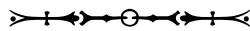


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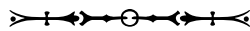
VOLUME 85 NUMBER 2 2007

THE ESSENES

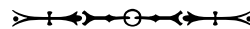
Each issue of the *Rosicrucian Digest* provides members and all interested readers with a compendium of materials regarding the ongoing flow of the Rosicrucian Timeline. The articles, historical excerpts, art, and literature included in this *Digest* span the ages, and are not only interesting in themselves, but also seek to provide a lasting reference shelf to stimulate continuing study of all of those factors which make up Rosicrucian history and thought. Therefore, we present classical background, historical development, and modern reflections on each of our subjects, using the many forms of primary sources, reflective commentaries, the arts, creative fiction, and poetry.



This magazine is dedicated to all the women and men throughout the ages who have contributed to and perpetuated the wisdom of the Rosicrucian, Western esoteric, tradition.



May we ever be worthy of the light with which we have been entrusted.



In this issue, we encounter the mysterious Essenes, as they were known in the ancient world, through the Dead Sea Scrolls, and as their spirituality continues to inspire today, part of the greater Rosicrucian heritage.

# ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST

No. 2 - 2007

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## Official Magazine of the Worldwide Rosicrucian Order

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# THE MYSTERY OF THE ESSENES

H. Spencer Lewis, F.R.C.  
From *The Mystical Life of Jesus*

**H** Spencer Lewis, first Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, wrote this remarkable description of the Essenes in 1929 as part of his book, *The Mystical Life of Jesus*, some eighteen years before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Lewis's work was one of the foundational inspirations for the modern Essene movement.<sup>1</sup>

Before one can properly understand and appreciate the history and real story of the birth and life work of the Master Jesus, one must have an understanding of the ancient organizations and schools that contributed to the preparation for his coming.

Within the last 100 years, a great many notations in sacred literature have been discovered relating to the Essenian community and the activities of this organization in Palestine just prior to and during the lifetime of the Master Jesus. Many of these notations have verified the references to the Essenes by such eminent historians as Philo and Josephus, and have explained many of the mysterious references found in the sacred writings of the Hebrews as translated in the Judeo-Christian Bible.

The possible relationship of the Essenes to the early Christian activities has not only aroused the interest of hundreds of eminent theologians and biblical authorities, but it has caused one question to be asked by thousands of students of mystical literature: "Why has the history or story of the Essenes been withheld from general knowledge?"

The answer is: Those who knew the story desired to keep

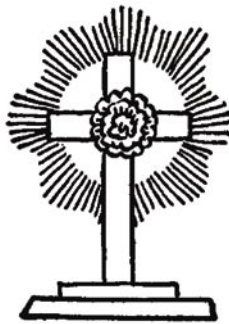
the Essenian community shrouded in mystery to protect its work and teachings from being publicly discussed.... The Rosicrucian records have always had extensive details of the activities of the Essenian organization, and no initiate of the Rosicrucian Order, or no profound student of the ancient mysteries who became worthy of contact with the ancient records, was ever left in ignorance regarding the Essenes.

Today the veil can be drawn aside and some of the facts regarding the Essenes be revealed to the world because of the advancement that has been made in the study of occult literature and the broad-minded view that is taken by the average educated student of spiritual and mystical subjects. For this reason I feel justified in giving the following facts in regard to the Essenes.

## A Manifestation of the Work of the Primordial Tradition

In the first place, it probably will be sufficient in this brief outline of their organization to say that the Essenes were a branch of the illuminated Great White Lodge,<sup>2</sup> which had its birth in the country of Egypt during the years preceding Akhnaton, Egyptian pharaoh and founder of the first monotheistic religion, who supported and encouraged the existence of a secret organization to teach the mystic truths of life.

The several mystic schools of Egypt, which were united under one head constituting the G.W.B., assumed different names in different parts of the world, in accordance with the language of



The Rose Cross became the official symbol of the Rosicrucians, but was used by the various branches of the Essenes and the G.W.B. before its official adoption as a universal emblem. The emblem of the early Templars was a red rose on a cross, adopted by them because of its use by the Essenes.

each country and the peculiarities of the general religious or spiritual thought of the people. We find that at Alexandria, the members of the organization there assumed the name of *Essenes*. Scientists have speculated considerably in regard to the origin of this word and its real meaning. So many unsatisfactory speculations upon its root have been offered in the past that there is still considerable doubt, in the minds of most authorities, regarding it.

### Origins of the Word “Essene”

The word truly comes from the Egyptian word *kashai*, which means “secret.” And there is a Jewish word of similar sound, *chsabi*, meaning “secret” or “silent”; and this word would naturally be translated into *essaïos* or “Essene,” denoting “secret” or “mystic.” Even Josephus found that the Egyptian symbols of light and truth are represented by the word *choshen*, which transliterates into the Greek as *essen*. Historical references have been found also wherein the priests of the ancient temples of Ephesus bore the name of *Essene*. A branch of the organization established by the Greeks translated the word *Essene* as being derived from the Syrian word *asaya*, meaning “physician,” into the Greek word *therapeutes*, having the same meaning.

The Rosicrucian records clearly state that the original word was meant to imply a secret organization, and while most of the members became physicians and healers, the organization was devoted to many other humanitarian practices besides the art of healing, and not all of its members were physicians in any sense.

The spread of the organization into the many lands near Egypt was slow and natural, in accordance with the awakening consciousness of the people; and we find that the Essenes became a very definite branch of the G.W.B. representing the outer activities of that organization, which was primarily a school of learning and instruction. Thus, for several centuries before the dawn of the Christian era, the Essenes, as an active band

of workers, maintained two principal centers. One was in Egypt on the banks of Lake Moeris, where the great Master Moria-El the Illustrious was born in his first known incarnation, educated, prepared for his great mission, and established the principle and law of *baptism* as a spiritual step in the process of initiation. The other principal Essenic center was first established in Palestine, at Engaddi, near the Dead Sea.

