

keit des Menschenglücks, um in der letzten Strophe festzustellen, daß der Mensch sein Glück nur Gott verdankt: fällt eine *αἴγλα διόσδοτος* über das Menschenleben, dann ist alles hell. Dem römischen Volke ist eine solche *αἴγλα*, eine lux, in der Gestalt des Augustus gegeben worden.

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TACITUS, *HIST.* 5. 13. 2
AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

It is rather surprising that no discussion of the reference made by Tacitus here to Jewish or Oriental prophecies seems hitherto to have used the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was in 1947 that the first of the Scrolls was discovered, so that the most detailed discussion of the passage, that by Anna M. A. Hospers-Jansen in her *Tacitus over de Joden* (Groningen, 1949), was prepared too early to take account of this evidence.

Tacitus refers to a belief derived from 'ancient priestly writings' (*antiquis sacerdotum litteris*) that the East would at that time (A.D. 70) achieve power and that men from Judaea would conquer the world. The prophecy is called an 'enigma' (*ambages*) and is said to have applied really to Vespasian and Titus. The striking parallels in Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4. 5 and in Josephus, *Bell. Iud.* 6. 5. 4 are well known. Neither of these elaborates on the Jewish source, save that Suetonius also emphasizes its antiquity (*vetus et constans opinio*) and suggests that it was not confined to the Jews (*Oriente toto*), whereas Josephus, like Tacitus, stresses its equivocal nature (*χρησμὸς ἀμφίβηλος*). There has been considerable discussion of what the intermediary source was to which Tacitus had access, and Dr Hospers-Jansen appears to have disposed effectively of Norden's view that both Tacitus and Suetonius had Antonius Iulianus, procurator of Judaea in A.D. 70, as their source; in two crucial references Norden invoked the hypothesis of interpolation. Hospers-Jansen's own view is that the *Commentarii* of Vespasian were used, among other sources, by both Tacitus and Suetonius. This rests on a reasoned case. In the present note I am concerned with the ulti-

mate Jewish or Oriental source¹) on which Vespasian or other Romans could have been informed. Tacitus and Josephus refer pointedly to its ambiguous nature. The three statements unite in saying that it was successfully applied to Vespasian, or to Vespasian and Titus. *It follows that this source could not have been openly and explicitly anti-Roman.*

Affinities to the prophecy recorded are not far to seek in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Messianic theme is prominent in them, and whereas the interpretation of this theme is sometimes on purely religious and spiritual lines, a political and even military emphasis is on occasion very evident²). According to Rabin³) 'intense Messianism was ... one of the characteristics of the Qumran sect'. Some scholars find a doctrine of two Messiahs in the Scrolls, the one priestly and the other secular. A successful Warrior Messiah is at any rate clearly prophesied, as in the text entitled *Benedictions* (1 QSb v. 20-28), where the triumphant ruler is destined, as in Tacitus, to dominate the whole world:

Thou shalt smite the peoples with the power of Thy word; with Thy rod thou shalt lay waste ... the earth. Thou shalt tread down the nations as mud in the streets. For God has raised thee up as the sceptre of rulers⁴).

The Zadokite Fragments found in the Cairo Genizah are now shown to derive from a Qumran archetype, and here it is said of the Messiah that 'when he appears, he will smite all the sons of Seth'⁵). All mankind are probably covered by the term בני שֵׁת according to G.R.Driver⁶), following a Targum interpretation.

But it is the *Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* that expresses most forcefully the military hopes of Jewish Messianism, and we now have an elaborate edition and

1) D.R.Dudley, *The World of Tacitus* (London, 1968), 194 says, 'Whatever Tacitus' sources may have been - Manetho, Nicolaus of Damascus, Pompeius Trogus - they did not draw on Hebrew sources...' If the *Commentarii* of Vespasian are considered a likely source or indeed the knowledge of any Roman involved in the affairs of Judaea, then indirect access to Hebrew writings can be assumed to have been possible.

2) On Messianism in the Scrolls see F.F.Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London, 1956), 76ff; Millar Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London, 1958), 297ff; Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London, 1961), Ch. 7; G.R.Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls* (Oxford, 1965), 462-86.

3) *Qumran Studies* (Oxford, 1957), 118.

4) Taken from Matthew Black, *op. cit.* 151.

