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Author(s): S. Kent Brown

Source: *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1983), pp. 49–66.

Published by: BYU Studies

Abstract: No abstract available.



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The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Mormon Perspective

S. Kent Brown

Extraordinary interest has been generated in all quarters by the Dead Sea Scrolls. This enthusiasm has most certainly touched Latter-day Saints. Since the first remarkable materials were discovered shortly before or during 1947, these texts have received considerable publicity and have been widely studied,¹ although rather lightly by LDS writers.

Many LDS readers are aware of the general outlines of the probable account of their uncovering: how a Bedouin lad, while climbing in the rugged hills that ring the northwest sector of the Dead Sea, threw a rock into a small opening about three feet in diameter—one of the hundreds of caves and depressions in that area—and heard the crash of breaking pottery. His curiosity led him to investigate. What he discovered inside were amphora jars containing the first of the

S. Kent Brown is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

¹Dependable English translations of the scrolls can be found in two paperback editions—Theodor H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, 3d ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Anchor Books, 1976); hereafter cited as Gaster, *Scriptures*; and Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Baltimore: Penguin Press, Pelican Books, 1962); hereafter cited as Vermes, *Scrolls*. The best all-around introduction to the scrolls, in addition to a superbly reliable translation of the texts, is to be found in two studies by Millar Burrows—*The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1955); and *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1958)(now in paperback). Both volumes are printed in one paperback volume entitled *Burrows on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978).

Among a host of other reliable studies are a few which are standards in the field—Frank M. Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies*, rev. ed. (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Anchor Books, 1961); Jean Daniélou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1958); William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972)(paperback); Harold Henry Rowley, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1957); Krister Stendahl, ed., *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957); Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) (paperback); Yigael Yadin, *The Message of the Scrolls* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957).

It might be interesting to note that there have remained enough unknown details that John Trever, the first American scholar to see the scrolls, was still trying to confirm particulars until recently. His earlier book, *The Untold Story of Qumran* (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1965), was updated with newly gleaned information in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Personal Account*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).



Photographs Courtesy of Author

My daughters, Karilynne and Julianne stand at the rear of Cave 1, the photograph being taken from the entrance. It is not more than a few meters deep.

known scrolls.² Although archaeologists subsequently made a systematic investigation of all the caves in the vicinity, they made only six original discoveries of scrolls; it was the Bedouins who found the caves with the most extensive and important caches of texts. More than two hundred caves were examined; only eleven yielded scrolls. Consequently, it is possible that other scrolls may exist which have not yet come to public attention. This was certainly the case with the so-called Temple Scroll.³

For students and scholars of the scriptures, the discovery of the scrolls offered new horizons. In the first place, biblical texts that were at least one thousand years older than the oldest extant Hebrew text could be studied. (The Ben Asher texts, copied from a manuscript dated to A.D. 895, were among the earliest known to that date.⁴) In addition, students of Judaism unexpectedly found themselves looking through a clear window into the two-hundred-year period before A.D. 70, the date the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. Further, the world of the New Testament could be illuminated by documents that were written or copied in the age of Jesus and John the Baptist.

In the Mormon community, as I mentioned before, there has yet to appear a full-scale scholarly work on these texts. To be sure, we are deeply indebted to Dr. Hugh Nibley for his introductory studies in

²The story is repeated, for instance, in Burrows, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 3–28; *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 3–36; LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 28–43; Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, *Treasure of Qumran: My Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), pp. 141–68; Trever, *Untold Story of Qumran*, pp. 101–13; and *Dead Sea Scrolls: A Personal Account*, pp. 96–110; Yadin, *Message of the Scrolls*, pp. 15–30. Firsthand accounts appear in Trever, Yadin, and Mar Athanasius.

³Yadin has only hinted at this in his preliminary report, which appeared in English: “The Temple Scroll,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (December 1967): 135–39 (reprinted in David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield, eds., *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology* [Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1969], pp. 139–48, and in paperback [Doubleday and Co., Anchor Books, 1971], pp. 156–66). I attended a seminar meeting on the scrolls taught by Dr. Yadin on 29 October 1969 in which he described the cloak-and-dagger manner by which he personally learned of the existence of the Temple Scroll. Yadin has published a Hebrew edition of this scroll, with extensive commentary, but the English edition is still awaited. Further reading on the Temple Scroll can be found in the following five essays—Jacob Milgrom, “The Temple Scroll,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 41 (September 1978): 105–20; “‘Sabbath’ and ‘Temple City’ in the Temple Scroll,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 232, Fall 1978, pp. 25–27; “Studies in the Temple Scroll,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (December 1978), pp. 501–23; Baruch A. Levine, “The Temple Scroll: Aspects of Its Historical Provenance and Literary Character,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 232, Fall 1978, pp. 5–23; B. E. Thiering, “*Mebaqqer* and *Episkopos* in the Light of the Temple Scroll,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 59–74.

