

# The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years Later

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**Several months ago, we released the historical tract, *The Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls [WM-753]*.**

***It surveyed the remarkable—and very providential—discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls and what happened to them afterward.***

***Since then, we have received a number of requests for additional information:***

- What was in the scrolls?
- How do they compare with the Bible?
- Do they, in any way, disprove the Biblical account?
- What is the story behind the more recent controversy over the scrolls?

***In this brief overview, we will attempt to provide you with some of this information. We will begin with a brief review of the discovery:***

## THE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

On a winter afternoon, fifty years ago this year, in early 1947, three shepherds (men, not boys as so often claimed) from the modern village of Bethlehem had led their sheep down to a creek near the Dead Sea for water. One of them had been intent on finding ancient treasures—and did that day.

Two or three days later, the youngest of them, Muhammed Edh-Dhib, came back to it and scrambled up the cliff to a bigger cave in the side, just above a smaller one. Entering it, he fell into the lower cave—and found, around him, large pottery jars. Could these be the golden treasures his cousin had al-

ways hoped to find?

But most of the jars were empty and no gold was in sight. Yet in one was a roll of leather and in the other a bundle wrapped in cloth. Taking the find to the others, the three opened the cloth and found two more leather rolls.

Taking the rolls and the two jars back to Jerusalem, they stored them in a bag hung in a tent for several weeks. Then they took the rolls and the two jars to a shopkeeper friend in Jerusalem. At first no one was interested.

Then a Syrian Orthodox Christian clothes-merchant saw them in Bethlehem and agreed to try to sell them. But the shepherds did not trust him, so they took the rolls to a local cobbler, Kando, and asked him to be their agent.

From that time forward, this humble shoemaker became the go-between for sale after sale, as more discoveries were made.

The Syrian arranged for the scrolls to be sold for about 24 pounds (at that time just under \$100) to the head of his church.

Three other rolls, brought out during a second visit to the same cave, were sold to an antiquities' dealer for 7 pounds (\$28). In 1947, they were sold to the Hebrew University.

Ultimately, the first set of two rolls were carried to America and finally sold to the State of Israel in 1954, for a quarter of a million dollars. Those two rolls—the priceless, fully complete Isaiah scroll—are now in a building called the Shrine of the Book, on the campus of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

## A LOOK AT THE SCROLLS

The Isaiah scroll consisted of two rolls (one would have been too large to easily handle) which, together, formed a roll of leather 24 feet (7.34 m) long and 10 inches (26 cm) high, made of 17 sheets, sewn end to end, and covered with 54 columns of Hebrew writing.

Such rolls were used in the Hebrew synagogues for public reading and personal study by the priests and others who could read. But when they wore out, they were buried. It was considered a sacrilege to burn them. Normally, internment in the earth caused them to rot. For such reasons, the oldest Hebrew scrolls only date back to about A.D. 1000.

But these newly discovered materials, preserved in dry caves, had been written a thousand years earlier (about 100 B.C.). The Isaiah scroll we now have was copied only a few hundred years after Isaiah wrote it!

Over the centuries, copyist's errors could creep in (*see ISM 16*); yet we know the Jews tried to be very careful to produce exact duplicates. What is the result when we compare the Isaiah scroll with our 1,000-year-old scrolls?

Scholars were surprised to find that there was very little difference! Over the thousand years, one or two words had been wrongly written here and there, and some small changes had occurred. But, all in all, the Isaiah scroll proved beyond doubt that the Hebrew Bible, on which all modern translations are based, have hardly changed at all

since the time of Jesus.

### ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE

With all 66 chapters completely preserved, this version of Isaiah—though copied down around 100 B.C.—matches the A.D. 1000 Masoretic text, upon which all modern Old Testament translations are based—99 percent of the time!

Nearly the same level of accuracy is found in the other Biblical manuscripts found at Qumran.

