdom had its own monarch, its own religious traditions, its own places of worship. Over the next several centuries, the rival priestly houses were locked in bitter contention. Eventually, a prophet arose in the south – Jeremiah – whose rancorous words condemned the corruption that allegedly permeated the Temple. The city Jeremiah reveals as his place of origin, Anathoth, begs the question of whether the prophet

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Brill), 309: “Once it was recognized that expectations for renewal were not going to be met, the temple may have become a socially marginalized institution.”

- 5 R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic*, VT 20 (1970):12. Hamerton-Kelly agrees in part with Hanson, identifying a group of “eschatologists” who did not support the rebuilding of the Temple in the sixth-century post-exilic era.
- 6 Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987, New York: HarperCollins), 40.
- 7 Friedman, 42-48.
- 8 This remained the case until Onias III was murdered in 175 B.C. See Paul D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 221 ff.

may have descended from the house of Abiathar, therefore representing one of the disenfranchised priests who stood in opposition to the “establishment” high priests of Jerusalem’s great shrine.

When Jeremiah’s dire predictions were fulfilled (with the Babylonian conquest of 586 B.C.E.) and the Judeans found themselves in exile far to the east, the Zadokites continued to preside over the developing Jewish faith.<sup>9</sup> On the Israelites’ return from “seventy years” in captivity – to rebuild the ruined city of Jerusalem and their destroyed Temple – their dreams lay within reach. The monarchy having long vanished, the returnees looked for leadership to their “de-facto” rulers, the Zadokite priests. The disenfranchised Levites, who can now be referred to as the “visionaries”, represent a dissident movement that stood in opposition to the Jerusalem priesthood. The spiritual restoration for which they longed had turned into a state cult, aimed at preserving the power of the status quo. While they must have applauded the goal of restoring their homeland, it soon became clear that the priesthood represented a new “aristocracy”, an upper-class hierarchy wedded to Persian interests. This was the cultural milieu in which the visionaries and their apocalyptic writings sprouted.

Variations on this reconstructed spiritual history are hardly new. Several decades ago Otto Plöger posited the existence of an “anti-establishment” breed, who likely met together in secret groups/ “conventicles” that cultivated spirituality.<sup>10</sup> In tension with the new hierocracy, they represented a “grassroots” movement, united by a purer “vision” of what a restored Jerusalem and rebuilt Temple should resemble. The Zadokites, who in their minds comprised a defiled priesthood, had beguiled the masses into accepting their concept of a “realized eschatology” – that the “end of days” was a present reality, brought about, not by purity of soul, but by fidelity to their own rituals and religious practices.<sup>11</sup>

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9 It is suggested that after the Babylonian deportation of the Zadokite priesthood, some priestly groups remained on the land (including Aaronides, perhaps Levites, and sons of Abiathar in Anathoth), only to be displaced by new immigrant priestly families. Presumably, they would have protested. Zechariah’s prophecy (3:1-10) regarding the legitimacy of the high priest Joshua, may well have been the response. See Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes, visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea*, (2007, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 26.

10 Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, trans. S. Rudman (1968, Richmond: John Knox), 23. It should be acknowledged, however, that some question whether a split occurred between establishment and anti-establishment circles. See P.R. Davies, “The Social World of Apocalyptic Writings”, in Ronald E. Clements, *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives* (1991, Cambridge Univ. Press), 251-71. Davies disagrees with Hanson’s contention that such ‘conventicles’ were the font of apocalypticism.

11 Paul Hanson, Apocalypticism, *IDB Supp.* (1984):1-5.

This socio-religious tension may be seen as the causative matrix of the literature of “apocalyptic eschatology”.<sup>12</sup> It was fueled by the visionaries’ sense of alienation, having been marginalized by their own national and religious leaders. Oddly enough, the bulk of the people felt drawn to them, as they began to record methodically their visionary experiences, in the tradition of the great prophets of the past. The movement they began persisted for centuries, spawning scores of textual traditions, some, according to Plöger, finding their way into the “canonical” Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 24-27, portions of Joel, Daniel, Zechariah 9-14, Trito-Isaiah, and the subject of this analysis, Malachi.<sup>13</sup>

It is theorized that multiple non-canonical texts, such as Enoch, Jubilees and a host of pseudepigraphical works, also represent their sense of alienation, as the “ruling class” became increasingly political, allying itself first with the Hasmoneans and later with Rome.<sup>14</sup> In response (and thanks to the influence of the visionaries) such anti-establishment currents as the Dead Sea Sect/“Essenes”, the “Enochians”, the “Therapeutae”, and the “Jesus movement” were spawned.<sup>15</sup>

12 Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 232.