5) Ch.Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents* (Oxford, 1954), 31.

6) *The Judaean Scrolls*, 468.

commentary by Yigael Yadin⁷). In this text the enemy are often referred to as Kittim, and Yadin⁸) concludes that the Romans are principally implied. He believes that the Scroll was written in the second half of the first century B.C.⁹) He has shown that it reflects features of the Roman Republican Army; thus the rectangular *scutum* is described, a shield not generally used before the time of Julius Caesar, but which continued in use in the period of Augustus¹⁰). The text envisages the conquest of the whole world, but the 'Sons of Darkness' are tacitly regarded as being mainly the Romans; the 'Sons of Light' are the true Israel. It is to the future that the *Scroll of the War* looks, and Matthew Black¹¹) well describes it as 'a kind of blue-print, in this case for an Apocalyptic or Messianic War which will finally bring to an end the oppressions and sufferings of Israel at the hands of one of the great Empires and place the true Israel, as represented and led by this priestly sect, in the dominant world-rôle now occupied by her enemies, the Kittim'.

A feature of the *Scroll of the War* which seems to be at variance with its military realism is the part played by angelic hosts from heaven. The expressions used here are reminiscent of one of the omens¹²) described by Tacitus: *Visae per caelum concurrere acies, rutilantia arma et subito nubium igne concludere templum*. Comparable to the first two expressions are the following allusions in the *Scroll of the War*:

On the day when the Kittim fall (there shall be) a mighty encounter ... for that is a day appointed by Him ... on which

7) Oxford, 1962.

8) *Op. cit.* 25. See too F.F. Bruce, *op. cit.* 73 and A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (Oxford, 1961), 341 ff who cites the Habakkuk Commentary, 6. 3-5 for the idea that the Kittim worshipped their military standards, as indeed the Romans did.

9) Yadin, *op. cit.* ix. H.E. Del Medico, *L'Énigme des Manuscrits de la Mer Morte* (Paris, 1957), 361 suggests that different parts of the work originate in different times; some parts are dated by him to the second century A.D.

10) Yadin, *The Scroll of the War etc.*, 116f. G.R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls*, 180-197 gives an elaborate discussion of 'Military Models' and his conclusion is that the details in the Scroll suit the Roman army 'particularly of the Imperial period, although details of the Republican organization can still be detected in it' (p. 193). His view (p. 225) is that the work was 'perhaps composed during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96).'

11) *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, 153.

12) Taken seriously by Tacitus himself. Cf. Russell T. Scott, *Religion and Philosophy in the Histories of Tacitus* (Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome, Vol. 22, Rome, 1968), 82f.

there shall engage in a great carnage the congregation of angels and the assembly of men (I, 9ff; Yadin, pp. 260f) ...with the sound of a great tumult and war cry of angels.

(I, 17; Yadin, pp. 262f)

And a host of angels are among those mustered with us.

(XII, 7; Yadin, pp. 316f. On p. 231 he cites the phrase 'congregation of sons of heaven' from the *Thanksgiving Hymns*.)

The battalions of the mighty angels are girding themselves for battle.

(XV, 14; Yadin, pp. 334f)

...The King of Glory is with us, The host of His spirits is with our steps, and our horsemen are like rain-clouds.

(XIX, 1f; Yadin, pp. 346f)

It is not to omens or portents that these statements refer, but to angelic and heavenly intervention in the actual war. The shift of emphasis, however, could easily occur in transit from a source indirectly used.

Enough has been quoted to show that some of the Scrolls are close in spirit to the kind of source adduced in the Tacitean reference. A minority of scholars, including Driver and Rabin, are admittedly inclined to date them to an era after A.D. 70; but Yadin's interpretation of the *Scroll of the War* is very convincing in its espousal of an earlier date. Although this Scroll is undoubtedly anti-Roman, it should be noted that its anti-Romanism is not overt and explicit. In particular it uses a camouflage in nomenclature which could prompt an interpreter to suggest an ambiguity in the allusions to the enemies. Since the Qumran sect were an isolated community living in the Judaean desert, it may be questioned whether its literature was accessible or influential. Matthew Black¹³) points out that its physical isolation did not mean that its influence was peripheral; he notes also that a related group, the Therapeutae of Philo, had settled near Lake Mareotis in the Egyptian Delta.

