Eschatology tailoring the Identity

In the Ph.D. project, I aim to investigate how authority is established, maintained, and contextualized in three selected Qumran compositions: 1QS, 1QH, and 4QInstruction.

I work from the assumption that cognitive mechanisms and in particular memory is key to unlock the mysteries of development and renewal of biblical authority in Qumran literature.

The Qumran library contains diverse narratives, which illustrate the human needs to narrate stories. Scholars agree that the Qumran texts are dependent on, and reflect, biblical texts and traditions. They are retellings and reinterpretations of established stories - told within a familiar but continuously renewed framework. In other words, the narrators seem to have felt obliged to reinterpret earlier texts in order to maintain authority and adjust the significance of previous traditions to their own circumstances and religious status.

There have been many fruitful discussions concerning the topics of authority, canonicity, and the questions about which texts were considered authoritative and canonical in Qumran literature. Philip S. Alexander's notion of *functional canon* allows us to look for the authority of those texts which seems to have been more influential with regard to faith and practice (Alexander 2017). Authority becomes a less formal and rule-bound idea and a more dynamic process orientated phenomenon.

In order to uncover the nature of authority I will apply social anthropological and cognitive approaches in addition to classical exegetical methods.

Basically, the authority of the sacred texts is sustained in memory through transmission. What we remember has authority, compared to all that is forgotten. Our identity evolves through we remember, whether we recognize or distance ourselves from the remembered content.

The three compositions (1QS, 1QH, and 4QInstruction) are chosen because: 1) they are texts of central importance in the Qumran library judging from the number of extant copies; 2) they exhibit narrative structures and elements of various kinds; 3) they include elements of ritual practice; 4) they contain explicitly named "orators", serving as figures of authority. All three compositions have intertextual connections to biblical literature by means of retellings and reinterpretations.

The distinction between *sectarian* and *non-sectarian* Qumran texts has been regarded by a majority of Qumran scholars as being of primary importance. However, scholars have not reached any consensus concerning the exact criteria for such a distinction. Generally, the classification of texts as sectarian is based on the occurrence of specific linguistic expressions, and, more vaguely, on the occurrence of a specific sectarian world-view including a developed eschatology. I seek to offer a novel perspective, which goes beyond these two categories.

My suggestion is that 1QH, 1QS and 4QInstruction represent a comparable eschatological worldview. I propose that an overall reading of these compositions gives the impression that the eschatological worldview could be the driving force behind their shared message. Despite the three substantially different approaches, it seems relevant to discuss the idea that these compositions are directed towards the same purpose and therefore mediate the same ideology. While using different terminologies and approaches, all three compositions divide the cosmos in two parts. The cosmos is painted in black and white, in right and wrong. In this context, the purpose of these compositions is providing the correct knowledge of good versus evil, so the addressee is ensured the right place in the righteous community and eventually an eternal salvation while evading eternal damnation.

The theoretical perspectives of this project include cognitive and social anthropological approaches. I aim to utilize the theory of Modes of Religiosity (Whitehouse 2002), Narrative Analytical Theory (Polkinghorne 1988), and Cognitive Literary Science (Burke & Troscianko 2017). These different approaches generally rest on models describing functions of human cognition. The advantage of the theory of Modes is its approach on how memory and emotions affect one another at a fundamental level. Additionally, the Cognitive Literary Science is an umbrella term that covers different analytical tools which are helpful in investigating cognitive and memory mechanisms closer. Finally, the Narrative analytical theory could be valuable in understanding how we need to narrate and retell stories to remember - and to pass on what we think is worthwhile remembering. These particular theories are selected with the hope of understanding why and how we establish and maintain authority through cognitive mechanisms.