13 See Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (1995, Minneapolis: Augsburg Press), 6-7. Plöger’s sociological approach saw apocalyptic as stemming from a *Gemeinschaft* that was alienated from the priestly establishment of the postexilic period. See also Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage: Post-exilic Prophetic Critique of the Priesthood* (2006, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 9-10.

14 It is speculated that the Hasidim were distant offshoots of the earlier visionary movement and that they joined forces with the Maccabees in order to cleanse and restore the defiled Temple. As rural priests and non-Zadokites, the Maccabees appeared to be good allies. But over time it became apparent that the motives of the Maccabees/ Hasmoneans were purely political. At that point the Hasidim left the ongoing revolt, being appeased by the appointment of a legitimate Aaronic high priest (Alcimus), only to be double-crossed and murdered in droves. After Jonathan the Hasmonean effectively seized the high priesthood, establishing his own dynasty in place of the Zadokites, his heirs became the new aristocracy (in league with the Sadducees) and target of the sectarian movements descended from the visionaries.

15 According to another hypothesis, it was the “Essenes” who acted as a parent movement, manifesting itself in a growing number of societal currents, including the Qumran sect, the Enochians, possibly the Therapeutae, and subsequent groups led by John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Additionally, there may have been a distinct sub-sect of “urban Essenes”. G. Boccaccini hypothesizes that it was the Enochians who amounted to “parents” of the “urban Essenes” and the “grandparents” of the Qumran sect, yet survived them both. According to her theory, the Enochians, the urban Essenes and Qumranites all belonged to the same family – part of the same intellectual current. However, she asserts that the Enochians as a social group were more closely linked to the urban Essenes than to the Dead Sea sect. Additionally, she posits that the Qumranites so drastically parted from the tenets of Enochic Judaism that we may speak of a veritable schism that divided the Dead

Whatever the interrelationship between these sub-currents, it is common to assume that the dualism expressed in the bulk of this literature was the result of the cultural influence of Persia, including various near-eastern religious cults, Zoroastrianism being the most dominant.<sup>16</sup> It may be argued to the contrary, however, that the counter-cultural dynamic of opposition to Jerusalem's priestly "status-quo" (as expressed in Qumranic and kindred Second-Temple literatures) sprang directly from an inner Israelite social matrix in-keeping with the earlier tradition of the Israelite prophets.<sup>17</sup> The prominent Qumranic citation of Malachi (as well as specific passages from Zechariah) underscores a literary dependency, not on near-eastern cultic religions, but on the traditions of the prophets themselves. This brings us to specific discussion of the text of CD, attested by the Geniza manuscript and relevant Cave 4 material.

### 3. The significance of 4Q266 in relation to CD

It is well known that the fragmentary manuscripts of Qumran Cave 4 (4Q266-273), are of great importance as "supplementary documentation" for the Cairo Geniza text of the Damascus Rule.<sup>18</sup> The preceding section of the Cave 4 material (4Q265) is said to form what amounts to a "hybrid" connecting CD with the Community Rule. The paleography of 4Q266-273 is likewise significant, as it may be dated between the mid-first century B.C.E. and the early first century C.E. The 4Q material may in fact be viewed as the missing prologue of CD, along with additional legal material that should follow the truncated ending of the CD "statutes". These statutes regulate, among other things, the admission and dismissal of candidates (4Q266, fr. 5) and criteria for the disqualification of priests (4Q266, fr. 5; 267, fr. 5 ii, 273, frs. 2, 4 i). Two main texts compiled from these fragments (4Q266 fr. 2 and 270 fr. 7i-ii) conclude with a ritual used to dismiss unworthy members of the sect, which is in turn part of a festival marking both entrance and expulsion

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Sea sect from the urban Essenes. See G. Boccaccini, and J. Collins, Eds., *The Early Enoch Literature* (2007, Leiden: Brill), 325.

