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# Religious Experience and Repentance

From time immemorial, deepening one's relationship with God has always been a central aspect of human religious experience. It forms and shapes our identity and our outlook or worldview—how we see our place before God and in our relation with others. We will ultimately be exploring how the Qumran community's understanding of repentance influenced their religious experience, how it shaped and formed their religious identity and their worldview. With this overriding purpose in mind, it will be helpful to first of all understand religious experience in very general terms.

## Religious Experience in General

William James, in his famous study from the early part of the nineteenth century, understood religious experience as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves and stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[1] While the experiential dimension of James's understanding stands out, his emphasis on the private and subjective

nature of the experience is evident. However, there are those who argue that that for a religious experience to be genuine, it should be rooted in historical facts lest it become "a series of subjective phenomena in which the individual may find contentment in the enjoyment of his own feelings but which can have not secure basis in fact."[2]

For the purposes of this study, we will harmonize these two perspectives and see them as being complementary, thereby taking religion at Qumran as one that is rooted in community and history. Therefore, a fundamental premise of the following chapters is to keep this historical rooting in perspective at all times. In our study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whatever we may discover about repentance and its impact on the religious experience of the members of the community, this information is not merely a literary construct, or the private and subjective experience of one individual or community. Rather, as I shall argue, the community's religious experience was largely controlled and mediated by the community. Furthermore, this community did not exist in a vacuum, but was itself rooted and grounded in verifiable history.[3] To this historical aspect of religious experience, which is our basis for understanding repentance at Qumran, we may add several other factors that enhance our understanding. Ninian Smart's "dimensions of religion" are helpful. It should be pointed out, however, that all of Smart's dimensions of religion do not necessarily apply to the religious experience of the Qumran community; even if they appear to apply, it may not necessarily be in the way that Smart describes them. I only offer them

1. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), 31.
2. H. Dermot McDonald, "What Is Meant by Religious Experience?," *Vox Evangelica 2* (1963): 58–70 (63).
3. This is a premise to which we will return at a later stage in this chapter.

as a general point of reference for understanding religious experience at Qumran.

Smart states that religion tends to express itself through rituals and that even the simplest form of religious service involves *ritual* "in the sense of some form of outer behaviour coordinated to an inner intention to make contact with, or participate in, the invisible world."[4] He talks about the importance of *mythological*, historical events of religious significance in a tradition. This is reiterated in the lives of the worshiping community through the reenactment of a highly important event that once occurred in a particular community. With regard to the Qumran community, we see this aspect in the annual covenant-renewal ceremony that was fundamental to membership in the community, both for new members and for existing ones.[5]

Smart states that *doctrines* are an attempt to give system, clarity, and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith and ritual.[6] While the term is certainly anachronistic to the scrolls, there is evidence of the existence of such "doctrines" at Qumran. The systematization of the beliefs of the Qumran community are described in texts such as the *Rule of the Community* (1QS).

Many religions incorporate a code of *ethics*, which concerns the behavior of the individual, and to some extent, the code of ethics of the dominant religion controls the community.[7] Again the *Rules* of Qumran could reflect this dimension.

4. N. Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (London: Collins, 1969), 16. He also grounds these rituals in history when he notes that the "meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed" (17).
5. Ibid., 18.
6. Ibid., 19.
7. Ibid.

As I stated above, any aspect of religious experience that we might discover about the Qumran community, repentance included, did not occur in a vacuum or as a literary construct. There was a *social* dimension to it. It occurred within the context of an existing community. Smart points out that "religions are not just a system of belief: they are also organizations . . . [and] have a communal and social significance."[8] The importance of this social dimension of religion is that it indicates the way in which people's lives are shaped by these claims and the way in which religious organizations operate.[9]

That humans can experience the divine is fundamental to any religious experience. Smart identifies as a central dimension of religion the place of *experience*. The basis of any "quest for, contact with or participation in the world is that personal religion involves the hope of, realization of, experience of that world."[10] Whether personal (as Smart notes) or communal (as in the case of the Qumran community—or any religious group for that matter), this experiential dimension is central to the validity of the religious encounter.

Bearing the above general dimensions of religion in mind, we can sharpen our focus and briefly consider the religious scenario of first-century Judaism with a specific emphasis on repentance. Our understanding of how repentance functioned in the religious experience of the Qumran community must be rooted within the religious climate of its time.

