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# Frank Moore Cross's Contribution to the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls

SIDNIE WHITE CRAWFORD

*This paper examines the impact of Frank Moore Cross on the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Since Cross was a member of the original editorial team responsible for publishing the Cave 4 materials, his influence on the field was vast. The article is limited to those areas of Scrolls study not covered in other articles; the reader is referred especially to the articles on palaeography and textual criticism for further discussion of Cross's work on the Scrolls.*

It is difficult to overestimate the impact the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls had on the life and career of Frank Moore Cross. The Scrolls shaped his views on textual criticism, palaeography, and the history of early Judaism and early Christianity. Without the discovery of the Scrolls, Cross would still have been a great scholar, but he would have been a *different* great scholar.

Cross's first encounter with the Dead Sea Scrolls came in the late winter of 1948, while he was a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, studying under W. F. Albright. John Trever, then a fellow at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem (later the Albright Institute), had sent Albright photographs of what became known as the Great Isaiah Scroll from Cave 1. Cross recounts:

I was sitting in my carrel in the library at Johns Hopkins University where I was a doctoral student in Semitic languages. David Noel Freedman, a fellow student, was sitting nearby. Our teacher, William Foxwell Albright, rushed into the library and told us to come to his office; he had something to show us. He was quite agitated and rushed out. We followed him into his study. There he showed us photographs that had been sent to him from the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem.

They pictured two columns of a manuscript, columns of the Book of Isaiah. . . . Noel and I persuaded Albright to let us take the glossy photographs home with us overnight. We spent all night working with them. . . . Noel and I examined the textual readings of the old manuscript, analyzed the unusual spelling . . . and . . . studied the paleographical features of the manuscript. We spent an extraordinary night with the photographs of what is now labeled 1QIs<sup>a</sup>. . . . (Shanks 1994: 98)

From that moment on, scholarship on the Scrolls would dominate his career. His first article on the Scrolls, "The Newly Discovered Scrolls in the Hebrew University Museum in Jerusalem," appeared in 1949, and he entered vociferously into the debates surrounding the authenticity of the newly discovered manuscripts. In 1952, for example, in a review of a recent book by G. R. Driver, he declares:

The weight of Professor Driver's work, more than one half of the book, is given over to a polemical defense of his positions on the date of the scrolls. He presses for a date toward 500 A.D., and if his attempts to show Arabic influence (!) on the language of the documents be taken seriously, a date as late as the seventh century A.D.

Driver arrives at this dating by a cavalier disregard for the evidence of paleography and archeology. This was an extraordinarily dubious procedure in 1950; it is an impossible one today. The findings of first-rank paleographers, who have maintained an early date (second–first centuries B.C. for the earliest of the scrolls) have been vindicated by (1) the late Hellenistic date of deposits

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found in the excavation of the “Scroll cave,” (2) the dating of the linen wrappings of the scrolls by use of the radioactive carbon method (totally misunderstood in a hasty addition by Driver), and (3) new finds this year of dated documents of the second century B.C. at the *end* of the paleographic series. Either of the first two lines of evidence are decisive against Driver; the third in itself demonstrates the early date. (Cross 1952: 273)

It is typical of Cross that he puts the palaeographic evidence first in determining the dates of the Scrolls.

In 1953, G. Lankester Harding and Roland de Vaux began to organize a committee to clean, organize, and identify the enormous quantity of inscribed material now making its way into the Palestine Archaeological Museum (PAM) following the discovery of Cave 4 in 1952 (Fields 2009: 191–93). Cross was invited to participate as a representative of the American School of Oriental Research, and was the first member of the committee to arrive in Jerusalem, in the summer of 1953. At that time, the Cave 4 fragments that had been professionally excavated by de Vaux and his team had arrived at the PAM, and Cross began to clean, sort, and describe them. Thus, Cross was the first scholar to work through the excavated fragments from Cave 4, and his eyewitness account of their state is extremely important for any explanation of how the manuscripts arrived in the caves. He states:

The writer had the opportunity to begin his labors on the scrolls by examining and doing preliminary identification of the excavated materials before they were combined with the great mass of purchased fragments. I was struck with the fact that the relatively small quantity of fragments from the deepest levels of the cave nevertheless represented a fair cross section of the whole deposit in the cave, which suggests . . . that deterioration of the manuscripts must have begun even before time sealed the manuscripts in the stratified soil, and that the manuscripts may have been in great disorder when originally abandoned in the cave. (Cross 1995: 34)

In other words, the physical state of the excavated fragments, from the lowest levels of Cave 4, show first that some of the manuscripts had *already begun* to deteriorate before being placed in the cave; that is, some of them were already quite old when they were stored away. Second, older manuscripts and younger manuscripts (by palaeographic date) were found *together* in the lowest levels of Cave 4, which supports the hypothesis that the Scrolls were hastily abandoned in the cave, rather than stored there in an organized fashion over a long period of time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This argues against the hypothesis that Cave 4 was used for storage of manuscripts prior to the abandonment of the settlement at the

Another important discovery came to light in that summer of 1953. While working his way through excavated materials from Cave 4, Cross came across some black, urine-encrusted fragments from the lowest level of the cave. After preliminary cleaning, it was clear that the manuscript had something to do with Samuel. However, what was visible had enough variants from the Masoretic Text that Cross set it aside, dismissing it as a Samuel Apocryphon. Returning to the fragments later, with the Greek text in hand, he discovered to his astonishment that the manuscript contained readings in common with the Old Greek translation of Samuel. This manuscript turned out to be 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, a revolutionary manuscript for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, and the focus of Cross’s final Dead Sea Scrolls publication in the series Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (Cross et al. 2005).<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning of his work on the Scrolls, Cross was also interested in the history and identity of the community that inhabited Qumran and stored the manuscripts in the caves. In 1956–1957, he gave the Haskell Lectures at Oberlin College, which were published in 1958 under the title *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (ALQ). In it, Cross flatly identifies the community with the Essenes: “There is now sufficient evidence, to be supplemented as the publication of the scrolls and reports of excavations in the vicinity of Qumrân continue, to identify the people of the scrolls definitively with the Essenes” (Cross 1958: 37). To support this identification, Cross brought together the evidence of the manuscripts, the archaeology, and the classical sources, constructing the chain of evidence that makes the Qumran-Essene hypothesis so plausible.

He describes the archaeological settlement in this way:

Khirbet Qumrân proved to be the hub of a Hellenistic–Roman occupation spreading nearly two miles north along the cliffs, and some two miles south to the agricultural complex at ‘Ēn Feskah. The people of this broad settlement lived in caves, tents, and solid constructions, but shared pottery made in a common kiln, read common biblical and sectarian scrolls, operated a common irrigation system, and, as we shall see, depended on common stores of food and water furnished by the installations of the community center.

The caves yielding manuscripts and identical pottery also radiate out from the center northward and southward. (Cross 1958: 41)

time of its destruction in 68 C.E. See, e.g., Stökl Ben Ezra 2007 or Taylor 2012: 293–95.

<sup>2</sup> For more detail of the importance of 4QSam<sup>a</sup> for textual criticism, see Hendel’s article in this same issue.

Cross notes that the location of Qumran “admirably fitted” the location of the Essene settlement according to Pliny (*Natural History* 5.73): somewhere below Jericho, above Ein Gedi, and near the shore of the Dead Sea. Further, explorations of the surrounding countryside southward and westward yielded only one other site with substantial Hellenistic–Roman remains, ‘Ein ‘el-Ghuweir, which he suggests was a satellite settlement of Qumran, similar to ‘Ein Feshkha. Thus, the only site that fits Pliny’s description of the Essene settlement is Qumran and its satellites (Cross 1995: 56, 58).<sup>3</sup> The scholarly consensus today continues to hold to this identification, in spite of attempts to identify other sites with Pliny’s description.<sup>4</sup>