16 David Winston, *The Iranian Component in the Bible, Apocrypha, and Qumran: A Review of the Evidence*, *HR* 5 (1966):185.

17 Cook, 7; Davies, 256.

18 For an overview of the Damascus Document manuscripts from Qumran Cave 4, see Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (1997, New York: Penguin), 144. See also Joseph M. Baumgarten, Stephen J. Pfann, Ada Yardeni, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert: (4Q266-273). Qumran Cave 4, XIII. The Damascus Document*, Volume 18 (1996, New York: Clarendon Press).

from the Covenant (observed in the third month and coinciding with the feast of Shavuot).<sup>19</sup>

The passage in question from the Damascus Rule (paralleled by 4Q266) initially references the apparent founder of the Dead Sea Sect, the Teacher of Righteousness (CD 6:11-12), and goes on to declare that no one who has been brought into the Covenant will be allowed to enter the sanctuary to kindle God's altar "in vain" (6:13-14).

There are, as we would expect, multiple ways of understanding the meaning of this sectarian language. First, however, we should consider the plain-sense meaning of the verse quoted from the prophet Malachi (1:10):

*Oh that there were even one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on Mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand (JPS).*

It is a clear condemnation of the theorized priestly "hierocracy" of early Second Commonwealth, against which the so-called "visionaries" had aligned themselves. The "hierocratic" priests were deemed so unworthy by various groups of disenfranchised Levites (those responsible for the book of Malachi and various other prophetic writings) that it would be preferable that the doors of the Temple be closed before them.<sup>20</sup>

The Qumranic material has accurately reproduced this verse, save for one word – *d'latim* ("doors") – which has been shortened to *d'lati* ("my door"). On its surface there is the obvious observation that deleting the final *mem* has turned the word into a first person possessive that makes it poetically parallel with *mizbekhi* ("my altar"). Additionally, however, we might question whether "my door" transfers the context of the passage from the Jerusalem Temple (and its "doors") to an emblem of the sect itself, "my door" referring to entrance into the covenantal community. In that case, the "sanctuary"/Temple of CD 6:12, may be understood as a symbol of the Qumran community – the *Yahad* – as a whole.<sup>21</sup>

19 Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (2004, New York: Penguin), 144. 4Q266 and its Damascus Document parallels also evince multiple correspondences with the purity rulings of Leviticus; Ian C. Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2007, Leiden: Brill), 307.

20 Ray E. Clendenen, The Structure of Malachi: A Textlinguistic Study, *CTR* 2 (1987):3-17; Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., The Socio-Historical Setting of Malachi, *RevEx* 84 (1987):383-90.

21 It is argued that the Dead Sea sect not only denied the Temple's sanctity, but saw the "Council of the Community" as a spiritual substitute for the holy sanctuary. See Noah Hacham, "Where Does the Shekhinah Dwell? Between the Dead Sea Sect, Diaspora Judaism, Rabbinic Literature, and Christianity", in Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, Matthias

CD 6:11-14 is translated as follows by Wise, Abegg and Cook:

*None who have been brought into the covenant shall enter into the sanctuary to light up His altar in vain; they shall "lock the door", for God said, "Would that one of you would lock My door so that you should not light up my altar in vain."*<sup>22</sup>

An alternate understanding of the passage is offered by Theodore Gaster:

*All that enter the covenant with no intention of going into the sanctuary to keep the flame alive on the altar do so in vain. They have as good as shut the door. Of them God has said: "Who is there among you that would shut the door, and who of you would keep alive the flame upon Mine altar?"*<sup>23</sup>

The former renders the passage as a simple admonition that members of the sect must be prevented from going into the Temple (as do the current and corrupt Temple priesthood) to unworthily kindle the altar. The door must be shut (and someone must lock it) to all except those who are counted as worthy and pure. The passage is alternately interpreted as more of a warning, acknowledging that some have entered the *Yahad* (a kind of "sanctuary") without the determination to perform "proper" priestly service, and that their service is therefore accounted as worthless ("vain"). Whereas Malachi has God asking for someone to close the "doors" on unworthy Jerusalemite priests, this rendering has the sect's unworthy members effectively shutting on themselves "the door" of priestly service in the *Yahad*.