8. Ibid. He adds that "the religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes" (20).
9. Ibid., 20.
10. Ibid., 21.

## Religion and Religious experience in First-Century Judaism

Judaism of the first century attempted to bring the entirety of life under the heading "Divine Law."[11] God cared for alls aspects of life, so no part of it was outside "religion."[12] As the first-century Jewish historian Josephus puts it in *Against Apion* 2.170–172: "Religion governs all our actions and occupations and speech; not of these things did our lawgiver leave unexamined or indeterminate. . . . He left nothing, however insignificant, to the discretion and caprice of the individual." First-century Jews sought to discern and follow God's will in very aspect of life. The Jewish people understood that along with their election God was committed to them and would save and protect those who were loyal to him. This conviction gave meaning to their religious identity even in the face of great opposition and the courage and conviction to stand firm in their faith. Further, the fact that God created the world and controlled history was another key factor in Jewish theology. Belief in this all-powerful, Creator God shaped and governed their faith-response and daily life.[13] In other words, it is needless to talk of "religious experience" per se in first-century Judaism because *all experience was religious.*

How, then, does repentance fit and function in such a worldview? Repentance too permeated all spheres of a life that was already deemed to be religious; this probably explains why there appears to be no undue emphasis as such on repentance: T. Hägerland comments: "The fact that few first-century pieces of Jewish literature deal with repentance as their primary topic should not be taken as evidence that the concept was unimportant."[14] In attempting to understand it in

11. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 5.
12. Ibid., 50.
13. While many scholarly works address this topic in detail, of particular note is E. P. Sanders's *Judaism*, which is an account of Judaism during the turn of the first century; the reader is referred to this comprehensive monograph for further information.

the wider context of repentance in first-century Judaism, Hägerland speaks of the "set of symbolic actions" that first-century Jews normally performed as an integral part of repenting. "Confession and prayer for forgiveness" were at the center of this ritual repentance.[15] These symbolic penitential actions or rites were more or less taken for granted.[16] This underlying penitential emphasis permeating Jewish religious experience is aptly captured by M. Philonenko, who notes:

> La notion [de la repentance] est capitale et son histoire est ancienne. Déjà les prophètes avaient exigé sans relâche que le peuple revienne à Dieu, que le méchant se détourne de l'iniquité et que tous renoncent aux idoles. Toutefois, le mot même de repentance (תשובה/μετάνοια) n'apparaît que tardivement. On le relève dans les apocryphes, les pseudépigraphes, les manuscrits de Qoumrân, chez Philon et Josèphe, dans la literature rabbinique enfin. La repentance devient un element fondamental de la piété.[17]

Regarding this all-pervasive attitude to repentance, Hägerland observes that it was not a sectarian concern that had to be intensely promoted in rivalry with a competing position: "This explains why almost none of our sources treat repentance as their principal concern, while nearly all of them mention the concept with approval."[18] However, he does acknowledge that "this is naturally not to say that all first-century Jews would have shared a common opinion on what it meant to repent."[19] This then becomes the starting

14. He says, "The theme of repentance, the return to a way of life in accordance with God's covenant with Israel, is nearly ubiquitous in first century Judaism." T. Hägerland, "Jesus and the Rites of Repentance," *NTS* 52 (2006) 166–87 (168).
15. Ibid., 174.
16. Ibid., 184. Hägerland asserts that the historical Jesus took a controversial view of repentance: while sharing the common belief that moral improvement was necessary for sinners, Jesus did not require the traditional rites of repentance to be carried out (ibid., 187). If the toll collectors and sinners had really repented through fasting before joining Jesus in table companionship, they would no longer have been sinners.
17. M. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 53–54.
18. Hägerland, "Jesus and the Rites of Repentance," 169.
19. Ibid.

point of our own investigation, as the above view on repentance gives us the opportunity to test the premise that a distinctive understanding of repentance did indeed exist at Qumran.