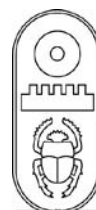
Going through the Rosicrucian records pertaining to the Essenes, I find thousands of notations regarding these two branches, and from them I have selected the following statements as being the most interesting and most definite in their connection with the mystical life of Jesus.



Lake Moeris in the Fayum Region of Egypt. (Photograph from the archives of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC)

The branch in Palestine had to contend with the despotism of the rulers of that country and the jealousy of the priesthood. These conditions forced the Essenes in Palestine to hold themselves in greater silence and solitude than they had been accustomed to in Egypt. Before they moved from their small buildings and sacred enclosure at Engaddi, to the ancient buildings on Mount Carmel, their principal activity seemed to be the translation of ancient manuscripts and the preservation of such traditions and records as constituted the foundation of their teachings.

It is recorded that when the time came for them to move from Engaddi to Mount Carmel, their greatest problem was the secret movement of these manuscripts and records.



Fortunately for us, they succeeded in preserving the rarest of the manuscripts that came out of Egypt, and in other ways preserved the ancient, traditional stories and teachings. It is from these that we derive most of our knowledge regarding both the Essenes and the G.W.B. A picture of how they lived, and what they believed and taught, undoubtedly constitutes a story of intense interest to all modern students of mysticism and sacred literature.

### **How They Lived and What They Believed**

Every member of the Essenes in Egypt or Palestine, or of the *Therapeutae*, as they were called in other lands . . . were students of the Avestan writings and adhered to the principles taught therein, which laid great stress upon a healthy body and a powerful mind. Before anyone could become an adept in the organization, he or she had to be prepared in childhood under certain teachers and instructors, raised with a healthy body, and needed to exercise certain mental powers under test.

Every adult applicant who was allowed to partake of the daily meal in the communal building was assigned at the time of initiation to a definite mission in life, and this mission had to be adhered to regardless of all obstacles and all temptations, even to the sacrifice of one's life. Some chose to be physicians or healers, others artisans, teachers, missionaries, translators, scribes, and so forth. Whatever worldly things they possessed at the time of their initiation had to be donated to the common fund, from which all drew only as was needed. The simple life they led, free from any indulgence in the pleasures common to the public, made it unnecessary for them to draw upon these funds except in rare instances.

Immediately upon initiation, each member adopted a robe of white composed of one piece of material, and wore sandals only in such weather or at such times as was absolutely necessary. Their attire was so distinct or unique that among the populace they were known as the *Brothers and Sisters in White Clothing*. The term *Essene* was not

popularly known, and only the learned knew of it. This accounts for the lack of references to the Essenes in most of the popular histories or writings of the time.

They lived in well-kept buildings, usually within a sacred or well-protected enclosure, in community fashion. All of their affairs were regulated by a committee or council of judges or councilors, 100 in number, who met once a week to regulate the activities of the organization and to hear the reports of the workers in the field. All disagreements, all complaints, all tests and trials were heard by this council, and one of the regulations indicates that they were always cautious in expressing opinions of one another or of those outside of the organization, and they were not critical of the lives or affairs of the people they were trying to reform or assist. They also adhered strictly to one of their laws: "Judge not—lest ye be judged also."

### **The Ancient Essene Articles of Faith**

It is possible to set forth here their definite articles of faith as recorded in ancient, secret writings. While these articles of faith appear in slightly different words in the various branches of the Essene organization, they are undoubtedly based upon the articles of faith adopted by the G.W.B. at the time of the establishment of the Essene organization.

1. God is principle; God's attributes manifest only through matter to the outer being. God is not a person, nor does God appear to the outer person in any form of cloud or glory. (Note the similarity of this article to the statement of John 4:24: "God is spirit, and those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and in truth.")

2. The power and glory of God's dominion neither increases nor diminishes by human belief or disbelief; and God does not set aside God's laws to please human beings.

3. The human ego is of God, and at one with God, and is consequently immortal and everlasting.

4. The forms of man and woman are manifestations of the truth of God, but God is not manifest in the form of man or woman as a being.

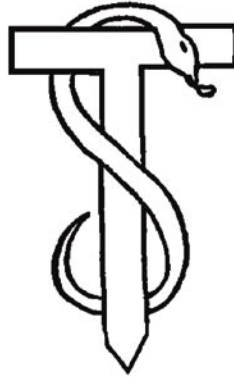
5. The human body is the temple in which the soul resides, and from the windows of which we view God's creations and evolutions.

6. At the transition or separation of the soul and body, the soul enters that secret state where none of the conditions of the earth have any charms, but the soft breezes and great power of the Holy Ghost bring comfort and solace to the weary or the anxious who are awaiting future action. Those who fail, however, to exercise the blessings and gifts of God, and who follow the dictates of the tempter and of the false prophets and the ensnaring doctrines of the wicked, remain in the bosom of the earth until they are freed from the binding powers of materialism, purified, and assigned to the secret kingdom. (This explains the ancient, mystical term of *earthbound*, referring to those who are still enslaved to material temptations for a time after transition.)

7. To keep holy the one sacred day of the week that the soul may commune in spirit and ascend to contact with God, resting from all labors, and discriminating in all actions.

8. To keep silent in disputes, to close the eyes before evil, and to stop the ears before blasphemers. (This is the original of the ancient law, "to speak no evil, to see no evil, and to hear no evil.")

9. To preserve the sacred doctrines from the profane, never speak of them to those who are not ready or qualified to understand, and be prepared always to reveal to the world that knowledge which will enable humans to rise to greater heights.



Long a symbol of healing, with symbolic linkages to the Greek Caduceus, the Serpent on the Tau Cross recalls Moses's healing of the people in Numbers 21:9, inspiring the Serpent image in the Temple of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:4), and the later analogy with the Master Jesus in John 3:14. It would have been natural for the Essenes to have felt these resonances.

10. To remain steadfast in all friendships and all communal relations, even unto death; in all positions of trust never to abuse the power or privilege granted; and in all human relationships to be kind and forgiving, even to the enemies of the faith.

