

PARALLELOMANIA*

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I encountered the term parallelomania, as I recall, in a French book of about 1830, whose title and author I have forgotten,[†] in a context in which there were being examined certain passages in the Pauline epistles and in the Book of Wisdom that seem to have some resemblance, and a consequent view that when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, a copy of the Book of Wisdom lay open before him, and that Paul in Romans copied generously from it. Three items are to be noted. One, that some passages are allegedly parallel; two, that a direct organic literary connection is assumed to have provided the parallels; and three, that the conclusion is drawn that the flow is in a particular direction, namely, from Wisdom to Paul, and not from Paul to Wisdom. Our French author disputes all three points: he denies that the passages cited are true parallels; he denies that a direct literary connection exists; he denies that Paul copied directly from Wisdom, and he calls the citations and the inferences parallelomania. We might for our purposes define parallelomania as that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.

The key word in my essay is extravagance. I am not denying that literary parallels and literary influence, in the form of source and derivation, exist. I am not seeking to discourage the study of these parallels, but, especially in the case of the Qumran documents, to encourage them. However, I am speaking words of caution about exaggerations about the parallels and about source and derivation. I shall not exhaust what might be said in all the areas which members of this Society might be interested in, but confine myself to the areas of rabbinic literature and the gospels, Philo and Paul, and the Dead Sea Scrolls and the NT.

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† A. T. S. Goodrick, *The Book of Wisdom*, New York, 1913, p. 405, apparently attributes the phrase to Menzel, *De Graecis in libris Koheleth et Sophiae vestigiis*, p. 40. Goodrick gives neither the place nor the date of publication. Perhaps it is P. Menzel; cf. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the O. T.*, 1, p. 533.

That is to say, my paper is a series of comments primarily in the general area of the literatures relevant to early rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity.

An important consideration is the difference between an abstract position on the one hand and the specific application on the other. Thus, in the case of passages in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, the concession that parallel passages do exist falls short of determining whether the Chronicler borrowed from the author of Samuel-Kings, or vice versa. That determination rests on inherent probabilities which emerge from close study. Similarly, Matthew may have borrowed from Mark, or Mark from Matthew; and still similarly, John may be later than and a borrower of the Synoptic tradition, or earlier and in some way a source for, or completely different from, the Synoptists. Hence, it is in the detailed study rather than in the abstract statement that there can emerge persuasive bases for judgment. Most of us would, I think, come to the view that the Chronicler borrowed from Samuel-Kings, and not vice versa, this because of clear phenomena in the texts. But elsewhere the phenomena may not be quite so clear. Thus, in the question of the chronological relation of John to the Synoptists, Erwin Goodenough² and William F. Albright³ have adduced two different bases for dating John early instead of late. I would term these bases as abstract rather than applied. Goodenough restricts his argument to the Christology, arguing that the high Christology of John is not only no proof of John's lateness, but conceivably an indication of its earliness, for in Paul too there is an advanced Christology. Albright, in the quest of some relationship between Jesus and the Qumran community, argues that there is no reason to suppose that the Jesus who spoke one way in the Synoptics could not have spoken another way in John. Abstractly, both views are right. Yet when all the factors in the gospel problems are weighed, the decision would seem to be that although John abstractly could have been the earliest, detailed study would incline to the conclusion that it is the last of the gospels.

Abstractly, Qumran might have influenced the NT, or abstractly, it might not have, or Talmud the NT, or the Midrash Philo, or Philo Paul. The issue for the student is not the abstraction but the specific. Detailed study is the criterion, and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts. Two passages may sound the same in splendid isolation from their context, but when seen in context reflect difference rather than similarity. The neophytes and the unwary often rush in, for example, to suppose that Philo's *nomos agraphos* and the rabbinic *torah she-be'al pe* are one and

² "John a Primitive Gospel," in *JBL*, 64 (1945), pp. 145-85.

³ In his essay in William David Davies and David Daube (eds.), *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, pp. 153-71.

the same thing, for unwritten law and oral torah do sound alike.⁴ But Philo is dealing with a concept of the relationship of enacted statutes to what the Greek philosophers call pure law, the law of nature, while the rabbis are dealing with the authoritative character of explanations to, and expansions of, the Pentateuch. It turns out from detailed study that the two similar terms have no relationship whatsoever. In this case we have not a true parallel, but only an alleged one.