Cross then correlates the archaeological evidence with the evidence of the classical authors Philo, Josephus, Dio Chrysostom, and Hippolytus on the Essenes, and compares that evidence with what the Qumran scrolls reveal about the community that collected them. He particularly relies on evidence from four major works then published: the Community Rule, the Damascus Document, the War Scroll, and the Rule of the Congregation. While he is convinced that Qumran is an Essene settlement, he does not believe it was the only Essene settlement in Judaea, but rather their “principle [sic] . . . center” (Cross 1958: 57). He states, concerning the relationship of the evidence of the Scrolls to the classical sources:

It is quite impossible within our limits to pursue all of the details in which our classical sources complement and correspond to sources from the Qumrân caves. This correspondence can be illustrated by citation of details of community organization, offices and trial procedures, or of common practice in such matters as sanitary regulations, the use of oaths, the rites of lustration and baptism. On the one hand we can point to verbal reminiscences in Josephus of theological clichés in the Qumrân texts, and on the other hand to the prohibition of spitting in assembly recorded by both Josephus and the Rule of Qumrân. (Cross 1958: 69–71)

However, Cross also acknowledges discrepancies between the Essenes as described in the classical sources and the community of the Scrolls. For example, he notices that while Philo unequivocally states that the Essenes were a celibate order, Josephus discusses two orders of Essenes, one that married and one that did not. He

<sup>3</sup> In this assessment, Cross of course agreed with, among others, De Vaux 1973; Milik 1959: 56; and Vermes 1977: 125–30.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of those who would either identify Pliny’s Essene settlement with another site or dismiss Pliny’s evidence as unreliable include Kraft 2001; Hirschfeld 2004; and Baumgarten 2004. For defenses of the identification of Qumran with Pliny’s Essene settlement, see Magness 2002; Broshi 2007; and Taylor 2012.

likewise notes that the evidence from Qumran is ambiguous. He concludes:

This area of Essene life can best be understood, not by positing a sect of marrying Essenes alongside a celibate sect, but by recognizing an ambiguous attitude toward marriage integral to the structure of Essene faith. While a genuine asceticism has no place in Judaism, there are two streams in Judaism which have dualistic tendencies. One of these is an extremely ancient one, rooted in the priestly distinctions between ritual purity and pollution. . . . Certain sexual acts render one unclean so that he may not approach holy things. This is especially vivid in the laws of “Holy War,” where all sexual life is suspended, women excluded from the camp, since God’s Spirit . . . is present in the camp. The second stream is the late developing apocalyptic movement which assimilates certain elements of Persian ethical dualism to the prophetic understanding of history as a drama of divine warfare culminating in the victory of God. In this tradition the “normal life” of the old age is qualified. . . . At Qumrân these streams come together in a priestly apocalypticism. . . . Ritual purity is maintained by the community as a whole. The community takes the posture of a priesthood standing in the presence of God. . . . The Essene in his daily life thus girds himself to withstand the final trial, purifies himself to join the holy armies. . . . This is the situation which prompts counsels against marriage. (Cross 1958: 72–73)

It is worth noting that Cross’s view about marriage and celibacy in the Qumran community is much more nuanced than that of other scholars in this period, who held that the Qumran community was completely celibate, and agrees with current discussions arguing that women played a role in the movement to which the Qumran community belonged, but that Qumran itself was a site with few if any women.<sup>5</sup>

Cross continued to hold to the Essene identification of the Qumran community throughout his career. In 1973, he published this famous statement:

We know of no other sect arising in the second century B.C. which can be associated with the wilderness community. Further, the community at Qumrân was organized precisely as a new Israel, a true sect which repudiated the priesthood and cultus of Jerusalem. Neither the Pharisees nor the Saducees [sic] can qualify. The Essenes qualify perfectly. . . . The scholar who would “exercise caution” in identifying the sect of Qumrân with the Essenes places himself in an astonishing posi-

<sup>5</sup> For the earlier view, e.g., Vermes 1977: 128: “As for celibacy, although it is not positively referred to in the Qumran Community Rule, its probability in the monastic brotherhood has been shown to be great.” For more recent views, see Schuller 1994; Qimron 1992; and Crawford 2003.

