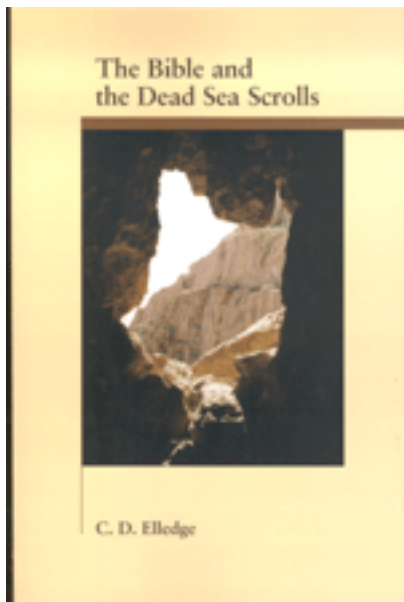


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**Elledge, C. D.**

***The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls***

Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies 14

Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden: Brill, 2005. Pp. xii + 148. Paper/cloth. \$15.95/\$84.00. ISBN 1589831837/9004137785.

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This book surveys the complete corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls, culminating with the final stages of the publication of all the scrolls in 2001, and addresses some of the questions most commonly asked by nonspecialists. Elledge attempts to enable the general reader of the Bible to understand the contribution of the scrolls to our knowledge of Second Temple Judaism, of the struggles concerning the social-religious lives of the Jewish people, and of the postbiblical literary oeuvre.

The book is organized around seven of the questions most frequently asked about the scrolls:

- What are the Dead Sea Scrolls, and how were they discovered?
- What do we know about the archeology of Qumran?
- Who lived in Qumran, and what was their story?
- What kinds of ancient writings are preserved among the scrolls?
- Why are the scrolls important for understanding the Hebrew Bible?
- Why are the scrolls important for Second Temple Judaism?
- Why are the scrolls important for understanding the New Testament?

In addition, the book includes indexes of ancient writings, of modern authorities, and of ancient persons and places. Bibliography is given in the notes at the end of the book. Unfortunately, the absence of a separate alphabetized bibliography is an unfortunate lacuna for those readers who wish to read further about the scrolls.

One of the salient features of the book is Elledge's attempt to correlate the archaeological claims regarding the chronology of the settlement and life in Qumran with the available data concerning the chronology of the Qumran community, as well as with the historical events of the Second Temple Judaism mentioned in the scrolls (see the table at 53–54). Elledge's archaeological chronology is based upon Roland de Vaux's assumptions, ignoring the later corrections made by Jodi Magness. Thus, some of his conclusions are questionable, such as his dating of the origins of the community's settlement at Qumran too early and of its resettlement there after the earthquake of 31 B.C.E. too late.

In chapter 4 (55–86) Elledge classifies the various kinds of writings preserved among the scrolls into rules and legal writings, pesharim, hymns and prayers. His survey of their contents reflects his familiarity with the various scrolls and his serious treatment of their contents. However, the detailed survey of each scroll may be tedious for the nonspecialist. It seems to me that a general survey of the main characteristics of the Qumran community (most probably the Essenes) would have created a clearer picture of this community. Hence, it would have been useful to include in this chapter a survey of the philosophy of the Qumran community, its legal principles, and its struggle with other circles within contemporary Judaism—such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who followed the Hasmonean leaders—regarding the legal code, liturgical customs, and eschatological hopes of Judaism (but see on this below, on ch. 6).

In chapter 5 (87–96) Elledge deals with the contribution of the biblical scrolls from Qumran, which represent variegated versions of a precanonical Hebrew Bible, for understanding the history of the biblical text. In this way one may understand that the canonization of the three best-known versions of the Bible—the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint and the Samaritan version—were fixed by the rabbinic stream, the Samaritans, and Christianity, respectively, following the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.). Moreover, the scrolls clarify some of the ancient literary techniques of interpreting the Bible and of creating new books based upon the Bible through the rewriting and elaboration of specific subjects.

Elledge preferred to deal with the philosophical and ideological aspects of the Qumran community in the context of the scrolls' importance for Second Temple Judaism (ch. 6). Here he deals with the anti-Hellenistic approach of some Jewish circles of that period and of the controversy among the Essenes, the Pharisees, and the Hasmonean priesthood

regarding the legal code that ought to be observed by the Jewish people. This includes, *inter alia*, the purification of the temple, Jerusalem and the land of Israel; the observance of the Sabbath and the festivals; and rules governing marital life. The controversy over these and other matters was the main reason for the secession of the Qumran community from the common worship practiced by the multitude (4QMMT C:7–8) and their establishment of a distinct community. However, their extremism concerning the legal code was influenced by their apocalyptic outlook regarding God's deterministic, historical-eschatological plan for redeeming the world from evil, as stated in such apocalyptic writings as Daniel, *Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and the *Testament of Levi*, as well as in other writings that were included within the corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This apocalyptic outlook, which is emphasized in the sectarian scrolls mentioned in chapter 4 and in some of the sapiential scrolls mentioned in chapter 6, combined with their extreme Zadokite priestly outlook, guided the rigorous legal code of the Qumran community and its polemics with other contemporary Jewish circles.

In his discussion of the importance of the scrolls for the New Testament (ch. 7), Elledge refutes the assumptions of those scholars who claimed that Christianity originated from the Qumran community. He claims that the emergence of Christianity was shaped by apocalyptic ideas and messianic hopes that were current among Second Temple Judaism generally but that these were developed by the first leaders of Christianity into other directions than those of the Qumran community.

In brief, this book presents a wide store of information on the Dead Sea Scrolls by an impartial scholar, allowing its readers a balanced view of their importance for Judaism and Christianity.