The next line of the passage is understood by Wise, Abegg and Cook (with Vermes concurring<sup>24</sup>) as a declarative statement:

*They must be careful to act according to the specifications of the Law for the era of wickedness (CD 6:14).*

This, however, might appear to some as straining to make sense of difficult wording, by essentially ignoring the words *im-lo* (normally understood as "if not"). Gaster's solution is more creative. He understands the text as joining the last word of the Malachi verse (*khinam* – "in vain") with the line that follows:

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Weigold, Eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures* (2011, Leiden: Brill), 399-412.

22 This and subsequent translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls by Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg, Jr. and Edward M. Cook, Eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New English Translation*, (2005, New York: HarperCollins), unless otherwise noted.

23 Theodore H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (1976, Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday), 73.

24 Vermes, 132: "They shall take care to act according to the exact interpretation of the Law during the age of wickedness."



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*In vain [are all their deeds] if, in an era of wickedness, they do not take heed to act in accordance with the explicit injunctions of the Law (CD 6:14).<sup>25</sup>*

His dilemma, however, is that he must supply the idea that “all their deeds” (not in the Hebrew text) are “in vain”. This reading also divorces the term “in vain” (*b'kheiman*) from the Malachi quotation, which is its obvious context. Gaster’s translation is more attractive, however, if we take the passage, not as an abstraction, but as a present-tense warning to wayward members of the *Yahad*.<sup>26</sup> This is all the more interesting, given the larger context of the material (noted above), which includes the dismissal of unworthy members.

#### 4. Separation from the Temple

Some have argued that the directive against kindling the altar “in vain” should not be taken as a prohibition of sectarian participation in the Temple cult, merely as a sanction against taking part in defiled or corrupt ritualistic service.<sup>27</sup> It is further argued that CD 6:14 should be rendered “... *unless (im lo)* they take care to act in accordance with the exact interpretation of the law”. The implication is that sectarians are permitted to participate in the sacrificial system as long as they rigorously verify that the requirements of the Torah are being met, especially with regard to ritual purity.<sup>28</sup>

Davies posits that CD 12b-14a represents a later redaction and that the original should be read as follows:

*And all who have been admitted into the covenant (are not) to enter the sanctuary “to light His altar in vain ... unless they are observant in doing according to the law.”<sup>29</sup>*

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25 *Ibid.*, 74.

26 Gaster’s translation has been hailed as an early attempt to reproduce the flavor of the original in idiomatically accessible style. See Devorah Dimant, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Scholarly Perspective: A History of Research* (2012, Leiden: Brill), 32.

27 John J. Collins, *Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period* (1998, Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University), 12. It is suggested that the sectarians were to limit their participation in the Temple cult, but not to withdraw from it entirely. See Yonder M. Gillihan, *Civic Ideology, Organization, and Law in the Rule Scrolls: A Comparative Study of the Covenanters’ Sect and Contemporary Voluntary Associations in Political Context* (2012, Leiden: Brill), 149.

28 Timothy Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity* (2010, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 148; Joseph M. Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law, SJLA* 24 (1977, Leiden: Brill), 70-72; Joseph M. Baumgarten and Daniel R. Schwartz, “Damascus Document”, in James Charlesworth, Ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations* (2002, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 51 n. 77.

29 Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the “Damascus*

Hultgren counters, however, that all those who have entered the sect are necessarily understood to be following the Torah.<sup>30</sup> Otherwise, they would face expulsion, as 4Q266 also specifies:

*Anyone who rejects these regulations, which are in keeping with the statutes found in the Law of Moses, shall not be considered one of those who belong to his truth ... (4Q266 f11:5-7).*

Davies suggested that refraining from kindling the altar is but the first of a series of precepts, adding that the phrase “in vain” should be taken in a narrow context, by no means banning participation in the Temple cult.<sup>31</sup> J. Baumgarten, however, argues that Davies’ initial supposition is strained syntactically, and that his second unduly emphasizes the translation “in vain”. We should instead understand the sense of the passage as indicating the impossibility of properly lighting the altar at all in its current defiled state.<sup>32</sup>

There are, to be sure, specific passages in CD that suggest some degree of participation in the Temple cult by the sectarians. There is, for example, a strong prohibition against sending any offering to the Temple by the hand of an impure person, thus defiling the altar (CD 11:17-20).