Moreover, when we deal with rabbinic literature, the gospels, the epistles, the pseudepigrapha, and Philo we are in an area which we can momentarily describe as post-Tanach Judaism. This is the case even if the final canonization of the hagiographa is later than Paul's epistles, and is the case if one will rise above nomenclature and be willing for purposes of discussion to regard Paul's writings as an expression of a Judaism. If, accordingly, all these writings are post-Tanach Judaism, then obviously the Tanach has some status and influence in all of them. What could conceivably surprise us would be the absence of tanach influence from this literature, not its presence. Furthermore, since all this literature is Jewish, it should reasonably reflect Judaism. Paul and the rabbis should overlap, and Paul and Philo and the Qumran writings and the rabbis should overlap. Accordingly, even true parallels may be of no great significance in themselves.

In the variety of the Judaisms, as represented by terms such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Qumran, Therapeutae, it is a restricted area which makes each of these groups distinctive within the totality of Judaisms; it is the distinctive which is significant for identifying the particular, and not the broad areas in common with other Judaisms.

There is nothing to be excited by in the circumstance that the rabbis and Jesus agree that the healing of the sick is permitted on the Sabbath. It would be exciting, though, if rabbinic literature contained a parallel to the "Son of man is lord of the Sabbath." The mote and the beam do not surprise us in appearing in both; certain criticisms of the Pharisees should reasonably appear in both.

For the rabbis and Philo to agree that Noah's righteousness is relative and lower than that of an Abraham or a Moses reflects simply the close study of the Tanach and hence the ascription of some pregnant meaning to a pleonastic work or syllable. Since Genesis describes Noah as righteous "in his generations" we should not be overwhelmed at discovering that the rabbis and Philo unite in inferring from these words a reduced admiration for Noah's righteousness. That Scripture is as a source common to Philo and the rabbis is quite as reasonable a conclusion as that Philo drew the item from the rabbis, or the rabbis from Philo.

⁴ See Isaac Heinemann, "Die Lehre vom Ungeschriebenen Gesetz in Jüdischen Schrifttum," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 4 (1927), pp. 149-72.

These varieties of Judaism, then, are bound to harbor true parallels which are of no consequence. The connections between two or more of these Judaisms is not determined by inconsequential parallels.

Furthermore, each of us operates within certain biases, and since I have one about Christianity, I must expose it here. It is that I regard early Christianity as a Jewish movement which was in particular ways distinctive from other Judaisms. This distinctiveness is an intertwining of events in, and of theology about, the career of Jesus, whether we can recover that career or not, and the histories of his direct disciples and of later apostles, and what they believed and thought. Only by such a supposition of such distinctiveness can I account to myself for the origin and growth of Christianity and its ultimate separation from Judaism. If, on the other hand, the particular content of early Christianity is contained in and anticipated chronologically by the Dead Sea Scrolls and anachronistically by the rabbinic literature, then I am at a loss to understand the movement. While I hold that Mark was a source utilized by both Matthew and Luke, I am not prepared to believe that the writers of Christian literature only copied sources and never did anything original and creative.

In the case of Paul and the rabbis, let us assume that at no less than 259 places, Paul's epistles contain acknowledged parallels to passages in the rabbis. Would this hypothetical situation imply that Paul and the rabbis are in thorough agreement? No. Is it conceivable that despite the parallels, Paul and the rabbis present attitudes and conclusions about the Torah that are diametrically opposed? Yes. Then what in context would be the significance of the hypothetical parallels? Surely it would be small. I doubt that as many as 59, let alone 259 parallels could be adduced. It was right for the scholarship of two hundred and a hundred years ago to have gathered the true and the alleged parallels. Today, however, it is a fruitless quest to continue to try to find elusive rabbinic sources for everything which Paul wrote. His first and second Adam are not found in the rabbis, the mediation of the angels at Sinai is not found in the rabbis, and his view that the *nomos* is superseded by the advent of the Messiah is not found there. To allude, as some have done, to Paul's use of Scripture as rabbinic exegesis is to forget that Philo and the Qumranites were also exegetes; it is to overlook some elementary issues in chronology. I don't believe that Paul bore the title Rabbi or that there is any genetic connection between the specific content of his epistles, or the theology in them, and that of rabbinic literature. Abstractly, it is conceivable that Paul had nothing of his own to say, and that his achievement was that he was only an eclectic. But this seems to me to break down at two points. First, no rabbinic parallels have been found to that which in Paul is Pauline; and secondly, it took Dupont-