## Repentance at Qumran: The Journey So Far

Detailed scholarly discussions on repentance at Qumran has been sparse. Up to the late 1980s, any paucity in the attention given to repentance could be explained by the limited number of scrolls published. However, from the early 1990s, with the publication of all remaining scrolls, we have witnessed an abundance of studies on the various themes and concepts in the scrolls. Nevertheless, the concept of repentance has largely been taken for granted and so has never warranted an examination for its own sake. Since a secondary task of this book is to draw attention to and address this lack of attention, it is worthy highlighting this lacuna. Obviously due to limitations of space, I cannot possibly survey all the relevant material to establish my case.[20] Therefore, for the sake of convenience, I will confine myself to representative works that can be divided into two broad categories:

1. Studies produced before the entire collection of the scrolls became available
2. Studies produced after the complete collection became available

Most introductory works on the scrolls normally focus on the faith of the Qumran community in some way or other, and when scholars talk about repentance in Qumran, they speak in relation to a particular text from the *Community Rule* (1QS 3:1-9):

1. He shall not be justified while he maintains the stubbornness of

20. A detailed survey of repentance in recent scholarship is not necessary for our study since a brief survey of key works is sufficient to demonstrates this point.

his heart since he regards as darkness paths of light. In the spring of the perfect

2. he shall not be counted. He will not become clean by acts of atonement, nor shall he be purified by the cleansing waters, nor shall he be made holy by seas
3. or rivers, nor shall he be purified by all the waters of ablution. Defiled, defiled, shall be all the days he spurns the decrees
4. of God so that he cannot be instructed within the community of his counsel. For it is by the spirit of the true counsel of God that are atoned the paths of man, all
5. his iniquities, so that he can look at the light of life. And it is by the spirit of holiness of the community, in its truth, that he is cleansed of all
6. his iniquities. And by the spirit of uprightness and of humility his sin is atoned. And by the compliance of his soul with all the laws of God
7. his flesh is cleansed by being sprinkled with cleansing water and being made holy with the waters of repentance.

This text emphasizes the necessity of the correct inward attitude that is to accompany ritual immersion. This "correct inward attitude" can undeniably be equated with repentance. Hence, scholars point out that in order to be effective, these external rituals had to be accompanied by repentance. Thus, from the time of the discovery of the scrolls, if the function of repentance has been mentioned by scholars, it has almost always been in relation to 1QS 3:1-9. The focus of attention on this one text should not be a surprise, considering such an attitude was taken for granted in first-century Judaism. In fact, purification was a standard metaphor in Judaism for the elimination of evil or unworthy thoughts and desires, and we may assume that many pilgrims took the opportunity to purify their hearts as well as

their bodies.[21] To confine repentance at Qumran to this one key text, however, reduces the importance of the concept.

## Studies Produced before the Entire Collection of the Scrolls Became Available

In the early days of scrolls scholarship, the notable introductory works were those of M. Burrows (1956, 1958), F. M. Cross (1958), and A. Dupont-Sommer (1961). Burrows surveyed the "general beliefs"[22] of the community and concluded that the community's emphasis on "returning to the Law of Moses" did not produce a merely mechanical, external observation of the Law but rather emphasized "the necessity of sincere, wholehearted devotion."[23] Similarly, Cross mentions repentance only in terms of 1QS 3:3-9 (above) denying the "*ex opere operato* nature of the water rites" without inward repentance. This brief mention of repentance is relegated to a footnote.[24] Interestingly, Dupont-Sommer too makes only a passing reference to repentance in a footnote. He speaks of the need for the "correct interior disposition" that accompanies purificatory rites.[25] That both Cross and Dupont-Sommer refer to repentance only in a footnote indicates the low priority devoted to understanding "repentance" in the early days of scrolls scholarship. The scenario did not change much even with the appearance of the first monograph devoted to the

21. Sanders, *Judaism*, 252. Philo speaks of this connection when he says: "outer purification brought to mind inner purification" (*Spec. Laws* 1.263–266).
22. M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Secker & Worburg, 1956).
23. Ibid., 251. However, in his next book in the section titled "Beliefs of the Sect," he comments on the idea of God as the one who pardons those who repent from sin: the "grace of repentance is given only to the elect." M. Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls: New Scrolls and New Interpretations* (New York: Vikings, 1958), 295. He understands repentance as an integral part of salvation. While this is accurate, Burrows does not discuss it further. He also states that ritual cleansing involves an "inner, moral purification." As in his first book, he does not dwell further on the function of repentance.
24. F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (London: Duckworth, 1958), 70n96.
25. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, 76n3.