Schiffman notes that this may pertain to some future time, when an ideal Temple will be restored. The problem here is that the Damascus Rule presents itself as legislation for the present rather than for a future age.<sup>33</sup> It is suggested, alternately, that the various literary strata in the Damascus Rule may account for some passages appearing to reference the sect’s continued participation in the cult, while over time the Yahad withdrew completely from the Temple.<sup>34</sup>

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*Document*”, *JOSup* 25: (1983, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 134-40.

30 Stephen Hultgren, *From the Damascus Covenant to the Covenant of the Community* (2007, Leiden: Brill), 116-17 n. 74.

31 Philip R. Davies, The Ideology of the Temple in the Damascus Document, *JJS* 33 (1982):295-8.

32 J.M. Baumgarten, *The Damascus Document (4Q266-273): Qumran Cave 4, XIII, DJD XVIII* (1996, Oxford: Clarendon Press), 43. Baumgarten at first posited that the passage does entail a complete rejection of the Temple, though he later revised this assessment. See also Baumgarten, *Studies*, 70-1; Sacrifice and Worship among the Jewish Sectarrians of the Dead Sea (Qumrân) Scrolls, *HTR* 46 03 (1953):143-4.

33 Lawrence Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran*, *SJLA* 16 (1975, Leiden: Brill), 129; “Community without Temple: The Qumran Community’s Withdrawal from the Jerusalem Temple”, in B. Ego, A. Lange, P. Pilhofer, Eds., *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kultus im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, *WUNT* 118 (1999, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 267-84.; Wardle, 149.

34 Charlotte Hempel, *The Laws of the Damascus Document: Sources Tradition and Redaction*, *STDJ* 29 (1998, Leiden: Brill,).

It is also suggested that the *Yahad* found a direct link between the perceived defilement of the altar and the greedy behavior of the population at large, as evidenced by the following ordinance from the Damascus Rule:

*A man shall not vow to the altar anything stolen, nor shall the priests accept it from an Israelite (CD 16:13-14).*

The passage supports the notion that ill-gotten wealth has corrupted the sanctuary itself.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, the continuation of CD 6:14 substantiates this point:

*... separating from corrupt people, avoiding filthy wicked lucre (hon ha'rasha) taken from what is vowed or consecrated to God or found in the Temple funds. They must not rob "the poor of God's people, making widows' wealth their booty and killing orphans" (Isaiah 10:2) (CD 6:14-17).*

Just as the sectarians are to shun completely the material "wealth of wickedness", so are they to withdraw from participation in the Temple.

It has also been observed that, as a whole, CD 6:11-15 may be understood as a kind of *pesher* on Malachi 1:10. In such a light the admonition would have to do, not with "vain" offerings, but with offerings acquired through unethical means. Since such offerings have become commonplace among those entering the Temple, it is incumbent upon the *Yahad* to avoid not only defiled offerings, but the sanctuary that has been defiled by them.<sup>36</sup> Acceptable sacrifices, by contrast, are those accompanied by care for the poor and the orphan.<sup>37</sup>

In the final analysis there is every reason to assume, given the force of the Malachi quotation, that the sectarians perceived entire Sanctuary as having been so polluted that members of the sect should not participate in it at all.<sup>38</sup> The members of the sect are viewed, not as those who participate on any level in the Temple, but who close its doors. Indeed, the larger context of the passage is rife with invective against the priesthood, suggesting that the sect's overall attitude is one of complete separation.

35 Catherine M. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls & in the Qumran Community* (2001, Leiden: Brill), 61-66, 476-7.

36 Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple : Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (2006, New York: Oxford University Press), 151-2; Murphy, 103-62.

37 Such broad indictments, it is argued, are indicative of the wider scope of the Damascus Rule in comparison with, for example, the Habakkuk Commentary, which is principally concerned with the Wicked Priest. See Klawans, 152.

38 See Eyal Regev, *Abominated Temple and a Holy Community: The Formation of the Notions of Purity and Impurity in Qumran*, *DSD* 15 2 (2008):258; Francis Schmidt, *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism*, (2001, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press), 150-1.