Sommer's emendations⁵ of the Qumran Scrolls to have them contain pre-Pauline Paulinism. I for one am prepared to believe that Paul was a person of an originality which went beyond the mere echoing of his predecessors or contemporaries. I am prepared to believe that Paul represents more than a hodgepodge of sources. I find in his epistles a consistency and a cohesiveness of thought that make me suppose that he had some genuine individuality. I admit that I am not a partisan of his views, any more than I am of those of Philo. But I hold that he had a mind of high caliber, and an inventiveness of high order. And even were the 259 hypothetical parallels present, I should want to inquire whether they are significant or merely routine.

Indeed, I should insist on proceeding to the next question, namely, what is the significance in the context of Paul's epistles of these parallels. To distort just a little, I would ask this question, what is the use that Paul makes of those parallels which he allegedly has borrowed?

Paul's context is of infinitely more significance than the question of the alleged parallels. Indeed, to make Paul's context conform to the content of the alleged parallels is to distort Paul. The knowledge on our part of the parallels may assist us in understanding Paul; but if we make him mean only what the parallels mean, we are using the parallels in a way that can lead us to misunderstand Paul.

I am not prepared to suppose that Philo of Alexandria had to go to his mailbox at regular intervals, learn by letter what the rabbis in Palestine were saying, and then be in a position to transmute the newly received data into philosophical ideas. Again, I am not prepared to believe that there was a bridge for one-way traffic that stretched directly from the caves on the west bank of the Dead Sea to Galilee, or even further into Tarsus, Ephesus, Galatia, and Mars Hill. While I am prepared to join in speculations that John the Baptist had some connection with Qumran, I will not accept it as proved without seeing some evidence for it; and I have been considerably surprised at an essay given before this society that speculated on why John had disaffiliated from Qumran.

The various Jewish movements, whether we are satisfied to call them groups or sects or sectarians, make sense to me only if I conceive of them as simultaneously reflecting broad areas of overlapping and restricted areas of distinctiveness. The phrase "restricted areas" is a surface measurement, for its extent could well have been small, but its depth tremendous. Where the literatures present us with acknowledged parallels, I am often more inclined to ascribe these to the common Jewish content of all these Jewish movements than to believe in advance that

⁵ See *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, tr. by E. Margaret Rowley, London, 1952, and the various critical assessments.

some item common to the scrolls and the gospels or to Paul implies that the gospels or Paul got that item specifically from the scrolls.

In dealing with Qumran and Ephesians K. G. Kuhn, in "Der Epheserbrief im Lichte der Qumrantexte,"⁶ after noting certain parallels which cannot come from a common biblical source, points to what he terms *Traditionszusammenhang*. The existence of a community of postbiblical tradition reflected now in Qumran, now in Philo, now in rabbinic literature, now in the NT, seems most reasonable, especially if one will emend the word into the plural, *Traditionenzusammenhang*, so as to allow for diversities among the aspects of tradition, as exemplified, for example, by the distinctions between rabbinic midrash and Philo's.

If we are, as I believe, justified in speaking of traditions in plural, then we may call to mind a distinction made a century ago between the so-called hellenistic midrash and the rabbinic. The former term has been used to describe materials found in Philo, Josephus, various apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, and the fragments preserved in Josephus and Eusebius. On the one hand, it is true that the Greek civilization represents a cultural and religious complex different from the Hebraic and Jewish; on the other hand, when Greek civilization penetrated Palestine and when Jews moved into the Greek dispersion, the Greek civilization began to penetrate the Jewish, evoking both a conscious rejection and also an acceptance and adaptation, whether conscious or unconscious. The term "hellenistic Jewish" is often better to describe certain doctrines or ideas than the bare term "hellenistic." But here exists one confusion that I doubt will ever be cleared up. It is this: when we describe something as hellenistic, are we speaking about the language in which an idea is expressed, or are we alluding to some demonstrable difference between a Jewish and a Greek idea? It seems to me that a Greek idea could receive expression in mishnaic or Qumran Hebrew, and a Jewish idea in koine Greek. Or does the term hellenistic Jewish merely describe the geography of a writing? It seems to me that a work written in Greek could have been composed on Palestinian soil, or one written in Hebrew or Aramaic in the Greek dispersion. Granted that language and ideational content can point to a great probability as to the place of origin, we go too far when we move from the probability to a predetermined inference. Therefore, at one and the same time I could assert that plural aspects of post-Tanach traditions marked the various Judaisms and also that these plural traditions do not always lend themselves to ready separation into neat categories. Hence, Qumran can in principle share traditions with the rabbis, with Philo, and with the NT, and on the one hand, Qumran can share certain traditions with the rabbis but not with Philo, certain traditions with Philo and not the rabbis, and certain