"theology" of the scrolls, by H. Ringgren. One would expect to find here more than in other works a detailed discussion of repentance. Ringgren mentions the relation between repentance and moral purity (p. 125), but apart from these cursory references, repentance does not feature in his "theology" of Qumran.[26]

A monograph that was greatly influential in the late 1970s was E. P. Sanders' monumental work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, which provided a detailed analysis of the various "patterns of religion" in Palestinian Judaism.[27] In his section on the Dead Sea Scrolls, he points out that repentance was required to join the covenant in the first place and notes that this basic and initial repentance is "of vital importance."[28] Moreover, one's continuing life in the community is to be characterized by repentance.[29] Sanders thus highlights the need to stay penitent and manifest an ongoing life of repentance. However, his observations are limited by his overall purpose of establishing covenantal nomism. Repentance is therefore only one aspect of his overall scheme and is not singled out as a key theological concept.

We should also note the study of H.-J. Fabry.[30] His work was not connected with repentance per se but focused on the use of the verb שוב at Qumran.[31] Directly related to repentance are his observations

26. H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963). Almost thirty-five years after Ringgren's study of theology in the scrolls, A. Deasley attempted to compile a "Qumran theology" (A. Deasley, *The Shape of Qumran Theology* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000]). Because of the book's popular style, it has not enjoyed great attention in scholarly circles. In his reconstruction of Qumran theology, he observes that the importance of repentance is conveyed through the frequent use of the verb שוב (ibid., 91). Although Deasley attempts to provide a holistic overview of Qumran thought, very little attention is given to "repentance."
27. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977).
28. Ibid., 270. He also points out that in rabbinic literature one does not *join* the covenant by repenting of transgression, since one is *born* in it (284).
29. Ibid., 305.
30. H.-J. Fabry, "Die Wurzel שוב in der Qumranliteratur," in *Qumran. Sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu*, ed. M. Delcor (Paris: Gembloux, 1978), 285–93. For an amplified treatment, see H.-J. Fabry, *Die Wurzel שוב in der Qumran-Literatur. Zur Semantik eines Grundbegriffes* (Köln: Hanstein, 1975).

of *Abkehr von der Sünde* ("turning from sin") and *Umkehr zu Gott* ("[re]turn to God"). Fabry's work is primarily a word study, and in highlighting "returning" imagery associated with the word שוב, he mentions in passing the idea of conversion and repentance.[32] Fabry sees repentance as merely another meaning conveyed through שוב and attributes no further importance to the concept. His study is further limited by the fact that in 1975 he had only a small number of scrolls available to him.[33]

### Studies Produced after the Complete Collection Became Available

B. Nitzan's article "Repentance in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in the late 1990s is significant since it represented the first and only study at the time entirely focusing on repentance in the scrolls.[34] She shows that repentance in Qumran literature goes beyond biblical tradition since the members of the community saw their repentance as the realization of the eschatological repentance demanded by the prophets. There is thus an emphasis on the "correct repentance" required to validate the covenant.[35] At Qumran, repentance was a "way of life" demanding a complete return to the law of Moses in its unique sectarian interpretation.[36] Sincere repentance was vitally important if one was to remain faithful to the oath taken on entrance.

31. Fabry, "Die Wurzel 286 ", שוב.
32. Ibid., 287–88.
33. However, even if he did have more scrolls available to him, it would not have made any impact on the study of repentance apart from recording more texts that employ שוב to refer to repentance.
34. B. Nitzan, "Repentance in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years*, ed. P. Flint and J. VanderKam (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2:145–70.
35. Ibid., 2:146.
36. Ibid., 2:146. E. Condra's study the on the soteriology of the scrolls also reflects this. He notes that the sectarian idea of repentance was not just an initial repentance that placed one graciously into the covenant but also implied an ongoing covenant faithfulness. E. Condra, *Salvation for the Righteous Revealed* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 141n29. Furthermore, he says that "repentance, and especially, Torah obedience, is what removes God's wrath and provides the entrance into the lot of the righteous saved as well as maintaining one's position therein" (275).