Are there any significant differences? Hardly anything of note. Here are a few of the most intriguing examples of the “1 percent” which are different:

- The Masoretic text of Psalm 22:16 says “Like a lion are my hands and feet.” Yet the Septuagint says “They have pierced my feet.” A Dead Sea manuscript confirmed that the reading should, indeed, be “They have pierced my feet.” (The Septuagint was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the earliest complete manuscript copies which dated back to about the late third century A.D.)

- In the Masoretic text, the number of Jacob’s descendants who went down with him into Egypt is 70 (Genesis 46:27), but 75 in *4QExod-a*. The latter number agrees with the number Stephen used in his Acts 7:14 sermon, as well as the Septuagint. (Genesis 46:27 is not mentioned in the Spirit of Prophecy.)

- An intriguing passage is Isaiah 61:1, as quoted in *4Q521* (written in Hebrew about 30 B.C.). It includes the phrase, “the dead are raised,” just as is found in Matthew 11:5 (cf. Luke 4:18 which

omits the phrase). *Desire of Ages* notes the types of healings which occurred on the day that Jesus sent the message to John; no dead were raised that day.

The phrase, “the dead are raised,” intensifies the Messianic application of that passage in Isaiah 61.

Skeptics, such as Bultmann, said that the Bible was inaccurate and worthless and that the Gospel of John was Grecian (Gnostic) in its concepts. But, based on the Dead Sea scroll findings, Edwin Yamauchi, of Miami University, declares that “it is now shown by the Qumran parallels to be the most Jewish of the Gospels.”

It is a staggering fact that, as the Isaiah scroll shows, in the course of a thousand years of copying by hand, no errors have crept into the text which in any way affect the Bible’s underlying teachings. We can trust our Bible! Thank God that this is so!

Contrary to the new theology critics in our own ranks, the Bible is unerring in all the teachings we so much need! The Spirit of Prophecy frequently declares the Written Word of God to be “unerring.” And it is so.

It is true that there have been some copyist’s mistakes over the centuries (*ISM 16*), but we now find that even they were very few and insignificant.

### CAVE FOUR

In the years following the initial scroll discoveries, researchers combed through that original cave (“Cave 1”) and found pieces of more scrolls. They were not in good shape, since they had not been kept

in jars.

Meanwhile, the Ta’amirah Bedouin (Arabs living in Jerusalem) had not lost interest. They now knew that there was money to be made if they found more scrolls! Searching the cliffs, they found more caves where scrolls had been hidden.

The one with the most manuscripts was Cave 4. This cave was close to some ancient ruins near the Dead Sea. In this cave, they found an enormous quantity of fragments. They took some, and then the archaeologists found where they were working and posted guards. In this way, more careful research could be carried on, with less trampling of the pieces.

About 40,000 manuscript pieces have come out of Cave 4, representing about 400 scrolls.

Eventually an agreement was reached: Every piece of scroll that the Arabs brought forward would receive 1 pound (\$2.80) per square inch. In this way, the Bedouin were less likely to be tempted to tear materials apart, in the hope of making more on the pieces.

Various governments and private institutions provided the money for these ongoing payments and the research which followed.

### THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

The archaeologists who explored the caves after the first discovery soon turned their attention to a ruin just above the shore of the Dead Sea. They were called Khirbat (Ruins of) Qumran. This site stood solitary and desolate on a terrace overlooking the Dead Sea. Between 1951 to 1956 it was excavated, and consisted of an odd-shaped building with many rooms. It was not a fort, palace, or house. It was a place where all kinds of activities were carried out by a small community.

Potters made and baked dishes, bowls, cups, and jars. Farm produce was stored in solos and prepared in a kitchen. Weavers probably made wool, from sheep and

The discoveries have been there, waiting for us for a long time. But we were given advance notice seventeen centuries ago. Origen, in the third century, reported discovery of a Hebrew book “in a jar near Jericho.” And a letter, written about A.D. 800 by Timotheus I, Patriarch of Seleucia, refers to “books . . . found ten years ago in a rock dwelling near Jericho.”

goats, into clothing; and there was a dyeing plant, to color it, and a laundry, to wash it. The place was obviously quite self-contained.