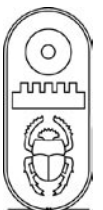
### Many Forms of Service

Every department of the organization was supervised by stewards, who were in charge of the material things turned into the general fund by every member. This general fund was called the *poor fund* and was used to relieve the sufferings of the poor in every

land. This point reminds us of the statement in Matthew 19:21: "Sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor . . . then come, follow me."

Hospices were established by the Essenes in various communities for the care of the sick and the poor, especially during epidemics of famine or disease. These places were called *Bethsaida*. We find in this feature of their work the origin of the hospices and hospitals that became well known some centuries later. A special staff of workers who were connected with these places came to be called Hospitalers. Herein we find the origin of another branch of the community that later became a more or less separate organization. The Essenes also established rescue homes in various communities and at the entrance to most cities had a place called a *gate*, where strangers or those in need of something to eat or guidance would be cared for temporarily. Recent discoveries in Jerusalem have revealed the existence of a gate known as the Essene Gate.

The Essenes disliked life in cities, and established themselves in communities of small villages outside of the walls or limits of practically every city where they existed. In



such communities members had their own little houses and gardens, and those who did not marry lived in a community house. Marriage was not forbidden among the Essenes, as is commonly believed, but their ideals regarding marriage were very high, and only those who were well mated and whose mating was approved by the higher officials were permitted to marry.

Women were permitted to become associate members of the organization, and in only a few cases were they allowed to enter even the early grades of study of the work. This was not because there was any belief among the Essenes that women were inferior to men in either spiritual or mental capacity, but because the Essenian branch of the G.W.B. was strictly an organization of men, to carry on the work throughout each community. But sisters, mothers, and daughters of the men in each Essenian community were permitted to be a part of the community and become associate members. Those of the women who were not married, and who did not care to marry, often adopted orphan children as their own, and in this way carried on a form of humanitarian work for the organization.

In considering their more private affairs, we find that there were no servants, for servitude was considered unlawful, and each household had to be cared for by the members of the household. Some of the rules and regulations recorded in the Rosicrucian records would indicate that their ideas regarding servants and servitude were quite fanatical according to our modern point of view. We must remember that in the days when these rules were adopted, most servants in every wealthy household, or the servants of a king or potentate of any kind, were like slaves, and, of course, among the Essenes every man and woman was a free being, and slavery or serfdom of any kind was absolutely prohibited. In each community everyone took part in any work that pertained to the entire community, and all had a certain

amount of menial work to do. The new initiates had to work in the fields and at certain times serve at the community tables or in the kitchen and at the tables of the rescue houses.

### **Their Word Was Their Promise**

As with many other branches of the G.W.B., the Essenes never entered into contracts or agreements that required oaths or any form of writing. It became well known about them that their word was equal to any agreement or contract in writing. They had a definite set of rules and regulations for their lives, which were well known by all those with whom they had any dealing, and the highest potentates of the land knew that the Essenes could not be bound by any oaths, but were highly responsible when they gave their word in any promise.

Even Josephus, in writing about the Essenes of 146 BCE, stated that the Essenes were exempted from the necessity of taking the oath of allegiance to Herod. Most certainly they would make no promise in the name of God, nor swear to anything in the name of God, for to them ... the name of God was to be mentioned only in a sacred manner in their temples, and at all other times the name of God was unpronounceable. In disagreements with strangers, the Essenes would pay any price demanded of them or make sacrifices as requested rather than to enter into arguments or have any strained relationships. It was for this reason that the Essenes were thought well of by the Pharisees and other sects in Palestine, although these other sects severely criticized the religious practices of the Essenes.

Speaking of oaths, however, I am permitted to give herewith the official oath which was taken by male initiates and which was the only oath they ever admitted. It was given upon their own honor, at the time of entering the final degree of initiation, or what we would call the fourth degree of their advancement into the organization. The oath is as follows:



I promise herewith, in the presence of my elders, and the Brothers of the Order, ever to exercise true humbleness before God and manifest justice toward all; to do no harm, either of my own volition or at the command of others, to any living creature; always to abhor wickedness, and assist in righteousness and justice; to show fidelity to all, particularly to those who may be my superiors in counsel; and when placed in authority, I shall never abuse the privileges or power temporarily given unto me, nor attempt to belittle others by a worldly display of my mental or physical prowess; truth shall ever have my adoration and I shall shun those who find pleasure in falsehood; I will keep my hands clean from theft, and keep my soul free from the contamination of worldly gain; my passions I will restrain, and never indulge in anger nor any outward display of unkind emotions; I shall never reveal the secret doctrines of our brotherhood, even at the hazard of life, except to those who are worthy of them; I shall never communicate the doctrines in any form, but the one form in which received; I shall not add to nor subtract from the teachings, but shall ever attempt to preserve them in their pristine purity, and will defend the integrity of the books and records of our order, the names of the masters, legislators, and my elders.

### **Essene Customs**

After the initiate had reached what we might call the fourth degree and had taken the foregoing obligation, he was admitted to the common table to partake of the one great symbolical meal of the day, at which time meditation and contemplation, as well as discussion of the problems of the work, formed part of the period.

It is interesting to note that all the food used by the Essenes was prepared according to the rules and regulations stated in the old documents, in a scientific but simple

manner, and while vegetables and especially many forms of raw foods were used, it is not true that all flesh foods were forbidden. There was never any form of over-eating or banqueting, and certainly the rules of moderation in all things pertained to eating and drinking as well; hence there was neither gluttony nor intoxication.

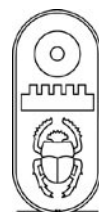
The Essenes seldom took part in public discussions and never participated in discussions of religion or politics. They were most often silent when others spoke, and silence seemed to be their motto. They were well trained in the use of the voice and in making incantations, and knew the value of vowel sounds to such a degree that by training they became very soft spoken, even in ordinary conversation. Because of this they were often known as the *soft-spoken* ones.

It is but natural that the Essenes would have developed not only magnetic personalities, accompanied by clean bodies, clean raiment, and clean habits, but they developed such beautiful auras that on many occasions these auras became visible to the profane....