If this interpretation is correct, what we have is a rejectionist message, delegitimizing the entire Temple cult and sacrificial system, as it existed in the Second Jewish Commonwealth.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, this represents a link to what has been termed an “inner Israelite social matrix” at the beginning of the Second Temple period, between a ruling class “theocratic group” on the one hand and a “grassroots” movement of “visionaries” on the other. I would argue that the *Yahad*, centuries removed from these developments, conceived of itself as an extension of this cultural/ religious tension. The Persian supported priestly hierocracy of the earlier period had become a Hasmonean hierocracy, and ultimately a Herodian/Roman hierocracy.<sup>40</sup> The Qumranites were the newly marginalized ones, a newly disenfranchised Levitical stream, and their community amounted to a new incarnation of the “anti-establishment conventicles” of Malachi’s day.

Indeed, the emphasis on Malachi 1:10 may be seen as evidence of what becomes, in the sectarian mindset, not only the rejection of the Jerusalem Temple, but its replacement by a metaphysical “sanctuary” consisting of the members of the *Yahad* as a “spiritual Temple”. While the relationship between the Dead Sea sect and the “Essenes”, the “Enochians”, the “Hasidim”, the “Therapeutae”, and the later “Jesus movement” needs further elucidation and ongoing research, the Qumranic passage in question (CD 6:11-14 and its parallel in 4Q266) is consistent with Plöger’s contention that the major inspiration for the disparate sects of Jewish late antiquity was not Persian dualism, but the Israelite prophetic tradition itself.<sup>41</sup>

## 5. Jesus and the visionaries

A final chapter in the conundrum regarding the Malachi verse and the visionaries relates to the extent to which the same thread of cultural and

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39 Hamerton-Kelly argues that the “eschatologists” of the Second Commonwealth awaited the manifestation of the “heavenly reality of the true temple” via miraculous divine agency. This new Temple would be revealed, as the prophet Ezekiel described, by God alone. See R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, *The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic*, VT, XX (January, 1970):13.

40 “Hierocracy” may be understood as the rule or hegemony of a priestly class, though it may specifically denote a situation in which the nation as a whole is under the sway of foreign domination. Whereas the priests of Israel were seen as exercising control over Jewish matters, there was no true “theocracy” unless the Israelites were under God’s rule alone. See Andrew Chester, *Future of Hope and Present Reality: Eschatology and Transformation in the Hebrew Bible* (2012, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 173.

41 Cook, 7.

religious dissent was picked up by the later Nazarene sect, beginning with Jesus himself. Indeed, we might ask to what extent Jesus and/or the “Jesus movement” may have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the same current of socio-religious alienation and marginalization that had fueled the visionary movement centuries before.<sup>42</sup> Though Jesus was by no means connected with the Abiathar lineage of priests, would it be fair to view the “Nazarene” sect in the land of Israel as a distant offshoot of the trend they arguably set in motion?

It would appear that harsh criticism of the Temple cult was a fundamental element in the “Torah” of Jesus. The relevant question is akin to that asked vis-a-vis the prophet Isaiah’s invective against the Temple: “Bring no more vain sacrifice” (Isa. 1:13 MKJV). Would the prophet have been pleased with the abolition of the entire sacrificial system, and with it the Temple?<sup>43</sup> The verse in Malachi (1:10) is certainly reminiscent of Isaiah’s cry, but is this a call for reform, or does it represent a complete repudiation of the Temple? Did Jesus advocate reform or “replacement”? As with Isaiah, there are voices on either side of the debate. It is noted, for example, that no mention is made of Jesus performing the obligatory purification rites on his entrance to Jerusalem. E.P. Sanders suggests that these rituals were taken for granted.<sup>44</sup> However, a tradition arose, recorded in a fragment from an unknown Gospel, that Jesus purposefully shunned such rites. One of the chief priests queries: “Who gave you leave to tread this place of purification and to look upon these holy utensils without having bathed yourself ...?”<sup>45</sup>

42 Hanson references a “brooding minority” behind every apocalyptic movement; *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 2. The degree to which Jesus himself was apocalyptic in orientation is debatable. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (1999, New York: Oxford Univ. Press), 119-23, 232-33. In any case, the apocalyptic flavor of much of the New Testament, including important passages in the Christian Gospels, is undeniable. Hanson’s approach rests on Karl Mannheim, suggesting that a “utopian mentality” is a fundamental aspect of the alienated, yet idealized group. See Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. L. Wirth and E. Shils (1936, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.), 40, 87, 192-3.