Nitzan speaks of a "ceremony of repentance"[37] where confession becomes "a formal expression of repentance" emphasizing the "moral aspect of repentance."[38] She notes that repentance established the congregation of penitents as the seed of eschatological Israel. Such an understanding of repentance is reflected in several psalms and prayers from Qumran.[39] She underscores the importance of repentance at Qumran, acknowledging that her study needs to be undertaken more intensively.[40]

T. Hägerland's article on repentance is concerned with Jesus' understanding of repentance,[41] but it is noted here because of its overall relevance to our own direction of travel. He attempts to understand repentance in its wider first-century Jewish context. In this regard, Hägerland speaks of the "set of symbolic actions" first-century Jews would normally perform as an integral part of repenting. "Confession and prayer for forgiveness" were at the center of this ritual repentance.[42] Hägerland asserts that the historical Jesus took a controversial view of repentance: while sharing the common belief that moral improvement was necessary for sinners, Jesus did not require the traditional rites of repentance to be carried out.[43]

37. Nitzan, "Repentance in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 156.
38. Unlike the priestly ritual of repentance, at Qumran there was no guilt offering. However, 1QS 9:5 describes a perfect life as a "pleasing freewill offering."
39. "The custom of expressing repentance by a recitation of confession had become a prominent factor in Second Temple Jewish liturgy with this phenomenon evident especially in prayers and psalms from the late biblical and Second Temple periods making the motif of repentance characteristic of an entire genre itself." Nitzan, "Repentance in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 160–61.
40. Ibid., 168.
41. Hägerland, "Jesus and the Rites of Repentance," 166–87. Condra's study on the soteriology of the scrolls (*Salvation for the Righteous Revealed*) is a similar sort of work since his concern was with the cultural milieu of Jesus. He notes that the sectarian idea of repentance was not just an initial repentance that placed one graciously into the covenant but implied an ongoing covenant faithfulness (141n29). For Condra, the repentance of all those outside the community (the gentiles included) is the corollary of the community's righteousness (126). Repentance was the necessary requirement to join the community for the continuing observance of the sectarian law. This is "the very nature of repentance" (129).
42. Hägerland, "Jesus and the Rites of Repentance," 174.
43. Ibid., 187.

Thus the accusation against Jesus for his association with sinners resulted from the fact that he did not require any ritual repentance from them.[44] Hägerland comments: "The fact that few first-century pieces of Jewish literature deal with repentance as their primary topic should not be taken as evidence that the concept was unimportant."[45] He observes that repentance was not a sectarian concern that had to be intensely promoted in rivalry with competing positions: "This explains why almost none of our sources treat repentance as their principal concern, while nearly all of them mention the concept with approval."[46]

Regarding repentance at Qumran, Hägerland notes that those outside the community are apostates; a formulaic penitential prayer is necessary for anyone who wants to repent and reenter the covenant.[47] Also, anyone who has renounced the covenant must repent, and repentance entails a public confession of sin.[48] Hägerland's article is helpful in that it paints in broad strokes something of the contextual background of first-century repentance in which to locate my own research.

In an article titled "Repentance and the Qumran Covenant Ceremony,"[49] R. Arnold asserts:

> The concept of repentance, which is centered on the first stage of the initiation of prospective members, is employed to mark clearly the boundary between those who are inside (the repentant) and those who are outside (the wicked). Repentance had a more limited role within

44. Ibid., 184. If the toll collectors and sinners had really repented through fasting before joining Jesus in table companionship, they would no longer have been sinners.
45. He says, "the theme of repentance, the return to a way of life in accordance with God's covenant with Israel, is nearly ubiquitous in first century Judaism," ibid., 168.
46. "This is naturally not to say that all first-century Jews would have shared a common opinion on what it meant to repent." Ibid., 169.
47. Ibid., 172.
48. Ibid.
49. R. Arnold "Repentance and the Qumran Covenant Ceremony," in *Seeking the Favour of God*, vol. 2, *The Development of Penitential Prayer in the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. Boda, D. Falk, and R. Werline, SBLEJL 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 159–75

> the ongoing life of the community due in part to the community's deterministic world view and expectation of perfection from its members.[50]