⁴Paul Kahle, in *The Cairo Geniza, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), claimed that the Cairo ben Asher Codex of the Prophets itself dated to A.D. 895. But see J. L. Teicher’s arguments that the Cairo Codex was copied from Moses ben Asher’s copy, in “The Ben Asher Bible Manuscripts,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 2 (1950–51): 17–25. Many of the biblical fragments found in the Cairo Geniza no doubt come to us from the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein has recently pointed out that the oldest complete copy of the Hebrew Bible produced by the Massorettes is the (now damaged) Aleppo Codex which was copied by Aaron (ben Moshe) ben Asher ca. A.D. 900. (See “The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Massoretic Bible Text,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 [Summer 1979]: 145–63.)

this area.⁵ Indeed, such contributions have gone far in whetting our appetite for more. Unfortunately, however, what most LDS readers have been subjected to is a series of audio materials and printed works whose quality is at the very best uneven and whose authors possess few means or skills to study the ancient texts themselves.⁶ Consequently, there exists a clear need for a more sober and balanced study to provide a counterpoint to claims made for the scrolls, claims which often tend to be sensational.

We must keep one difficulty in focus during our discussion. The composers of the various Dead Sea texts may not have been people who lived at Qumran. While some of the documents may have been composed by members of the community for their group, it is by no means certain which of the texts originated there. Probably many are only copies of other texts. As Theodor Gaster notes, almost with overemphasis, "We do not yet know for certain who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, when and where."⁷

We need to turn now to features of the scrolls which are particularly striking to Latter-day Saints. As will be seen, most of these characteristics disclose links with the New Testament. Understandably, our interest is heightened by parallels with Mormon scripture. In this connection, incidentally, Latter-day Saint scriptures, since the time of Joseph Smith, have taught us to expect additional discoveries of ancient texts (see 1 Ne. 14:24–26 and Doctrine and Covenants 93:7–17). While Nephi's record mentions other documents and books that are to appear, the Doctrine and Covenants passage offers a quotation from a missing record of John. Along with other selections, these passages have helped to condition Latter-day Saints not to be surprised at the discovery of texts with biblical associations.

A major theme of the scrolls concerns the congregation, or the "church," awaiting the Messiah. It is said that the exiled congregation must wait in the desert where persecution has driven its

⁵See, among others, Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1975), appendix I (exposition of the Manual of Discipline), pp. 255–62; "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Mormon," *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), pp. 135–80; *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), discussions throughout. Lewis M. Rogers also wrote a balanced, general article several years ago which, I believe, has largely been ignored by LDS readers: "The Dead Sea Scrolls—Qumran Calmly Revisited," *Brigham Young University Studies* 2 (Spring–Summer 1960): 109–28.

⁶In addition to the growing number of tapes directed to an LDS audience, one thinks of written works such as O. Preston Robinson, *Christ's Eternal Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), pp. 91–106, 112–29; and Vernon W. Mattson, Jr., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Important Discoveries*, 2d enl. ed. (Salt Lake City: Buried Record Products, 1979), pp. 10–36 and appendix A. While such studies possess strengths, they also exhibit serious misunderstandings because of their dependence on the vast but uneven secondary literature on the scrolls.

⁷Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 1.



Karilyne and Julianne Brown, stand before the openings of Cave 1. The discoverer entered by the rounded aperture above their heads. The depression seen at the far right of the photo is the one visible in photograph 4, p. 63.

members.⁸ A similar notion, of course, appears in Revelation 12:1–6, where a celestial woman (the true church) gives birth to a male child, who is immediately caught up to heaven in order to be preserved; she then flees to the desert for protection during a period of suffocating apostasy. Latter-day Saints immediately think of the situation of the Book of Mormon prophet Alma, about one hundred and fifty years prior to the coming of the Messiah. Because of persecution, Alma was obliged to establish a community at the Waters of Mormon for spiritual exiles who withdrew from their hostile and evil society in order to prepare themselves for fuller spiritual blessings (Mosiah 17:2–4; 18:1–35).

The enigmatic Teacher of Righteousness of the Damascus Document, whose identity remains a matter of speculation,⁹ came in the role of a prophet–founder.¹⁰ He appeared as a forerunner of the expected messianic age¹¹ and was both persecuted by representatives of the current official religion and finally driven to exile.¹² It is further claimed that the Teacher of Righteousness was inspired by revelation to do what he did.¹³ Such claims of receiving divine inspiration, fulfilling a prophetic call, and functioning as a forerunner find immediate similarities, naturally, with John the Baptist.

A third key motif in the scrolls is the idea that the Mosaic law was basically an interim code designed to keep God’s people in the strait and narrow path during the age of wickedness. The Messiah was to

⁸Consult the Commentary on Habakkuk, XI.4–8 (on Hab. 2:15) and the Damascus (Zadokite) Text, I.18–21 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 324, 67; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 241–42, 98). The existence of a code for the camps which were to be established in the desert, owing to persecution during the “age of wickedness,” hints at the difficult times which the Dead Sea people had experienced and were expecting to continue (see the Damascus Text, XII.22–XIV.22 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 86–89; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 114–17]).

⁹See Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 4, 6, 28–31, where Gaster argues that the Teacher of Righteousness was not an actual historical person; for a contrary view, consult Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 57–68, in which he suggests that the Teacher of Righteousness was a priest living in the Maccabean Age who began his ministry about 155 B.C.

¹⁰Damascus Text, I.9–13; see also VI.10–11 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 67, 73; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 97, 103). It is interesting to note that the teachers in the group who succeeded the Teacher of Righteousness were described in the same scriptural language which was later applied to John the Baptist (i.e., that of Isa. 40:3): Manual of Discipline, VIII.14, and IX.19 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 61, 65; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 85–86, 88). In fact, there was a prophet expected in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:18 who would precede the coming Messiah(s): Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 6, and Manual of Discipline, IX.11; also the Damascus Text, VI.10–11 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 63, 73; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 87, 103).