In one room the researchers found pieces of plastered brickwork which had fallen from an upper floor. Among these were pieces which, when joined, formed three benches. Two inkwells were also found. It was clear that this room was a “scriptorium”; that is, a place where copies of manuscripts were made. However, no scroll remnants were found there.

Because no spring of fresh water was on the property, a canal had been dug, to divert water from the nearby hills into large cisterns. It has been calculated that these storage pools could provide the needs of 200 residents.

A large hall, 70 feet in length, seems to have been the dining room. In one corner lay over 100 pottery vessels, perhaps ready for a meal when the end came.

A small room, off to one side, contained over a thousand pieces of tableware, piled on the floor.

Apparently everyone ate together. Perhaps they slept in dormitories upstairs. Some may have lived in the numerous caves in the nearby cliffs. Pottery found in the caves is identical to that found in the ruins. In addition, jars, just like those in Cave 1 (where the Isaiah scroll was found), were found in the building.

To this day, there is no certainty that it was an Essene community, but most are generally agreed that it was. As you may know, the Essenes were the class of Jews who held to the strictest standards and tended to separate themselves from the rest of Jewry.

Rules of conduct, as given in some of the scrolls, matched the teachings and practices of the Essenes, as supplied by other writers.

This Jewish sect flourished during the first century B.C. and the

first century A.D. Those are the dates when the building was in use.

About 166 B.C., the group withdrew to the desert and established Qumran, located about 20 miles east of Jerusalem. They rallied around a man who seemed able to predict a variety of things which were to take place, based on Bible passages which he interpreted.

The end came in A.D. 68—two years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Although the Essenes were not fighting the Romans, when the legions swept through the land to crush the Jewish revolt, they destroyed everything in their path. In A.D. 68, the army advanced to Jericho and the Dead Sea.

All those in the building were enslaved and taken to foreign lands or slain. This is unfortunate; but, frankly, it has strong parallels to the experience of the group at Waco. Later in this study, we will learn their leader had predicted that eventually the Romans would come, accompanied by apostate Jews, and the people of Qumran would destroy them all.

Victor Houteff and David Koresh made many predictions about how their followers would destroy Adventists, and their enemies would be destroyed.

Coins found in the ruins include Jewish ones of the year A.D. 68, but none later. The Essenes would not have used Roman coins, some of which were found there, with dates from A.D. 65 to 73. The Romans turned part of the building into a legion outpost for several years.

The advance of the troops came so quickly, that there was no time to gather any of the manuscripts. Some were lost in the dampness or in landslides. But some survived, for which we today are thankful.

All that remains of the Essene community at Qumran is a ruined stone building that was their headquarters, plus part of their library stored in nearby caves.

## WHAT WAS IN THE SCROLLS?

Over a period of time, the sharp-eyed shepherds and the archaeologists found eleven caves, close to the Dead Sea, which were caches for manuscripts.

A jigsaw puzzle of 100,000 pieces of ancient Jewish religious texts were found, all that remained of about 870 distinct scrolls. Written in varieties of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, 220 of these were Biblical scrolls.

As you might expect of the Essenes, most of the books are religious. Over 100 are copies of parts of the Old Testament. In addition to the first Isaiah scroll, 16 more were found (none in as good condition as the first one). In addition, over 24 copies of Deuteronomy were located. Those appear to be the favorite books.

Two copies of Joshua, one of Ezra, and something from every other book in the Old Testament, with the exception of Esther (which the Jews, oddly enough, considered to be more of a secular history book—even though it contained the story of a great deliverance of God’s people in ancient times).

Of the 870 scrolls, the remaining 650 non-Biblical texts contained an intriguing assortment of religious prose and poetry.

Every religious book in the library depended upon the Old Testament as its basis of teachings.

Some of these non-Biblical books were commentaries. Habakkuk was a book especially liked as one which commentaries could be written about. There were commentaries on various Old Testament books, plus some of the Apocryphal books.

The Essenes viewed themselves as the only remaining true Israel who were persecuted by godless Jews and ruled by a foreign power.

