

Cross, Frank Moore 1995 — The Ancient Library of Qumrân (3rd edition)

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. 204 pages. Price: US \$41.00

Reviewer: Prof J H Potgieter

I was mildly surprised when I received a copy of the third edition of Frank Moore Cross's well-known book *The Ancient Library of Qumrân*. Even after reading the preface to the third edition and acknowledging that certain additions have been made to the earlier editions, the question remains whether an update can compare with more recent publications in the ever expanding and fast changing field of Qumran studies.

But after reading the book for a second time, I came to the conclusion that it was a worthwhile exercise. It is evident that Frank Moore Cross is an expert in this field. His style is fluent, his arguments clear and his knowledge enviable, which makes the reading of the book an enjoyable experience.

The book comprises six chapters. The third edition differs from previous editions in the addition of supplementary material to chapter 1 and to the footnotes, as well as a full set of script charts. Especially valuable is the addition of the sixth chapter, *Notes on a generation of Qumrân studies*, in which he addresses such important themes as the value of the Qumrân scrolls to paleography, to the comparative orthography of Jewish writings, to the history of the Biblical text, and to the history of the sect.

I have always regarded chapter 5, *The Essenes and the Primitive Church* as one of the special traits of the book which distinguishes it from similar books on Qumrân studies. Cross demonstrates in this chapter that the communal and apocalyptic tradition in the primitive church can be traced back to a very concrete Jewish setting, namely the Essene community. In this chapter the author provides us with a frame of reference which enables us to trace certain peculiarities of the early church.

This book is still compelling reading for a broad readership of people who are interested in the documents of Qumrân and their reflection on the history of the Jewish community of the late second templeperiod as well as the primitive Christian community.