¹¹Damascus Text, XIX.33–XX.1 (or, in another numbering system, B I.33–B II.1; the numbering problem arises because of the existence of two variant versions of the text and because the leaves of the manuscripts in the original edition were published out of their correct order [in Solomon Schechter, *Fragments of a Zadokite Work*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1910)]. One version only was preserved in fragmentary form at the Dead Sea. The two more complete texts were found by Schechter in the Geniza of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Old Cairo in 1896; they date from the tenth and twelfth centuries A.D.) and XII.21–XIII.1 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 77, 86; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 106, 114–15).

¹²Comm. on Habakkuk, VIII.8–13; IX.9–10, and X.9–13 (on Hab. 2:5–6, 8b, 12–13); Comm. on Psalm 37, IV.8–9 (on Ps. 37:32–33 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 322–24, 329; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 240–41, 245]).

¹³Damascus Text, I.10–11, and Comm. on Psalm 37, III.15–17 (on Ps. 37:23–24 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 67, 328; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 97, 245]).

bring a new law which would inaugurate a new order.¹⁴ The Qumran community of Essenes¹⁵ felt very strongly that they must abide the conditions of the Mosaic law, living it as carefully as possible until the coming of the Messiah. When we turn to the New Testament, it is clear that Jesus and his disciples changed and reinterpreted the Mosaic law. After all, Jesus was its fulfillment (see Matt. 5:17–18). Plainly, for early Christians the Messiah Jesus had come, had fulfilled the law, and had brought a new higher law to replace the Mosaic code. Correspondingly, the doctrine that the Mosaic law was simply an interim system which the coming Messiah would change to a higher and fuller concept also finds prominent profile in the Book of Mormon (for instance, see 2 Nephi 25:24–27).

The people of Qumran held all things in common. When persons became officially affiliated with the community, they deeded all of their property to the congregation.¹⁶ While this happened formally among the Essenes only at the end of a two-year probationary

¹⁴Manual of Discipline, IX.9–11; Damascus Text, XII.22–XIII.2; XIII.20–XIV.1; XIV.18–19; XV.6–10; and XIX.33–XX.1 (see preceding n. 11 for the problem of numbering this last passage [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 63, 86–90, 77; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 87, 114–17, 108, 106]).

¹⁵The question of whether the Dead Sea people were Essenes has been widely debated. I accept the concept that they were Essenes. First of all, I am influenced by the circumstantial observations of Frank M. Cross, Jr., in “The Early History of the Qumran Community,” in Freedman and Greenfield, *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, pp. 70–89, particularly his statement on p. 77:

The scholar who would “exercise caution” in identifying the sect of Qumran with the Essenes places himself in an astonishing position: he must suggest seriously that two major parties formed communistic religious communities in the same district of the desert of the Dead Sea and lived together in effect for two centuries, holding similar bizarre views, performing similar or rather identical lustrations, ritual meals, and ceremonies. He must suppose that one, carefully described by classical authors, disappeared without leaving building remains or even potsherds behind; the other, systematically ignored by the classical sources, left extensive ruins, and indeed a great library.

Secondly, a remark by Professor Jacob Milgrom, in a lecture delivered at BYU on 5 March 1980, took the issue from one of circumstantial evidence to one of a decisive identification of the people of Qumran with the Essenes described by Josephus and Pliny the Elder. In discussing the Temple Scroll’s Sabbath prohibition by the Essenes of Jerusalem against using the latrine because it was located more than a Sabbath day’s journey from the walls, Dr. Milgrom said:

Let me state that precisely on this point we have historical verification [of identifying Qumranites as Essenes]. The historian Josephus, who lived in the first century while the Temple still stood, reports that the Essenes of Jerusalem did not defecate on the Sabbath. *This is the first time I have used the term Essenes to describe the sectaries of Qumran* [italics mine]. Because of the Temple Scroll, we have the support of an outside source that, indeed, the Qumran sect was part of the Essene movement. For the law of Qumran was practiced by the Essenes of Jerusalem. Moreover, Josephus tells us that one of Jerusalem’s gates was called the Essene Gate. Heretofore it has never been identified. Josephus locates it near a place called *Bethso*. That name too has never been identified. But thanks to the Temple Scroll, both problems have been solved. *Bethso*, it turns out, is not a place name. It is Hebrew *beth so’ah* or “toilet.” Thus the Essene gate was not a real gate but an opening in the city wall at the nearest point to their toilets, a wicket which they could squeeze through one at a time. (This extract, from a paper entitled “The Dead Sea ‘Temple’ Scroll,” is to be published in a future volume of the BYU Religious Studies Center’s Monograph Series.)

¹⁶Manual of Discipline, I.11–13; VI.19; Comm. on Psalm 37, III.10 (on Ps. 37:21–22; the interpretation of the latter is unclear because of the fragmentary condition of the text [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 44, 56, 328; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 72, 82, 245]).

period,¹⁷ a similar thing occurred among Christians, who also were known to have held all things in common (Acts 2:44; 4:32). The difference, however, consists in the fact that the Christians turned over their property almost immediately; there was no two-year waiting period as at Qumran.