It was customary for all Essenes to wash their hands and feet upon entering their own homes or the homes of anyone else, and to cleanse their hands and feet before any ceremony, and before each daily prayer. In their individual homes the Essenes spent much time before the altar in their sanctums, or in the study of the rare manuscripts and books that were circulated among them according to their degree of advancement. They were particularly well versed in astrology, elementary astronomy, natural history, geometry, elementary chemistry and alchemy, comparative religions, mysticism, and natural law.

### **Service in Health, Education, and Constructive Guidance**

Those who were the physicians in the organization were evidently a curiosity to the peoples of Palestine who were accustomed to the healing methods of that land, which



included the exercising of charms, incantations in high-pitched voices, the reciting of weird formulas, the striking of crude musical instruments, and the use of strong drugs. The Essenes spoke softly to their patients and used certain vowel sounds without any evidence of a formula. They often performed the greatest cures by the simple laying on of hands or by instructing the patient to retire to the silence of his home and sleep while the cure was conducted in a psychic manner.

All Essenes promised to educate their children in the teachings and principles that constituted the foundation of the Essenian belief. They raised each child within the scope of the organization until the child's twelfth year, when he or she was accepted on probation, which lasted until the twenty-first year, at which time the males were admitted to the first degree, and generally reached the fourth degree about the thirtieth year. The females were admitted on their twenty-first birthday to associate membership, and remained in that the rest of their lives if they proved worthy by the manner of their living.

Only an occasional Essene was permitted to preach to the public or perform public miracles, and then never as a matter of demonstration, but solely as a matter of service. Those in the organization who had lived the greatest number of incarnations, and were therefore the most highly evolved, were selected as their leaders, and, from among these, one was selected during each cycle to go out into the world and organize the work in a new land.

The Essenes looked forward to the coming of a great Savior who would be born within the fold of their organization and who would be a reincarnation of

the greatest of their past leaders. Through their highly evolved knowledge and intimate psychic contact with the Cosmic, they were well informed of coming events, and the Essenian literature and the literature of many countries contain references to the prophets among the Essenes. Manahem was one of their prophets who became famous through the prophecy that Herod would reign.

There seemed to be a regulation or an unwritten law among the Essenes that none of their members should be engaged in a daily task that was destructive, but always constructive. Therefore we find that the list of prominent Essenes included weavers, carpenters, vine planters, gardeners, merchants, and those contributing to the good and welfare of the public. There never were any in the organization who were armorers, slaughterers of cattle, nor engaged in any practice or business that destroyed the least living thing.

### **Conditions in Palestine Just Prior to the Birth of Jesus**

We have, first of all, a large number of men and women, even children, who were either Jewish by birth, Gentile by birth, or of various races and bloods.... They were prepared by some school or some system that made them ready to accept the higher mystical teachings as they were revealed from time to time by the progressive minds or by the teachings of avatars.

On the other hand, there was the one definite organization of mystics known as the Essenes, which conducted many forms of humanitarian activities, including hospices, rescue homes, and places for the care of the poor and needy. The Essenes had their northern center in



The serpent was used as a mystical symbol in the early sacred writings of various schools of religion. It was very often used as an emblem of the Word or Logos. The serpent was also the emblem of the Holy Spirit or the power that impregnated the life in the Virgin. In this sense it was the incarnation of the "Logos."

Galilee...because they had been directed to this locality by the center of their organization in Egypt, known as the G.W.B.

The Essenes were not popularly known, were quiet and unostentatious in their activities, and were distinguished by the populace only by their white raiment. The Nazarites, the Nazarenes, and the Essenes mingled freely and undoubtedly sought to carry on their independent activities without interference one with the other, although they unquestionably had many ideals and purposes in common....

In and around the shores of the Sea of Galilee lived these people...Nazarenes, Nazarites, and Essenes. They, too, were looking for the coming of the great Master, the great Avatar, the great Messiah, who would not only redeem Palestine but the whole world, and who would bring contentment to Israel and all peoples. These mystics contemplated, with true understanding, the reincarnation of one of their own great masters.

We must bear in mind that the belief in reincarnation was not only an established belief among these mystics, who were classified as heretics...but also among the most orthodox of the Jewish people at that time. This accounts for the many references in sacred literature, and even in the Judeo-Christian Bible, to a great leader, a great teacher, as having been *someone else at some other time*; for they believed that the greatest among them were great because of previous preparation, previous existence, and previous attainments. Naturally they looked for the new great master, the new redeemer of the world, to come out of the past in a new body and as a well-prepared individual of high attainments....

Not only did each of the homes of these Essenes and Nazarenes and Nazarites have a sanctum, in which daily prayers and solemn meditations were held, but many hours of each day and evening were given to mystical practices and the development of a

spiritual power within their beings. This made possible the many miracles they performed and the great work that they did among the poor and needy.

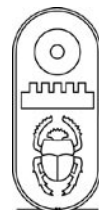
They were well advanced in the understanding of most of the mystical laws which the Rosicrucians and other mystics of the world today study and practice, and they knew the potentialities of certain spiritual laws when applied specifically for any definite purpose. To them, such miracles as incarnations of a highly divine nature, and the coming of a great leader into their midst, through *uncontaminated material laws*, were not impossible, nor improbable, and they lived a life typical of that which the mystics of today believe is lived by the masters in Tibet and in parts of India and Egypt.

Joseph was not only a devout Essene, and a carpenter by trade, in keeping with the rules of the organization, but Mary, his wife, was an associate member of the organization....

### Essenian Education of Jesus

In the first place, I have already shown that Jesus was born in the family of two devout Essenes and in a community of Essenes. This in itself was sufficient to guarantee the young child the very highest education obtainable in any land at that time. Not only were the preparatory schools conducted by the Essenes sufficient to give every child an excellent education at the hands of teachers and masters who had been trained in many lands and raised to the highest degree of ethical and literary attainments, but the associations and connections which the Essenes maintained with their other branches in foreign lands guaranteed a very liberal education to this special Son of God and this special charge of the Essenian community....

I have said that at the time of the birth of Jesus, the Essenes constituted a large community in Galilee, and that they had hospices and refuge houses in various parts of Palestine for the care of the poor and needy.