⁶ *NTS*, 7 (1960), pp. 334-46.

traditions with NT but not with the rabbis and Philo. And Qumran can be alone in certain traditions.

In the matter of parallels, we could conceivably be justified in speaking of rabbinic versus hellenistic midrash, if we abstain from assuming that no communication took place, and providing we remain prudent in isolating in some given literature that individuality which is the hallmark of it. For Ephesians and Qumran to echo each other has a definite significance; that Ephesians has a Christology lacking in Qumran is even more significant, for it gives us the hallmark of the Christian character of Ephesians. Kuhn is quite right in telling us that "überhaupt gibt es zur Christologie . . . von Qumran keinerlei Parallelen."

It would seem to me to follow that, in dealing with similarities we can sometimes discover exact parallels, some with and some devoid of significance; seeming parallels which are so only imperfectly; and statements which can be called parallels only by taking them out of context. I must go on to allege that I encounter from time to time scholarly writings which go astray in this last regard. It is the question of excerpt versus context, which I have touched on and now return to.

Let me lead into this by a related matter, for thereafter the danger in studying parallels only in excerpts can become clearer. Over a century ago the Jewish historian Graetz identified Jesus as an Essene, and in the subsequent decades there was almost as much written on the Essenes as there has been in the last decade. The earliest literary source on the Essenes is Philo's treatise entitled "That Every Good Man is Free," wherein Philo illustrates a theme by his description of the Essenes. That theme is that the life of *askesis* is both commendable and viable for attaining perfection. A second essay by Philo, "On the Contemplative Life," argues that still another way to perfection, that of contemplation, is commendable and viable, and is illustrated by the Therapeutae. Indeed, at the beginning of the essay on the Therapeutae Philo hearkens back to his "That Every Good Man is Free."

One cannot understand Philo's intent fully without some recourse to Philo's other writings. It is not methodologically sound, in view of the preservation of so much of Philo's writing, to study the material in isolation on the Essenes in "That Every Good Man is Free." The person who immerses himself in Philo necessarily goes on to note that *askesis* is symbolized recurrently by Jacob and contemplation by Abraham; a third way to perfection is intuition, symbolized by Isaac.

I have to state that my studies in Philo lead me to regard him as an apologist, and a preacher, and to have no great confidence in the reliability of his reports on either the Therapeutae or the Essenes. In the case of the latter, I suspect we deal with Philo's third-hand knowledge and not his direct contact on any intensive basis, for Philo was an Alexandrian whose known visits to Palestine turn out to number exactly one. A

study of Philo discloses, for example, that he can say of Abraham's father Terah that the name means to spy out odor, and that Terah only asked questions but never got to knowledge, and that Terah is the character whom the Greeks called Socrates. Hence, I find myself somewhat disinclined to take Philo's historical statements too seriously. Moreover, he tells us that the meaning of Abraham's marriage to Hagar is that Abraham went to college, and then he proceeds to deny that Hagar and Sarah are historical characters. Accordingly my skepticism increases about his reliability. Indeed, when I consider the apologetic tendencies, and concomitant distortions, in both Philo and Josephus, I find myself taking what they say with elaborate grains of salt. Josephus tells us that the Essenes were Neo-Pythagoreans. Indeed, he makes philosophers out of all Jews, equating the movements with Greek philosophical schools. To my mind, we encounter in Josephus not precision but pretension.

I do not trust what Philo and Josephus tell about the Essenes. About six years ago I wrote that to identify the Qumran community with the Essenes is to explain one unknown by another. I should phrase it a little differently today. I would never try to identify the Qumran community by the Essenes, but I incline to some willingness to identify the Essenes by the Qumran community.