In matters of organization, we find some very interesting parallels to the situation of the early Church. The primary leadership of the Dead Sea community consisted of three priests, who comprised the governing quorum, and twelve laymen, who comprised the second leading quorum of the group.¹⁸ This points immediately to a numerical similarity in the early church in which Jesus had selected three of his Twelve Apostles to serve as the governing quorum of the Church. One observes, however, that these three apparently remained within the body of the Twelve and did not exist outside of that number. Turning to Qumran again, we find that the community had an officer called an overseer who was almost the direct equivalent of early Christian bishops (the Greek word for bishop, *episcopos*, literally means "overseer"). The responsibility of the overseer at the Dead Sea appears to have centered largely in temporal and practical affairs, although it was not limited to that.¹⁹ One finds here interesting parallels to the Christian bishops' roles and functions.²⁰

There was a further concern for priesthood matters at Qumran.²¹ Not only do we find a good deal said about the priests (the direct descendants of Aaron) and the Levites as distinct from the laymen of the community,²² but there was additional interest in Melchizedek's priesthood and those who would share his sacred lot, that is, those who would bear the same priesthood.²³ The rather late Christian

¹⁷Manual of Discipline, VI.20-23; Comm. on Psalm 37, III.10 (on Ps. 37:21-22 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 56, 328; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 82, 245]).

¹⁸Manual of Discipline, VIII.1-4 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 60; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 85).

¹⁹The overseer's qualifications are described in the Damascus Text, XIV.7-11 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 88; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 116); his functions are also outlined chiefly in the Damascus Text, IX.16-22; XIII.5-6, 7-16; XIV.10-12; XV.6-15 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 81, 87-88, 90; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 111, 115-16, 108-9).

²⁰See 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. The Greek term *episcopos* also appears in Acts 20:28, Phil. 1:1, and 1 Pet. 2:25.

²¹Consult LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 54-57, for a concise discussion of the various officials at Qumran whom I have not mentioned.

²²Qualifications to function as a priest appear in the Damascus Text, XIV.6-8 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 88; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 116). The relationship between priests, Levites, and laymen is more fully spelled out, for instance, in the Manual of Discipline, I.18-II.23; V.2-3, 7-10, 20-22; VI.8-10; IX.7-8 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 45-47, 51-53, 55, 63; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 72-74, 78-81, 87).

²³Text, translation, and discussion of the so-called Melchizedek midrash from Cave 11 appear in M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 12 (July 1966): 301-26, and in J. A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (March 1967): 25-41. See also James A. Sanders, "Cave 11 Surprises and the Question of Canon," in Freedman and Greenfield, *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, pp. 113-30, especially pp. 113-15.

understanding that Jesus would be the last High Priest of the Melchizedek order (see Hebrews 7:24, marginal reading no. 5 in most King James Version translations) is based on an erroneous interpretation of the Greek word *aparabaton* which does not mean “intransmissible” but means “unchangeable” when referring to Jesus’ priesthood. Because the Essenes of the Dead Sea obviously expected other priests to arise after the order of Melchizedek and because their Melchizedek text bears a close connection to the ideas expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the notion that Jesus was to be the last High Priest cannot be sustained by an appeal to this scroll which was being read by Jews contemporary with Jesus and Paul. In addition, no contemporaneous Greco-Roman source ever uses the term *aparabaton* with the meaning “intransmissible”—it always means “unchangeable.”

The temple formed the absolutely central focus of life for the Essenes, a concept particularly visible in their festivals and ordinances. Their festivals both renewed time and sought to renew the blessings of God to his people:²⁴ for instance, the Feast of Tabernacles, the New Year, and the Day of Atonement.²⁵ Naturally, these festivals were properly celebrated at the temple. Because the Essenes believed that the temple’s priesthood was corrupt²⁶ and that the calendar used by the Jerusalem priests was wrong,²⁷ they refused to celebrate the great renewal covenants at the temple itself, apparently commemorating them instead in their own community, although without burnt offerings.²⁸ The Essenes’ basic ideal for living was to live as if they were priests dwelling in the temple itself. By this means, they sought to make their community a virtual temple,

²⁴For an informative discussion on renewing time by performing sacred rites, see Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Torchbook, 1959), pp. 49–92 (paperback).

²⁵These celebrations, among others, form a major concern of the Temple Scroll (see Y. Yadin, “The Temple Scroll,” p. 137 [reprinted in Freedman and Greenfield, *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, pp. 160–62], and Milgrom, “The Temple Scroll,” pp. 107–8, 112–16).

²⁶The Teacher of Righteousness, the community’s founder, withdrew from Jerusalem because he was persecuted by an unnamed “wicked priest”; for numerous references, see Comm. on Habakkuk, VIII.8–XII.10 (on Hab. 2:5–17); also, the Damascus Text, I.13–17 and Comm. on Isaiah (B), II.2–10 (on Isa. 5:11–14, 24–25 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 322–25, 67, 303–4; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 240–42, 97, 227–28]).

²⁷Consult the summary and bibliographical references in LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 72, 201–5.