They also maintained the Supreme Temple in distant Egypt and minor temples in Palestine and other places. I must point out now one other fact that has been held in secrecy for many centuries, and that will probably explain many strange references in the sacred literature of the Christians and other sects.

The Nazarenes, the Nazarites, and the Essenes had united their interests in regard to one essential work—a work that is referred to by many authorities in religious and sacred histories and encyclopedias as being one of the common interests which bound the Nazarenes, the Nazarites, and the Essenes. This work was the maintenance of a great school, college, and monastery on Mount Carmel. The introduction of this historical place into the life of Jesus may seem surprising to a great many of my readers. For this reason a brief résumé of the history of Mount Carmel may be not only appropriate, but of value to those who wish to make further research in this regard.

### **Mount Carmel, the “Holy Headland”**

Just when Mount Carmel became the secret, sacred place for the maintenance of an isolated, protected school of mystics and of the G.W.B. is not definitely known. The earliest historical incidents of a religious nature connected with Mount Carmel are those associated with the lives of Elijah and his son. The ancient Jewish documents, as well as many of the writings preserved by the Roman Catholic Church, which in later years became greatly interested in the Mount of Carmel, show that from the earliest known period of the history of this mount, a tabernacle, monastery, or temple of some kind was located there, and that when Elijah went to this mountain to carry out the many marvelous things recorded of him, he found a temple and an altar there. We also know, from references in various records, that many of the great masters of the G.W.B. spent part of their lives on this mountain in the temple or monastery.

Even Pythagoras spent part of his life there, and in the history of his life this retreat of Mount Carmel is referred to as “sacred above all mountains and forbidden of access to the vulgar.” We find even in the Roman Catholic records, which have traced the history of Mount Carmel very carefully, references to the fact that “in ancient times the sacredness of Carmel seems to have been known to other nations besides Israel; thus in the list of places conquered by the Egyptian King, Thutmose III, there is a probable reference at Number 48 to the ‘Holy Headland’ of Carmel.”

Those who are students of Rosicrucian history know that Thutmose III was one of the great founders of the early mystery schools of Egypt and a leader in the movement that became the G.W.B. The Rosicrucian records also point out that Thutmose III conquered Carmel in the year 1449 BCE and released it to those who sought to maintain in this out-of-the-way place a school and monastery for the mystery teachings.

### **Elijah and Mount Carmel**

Now it is well known that Elijah was a Nazarite and an Essene, and that both the Jewish and Roman Catholic records refer to him as such. This one fact alone would be sufficient to indicate the nature of the demonstrations that Elijah performed on Mount Carmel and the nature of the monastery and temple maintained on the summit of the mountain.

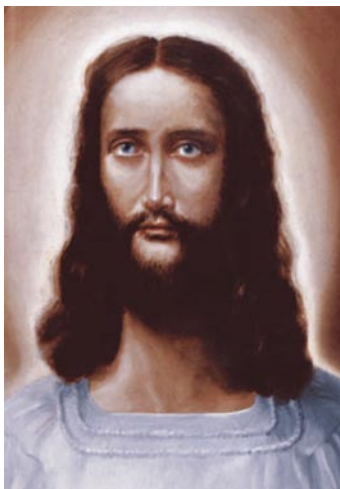
In many of the old stichometrical lists and writings and papers of the ancient ecclesiastical writers, mention appeared of an apocryphal Apocalypse of Elias, from which some citations are said to be found in I Corinthians 2:9, and elsewhere in the Bible. This old book or Apocalypse of Elias was known to the mystics of the G.W.B. and is known to all of the Eastern Rosicrucians as a very sacred record of the early history and teachings of the Essenes and the Nazarenes. In the early Christian centuries and during the lifetime of the Master Jesus, the

Apocalypse of Elias was well known and used in the sacred classes of the most advanced members of the organization. But like many other very valuable and illuminating records of early periods dealing with the more secret teachings, it was withdrawn from public use and became “lost.”

However, in 1893, Maspero, the famous historical writer, connected with the Rosicrucian Order of Egypt, found a Coptic translation of it in one of the Order’s monasteries in Upper Egypt. Since then several other translations in other languages have been discovered in the archives of the G.W.B., and parts of these have been used in the recently issued higher teachings of the Rosicrucians. From this Apocalypse of Elias and from the other Rosicrucian records, we learn much about the establishment of the monasteries and schools at Carmel, which were known as “the school of the prophets” or “the school of the Essenes.”

### The Great School at Carmel

As years passed by, the attendance at the school and monastery at Carmel became so



*The Master Jesus*, by H. Spencer Lewis

large that a community was established there, composed of those who were students. They adopted a distinct form of dress and remained within the monastery grounds throughout their entire lives except for the periods when they went forth to other lands as missionaries.

It was here that many of the most ancient manuscripts were translated and illuminated on parchment and sent to the various

archives of the G.W.B. throughout the world. A wonderful library was also maintained at Carmel for many centuries. Members of this community were present at Saint Peter’s first sermon on Pentecost, and they built a chapel in honor of this occasion. Many other historical structures existed there, such as El-Khadr, the school of the prophets; El-Muhraka, the traditional spot of Elias’s sacrifice; Elias’s Grotto; and the monastery itself...

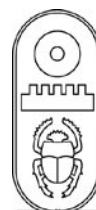
According to the Rosicrucian records, we find that in the sixth year of his life, the youthful Jesus was placed in the school at Carmel and began his preparation and training as a Son of God and an avatar.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Co., 1978).

<sup>2</sup> In Rosicrucian terminology the *Great White Brotherhood* consists of all the enlightened soul personalities who, independent of religions and traditions, are commissioned to work in one of the twelve paths of the ancient mystical tradition. It is that invisible body of mystics composed of the most exalted and advanced spiritual leaders in various lands throughout the world. The word

*White* in this phrase alludes to *Light*, the illumination of understanding, wisdom, and spirituality as expressed by enlightened soul personalities, and has nothing to do with race. Rosicrucians realize that these cosmic masters work in the service of humanity. The Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, is only one of the channels that has been used and is still being used by the G.W.B. for the development and progress of humanity’s own spiritual and esoteric unfoldment and for the improvement of civilization.