If it is foolhardy to take without sifting a long parallel from Philo's "That Every Good Man is Free," how much more foolhardy is it to take out of context a sentence from one of his laborious allegories and use it for comparison. Wilfred Knox's cautious listing of passages in Philo which have some echoes in Paul seems sounder to me than Gerald Friedlander's view that Paul had necessarily read Philo.

Harry Wolfson and Louis Ginzberg have recorded many passages which presumably reflect parallels between the rabbis and Philo. Inasmuch as the overlappings in the varieties of Judaism would reasonably suggest that parallels would appear, it is striking that most of the paired passages which these two cite are actually not parallels, but are instead statements of considerable difference. I have discussed this at length in my book, *Philo's Place in Judaism*, and I need not here repeat myself. There I contend that Wolfson and Ginzberg suppose that parallels, both the true and the alleged, mean that Philo drew on the rabbis, as though there was no creativity in the Alexandrian Jewish community. I would only suggest that if a Wolfson, who wrote a magnificent two-volume book on Philo, could be mistaken so often about parallels, it is not prudent for the mere amateur to rush into excerpts from Philo.

What shall we make of the five immense books which constitute the Strack and Billerbeck *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*? Let us grant that it is a useful tool. So is a hammer, if one needs to drive nails. But if one needs to bisect a board, then a

hammer is scarcely the useful tool. Four major errors in the use of Strack and Billerbeck, caused by its construction, mar its usefulness. The first is to be stated as follows. When Luke, presumably of Roman origin, appends editorializing comments to Mark, then it is scarcely likely that rabbinic passages can serve as persuasive parallels or, more importantly, as the direct sources for such editorializing. Strack-Billerbeck list such rabbinic parallels, and indeed, do so for Paul, James, the Johannine literature, the Pastorals, and so on. The impression thereupon exists that the unfolding Christian literature, even after Christendom became gentile in the dispersion in the second century, still owes some immediate debt to the rabbinic literature, even in passages emerging from Babylonia in the fifth century. If it is retorted that I am addressing myself not to the value of Strack-Billerbeck but to its misuse, then I must reply that the manufacturer who shapes a hammer to resemble a saw bears some responsibility for the misuse of the tool. I would charge therefore that Strack-Billerbeck is shaped as though its compilers were out of touch with NT scholarship.

Secondly, Strack-Billerbeck misleads many into confusing a scrutiny of excerpts with a genuine comprehension of the tone, texture, and import of a literature. One recalls the proposal that in the verse, "Let the dead bury the dead," we should understand that mistranslation has occurred, and that the first "dead" really was the "place," *מחיה* for *מחיה*; so that the verse should read, "Let the place bury the dead." One can go on thereafter to cite biblical and rabbinic requirements about the burial of unclaimed bodies, and thereby miss the intent, and the deliberate bite, in the gospel passage. Rabbinists have sometimes assumed that a gospel pericope was lifted bodily from the Gemara. Elsewhere I have expressed the opinion that rabbinic scholars have assumed that a mastery of the Talmud confers automatic mastery of the gospels.

I would state here that NT scholars devoid of rabbinic learning have been misled by Strack-Billerbeck into arrogating to themselves a competency they do not possess. Strack-Billerbeck confers upon a student untrained and inexperienced in rabbinic literature not competency but confusion. The list of indiscretions by NT scholars in rabbinics, or by rabbinic scholars in NT, would be a long one. I allude here to errors in scholarship and not to pseudo scholarship. By this latter I have in mind the distorted evaluation of rabbinic Judaism as merely dry and arid legalism — it is never dry *or* arid, but always dry *and* arid; or a judgment such as Friedlander's that what is good in the Sermon on the Mount is borrowed from Jewish sources,⁷ and what isn't, isn't very good. I am not implying that scholars are without the right to make value judgments. I am only suggesting the lack of value in many value judgments,

⁷ See Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount*.

when these emerge from an acquaintance merely with excerpt instead of with the intent, and the nuances, of a literature.