43 The older critical view that Isaiah, among other prophets, rejected animal sacrifice has been challenged by many scholars (including Sweeney), though hardly by all (notably Blenkinsopp). See Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition*, (1988, Berlin: W. de Gruyter). See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (1996, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 80. Blenkinsopp refers to “the entire apparatus of festivals, sacrifice, religious music, and tithing” as being rejected by Hosea (6:6; 8:13) and Jeremiah (6:20) in addition to Isaiah (1:10-17).

44 E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993, New York: Penguin), 250f.

45 *NT Apoc.* I, 94. Whether the historical Jesus actually shunned the purification rites is

Was Jesus' apparent detachment from the Temple inspired by the prophetic legacy of the visionaries, as reflected also in the Dead Sea corpus?

There are other "anti-Temple" messages in the Gospels. In Mark 13:1-3 Jesus castigates the Temple and foretells its destruction. In Mark 14:58 some unspecified opponents of Jesus declare: "We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." In Matthew 26:61 Jesus declares, not that he would indeed destroy the great Sanctuary but that he *could* do so. While the prophecy is absent in Luke, the author of Acts (6:14) portrays Stephen as declaring that Jesus would destroy the Temple and alter the customs handed down to Moses. The Gospel of Thomas (71) depicts Jesus as saying: "I shall destroy this house, and no one will be able to build it." It is rightly pointed out that any historical authenticity of this passage is doubtful, given the "lateness" of its composition and its gnostic overtones.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, even assuming the prophecy of destruction to be a later gloss in the synoptic tradition, the caustic tone regarding the holy Sanctuary may well be reflective of the authentic attitude of Jesus and his movement.

Moreover, Jesus is somewhat "notoriously" known for having chided and derided the so-called "moneychangers" at the Temple, coupling his condemnation with the violent act of overturning the tables at which they performed their negotiations. The event is well chronicled in the triple tradition and additionally referenced in John's Gospel.<sup>47</sup> The narratives make it clear that this incident, above and beyond anything Jesus may have taught or done, is what prompted the chief priests to seek "how they might destroy him".<sup>48</sup> The link with the book of Malachi and the verse in question (1:10) is by no means difficult to grasp. The ancient prophet, whose words are laden with sarcasm, is declaring that abolishing all pretense of worship would be preferable to its shameful profanation. That of course hardly brands the

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anyone's guess, but an anti-Temple diatribe definitely crept into the narratives about him. This attitude may have been spurred by the general tone of various rejectionist movements of the day, the Dead Sea sect included, as later stepchildren of the visionaries.

46 David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (1983, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 173.

47 "And entering into the temple, Jesus began to cast out those who bought and sold in the temple. And He overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow any to carry a vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying to them, Is it not written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it a den of thieves" (Mk. 11:15-17 MKJV).

48 Mk. 11:18 MKJV.

author of Malachi (assuming him to be a product of the visionary movement) as a rejectionist of the Temple and the sacrificial system it embodied. It may be indeed argued that Malachi's harsh invective vis-à-vis the Temple cult was essentially the same as that of the pre-exilic prophets, Isaiah included — a call not for abolition but reform.<sup>49</sup>

When it comes to Jesus, some have pointed out that when he accosted the moneychangers he was, from the viewpoint of the priestly establishment, attacking the Sanctuary itself.<sup>50</sup> Some have gone as far as to argue that Jesus' violent action amounts to nothing less than the symbolic destruction of the Temple. In any case we should ask whether Jesus was mindful of the verse in Malachi when he undertook to "cleanse" the Temple. We might additionally ask whether Jesus, by his words and deeds, should be understood as a "reformer", perhaps inspired by Malachi's harsh diatribe, or as a "rejectionist". Caution is certainly called for when positing that Jesus rejected the entire sacrificial cult, even though the Dead Sea sect may well have done so. Nonetheless, the subsequent Jesus movement seems to have picked up many aspects of Qumranic thought, including harsh anti-Temple invective.