# THE ESSENE LINEAGE IN CALIFORNIA: CARMELITES AND ROSICRUCIANS AT CARMEL IN 1602

Richard A. Schultz, Ph.D., F.R.C.

**W** Spencer Lewis writes in *"The Mystery of the Essenes,"* that the Master Jesus was trained at the major Essene school established on Mount Carmel on the northwestern coast of today's Israel. This was one of the most important and influential of the Essene establishments. After the Jewish revolt in 66 CE when the Dead Sea Scrolls were hidden at Qumran, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, external Essene activity began to be curtailed, and the Tradition was transmitted under many forms.

Two of the clearest manifestations of the Essene Lineage may be found in the Rosicrucian Tradition and the Carmelite Order, continuing the mysteries of the Essene School at Mount Carmel. The Rosicrucian Tradition has faithfully transmitted the Essene healing techniques across the centuries, as well as the sense of the *Égrégoire* and of the unity between mystical meditation and an ethical life, for the betterment of the community and the planet.

In the 12th century, the hermits, monks, and mystics who still lived and worked on Mount Carmel formalized their community as the Carmelite Order within the Roman Catholic Church. They were also in clear continuity with the Essene traditions, including mystical prayer, vegetarianism, common holding of all property, simplicity of life, and manual labor to support the community. This Essene movement spread rapidly throughout the Middle East and Western Europe, and included many mystics traditionally associated with the Rose+Croix Path, notably Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross in the 16th century. Both the Rosicrucian Tradition and the Carmelites expanded the role of women in the earlier Essene movement, to full membership.

This is the story of how representatives of these two strains of the Essene heritage, Rosicrucian

explorers and Discalced (shoeless) Carmelite friars, landed in Monterey Bay in 1602. Through no coincidence, the river and valley were named "Carmel." Connected with this great mystical school, this became the first Rosicrucian mission to North America, bringing the Essene Tradition to the shores of Alta California through the two filiations.

## Written References to Seventeenth Century Rosicrucians in California

In many of the writings of H. Spencer Lewis, references are made to an early Rosicrucian presence in California during the earliest years of the seventeenth century. For example, in *The Light of Egypt*,<sup>1</sup> a document written for the public in 1927 and which was comparable to today's *Mastery of Life*,<sup>2</sup> there is a section entitled "America's First Rosicrucians." It states that "The first Rosicrucians to come to America and bring their wisdom to this new country were those who journeyed to the Pacific Coast early in the seventeenth century and deposited there the 'foundation stone' and documents of the last C.R.C. of Europe." Still earlier, a poem written by Royle Thurston,<sup>3</sup> called "To the Temple of Alden," was published in the Order's early magazine, *The American Rosae Crucis*, in 1920.<sup>4</sup> It also notes that the Temple was established on the California coast in 1603.

In the book *Lemuria: The Lost Continent of the Pacific*,<sup>5</sup> the writer relates, "Not far from San Jose and just across a little mountain range called the Santa Cruz Mountains is a small peninsula which stands unique in romantic, religious history, for here is the mountain of Carmel, the Valley of Carmel, and the Carmel River. The Carmelites who came here and established a monastery were

acquainted with this particular locality long before Vizcaíno made his expeditions and brought scientists, padres, and some Rosicrucian mystics to this region to unite their efforts in further forwarding the settlement and civilization of the Carmel and Santa Clara valleys. It was for this reason that the mystic descendents of an early mystery school located in Carmel of the East desired to accompany the expedition to the New World, and named the goal of their expedition Carmel long before they reached its shores . . . for the establishment of the first Rosicrucian Temple on the Pacific shores, equaling a similar foundation laid by the Rosicrucian pilgrims in 1694 on the eastern shore in what is now known as the city of Philadelphia.”

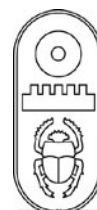
Several decades later, former Emperor Ralph M. Lewis wrote about this topic in his biography of his father, H. Spencer Lewis.<sup>6</sup> “There was still another factor, a romantic one which weighed heavily in the decision to make the move [of the Order’s headquarters] from New York to San Francisco. In the seventeenth century the first Europeans explored the Pacific Coast of California. There were Rosicrucians among their number! In Carmel, near Monterey, California, not far from the still existing mission of Spanish padres, was built the first Rosicrucian Temple of Alden in America, the rooms of which remained for some time but were not generally known by the local populace as having a Rosicrucian origin. To the Rosicrucian historians who had the opportunity of viewing these rooms before the property was converted to other use, there were evident signs of its early function. Frater [H. Spencer] Lewis was well acquainted with these facts. There was then the strong appeal to rebuild the See of the Order in that traditional area, California. [H. Spencer Lewis] relates, ‘San Francisco was not our objective, but California was. The Temple of Alden had been built by the first visitors to the Pacific Coast who built many permanent foundations. The Valley of Carmel was the first Rosicrucian settlement on the Pacific Coast. (Carmel was so named after Mt. Carmel in Palestine, where the Rosicrucian and Essene settlement existed so long.)’ ”

Little mention is made today of a Rosicrucian presence in California during the seventeenth century, or of a Temple of Alden, in contemporary Rosicrucian literature, such as the *Mastery of Life* or Christian Rebisse’s recent official history of the Rosicrucian Order.<sup>7</sup> However, confirmation of H. Spencer Lewis’s writings is contained in the archives of the Order,<sup>8</sup> from which some of the information presented here is derived. This article serves to bridge knowledge that was prevalent in the early history of the Order’s present cycle in America, during the first third of the twentieth century, with that available in the present day.