Then there were the rule books. These were for the people who lived there like monks and nuns. There was strict order and organization.

Anyone desirous of uniting with the group was on probation for two years. Once accepted, all his property must be turned over to the group and he must thereafter obey every order from the leaders.

They highly respected one man they called “the teacher of righteousness.” That may sound quite Biblical; but, in their language, it just meant a very good man. Apparently, he lived about 150 B.C.

Because this teacher had set different dates for the various Jewish feasts, the Jews in Jerusalem banished him from the city and told him he could no longer observe those events on different dates. He then led his followers to the Dead Sea and founded Qumran.

Then there is the “wicked priest.” This man ruled like a tyrant in Jerusalem, and was the one who persecuted the teacher of righteousness. The Essene books say that, as a judgment from God, that wicked man eventually died a fearful death at the hands of his enemies. It was about the time of his death that the good teacher led his followers to a “place of refuge” in “the wilderness.”

In one book, the “War Scroll,” the reader is told about a war between themselves, the good people (called “the sons of light”) and some bad people (called “the sons of darkness”). They were certain they would ultimately win the war, with God’s help. The final battle would be against the hated Romans and their puppet Jewish temple leaders. With the help of a messiah, the Essenes would win the war—and this would usher in the long-awaited redemption of Israel. (Again, note the similarity to Waco.)

The true worship would be restored, for God would have sent two Messiahs. One would be a great King; the other a great Priest. Those two would henceforth lead the people in safe paths. (Both Koresh and Christ would reign in the restored New Earth.)

There was also a “Temple Scroll.”

For some reason, after it was found, an antiquities’ dealer kept it hidden until 1967. This scroll lists all the regulations for the correct worship in the Temple. All the furniture and arrangements are discussed, along with instructions for keeping the people holy. This Temple scroll included plans for a new temple complex which was to be the size of Jerusalem.

A “Copper Scroll” was also discovered, which the experts had an extremely difficult time unrolling. Inside, they found detailed directions to treasure! Gold and silver was said to be buried in various locations throughout Palestine. As you might imagine, this scroll caused some excitement, yet no loot was ever recovered. In fact, many of the measurements appeared to be mythical. The amount of stored gold is astronomical in size.

Calendar texts were also found.

### THE EARLY YEARS

E.L. Sukenik, a specialist in Jewish paleography who lived in Jerusalem, was the first person to read any of the texts—and recognize their antiquity.

He made this discovery on November 29, 1947, the very day that the United Nations voted to partition Palestine in order to create a Jewish state.

But, like so many others back then, Sukenik, had a difficult time making contact with the Bedouin.

Eventually the original documents, joined by others clandestinely excavated in that same first cave, reached Jerusalem. There the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop, Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, purchased four of the scrolls directly from the Bedouin. Professor Elazar L. Sukenik, of the Hebrew university, later bought three from a middleman in Bethlehem.

Several local experts had told Samuel that his scrolls were worthless; but, as noted in an earlier tract study on this topic, when he took

them to Dr. John C. Trever and William Brownlee, at the American School of Oriental Research, to examine, they were intrigued by the ancient form of Hebrew characters. They sent photographs of sections of one scroll to Dr. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore; and he wrote back, that they had made the find of the century. Without hesitation, he dated the scrolls to “about 100 B.C.” “An absolutely incredible find,” Albright declared.

Since then, every test of science, including carbon-14 dating, has placed them at least 1,900 years old. Prior to this discovery, only a few fragments were so ancient.

### THE SCROLL EDITORS

In 1952, the first team of scroll editors was formed. Their assignment was to take the thousands upon thousands of fragments—and fit them together. It was a jigsaw puzzler’s paradise.

The team worked in the Palestine Archaeological Museum in east Jerusalem. But, in the 1967 Six Day War, Israeli soldiers captured it—and gained possession of the entire project and its collection of manuscripts and scrolls. The building was renamed the Rockefeller Museum, and more researchers were added to the editorial team.