²⁸That the Qumran sect offered sacrifices at their settlement has not been confirmed by archaeological data (*ibid.*, pp. 66–70). Josephus maintained that the Essenes did sacrifice away from the temple (*Antiquities*, XVIII.1.5 [§19]); for a discussion of the passage, see John Strugnell, “Flavius Josephus and the Essenes: *Antiquities* XVIII.18–22,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77 (1958): 106–15.

whether or not they were priests or Levites.²⁹ In this connection we should also note that the Dead Sea group practiced lustral washings which were not only for physical cleanliness but especially for spiritual cleansing.³⁰ Some scholars have suggested that these washings bear a historical relationship to early Christian baptisms, but make such claims without clear proof.³¹ Additionally, we know that they wore garments of white linen on special occasions to symbolize the level of purity necessary to dwell in the temple.³² Further, they believed that the holy city, Jerusalem, was to be absolutely pure and free from taint.³³ All these concerns, of course, formed part of the program to make the Essenes a holy people prepared to receive the Messiah when he came. One can very quickly recall that not only Jesus but also his disciples continued to look to the temple as a place of strength, commemorating there the great holidays established among the ancient Israelites.³⁴ There was something about celebrating ordinances at the temple which gave these ordinances an everlasting spiritual meaning.

The compass of scripture among the people of the Dead Sea was much broader than that among the Rabbis. Except for the Book of Esther, of which no trace has been found in the Qumran caves, the people of Qumran employed as scripture all the Old Testament books plus the thirteen (or fifteen) books that make up the Old Testament Apocrypha. Moreover, they utilized a number of works known as pseudepigrapha, including Jubilees, the Assumption of Moses, and 1 Enoch.³⁵ On the other hand, the Rabbinic canon consisted of only

²⁹Manual of Discipline, IX.5-6 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 63; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 87). This ideal, interestingly, was also held by the Pharisees. See Jacob Neusner, *Fellowship in Judaism* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., 1963), pp. 11-21, notably his observation on p. 14: "Two biblical precepts contended in the Pharisaic ethics: first, that all Israel is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy people (and this was understood to mean at the very least a people ritually pure and holy), and second, that every individual Jew everywhere was himself to be as ritually fit as a priest to perform the sacrificial act in the Temple."

³⁰Manual of Discipline, III.4-11; IV.21-22; V.13-14; Damascus Text, X.10-13 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 47-48, 50, 53, 82-83; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 74-75, 77-79, 111-12).

³¹For a discussion of difficulties involved in claiming that Essene "baptisms" were the same as those performed by John the Baptist and disciples of Jesus, see LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 149-51.

³²The white linen garments are noted by Josephus, *The Jewish War*, II.8.3-5 (§§ 123-32).

³³Temple Scroll, cols. 35, 45-51; see Yadin, "The Temple Scroll," p. 139 (reprinted in Freedman and Greenfield, *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, p. 165); Milgrom, "The Temple Scroll," pp. 108, 111-12; "'Sabbath' and 'Temple City,'" pp. 26-27. Also see the Damascus Text, XI.18-XII.2 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 84-85; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 113).

³⁴For instance, John 2:13-16; 7:2-10; Acts 2:1-14, 46; 3:1; 20:16. One also notes Jesus' positive feelings about the temple in Matt. 5:23-24; 21:13 (parallels, Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46); 23:16-21.

³⁵Besides fragments of these and other texts, the Book of Jubilees is cited as scripture, for instance, in the Damascus Text, XVI.2-4 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 90; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 109). See also H. L. Ginzberg, "The Dead Sea Manuscript Finds: New Light on *Eretz Yisrael* in the Greco-Roman Period," in Moshe Davis, ed., *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 39-57. English translations of the pseudepigrapha appear in R. H. Charles, ed., *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). Dr. James Charlesworth is currently editing an expanded collection of pseudepigraphical texts which are to be published by Anchor Books in the near future.

the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament which are still published in all standard Protestant Bibles. The Rabbis included none of the books which make up the Old Testament Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. It is noteworthy that early Christians, like the Essenes but unlike the Rabbis, had a much broader concept of scripture. One notes, for instance, that the Epistle of Jude, verses 14–15, quotes from 1 Enoch 1:9. This latter work has not been included either in the Old Testament or in the Old Testament Apocrypha. Moreover, Jude quotes Enoch in the way that one customarily cites scripture. This illustrates that the earliest Christians understood the canon of scripture to be much broader than that which we have inherited from the Rabbis.

I should make one further note about the concept of scripture at Qumran. There can be no doubt that many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were thought to be composed in a living scriptural milieu. The authors plainly saw themselves as writing new scripture.³⁶ There was no notion that the spirit of inspiration underlying scripture had ceased. For them, the canon of scripture was expanding. The same idea is found among the Christians, who at an early date collected the Epistles of Paul along with other Christian texts, such as the Gospels, and read them side by side with the Old Testament books inherited from the synagogue.

That the Qumranites, threatened by the Roman army,³⁷ would seal up their precious records for a future age is a notion prescribed in Daniel 12:4 as well as other apocalyptic works.³⁸ One observes, however, that there were a variety of circumstances involved in the burial of the scrolls. For example, we know that the texts of Cave 1 were very carefully hidden. The mouth of the cave was painstakingly walled up except for the upper hole through which the young Bedouin boy threw the fortuitous rock, thus beginning the process of discovery. The scrolls of Cave 4 apparently were hastily dumped in the cave and then covered with a layer of dirt in order to hide them from prying eyes. In this instance, those who hid the scrolls were obviously in a hurry. The texts from Cave 11 seem to have belonged to a single

³⁶This point, for example, can be maintained for the Temple Scroll. The author's technique of altering God's words in scriptural quotations from third person to first person must not be thought of as cavalier but as inspired—at least from the author's viewpoint.