tion: he must suggest seriously that two major parties formed communistic religious communities in the same district of the desert of the Dead Sea and lived together in effect for two centuries, holding similar bizarre views, performing similar or rather identical lustrations, ritual meals, and ceremonies. He must suppose that one, carefully described by classical authors, disappeared without leaving building remains or even potsherds behind; the other, systematically ignored by the classical sources, left extensive ruins, and indeed a great library. I prefer to be reckless and flatly identify the men of Qumrân with their perennial houseguests, the Essenes. (Cross 1973: 331–32)

In the third, revised edition of *ALQ*, published in 1995, which includes a new chapter entitled “Notes on a Generation of Qumran Studies,” Cross continued to regard the Essene identification of Qumran as certain (Cross 1995: 183–91).

One of Cross’s unique contributions to the study of the Qumran community is his identification of the Wicked Priest mentioned in the pesharim with Simon the Hasmonaean. Cross based his identification of Simon as the Wicked Priest on the quotation from the Psalms of Joshua in 4QTestimonia:

Cursed before the Lord be the man that rises up and rebuilds this city [ ]. At the cost of his first born shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates . . . and behold an accursed man, a son of Belial shall come to power to be a trapper’s snare to his people and a ruin to all his neighbors . . . the two of them shall become violent instruments, and they shall rebuild the [city?] . . . and set up a wall and towers for it to make a stronghold of wickedness[ ] . . . horrors in Ephraim and Judah[ ] . . . [and they shall] commit sacrilege in the land . . . [ bl]ood like water [shall flow?] on the battlements of the daughter of Zion and in the district of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

Cross applies this passage to the murder of Simon and his eldest and youngest sons at the hands of his son-in-law Ptolemy in Jericho, and the subsequent attack by Antiochus VII Sidetes upon Judaea (Cross 1958: 115). This identification, however, did not gain wide acceptance, one reason being that the title “Wicked Priest” does not appear in the 4QTestimonia passage.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> As translated by Cross 1958: 112–13.

<sup>7</sup> For an early critique, see Milik 1959: 61–64; for a more recent discussion, see Crawford 2000.

One last subject I wish to touch on in this article is Cross’s contribution to the study of the Wâdi Daliyeh papyri. After the Ta’amireh bedouin discovered the papyri in the cave of Abu Sinjeh, Cross purchased the main lot of documents on behalf of ASOR on November 19, 1962. He describes his first glimpse of the papyri as follows:

For the most part the papyri were in a very poor condition, worm-eaten and fibres badly frayed. My attention, however, was riveted first on one of the bullae. It alone appeared to be inscribed. The writing was not Aramaic, but a clear and characteristic Paleo-Hebrew, rather more archaic than I should have expected in the 4th century B.C. I read:

. . .-yhw bn (sn’-)

blt pht smrn

‘. . .-iah, son of (San-)ballat, governor of Samaria.’ . . .

The sight of the seal very nearly dissolved all my poise for the bargaining process. (Cross 1963: 228)

Cross’s study of the papyri and their seals led him to propose a new sequence of Samaritan governors, based on the practice of papponymy, showing that the Sanballatids held the governorship of Samaria for several generations in the Persian period. Cross also proposed a correlative list of Jewish high priests in later fifth- and fourth-century Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> These reconstructions are still cited with approval in the scholarly literature.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, any discussion of Frank Moore Cross’s contribution to the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls would be incomplete without mentioning his training of a generation of Scrolls scholars, including the present author. Cross directed the dissertations of 13 graduate students who eventually published in the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series, and was a second reader for 5 students who studied with John Strugnell (Fields 2009: 202, 543). As has often been noted, Cross’s training and supervision of doctoral students was as much a seminal contribution to the field as was his own scholarship.

Frank Moore Cross was a giant among Dead Sea Scrolls scholars, and his contributions continue to resonate 64 years after his first publication on the subject. His brilliance is not easily replaced.

<sup>8</sup> See especially the genealogical chart in Cross 1998: 156. For a more thorough discussion of Cross’s thesis, see Coogan’s article in this issue.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Knoppers 2013 and VanderKam 2004. For alternatives to Cross’s proposal, see Eshel 2007 and Dušek 2012.

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