### THE ATTACK BY THE ATHEISTS

Unfortunately, some of the team members were arrogant atheists, determined to use the information in the manuscripts to destroy Christianity. John Allegro had vowed that he would be the one to accomplish the task single-handedly.

In 1956, he announced to the

Continued on the next tract

More WAYMARKS - from —

**PILGRIMS REST**

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# The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years Later

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Continued from the preceding tract in this series —

press that he had found a 100 B.C. manuscript which contained an Essene story of a messiah who had been crucified and resurrected. This proved, Allegro claimed, that Christianity and the Gospels were nothing more than later adaptations of this earlier Essene fairy tale. Jesus Christ, he said, was a fictional character who never existed.

In addition, Allegro charged that the other team members were suppressing additional evidence which would prove even more damaging to Christianity.

The other scholars denounced Allegro's lies; even Jewish scholars (who had no love for Christ) said Allegro was not telling the truth.

But, over the years, these false charges continued to surface in books and articles.

For example, Barbara Thiering, an Australian scholar, claimed in the 1980s that the scrolls were encoded with secret messages which, when the Gospels were read with these codes, revealed that Jesus was that wicked priest mentioned in the Essene documents. She said Christ was crucified but kept alive with snake poison, eventually married, etc.

Robert Eisenman, a California historian, came forward with more wild claims. Then, as late as 1991, in a book by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, called *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception*, more attacks were made on Christianity.

But there was a reason why the it was difficult to deny the false

claims of the atheists.

## “THE SCANDAL OF THE CENTURY”

The problem was that only a few men had access to most of the Dead Sea scroll material—and this situation had continued for decades!

Scholars pled for the release of the manuscripts, so they could be studied by everyone; but the tightly knit group of team members refused to release them. They must—*themselves*—have the honor of being the first to publish them in a properly translated format.

Year after year this continued, and the editorial team never quite got around to publishing much of anything.

By the late 1980s, outside scholars were increasingly expressing their anger publicly in various publications. One of the leading journals to enter the fray was Hershel Shanks' *Biblical Archaeologist*. Repeatedly, he roundly denounced the official scroll editors who would not publish the materials themselves, nor let anyone else even look at them.

Scholars and literary publications were calling it the “academic scandal of the century.” Men were increasingly determined to put a stop to, what they termed, the “scrolls cartel.”

In the early years, scroll editions had come out in a timely fashion; the editors sensed the importance of the scrolls to the scholarly community.

But gradually, in order to magnify their own positions, the editors

decided to become more literary. Instead of publishing the documents,—they began writing extensive commentaries on each little scrap.

## ENTER MARTIN ABEGG

Martin Abegg was a young graduate student working at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As he was preparing to leave for Hebrew Union University in Cincinnati, in order to complete his doctoral work, Professor Tov gave him final instructions.

As one of the scroll editors, Tov had given Abegg and other students some of the unpublished scroll material to work on. Now Tov told him, “Do not show this to any of your professors back in the States.”

Abegg considered it strange that he, a master's student, could not show those valuable materials to experienced scholars, far older than himself, who had a lifetime experience in translation work.

When Hershel Shanks, editor of the *Biblical Archaeologist*, published a very short manuscript that was supposed to be kept secret, John Strugnell, at that time chief editor of the editorial team, successfully took him to court in Jerusalem and won the case. The court decided that Strugnell could keep to himself manuscripts over 2,000 years old, as if he had a copyright on them! This decision only intensified the feeling of scholars worldwide.

In 1991, Strugnell was reported in the press as calling outside scholars who wanted access to the unpublished manuscripts “a bunch of

fleas who are in the business of annoying us.” He was fired soon

after, when he told a reporter for an Israeli newspaper that the Jewish

faith was “a horrible religion.”  
Tov became chief editor, but was

Amid hostility between Arabs and Jews, climaxed by all-out war in the spring of 1948, archaeologists dared not go immediately out to the desert to see what was there.