³⁷One can surmise that in A.D. 68 when the Roman legions swept down the Jordan valley on their way to besiege Jerusalem, the Essenes at Qumran must have known that neither they nor their records would survive. Therefore, they buried them. Excavations have borne this out. (See Josephus' account in *Jewish War*, IV.7.4–9.1 [§§419–90], and Roland de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [London: Oxford University Press, 1973].)

³⁸Compare Revelation 5:2; 10:4. The Assumption of Moses, found in fragmentary form at Qumran, contains the recipe for preserving and hiding precious manuscripts until the last days (1:16–18).

individual who lived there and had collected a private library. The fact that the records were hidden usually with care illustrates that their copiers and keepers esteemed them to be among the most precious of their possessions. Latter-day Saints naturally find an immediate similarity to the burial of valuable records. Joseph Smith stated that he was given charge of a precious record from the past, a record buried for preservation until a later age.³⁹

In the discussion on common property, I have suggested that differences existed between the people of the Dead Sea and the earliest Christians, differences which in many cases were critically important. One can neither claim nor imply that the people of the Dead Sea were pre-Christians who somehow became linked to the movement which Jesus led. With this in mind, let us now examine a few things which clearly differentiate the Dead Sea people from Jesus and his followers.

In the first place, the period of initiation differed radically. For the early Christians, it could be a matter of only hours.⁴⁰ For the people of Qumran, full fellowship came only after a two-year initiatory period.⁴¹ The difference is so striking in this instance that one would have great difficulty demonstrating a link on this level between Qumran and the earliest Christianity.

A second question concerns whether either Jesus or John the Baptist was at any time associated with the Dead Sea sect. To date, nothing from the scrolls would clearly indicate that Jesus and John were affiliates, or even sympathetic. A number of scholars have argued that John the Baptist may have had some connection with the people of Qumran.⁴² But evidence one way or another is largely lacking. In the case of Jesus, however, there is no question that he could not have been associated with the people at Qumran. The evidence of this derives from the eating customs of these people and the oaths which they swore upon admission that they would have no dealings with gentiles or with other Jews.⁴³ This not only extended to commercial dealings, which would include purchase and sale of food, but

³⁹Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:34; Morm. 6:6.

⁴⁰Acts 2:37–45; 16:14–15, 25–33.

⁴¹Manual of Discipline, VI.20–23; Comm. on Psalm 37, III.10 (on Ps. 37:21–22 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 56, 328; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 82, 245]).

⁴²See, for instance, the statement of J. Daniélou, *Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity*, p. 16: “The discovery of the manuscripts has in an undeniable way confirmed the Baptist’s contacts with the monks of Qumran.”

⁴³Damascus Text, XII.8–11; XIII.14–16 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 85, 87; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 114–15). Among the earliest to allege an association of Jesus with the Qumranites were A. Powell Davies, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: New American Library, 1956), and Charles Francis Potter, *The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1958). Not only is such a position untenable because of a lack of any evidence but also these works are clearly sensationalistic in character, as LaSor has so aptly noted (*Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 17–19).



Karilynne and Julianne stand in the entrance to Cave 1. Note above the rounded hole through which the discoverer entered. Excavators later cleared all but a lower portion of the wall which sealed the main entrance.

also included the forbidding of eating anything which had not been prepared by oneself or by another member of the sect.⁴⁴ Since, according to New Testament accounts, Jesus ate frequently with people who obviously had no connection with the Qumranites—such as Pharisees and publicans—it is obvious that he had never sworn to abide by the Qumran rules in this matter. On the other hand, however, one could argue that for John the Baptist the possibilities remain open. His diet consisted of honey and locusts, foods which obviously were available in the wild and would not necessarily have been purchased from another Jew. Thus, John's diet did not really violate the spirit of the oaths which governed food matters at Qumran. The problem remains, however, that the evidence is at best circumstantial. Nothing plainly ties John to Qumran.⁴⁵

The people of Qumran did not proselyte. While some of their group lived and worked among other Jewish people,⁴⁶ the main body of the community withdrew to the shores of the Dead Sea where they formed a "turned-in" society which waited for newcomers.⁴⁷ Those

⁴⁴Josephus informs us of the tremendous oaths sworn by the Essenes regarding foods. In discussing the fate of any person expelled from the community, he notes that "being bound by their oaths and usages, he is not at liberty to partake of other men's food, and so falls to eating grass and wastes away and dies of starvation" (*Jewish War*, [trans. H. St. J. Thackeray in The Loeb Classical Library], II.8.8 [§143]).