The Last Supper is another possible expression of Jesus' "rejectionist" approach, for the elements of wine and bread, spoken of in terms of a sacrifice granting atonement, may be viewed as foundational of a new, Temple-less cult.<sup>51</sup> Some see this aspect of nascent Christianity in tones similar to those expressed in the scrolls of Qumran, which arguably also replaced the Temple sacrifice. In addition to strident sectarian denunciations of the Temple cult, we find in the Community Rule language characterizing the *Yahad* as an atonement and even as the "Holy of Holies":

49 Pieter A. Verhoef, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (1987, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 256; cf. R. Rendtorff, *Priestliche Kulttheologie und prophetische Kultpolemik*, *TLZ* 51 (1956):339-42.

50 Sanders has especially focused on the incident in the Temple as rationale for the authorities' execution of Jesus. See E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (1985, Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 296-308; Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (2000, New York: Vintage), 207-18; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991, New York: Harper Collins), 360; David Flusser, *Jesus* (2001, Jerusalem: Magnes Press), 141; N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Vol. 2 (1996, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), 405.

51 See E.P. Sanders, "Jerusalem and Its Temple in Early Christian Thought and Practice", in Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (1999, New York: Continuum), 90-103.

*They shall atone for the guilt of transgression and the rebellion of sin, becoming an acceptable sacrifice for the land through the flesh of burnt offerings, the fat of sacrificial portions, and prayer, becoming – as it were – justice itself, a sweet savor of righteousness and blameless behavior, a pleasing freewill offering. At that time the men of the Yahad shall withdraw, the holy house of Aaron uniting as a Holy of Holies, and the synagogue of Israel as those who walk blamelessly (1QS 9:4-6).*

In the so-called Messianic Rule there is a kindred depiction:

*This is the rule for all the congregation of Israel in the Last Days, when they are mobilized [to join the Yahad. They must l]ive by the law of the Sons of Zadok, the priests, and the men of their Covenant, they who ce[ased to walk in the w]ay of the people. These same are the men of His party who kept His Covenant during evil times, and so aton[ed for the lan]d (1QSa 1:1-3).*

Elsewhere we find cryptic mention of a Temple of Adam (“flesh”), which might amount to radical depiction of the sect itself as a holy Sanctuary:

*To that end He has commanded that they build Him a Temple of Adam, and that in it they sacrifice to Him proper sacrifices (4Q174 f1\_2i:6-7).*

Additional references to prayer as a type of sacrifice or in lieu of it include CD 11:20-21 and 1QS 9:5. Moreover, the times appointed for daily, sabbath and festival prayers find parallel in the designated times for animal sacrifice.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the entire text of the “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice” corresponds with the offerings in the Jerusalem Temple (Num. 28:10), and, we may speculate, were seen by the sectarians as replacing them.

## 6. Conclusion

Hopefully, this analysis has opened (rather than “shutting”) the door to an additional insight of utmost significance. Might the visionaries, a renegade priestly class dating as far back as King David and born in the schism between Zadok and Abiathar, ironically be seen as facilitating the preservation of the Jewish people? For having fostered what ultimately became a rejectionist attitude toward the Temple cult (“shutting the door”), they opened another door, to the idea of prayer as atonement, and to a concept that gained new adherents in the ashes of the Roman destruction of 70 C.E. – a Temple-less Judaism, capable of surviving the long centuries of Diaspora to come. When the early Tannaitic sage, Yohanan ben Zakkai declared, in the aftermath of the Temple’s devastation, that “deeds of lovingkindness” (*gemilut hasadim*)

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<sup>52</sup> See Bilhah Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry* (1994, Leiden: Brill), 12-13.



shall atone for the people,<sup>53</sup> he was in fact closely congruent with prior sectarian movements (arguably spawned by these marginalized priests) as far-flung as the Essenes/Dead Sea sect, the Enochians and the Judeo-Christians. Christianity and Judaism are on this level more closely linked than might ever have been imagined. This is perhaps the visionaries' most enduring legacy.

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53 *Avot d'Rabbi Natan* 4:21.