The Jewish Sibylline Oracles contain, of course, some similar elements. In the Fifth Book, lines 414ff, for instance, angelic intervention is suggested by the appearance of the Messiah as 'the man from the plains of heaven'¹⁴). The Sibylline Oracles are very varied in origin, both in place and time, and several of their Messianic prophecies are explicitly anti-Roman, so that these, at any rate, could not possibly have been interpreted in

13) *Op. cit.* 165.

14) See A. Rzach's edition (Vienna, 1891), p. 124 and that of J. Geffcken (Leipzig, 1902), p. 124; cf. M. Black, *op. cit.* 156.

favour of Vespasian or Titus. Anna Hospers-Jansen¹⁵) reminds us that Tacitus had been a *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* (*Ann.* 11, 11), which meant that he had access to the Sibyllina. Furthermore, these texts are in Greek, so that Romans of the ruling class could easily read them¹⁶), whereas the Hebrew prophecies would be accessible to a person like Vespasian only through interpreters who would doubtless have been prepared to soften the blow of any possible anti-Roman reference. In striking contrast are the express allusions to Rome in the Sibylline oracles studied by Peretti in Ch. 8 of his *La Sibilla Babilonese* (Florence, 1943). Such oracles must therefore be excluded from the possible scope of the Tacitean reference. Even the Iranian 'Oracle of Hystaspes', as summarized by Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 7. 15. 11, unequivocally announces the doom of Rome¹⁷):

Romanum nomen, quo nunc regitur orbis – horret animus dicere, sed dicam quia futurum est – tolletur e terra et imperium in Asiam revertetur ac rursus oriens dominabitur atque occidens serviet.

The second part of this statement agrees well with what Tacitus says, but neither Vespasian nor Titus could possibly be regarded as future sovereigns in view of the first part. Windisch¹⁸) assigns the 'Oracle of Hystaspes' to a Parsi-Hellenistic writer in the first century B.C. or the first century A.D. A degree of syncretism is present since Iuppiter, Zeus and Ahura Mazda are regarded as one. Windisch¹⁹) believes that it is definitely non-Jewish in origin, so that although a domination by the East as adumbrated by this oracle suits one element mentioned by Tacitus, the Judaean source of the new power (*profectique Iudaea*) is at variance with it.

Provided that they are not dated to after 70 A.D. – and the consensus of opinion does not favour such a late date – the Scrolls are clearly relevant to the allusion in Tacitus as well as to the parallels in Suetonius and Josephus. Possible interpretation in a pro-Roman sense must apply to the source involved, and

15) *Tacitus over de Joden*, 57, n. 112 and p. 186.

16) If access was possible. They were not available to anyone. See Hospers-Jansen, 57, n. 112.

17) See Peretti, *La Sibilla Babilonese*, Ch. 9 and cf. Harald Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der antiken Welt* (Berlin, 1938), 63; R. Syme, *Tacitus*, II (Oxford, 1958), 518.

18) *Die Orakel des Hystaspes* (Verhandelingen der koninklijke Akad. van wetenschappen te Amsterdam, 28, No. 3, 1929), 96.

19) *Ibid.* 52 and 98.

this condition, it must be admitted, is found in the Old Testament prophecies which the early commentators²⁰⁾ were content to note. Daniel 2. 44 is an example:

And in the days of those kings shall the god of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.

It is true that the Rabbinic interpreters explained Daniel's fourth kingdom, which was due for destruction, as the Roman Empire²¹⁾, even though the book dates from an era anterior to the spread of this Empire in the East. But there is no explicit reference, more than in the Scrolls, to Rome, and a diplomatic interpreter would stress the *ambages* of the prophecy. Tacitus and Suetonius note the antiquity of their prophecy, and this suits the Book of Daniel better than the Scrolls.

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20) E. g. W. A. Spooner (London, 1891); Karl Heraeus (Berlin, 1927, first publ. 1899). E. Norden, *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 31 (1913), 660ff suggests that Josephus had the Old Testament in mind, whereas Tacitus and Suetonius were thinking of a Sibylline Jewish prophecy conveyed through the agency of Antonius Iulianus.

21) See Martin Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (Leiden, 1961), 308.