⁴⁵The arguments for a connection between John the Baptist and the Qumran community can be summarized thus: (1) John lived "in the wilderness" (Luke 1:80; 3:2), and the Essenes used the word "desert" to describe their homeland; (2) John came from a devout family of priests, and the people of Qumran were both devoted to the law and deeply concerned about priesthood matters; (3) John lived in an ascetic manner, and the Qumran sect largely rejected pleasures of this life, opting for a solitary and austere existence; (4) John indicted the Jewish people for sin and corruption, a sentiment reflected in the scrolls; (5) John's mission was described as preparing "the way of the Lord" (Isa. 40:3), a well-attested notion in the scrolls; and (6) John's baptism bears resemblances to the ablutions mentioned in the texts. The replies are the following: (1) it is impossible to demonstrate that the Greek word used by Luke for "desert" (*erēmos*) refers to the neighborhood of Qumran—the term "wilderness" can refer to all or any part of the geographical area lying between the Jerusalem-Hebron road and the Dead Sea; (2) it is difficult to imagine that John's family—or John himself, for that matter—would be inclined to associate with a group so critical of the temple's priesthood (nn. 26 and 27) of which Zacharias was a practicing and supportive member (Luke 1:5-9); (3) on the matter of asceticism, John's diet is more rigorous than that of the Qumranites (see Matt. 3:4; 11:18); (4) John's condemnation of wickedness finds similarities with teachings of earlier prophets and not just with those of the scrolls; (5) for John, preparing "the way" consisted of calling people to repentance, whereas for the Essenes it meant withdrawal to the desert in an effort to become both ritually and ethically pure by avoiding contact with outsiders; (6) John's baptism served as an initiation and was performed once only while the ablutions of Qumran were both initiatory and were employed frequently as purifactory washings. The problem remains: nothing decisively links John to Qumran. Had John been affiliated with Qumran and then abandoned his community ties, he would have been subject at least to the disciplinary measures spelled out in the Manual of Discipline, VII.18-25 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 59-60; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 84-85). (See summaries in Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 56-63, and LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 142-53.)

⁴⁶Josephus indicates that Essenes did live among other Jews (see *Jewish War*, II.8.4 [§124]). Mention of several "camps" existing during the era of wickedness implies that Essenes did not all live in one place (Damascus Text, XII.22-XIII.2; XIII.20; XIV.3; etc. [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 86-88; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 114-16]).

⁴⁷The injunction "to bring all those who have offered themselves to do God's statutes into a covenant of steadfast love" (Manual of Discipline, I.7-8 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 44; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 72]; translation from Burrows, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 371) may refer to proselyting activity; but it may also simply refer to the ceremonial act of initiating new members into the congregation, the ceremony for which follows this passage. Josephus mentions that one major means employed by the community for maintaining their numbers was adopting children (*Jewish War*, II.8.2 [§120]).



Pictured is the rocky outcropping which overlooks the northeast corner of the Dead Sea and contains Cave 1. The dark cave-like opening is the shadowed depression visible on the right side of photograph 2, p. 53.

affiliated with the Qumran group had apparently become dissatisfied with life elsewhere and withdrew to the desert because they felt the need to live a higher order before the Messiah came. Compare this posture of separation to the Christians' attitude of reaching out, proselyting others to their point of view. Jesus charged his disciples to spread his message to all the world (Matt. 28:18–20). Their missionary response illustrates clearly their attitude toward remaining a part of society and toward trying to influence that society in a righteous way. It is worth noting here that the Pharisees were also a proselyting group who sought to win converts to their way of life. In this regard, both Pharisees and Christians differed from the Essenes.

In matters of organization, too, the early Christians stood significantly apart from the people of Qumran. While, as we noted above, both groups had a council of three associated with a council of twelve, one important detail makes all the difference: for the Dead Sea people, the leading council of three consisted only of priests.⁴⁸ These men had to be able to prove their genealogical descent from Aaron. No laymen were to be permitted to become part of this select group. For Jesus' followers, on the other hand, the matter was quite different. Jesus' three chief Apostles—Peter, James, and John—were all laymen. The privilege of belonging to the presiding council of three was not restricted to those alone who were Aaronites by birth, whereas that definitely was so among the people of Qumran. To be sure, Essene laymen could serve in the council of twelve, but they could not “advance” to the presiding council of three.

Another crucial difference has to do with the view of charity held by the people of Qumran. Their concept was that the lame, deaf, halt, idiots, etc., remained in the care of the angels. Therefore, the Essenes saw no need to admit them to the community.⁴⁹ Among the Christians, however, there was deep concern for the unfortunate. Rather than saying the angels would take charge of those who suffered physical and mental impairment, Christians sought—following Jesus' lead—to ease the lives of the less fortunate.⁵⁰ One has only to think of the interest in the Jerusalem widows shown in the book of Acts⁵¹

⁴⁸Manual of Discipline, VI.8–9; VIII.1–4; IX.7–8 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 55, 60, 63; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 81, 85, 87).

⁴⁹Rule of the Congregation, II.3–9; Damascus Text, XV (end [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 441, 90; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 120–21, 109]). The latter passage's meaning is not fully clear because it exists only in fragmentary form. Vermes understands its sense as I have noted, whereas Gaster does not.

⁵⁰Jesus' acts of compassion were many, including healings, his instructions to the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16–21; etc.), and his injunctions to love even enemies (e.g., Matt. 5:38–47).