But in 1949, Pere Roland de Vaux, of Jerusalem's Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise (French School of Biblical Archaeology), and Gerald Lankester Harding, head of the Jordan Department of Antiquities and acting curator of the Palestine Archaeological Museum, went down to Cave 1. They had paid the Bedouin to show them where it was.

Although the interior of the cave was well-rifled, meticulous sifting of the debris produced fragments of about 70 scrolls.

Just to the south of them was the ruins of Qumran, so they made a preliminary examination of it. But they decided that there was nothing more to be learned, either at the cave or at Qumran. Apparently, whatever was to be found was in that one cave.

But the impoverished Bedouin in Jerusalem did not give up. Their brief contact with the eager scholars had alerted them to a new source of income. So they set to work exploring the thousands of cracks and fissures which honeycomb the Wilderness of Judaea.

In 1952, after hundreds of weary days of searching, they once again struck what would become gold to them: more leather. When these latest finds were offered for sale—and quickly sold at good prices—an archaeological task force, drawn from the American Schools of Oriental Research, the Ecole Biblique and the Palestine Museum hurried down to the area and began ex-

ploring. Repeatedly, they would find nothing while the Bedouin kept making discoveries.

In the third cave was found two rolls of copper so oxidized that the scientists could neither open nor decipher them. They remained unread for four years as scientists sought a safe method to unroll them. Finally, H.W. Baker at the University of Manchester, England, sliced them open with a specially adapted saw used to slit pen nibs with a cut 6/1000ths of an inch thick. To prevent shattering, he coated the surfaces with a plastic. So carefully did he work that not a single letter was lost. When opened, the two rolls were actually parts of a single one, and told of the treasures mentioned earlier in this study—in 60 locations from Hebron to Nablus. Here are three of the sixty, so the more adventurous of our readers can go search for some:

“In the cistern which is below the rampart, on the east side, in a place hollowed out of rock—600 bars of silver.

“Close by, below the southern corner of the portico, at Zadok's tomb, underneath the pilaster in the exedra [meeting room]—a vessel of incense in pine wood, and a vessel of incense in cassia wood.

“In the pit near by, toward the north in a hole opening near the graves, there is a copy of this document with explanations, measurements, and all details.”

Well, now you are ready! The total amount of listed treasure is itself phenomenally large, indicating the whole thing was a hoax.

Six months after discovering Cave 3, the tireless Ta'amirah uncovered Cave 4—the best of them all. There, as mentioned elsewhere in this study, thousands of manuscript portions were discovered.

In 1956, those Ta'amirah Be-

douin found Cave 11, which contained a number of virtually intact leather scrolls—the first to be found since Muhammad Edh-Dhib threw that stone into Cave 1 nine years before and heard something break.

Upon excavation, Khirbat Qumran, the Essene community center, was found to have been erected about 166 B.C., upon ruins of an Israelite settlement dating from the 8th century B.C. The large “building” was actually a complex of structures, and was 128 yards long by 80 yards wide. Many of the members probably lived in tents or nearby caves rather than in the Qumran complex. The Essenes called the place their “house of exile,” since the Pharisees did not like them up at Jerusalem.

Although the Dead Sea is 25 percent salt, the spring of Ayn Fashkhah, up on the hill, provided fresher water, and they had conduits to it and other sources of water.

At mealtime, everyone gathered in the main assembly room. Seated on the floor, they would eat their meals. When they were finished and had left, the floor was cleaned. This was easily done, since it all sloped slightly downward toward one end. At the opposite end, there was an opening where water could be permitted in, flow over the floor, and run out again.

Large kick-wheels, just like those in use in Hebron today, were used to turn out pottery.

Every new member turned over all his property to the group, and this provided the funds to keep Qumran in good financial condition as they awaited the end of time. It came unexpectedly.

as implacable about not sharing materials as all the editors before him.

Meanwhile, back in Cincinnati, Abegg set to work. His major professor was Ben Zion Wacholder.

As early as 1988, there had been rumors that, in the 1950s, a concordance had been prepared by the editorial teams, to help them in their work. Could it be so? And how was it arranged?

Was it like a dictionary, where a word in one language was explained by a phrase in another?