Third, in the major sins of Strack-Billerbeck is the excessive piling up of rabbinic passages. Nowhere else in scholarly literature is quantity so confused for quality as in Strack-Billerbeck. The mere abundance of so-called parallels is its own distortion, for the height of the pile misleads him who reads as he runs to suppose that he is dealing with sifted material. The distortion lies also in the circumstance that quantity lends a tone of authority all too often submitted to. The counterbalance is notably absent, the qualifying is withheld, and the pile acts as an obstruction to seeing what really should be seen. If Philo can undergo mayhem by study in excerpt, then this is mild compared to what rabbinic literature studied only in Strack-Billerbeck undergoes. And lest my statement here seem to be some Jewish provincialism, I must hasten to say that I am paraphrasing what was said about the competency of Weber's *Theologie der alten Synagoge* and Bousset's *Religion* by a Presbyterian named George Foot Moore.⁸

The fourth and crowning sin of Strack-Billerbeck involves a paradox. On the one hand, they quote the rabbinic literature endlessly to clarify the NT. Yet even where Jesus and the rabbis seem to say identically the same thing, Strack-Billerbeck manage to demonstrate that what Jesus said was finer and better. I am a religious liberal and to the best of my knowledge a student free of conscious partisanship in dealing with the ancient past. Somewhat like Claude Montefiore,⁹ I am impelled to admire some statements attributed to Jesus more than similar statements of certain rabbis, and at other places the statements of certain rabbis more than those attributed to Jesus. Scholarly impartiality, achieved by many Christian scholars in this Society, is not a characteristic or a goal of Strack-Billerbeck. Why, I must ask, pile up the alleged parallels, if the end result is to show a forced, artificial, and untenable distinction even within the admitted parallels?

It is scarcely cricket to pile up Strack-Billerbeck sheer irrelevances, as they do, in connection with the admirable injunction in Matt 5 43-48, not to hate one's enemies. Strack-Billerbeck concede that parallels are here lacking, yet they manage to conclude that Judaism actually teaches the hatred of enemies, almost as a central doctrine. Strack-Billerbeck carefully omit such gospel passages as Matt 23, which to any fair-minded reader, such as a man from Mars, would prevent the characterization of the gospels as expressive of love and only love. Christianity shared with other versions of Judaism both the ideal of the love of one's fellowmen and also a hostility to the out group. What else should one rea-

⁸ "Christian Writers on Judaism," in *HTR*, 14 (1921), pp. 197-254.

⁹ See, especially, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*.

sonably expect? If love was distinctively a Christian virtue, absent from Judaism, what happened to it when the church fathers dealt with fellow Christians who disagreed with them? I think, for example, of Tertullian's dealing with Marcion. Unparallel parallels which feed a partisan ego scarcely represent good scholarship, whether the dabblers are Christians or Jews. How should a serious student assess the statement of a modern writer that "in many ways the New Testament is the reassertion of the authentic Old Testament tradition over against the rabbinic distortion of it"?¹⁰ Sober scholarship and partisan apologetics are too quite different matters.

The various literatures relevant to Judaism and Christianity are so bulky and so diverse and so complex that no one person can master them all and the secondary scholarship in full thoroughness. This has been the case for at least a century and a half or ever since modern scientific scholarship arose. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided an addition to the relevant literature, this in the last twelve or thirteen years. Since the scrolls are in Hebrew, the first people who worked in them were, naturally, Hebraists, not NT scholars whose milieu has been Greek. Sometimes the Hebraists have been masters of biblical Hebrew, and not of the mishnaic; and sometimes the Hebraists have failed to display a deep comprehension of the problems inherent in NT scholarship. Sometimes NT scholars have made forays into the scrolls as if they are listed in the Muratorian fragment.

If ever there was a time when interdisciplinary partnerships were called for, this should have been the case when the scrolls emerged to notice. Instead, the scrolls have been at the mercy of extreme individualists, especially on the part of those who have ascribed to them some special, indeed, unique relationship to early Christianity. When the scrolls first came to light, there were flamboyant statements made about them. Let me paraphrase four of them: one, the greatest discovery in the history of archeology; two, all the mysteries about the origins of Christianity are now solved; three, everything that has ever been written about Judaism and Christianity must now be rewritten; and four, the scrolls, sight unseen, are a hoax.

The individualism has prompted a good many theories, most of them competently assembled in Rowley's very able article in the last issue¹¹ of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*. There can be no doubt that the scrolls captured the imagination of the general public. They also spawned some of the most spectacular exhibitions which I have ever encountered. If I pick out one to mention, it is only because it is typical

¹⁰ Fuller, in G. Ernest Wright and Reginald Fuller, *The Book of the Acts of God*, p. 209.