⁵¹Acts 6:1–7; see also 2:45 and 4:34–35.

and Paul's concern for the poor Saints in Judea for whom he twice gathered sizeable sums to help alleviate their desperate situation.⁵²

Last but not least are the points on which Jesus himself seems to have differed rather sharply in his views from those held at Qumran. In the first place, among Essenes no one had the right to worship unless at least ten persons were gathered—with a priest—in the name of the Lord.⁵³ Jesus, on the other hand, taught that where two or three were gathered in his name, there the Lord would be also (Matt. 18:19–20). While this does not appear to be a major item, one cannot diminish its importance in terms of how worship was to be conducted and how the community of worship was to be constituted. In a second instance, we seem to possess a direct critique by Jesus of a Qumran doctrine. In Matthew 5:43–47, Jesus criticizes the notion that one should love one's neighbor and hate one's enemy. No reference for this notion has ever been identified in scripture. Commentators have questioned the origin of this idea which Jesus sought to correct. However, in the Manual of Discipline one reads that those who became initiates in the community were instructed to love the children of light and hate the children of darkness.⁵⁴ (The children of darkness should most likely be understood as nonmembers of the community.) In terms of known sources, this is the only instance in which this love–hate dichotomy is urged upon a group's members. For this reason, I feel confident in saying that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was criticizing a fundamental tenet taught by the Qumran community.

A third difference consists in Jesus' acceptance of the temple's ordinances and festivals,⁵⁵ contrasting sharply with the total rejection of the temple's festivals and officials by those at Qumran. One key issue for Essenes seems to lie in the calendar. The priests at the Jerusalem temple operated according to a lunar calendar, the priests at Qumran according to a solar time measurement.⁵⁶ Thus, celebration of

⁵²The first occasion: Acts 11:27–30; for the second collection: Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8 and 9; Gal. 2:10.

⁵³Manual of Discipline, VI.3–7; Damascus Text, XIII.1–7 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 54–55, 86–87; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 81, 115). Josephus also mentions ten persons as an organizational unit among Essenes (*Jewish War*, II.8.9 [§146]).

⁵⁴Manual of Discipline, I.9–11; IX.21–23 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, pp. 44, 65; Vermes, *Scrolls*, pp. 72, 88).

⁵⁵While many priests opposed Jesus and sought his death, he seems clearly to have accepted the ordinances performed at the temple, participating regularly in the festivals held there. See, for instance, John 2:13–16; 7:2–10; Acts 2:1–14, 46; 3:1; 20:16. Jesus' positive feelings about the temple are also noted in Matt. 5:23–24; 21:13 (parallels, Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46); 23:16–21.

⁵⁶Reference in the Damascus Text, XVI.2–4 (in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 90; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 109), to "the Book of the Divisions of the Times into their Jubilees and Weeks" most likely refers to the time-keeping system employed by the community, i.e., that which appears in the Book of Jubilees and 1 Enoch (translation is Gaster's). By that reckoning, each year consisted of 364 days (1 Enoch 74:13: "In three years there are 1,092 days and in five years 1,820 days"). The lunar calendar, by contrast, took 354 days to run its course (see LaSor's summary, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 72, 201–5).

mutual festivals almost always varied by a few days, clearly implying one group viewed the other as apostate. I emphasize that a few days' difference was important. Festivals were understood to have everlasting significance because they had been enjoined by God. The fact that one body celebrated on a different day from another meant that the latter group somehow was out of harmony with the universe, with God's people, with God's law, with God himself. In the instance of the New Testament, Jesus censured neither the temple's festivals nor the days on which they were celebrated. In fact, Jesus not only accepted them but frequently used them in a subtle way to illustrate his own teachings.⁵⁷

In conclusion, I must urge that there exists no evidence of close ties between the people of the Dead Sea and the earliest Christians, including Jesus.⁵⁸ In fact, significant differences between the two groups appear to be the rule. The variations are striking enough to suggest that early Christians, while possibly aware of the people of Qumran and their doctrines, shared no connection with Essenes, whether historical continuities or doctrinal similarities.

While I have brought us to a largely negative conclusion, I do not wish to leave it that way. I have already mentioned that the discovery of the scrolls has thrown a bright beam of light not only on the age of Jesus and John the Baptist but also on our rich biblical heritage. Many things which earlier were seen only dimly, remotely, have been brought into clearer view. But as with most discoveries, even though a number of questions are answered and a number of dark corners are illuminated, further questions are posed which simply cannot and should not be answered until further light is shed from a different quarter, whether the painstaking work of the historical researcher, the archaeologist's trowel, or the direct word of the Lord.

⁵⁷Compare, for instance, Jesus' timely appearance at the temple on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles—Jesus proclaiming, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37)—when (1) the celebrants were commemorating ancient Israel's years in the wilderness when they were so dependent on God for water; (2) the priests, after carrying water for seven days from the Pool of Siloam to the sacrificial area of the temple, ceased drawing water on the eighth day, a Sabbath (Mishnah Sukkah, 4.1, 9; on the eighth day as being part of the feast and thus the last day, see Num. 29:35; Lev. 23:36, 39; Neh. 8:18); and (3) the worshippers looked forward to the day when Zechariah 14:8 would be fulfilled: "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former [eastern or Dead] sea, and half of them toward the hinder [western] sea." All of the prophecies of Zechariah, chapters 9–14, are to be understood against the backdrop of the Feast of the Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16).

⁵⁸I have not exhausted the differences between Jesus' teachings and those of the scrolls. For instance, Jesus taught that the law did not hinder a person from rescuing an unwary animal that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:11; Luke 14:5), whereas the Dead Sea code expressly forbade such action (Damascus Text, XI.13–14 [in Gaster, *Scriptures*, p. 84; Vermes, *Scrolls*, p. 113]).