### **Mt. Carmel and the Essenes**

The original Mount Carmel is part of a mountain range along the Mediterranean Coast of present-day northwest Israel, west of the Sea of Galilee, approximately 23 km (14 miles) long and reaching an elevation of 546 m (1,791 feet).<sup>9</sup> The range is composed of limestone and dolomite rock, with numerous caves and abundant vegetation, such as vineyards, due to the favorable climate and rainfall, making it a noted and persistent oasis in the region.<sup>10</sup> The range has been occupied since Lower Paleolithic times,<sup>11</sup> with sites such as Tabun Cave preserving evidence of occupation from at least 750,000 years ago. Tabun Cave also demonstrates coexistence of Neanderthal and anatomically modern humans approximately 100,000 years ago, with burial artifacts suggesting that religious rituals were in existence from at least that time.<sup>12</sup> Evidence unearthed at Mt. Carmel caves records the progression from nomadic hunter-gatherer groups to more stationary agrarian societies in that area.

The range has been considered sacred since at least 1500 BCE, according to geographical lists found at the Temple Complex of Karnak<sup>13</sup> (Precinct of Amun-Re<sup>14</sup>). According to historical sources, the northern branch of the Essene Community<sup>15</sup> (the Nazareans) established its temple and main school at Mt. Carmel, between



the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. The southern branch occupied at least six sites around the Dead Sea, in the present-day West Bank, including Qumran, En Gedi,<sup>16</sup> and part of Old Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> Excavations in 1958 revealed what is now accepted as the altar and cave where the Hebrew prophet Elijah<sup>18</sup> lived and worked around 900 BCE.<sup>19</sup> Rosicrucian writings by H. Spencer Lewis<sup>20</sup> indicate that Elijah was also an Essene. Jesus and his family are considered to have been Nazarean Essenes, while John the Baptist was an Essene from Qumran.<sup>21</sup> Recent scholarly research<sup>22</sup> indicates that Qumran was a center for medicine and healing, at which both the northern branch of Essenes at Mt. Carmel and the Therapeutae<sup>23</sup> in northern Egypt also excelled.

History records that Pythagoras (ca.569–475 BCE), the Greek philosopher and mathematician, visited Mt. Carmel<sup>24</sup> around 535 BCE and studied there on his way to Egypt before establishing his school at Croton, southeast Italy, after approximately 518 BCE.<sup>25</sup> Pythagoras shared many attributes with the Essenes, including their mode of dress (white robes), long hair, vegetarianism, nonviolence to living creatures, and certain mystical practices.<sup>26</sup> Most likely, the many differences in living habits, texts, and rituals between both groups of Essenes and the Therapeutae indicate regional adaptations and individualized explorations of a common mystical philosophy.

An Essene presence in either region is difficult to trace after the time of the First Jewish-Roman War of 66–73 CE.<sup>27</sup> Many Essenes were believed to have been killed during the war and the related destruction of Jerusalem and many Essene sites including Qumran in 70 CE. This period coincided with the sequestration of the Dead Sea Scrolls in eleven caves near Qumran. The systematic shutdown of Egyptian and other “pagan” sites by Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, ca. 391 CE, likely completed the abandonment of Essene sites such as Mt. Carmel.<sup>28</sup> Roman rule of the region lasted until its conquest by the Persians in 614 CE, and then by the Arabs

in 640 CE. The series of Crusades<sup>29</sup> to this region from 1095–1292 brought, among other things, a resurgence of trade and a diffusion of Arab learning to Europe.

The Carmelite Order of the Roman Catholic Church was established at Mt. Carmel in approximately 1155,<sup>30</sup> tracing its inspiration to Elijah and later inhabitants there; in 1238 this group relocated to Cyprus and Sicily, and then moved on to England and France a few years later. Some of the early Carmelite practices resembled those of the Essenes, such as vegetarianism, contemplation and prayer, and communal property. A central focus of the Essenes on healthy living and harmony between the body, soul, and spirit<sup>31</sup> underlies the teachings of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, today.

## **The Vizcaíno Expedition of 1602–1603** *Prelude to the Expedition*

The century following Christopher Columbus’s first voyage to North America was a time of vigorous exploration and exploitation of the new lands of the Western Hemisphere.<sup>32</sup> Vasco Núñez de Balboa’s discovery of the Pacific Ocean in 1513<sup>33</sup> was followed about a decade later with the establishment of Acapulco as the principal port of New Spain. In conjunction with expansion of Spanish explorations into Baja California and the American Southwest, the discovery of untapped resources of high-quality pearls in the Gulf of California in late 1533<sup>34</sup> led to extensive commercial exploitation of this lucrative gemstone.

The expedition of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo<sup>35</sup> was the first to clearly map much of the coast of Alta California.<sup>36</sup> Launched on June 27, 1542, from Puerto de Navidad (Mexico), his two small, poorly built ships discovered San Diego Bay and Cape Mendocino, and may have reached Oregon before turning south for home. Storms on their northward journey between November 11 and 14 kept the ships at sea, beyond sight of land, so they sailed passed Drake’s Bay, Half Moon Bay, and San Francisco Bay.<sup>37</sup> On November 16 Cabrillo anchored, but did not



make landfall due to heavy seas, in the “Bahia de Los Pinos,” now considered to be Monterey Bay.<sup>38</sup> Two days later they described Cape San Martin near Big Sur, California.

During the course of the next forty years, with the California coast considered by Spain to be sufficiently well known, the focus in Spanish cartography and exploration shifted to the Philippines and other lands of the western Pacific. Expeditions were launched from Acapulco<sup>39</sup> to the Philippines, China, and Japan, with regular commercial service by the Manila Galleons<sup>40</sup> between Mexico and the Philippines beginning in 1565. This lucrative commercial trade made the safety and efficiency of trans-Pacific shipping of major importance to Spain through the remainder of the century.<sup>41</sup> Although the outbound journey from Acapulco to Manila took three to four months, usually occurring from March through late April or early June, the return voyage of fully loaded ships, via Japan to Acapulco, required a longer journey. Typically taking from early July through late January or early February, the crews on the return voyage contended with high seas, storms, and poor nutrition for more than seven months. Exhaustion was common by the time the ships reached the California coast, so finding a port in either Alta or Baja California became desirable for both ship repairs and crew rehabilitation.<sup>42</sup>

Following the successful raids on Spanish shipping by the English Captains Francis Drake in 1579 and Thomas Cavendish in 1588, protection of trans-Pacific shipping from foreign attacks motivated a renewed effort to map the California coast in support of safe havens for the returning Spanish ships.<sup>43</sup> Charting the foggy and dangerous California coast again became an official priority in January 1593. The second attempted expedition of this series, again

commanded by the experienced Portuguese Sebastián Meléndez Rodríguez Cermeño, sailed from Manila in July of the following year, eventually reaching Cape Mendocino in early November.<sup>44</sup> After anchoring in Drake’s Bay (north of San Francisco), Cermeño passed Monterey Bay (which he named San Pedro Bay) on December 10.<sup>45</sup> Because this voyage was obliged to use a galleon loaded with commercial cargo, the expedition was ill suited for coastal mapping and exploration.