¹¹ Vol. 44 (1961), pp. 119-56.

of a certain lack of restraint. I allude to the work of a British scholar, the author of many works on Jewish history, who began his essay on the scrolls by saying that the difficulty in the problem of the scrolls stemmed from the fact that up to the time of his writing, no historian had approached the scrolls. Quite modestly, this British scholar offered himself for the task. His theory wins by a length in my opinion the race for the most preposterous of the theories about the scrolls.

Edmund Wilson was the first popularizer to titillate the general public about the scrolls. Mr. Wilson has written both literary criticism and fiction — and one can be uncertain as to just where to classify his book, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*. He makes the contention that NT scholarship, even the liberal scholarship, has shied away from the scrolls, out of fear of theological positions being upset. This was in May, 1955. In 1954 I was invited to be part of a panel at the December meeting of the Society on the scrolls and the NT. I was not able to accept the invitation, but I still keep Franklin Young's telegram inviting me because it predates Mr. Wilson's libel on NT scholars.

Since I am a NT specialist, and Jewish, I hope you can take it at face value that no theory about the scrolls, moderate or extreme, will step on my theological toes. It was not my theology which Mr. Wilson offended, but whatever learning I had acquired. NT scholars, far from shying away from the scrolls, have possibly been guilty of going overboard about them.

The vaunted novelties which the scrolls were alleged to contain did excite me at one time, but always in prospect. When I acquired my copies, this excitement receded, for I learned that those things which might have made the scrolls exciting weren't and aren't there. As the scrolls relate to early Christianity, they are notable for the absence of concrete, recognizable history, and this may possibly be pointed up in the following way. In my judgment, the Scriptural books and fragments are of infinitely greater value than the sectarian documents and the Hodayoth, and I for one would willingly trade in the sectarian documents and the Hodayoth for just one tiny Qumran fragment that would mention Jesus, or Cephas, or Paul. Until such a fragment appears, I shall continue to believe, respecting the scrolls and early Christianity, that they contribute a few more drops to a bucket that was already half-full.

With the passing of months and of years, we have come to a better perspective on the scrolls. In the light of that perspective perhaps many here will agree with me that the scrolls reflect the greatest exaggeration in the history of biblical scholarship. To speak of exaggeration is to imply that there is a basic substance. I am not denying utility and worth to the scrolls. But I do not hesitate to express the judgment that they are not nearly so useful and worthy as was initially claimed.

Further, respecting interdisciplinary partnership, virtually all of us

have loyalties which we neither can nor should deny. I for one have no scruples at stating that I am Jewish and a rabbi. There is an affirmative sense in which in context one can speak of Jewish scholarship or of Christian scholarship. At the same time, there are other contexts in which scholarship needs other descriptive adjectives. Where we deal with documents from long ago, it seems to me that the ideal is sound scholarship, rather than unsound, accurate rather than inaccurate, objective rather than partisan.

Someday some cultural historian might want to study a phenomenon in our Society of Biblical Literature. Two hundred years ago Christians and Jews and Roman Catholics and Protestants seldom read each other's books, and almost never met together to exchange views and opinions on academic matters related to religious documents. Even a hundred years ago such cross-fertilization or meeting was rare. In our ninety-seventh meeting we take it as a norm for us to read each other's writings and to meet together, debate with each other, and agree or disagree with each other in small or large matters of scholarship. The legacy from past centuries, of misunderstanding and even of animosity, has all but been dissolved in the framework of our organization. Would that humanity at large could achieve what has been achieved in our Society.

It is proper that our Society should be host to differences of opinion, and even acute ones. We do not want to arrive at some pallid unanimity, but rather to be the market place in which vigorously held viewpoints, freely expressed, vie with each other for acceptance. When one recalls the occasional fervid debate in this Society, it is notable that the issues have been primarily scholarly, and never to my recollection denominational. This is as it should be.

In scholarship full accuracy and full depth are an ideal occasionally approached but never quite realized, certainly not by any one person. The realization comes the nearest to the ideal not in an individual, but in our corporate strivings, as together we seek always to know more, and always to know better.

It seems to me that we are at a junction when biblical scholarship should recognize parallelomania for the disease that it is. It is time to draw away from the extravagance which has always been a latent danger and which the scrolls have made an imminent and omnipresent one.

It would be a real achievement if biblical scholarship in the 1960's were to be characterized as the decade in which perspective and direction were restored, the older theories reassessed, and our collective learning broadened and deepened.