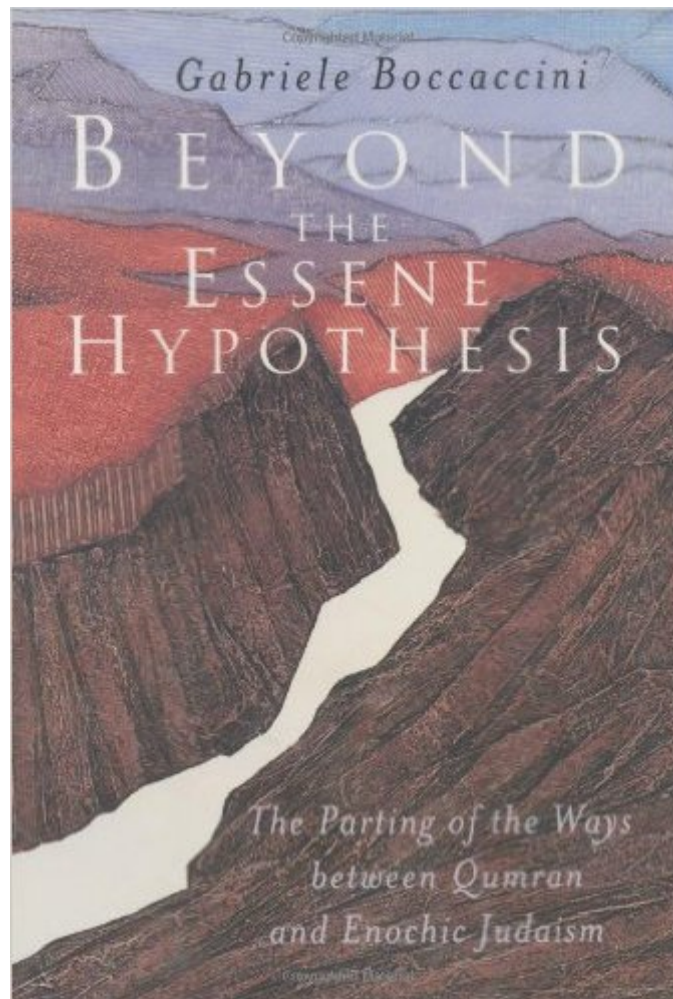


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Beyond The Essene Hypothesis: The Parting Of The Ways Between Qumran And Enochic Judaism



Synopsis

Respected scholar Gabriele Boccaccini here offers readers a new and challenging view of the ideology of the Qumran sect, the community closely related with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Boccaccini moves beyond the Essene hypothesis and posits a unique relationship between what he terms "Enochic Judaism" and the group traditionally known as the Essenes. Building his case on what the ancient records tell us about the Essenes and on a systematic analysis of the documents found at Qumran, Boccaccini argues that the literature betrays the core of an ancient and distinct variety of Second Temple Judaism. Tracing the development of this tradition, Boccaccini shows that the Essene community at Qumran was really the offspring of the Enochic party, which in turn contributed to the birth of parties led by John the Baptist and Jesus. Convincingly argued, this work will surely spark fresh debate in the discussion on the Qumran community and their famous writings.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the *best* book I ever read about the Essene and Qumran to date. Dry, no-nonsensical, factual, sound... A bit "boring" here and there, but the matter is dry in itself, and the author is always essential and up-to-the-point, so the "boring" parts are always *very* short (never more than two pages). The author begins by reviewing all we know about the Essene from ancient sources. Then he thoroughly examines the literature that most resembles these features, the "Enochic" Jewish literature. He highlights a set of shared ideas in all of these texts, as well an important evolution in them along two centuries. Next, he examines the ideology displayed by the Qumran literature, and

compares it with the "Enochic" one. Boccaccini makes his point with great elegance and very convincingly: Qumran people were not "the Essene" at large, but just a schismatic (somehow fanatical) group that had parted from the Enochic tradition from which it derived, developing unique features and ideas. It is therefore an error using the Qumran texts to understand who "the Essene" were and what did they think. Boccaccini proposes to rather identify "The Essene" with the "Enochic" tradition at large: if the Enochic party was not the "Essene" party, then it was its twin, he prudently suggests. Most important is Boccaccini's memento about the fact that Enochic/Essene literature continued after "the parting of the ways" with the Qumran community. From this more recent tradition also Christianity stems, he hints. And here is the most deceiving point in this book.

This book does an outstanding job of putting a lot of myths regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran to rest. We've been hoodwinked by so many charlatans trying to sell the Dead Sea Scroll - Christian connection. It takes a real scholar like Gabriele Boccaccini to smash those myths once and for all. The Qumran community which produced the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls and who were described by Pliny as the monastic community living on the shores of the Dead Sea were not the same Essenes which Josephus and Philo wrote about. They were both rooted in Enochian Judaism but parted ways after the Maccabean revolt which ended the rival Zadokite priesthood. Boccaccini takes us step by step through the history of Enochian Judaism which started as a rival to the Zadokite priesthood, to the Maccabean crisis which deposed the Zadokite priesthood and relegated the Enochians to a second class status. The book explains how the Enochians accepted the Zadokite Hebrew Bible with its stress on the Mosaic covenant but kept the earliest books of Enoch which make no reference to the Mosaic covenant. It then explains how the Qumranites separated from the mainstream Enochian/Essene movement as described in the Damascus Document. The Qumran community is described as an isolated, xenophobic community which did not have the tremendous impact on history which so many people give them credit for. With two minor exceptions, which are adequately explained, the Qumran sectarian literature was unknown to the earliest Christians and are neither quoted nor mentioned in the earliest Rabbinic writings or Josephus. Conversely, none of the later Enochian literature starting in the first century B.C.E.

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