Or, better yet, was it like *Cruden's* or *Strong's Concordances*,—which gave an entire phrase for each entry?

Official publications, such as the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, flatly denied that any concordance existed.

But when Abegg's professor, Wacholder, met Strugnell at a conference in Israel, he learned that a concordance did in fact exist! Back in the 1950s, the scroll editors had written notes on 3 x 5 cards, along with portions of manuscripts. This helped them unravel the jigsaw puzzles and also kept the materials from being handled too much.

Wacholder quietly worked through connections, to obtain a copy of the concordance. All the while Abegg still did not know what might be on those cards. Were they just word lists or did they have key words in context, like *Strong's*?

At last, Abegg had the concordance before him—and he found it was better than *Strong's*! Beside each word was a complete sentence. And, more, it would give the first word in the next sentence! Thus all the cards were keyed to one another.

So Abegg carefully, laboriously, typed one card after another into his word processor. This required months of difficult work. When he was done, he was able to reconstruct whole texts—manuscripts which had never before been pub-

lished.

When in 1991, Hershel Shanks, who had been demanding release of the manuscripts for nearly a decade, learned about Abegg's secret project—he begged him for permission to publish the results. It was Shanks who had been humiliated when he lost that lawsuit over a couple paragraphs of an unreleased manuscript.

What was Martin Abegg to do? On one hand, it was unethical to publish someone else's assigned research project. On the other, the material had been available since the late 1950s and could have been published then. Why had that not been done?

The texts were published in September 1991 in a set of large, expensive, volumes by Shanks' Biblical Archaeology Society.

Soon after, the prestigious Huntington Library in southern California, which had obtained many photographs of the manuscripts, published them. Its action was just as unethical as that of Abegg and Shanks'. But the entire scholarly world was on their side. A mammoth rebellion was in progress.

Oddly enough, in later years Tov invited Abegg to join the official editorial staff. The entire staff was enlarged, and many Protestants (nearly two dozen) were brought in. With the publication of the materials, the clique had been broken. Apparently, the editorial leaders decided they might as well let others in on the project—because everyone had access to the scroll materials anyway and could do it on their own.

Whereas, the Jews on the editorial team had focused on ritual purity, food laws, and similar matters, the Protestants admitted to it were concerned with evidences in the manuscripts that the Bible was reliable, how we got it, and topics of special interest to Christians.

In 1962, the Evangelical Free Church had opened a new school, called Trinity Western in British Co-

lumbia. In 1995, Trinity Western University started an on-campus research organization: the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute.

Martin Abegg and Peter Flint joined the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute, to work with Craig Evans. Today theirs is a leading scrolls research team, in defense of the Bible. They dig up material defending Christianity; and Evans travels the lecture circuit, challenging the critics to debates.

## DEBUNKING THE CRITICS

Now that everyone has access to the Dead Sea manuscripts, the foolish claims of the atheists and assorted fanatics can be disproved.

Pinned to a bulletin board outside Flint's office at Trinity Western is a tabloid sheet which proclaims "*Startling Revelations from Dead Sea Scrolls: 1997 Weather to be Worst Ever.*" Another says, "*Lost Prophecies of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Christ Reborn—Woman in Idaho Will be New Virgin Mother.*"

Then there is the so-called "Jesus Seminar," a group of atheists out to disprove Christianity. For years they had claimed that "secret manuscripts," from the Dead Sea, proved that Christianity was fraudulent. But it is the Jesus Seminar which is fraudulent; yet only recently could researchers get their hands on the manuscripts, to disprove the charges.

As for the Jesus Seminar, it claims to have hundreds of members; but only about 35 are now active. Their leaders are Robert Funk and John Dominic Crossan.

In recent years, the atheists have tended to drop out of the scroll research and Bible-based Protestants have taken their place. The problem is that the atheists cannot agree on which attack to focus their attention on, and they wind up arguing among themselves.

Before the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, the atheists had declared that our Bible was totally dif-

ferent than the originals, but today there are few to make that claim. The Dead Sea scrolls changed everything.