While he sees repentance as related to the identity of the community (expressed by the epithets שבי ישראל and שבי פשע), he believes its importance is confined only to those about to become members, since repentance was required for membership. However, once within the community, because of the emphasis on maintaining a life of perfection, "the need for repentance was also essentially obviated."[51] Arnold's description of the limited role of repentance at Qumran arises from his reading of the highly deterministic emphasis of the scrolls. This is a factor that needs to be borne in mind since the determinism of the scrolls and the voluntary aspect that repentance implies appear to be incompatible with each other. A recent article by David Lambert highlights this difficulty.[52]

Lambert talks about the anachronistic challenge when studying religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls. He says that "both rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity made great strides in devising a vocabulary of religious experience that ultimately became the standard for religious discourse in the west."[53] In applying some of these terms to ancient literature, Lambert says: "we run the risk of in appropriately absorbing terminological baggage of later religious systems."[54]

Lambert challenges that the Qumran community was in fact a penitential movement and that Israel's repentance was one of its central tasks. This is because "most religious movements favour

50. Ibid., 162. He also says that "in such a deterministic view [as one find's at Qumran], petition [hence repentance] of any kind is of no effect" (171).
51. Ibid., 175.
52. D. Lambert, "Was the Qumran Community a Penitential Movement?," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. T. Lim and J. J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 501–13.
53. Ibid., 502.
54. Ibid.

rejecting one's former way of life, in some fashion, and adopting a new one." As a consequence, the contemporary task is to identify "which *theory* of human change a given movement adopts to account for and instill such transformation."[55]

His underlying concern is that "it is anachronistic to speak of repentance as a concept operative at Qumran." He speaks instead about a notion of "Divine re-creation."[56] For Lambert, this conveys the idea that could be described as repentance but avoids superimposing modern terms (with its related conceptual baggage) on to an ancient concept. For example, regarding ritual immersion, he says the transformation enacted through the initiate's immersion draws its strength not from individual human consciousness but from the 'holy spirit of the community' (1QS 3:7), the power God has invested in the sect. Reconstituted, the initiate is now fit to join in the community."[57] He describes the initiate as being "newly remade."[58] When seen as such, Lambert believes that the "logic of this ritual and its effects fit better with the notion of re-creation with its focus on external agency than with the penitential framework that presently dominates."[59]

For him, a distinction should be drawn between biblical *shuv*, connoting a behavioral change (a turn away from sin) and rabbinic *teshuva*, connoting an internal change (regret over sin). He points out that "the distinction may seem subtle at first but it bears great functional weight, for *teshuva* derives from inside the individual and is, by necessity, an act of free will, whereas *shuv* need not be either." Thus Lambert compares *teshuva* to the Greek *metanoia* and its Latin equivalent *paenitentia*. Repentance understood in such a way is closer

55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 505.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.

to Hellenistic philosophical thought than Judaism or Christianity.[60] At Qumran, שוב terminology serves as a technical term for the adoption of sectarian practice, not for the painful internal struggle over one's sins that comes to be known respectively in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin as *teshuva*, *metanoia*, and *paenitentia*.[61]

The thrust of Lambert's article challenges the existence of repentance at Qumran in the way the concept is normally understood; we must conclude that the answer to the question he uses as the title of his article, "Was the Qumran Community a Penitential Movement?," for him was no—at least not in the traditional understanding of the concept of penitence. However, he offers an important caution that is relevant to our own task of identifying the place of repentance in the religious experience of the community. He says: "The religious experience of the sect must be reconstructed from the ground up, using its own language and symbols, rather than on the basis of standard Western vocabularies for depicting spirituality."[62] This is what I intend to do in the rest of this book, as I argue, using repentance-specific language, terms, and concepts, that the Qumran community was indeed a penitential community.

From this brief survey, we can observe an increase in studies related to specific theological themes and concepts after 1990, coinciding with the publication of all remaining scrolls. That said, most works present repentance as a "given" and thus take it for granted, while other works highlight repentance insofar as it fits into their overall argument. This scenario in Qumran scholarship justifies the present investigation; more work needs to be done in further exploring the concept of repentance at Qumran.

60. Ibid., 503.
61. Ibid., 507.
62. Ibid., 510.

Before we actually embark on our journey of exploration of the scrolls themselves, another matter needs to be dealt with to facilitate a more cohesive reading of the scrolls, namely the motivations for repentance. Why is repentance so important in the first place? What motivates an individual or a community to repent? Probing these questions is the task of the next chapter.