In 1893, Ernest Renan a radical French scholar declared, "Christianity is a sort of successful Essenism."

After the scrolls brought so much fresh knowledge of Essene beliefs to light, one of Renan's successors in Paris, A. Dupont-Sommer, wrote this:

"Everything in the Jewish New Covenant (as found in the scrolls) heralds and prepares the way for the Christian New Covenant. The master from Galilee, as the New Testament writings present him to us, appears as an astonishing reincarnation of the master of justice (the teacher of righteousness) in many respects . . . Like him, he was condemned and put to death. Like him, he ascended to heaven, near to God . . . Like him, he will be the supreme judge at the end of time. Like him, he founded a church whose members eagerly awaited his glorious return . . ."

Dupont-Sommer then claimed that wherever there is a resemblance between the scrolls and Christianity, the Christians had borrowed from the Essenes.

*This was ammunition the critics could use. But historical facts and the contents of the scrolls disprove Dupont-Sommer's claims:*

- The Essene's teacher had failed to bring his followers through; they all perished. Christianity has continued, growing even stronger with the passing of the centuries.

- There is no indication that Jesus ever had any contact with the Essene community at Qumran, nor with any other Essenes.

- The critics have said that John the Baptist was an Essene. Yet the Dead Sea scrolls prove that John preached none of their teachings.

- Both the Dead Sea scrolls and the New Testament have their roots

in the Old Testament, so, at times, they share similar language. Yet the concepts and beliefs in the two are vastly different.

- The similarities between the teacher and Jesus are not as close as Dupont-Sommer would like us to think. His sensational assertions were based on something supposedly written at the bottom of the *Commentary on Habakkuk*. Although the scrolls are well-preserved, at the bottom of each column the last lines are damaged or missing.

By filling in a gap at the bottom with the words, "he persecuted the teacher of righteousness," Dupont-Sommer manufactured the claim that the teacher "was judged, condemned, and put to death."

No scholars now agree with that theory. They unanimously agree that it was the wicked priest who was slain, not the teacher of righteousness. —And that is what the surrounding passages confirm.

- There is no statement that the teacher will be a judge at some future time. It is not even certain if he was expected to reappear in the future.

*There are many other differences between the two:*

- The teacher taught a detailed observance of rabbinic ritual laws, which, of course, included many things not in the Old Testament. Jesus taught obedience to the Ten Commandments.

- The teacher and his followers looked forward to the time when the Temple services in Jerusalem would be restored and they could resume offering sacrifices there. Jesus' teachings were far different! He predicted the destruction of the Temple. During His life, Jesus downplayed obedience to the ritual laws.

- The concern to obey the ritual law drove the teacher and his followers out into the desert, so they could become hermits. The concern to proclaim justification and obedience by faith led the disciples to

follow the command of Christ and go into all the world and proclaim the Good News, that we can become the children of God and, in Christ's strength, overcome sin.

- The teacher was waiting for God to send the Messiah, and he instructed his followers to wait for that event. The teacher is not known to have ever claimed to be the Messiah. But Christ was the Messiah, said so, and His church is founded on that fact.

- According to Christ's teachings, His death would make atonement for the sins of the whole world. That concept would have offended the teacher who believed that only Essene Jews could be saved.

- The Essenes practiced baptism, but theirs was far different. It was routinely repeated once each year, and was done to purify themselves from ritual matters. Baptism, for them, was something *they* accomplished. It was just another ritual work.

- The members ate meals together, and this has been likened to the communion service. But they were merely joint cafeteria meals. There was nothing thought sacred about them. They were looking forward to a meal with the Messiah when He should appear. They were not eating together "in remembrance of" their teacher of righteousness.

- The scroll commentaries had the oddities of Old Testament interpretation given them by their teacher, and lacked the certainty we find in the words of Jesus and throughout the New Testament.

The Dead Sea scrolls are especially important because no other Jewish writings from immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem have survived. But we must keep in mind that the Essene writings present only one aspect of Jewish thought in the time of Christ.