The loss of the main ship in Drake’s Bay during the voyage, with its valuable cargo and many crewmembers,<sup>46</sup> prompted a decision in September 1599 to send more appropriate ships directly north along the coast from Acapulco.<sup>47</sup> These expeditions were also ordered to prepare fresh maps of the coast, without referring to

those of the previous voyages. Vizcaíno’s expedition of 1602–1603 was the result.

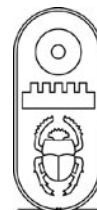
In contrast to the well-known geography of the East Coast of North America and its interior, maps of the Pacific Coast during the 1500s<sup>48</sup> were vague and at times fanciful, with many maps representing the coast as collections of islands. This conception that California was an island,<sup>49</sup> bordered to the north by a waterway that would lead back to the Atlantic Ocean (the Northwest Passage or Strait of Anián<sup>50</sup>) persisted through publication of the Mercator world map in 1569<sup>51</sup> that otherwise presented North America reasonably well as a contiguous, if distorted, landmass. The continuity of California with the rest of the continent to the east was conclusively proven only by the overland expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza<sup>52</sup> from Tubac (south of Tucson, Arizona) to Monterey, in 1774.

### *Vizcaíno, Monterey Bay, and Carmel*

Chartered by the Viceroy for New Spain, Don Gaspár de Zúñiga y Avcevedo, Count of Monte Rey, under orders of King Philip III of



Fig 1. A statue of Fr. Serra occupies the site of Sebastián Vizcaíno’s Mass on December 18, 1602, overlooking Monterey Bay. (Photograph by the author.)



Spain, Sebastián Vizcaíno set sail in three well-built ships and a longboat from Acapulco on Sunday May 5, 1602, under the divine protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.<sup>53</sup> Vizcaíno's voyage and the surrounding events are generally well documented.<sup>54</sup> The expedition included Vizcaíno, his son Juan, fourteen ships-officers,<sup>55</sup> 126–150 soldiers and sailors, and 3 Friars of the Discalced Carmelite Order,<sup>56</sup> for a total of 145–169 people. However, there is some ambiguity in the total number of people who embarked on the voyage. Vizcaíno gives a value in his diary of 126 soldiers,<sup>57</sup> for a total of 145 persons, whereas the detailed account of the voyage by Father Antonio de la Ascension states that 200 soldiers were authorized and raised,<sup>58</sup> increasing the total to 219. Father Ascension's later report dated 1620, however, lists 150 soldiers and a total of about 200 persons on the voyage,<sup>59</sup> implying an additional 30 people beyond Vizcaíno and his crew. The purpose of Juan Vizcaíno on the voyage is not addressed in Vizcaíno's or Father Ascension's accounts, and it is likely that others not listed in the records, such as those suggested in Rosicrucian writings, were also on board.

After eight months at sea, Vizcaíno's ships entered Monterey Bay on the night of December 16, 1602.<sup>60</sup> The bay was considered to be the fruit of their voyage—a resting place for ships returning from the western Pacific. On the next day, Vizcaíno sent parties ashore near what is now Fisherman's Wharf in downtown Monterey to obtain water, food, wood, and an assessment of the resources and fertility of the land. On December 18, following a Mass held in a tent erected under a large oak tree<sup>61</sup>—the first Mass in Alta California—Vizcaíno and his officers decided to send one

of their ships back to Acapulco with the most sick among them, along with copies of the maps and reports made during the voyage.<sup>62</sup> This ship sailed on December 29, during a time of deteriorating weather, increasing snow in the inland mountains, and freezing of freshwater streams near the shore. A party was sent on Wednesday, January 1, 1603, to obtain fresh water from the Carmel River, eight km (five miles) to the south, which was so named by Vizcaíno, himself;<sup>63</sup> the supplies were replenished late on January 3. On that final day, Vizcaíno and eleven others traveled overland from Monterey Bay to the Valley of Carmel. There, his party split into two, with five crew members sent to investigate a Native American village, leaving the remaining seven people in the Valley; all returned to Monterey Bay by nightfall on the 3rd. Vizcaíno and the remaining ships left Monterey Bay on Friday, January 3, heading north toward Cape Mendocino, and then turning south to arrive at Mazatlan,

Mexico, on February 17, 1603. A total of eighteen days were spent in the Monterey Bay and Carmel areas.

The location of Vizcaíno's landing site in southern Monterey Bay is marked today by a Celtic cross and a plaque near Lighthouse Avenue and Artillery Street.<sup>64</sup> The Mass was celebrated on a nearby hill in what is now Lower Presidio Historic Park (Fig 1); it is marked by a statue erected in 1891 commemorating Father Junipero Serra's later reoccupation of the site, along with several information plaques and a cross dating from 1770 marking the burial site of one of Father Serra's troops, Alexo Nino.<sup>65</sup> The oak tree used as a canopy for both Vizcaíno's and Father Serra's Masses stood until ca. 1900.<sup>66</sup> Remains of the Serra Oak are preserved at the San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey.<sup>67</sup>



Fig. 2. The Carmel Mission today; the Rosicrucian temple ruins would be near the single-story buildings to the left of the main church. (Photo by the author.)

## Today's Legacy

Several sites in California are associated with this early seventeenth century group of Rosicrucians. The first is the hill where Vizcaíno's party in 1602 celebrated their first Mass (seen in Fig. 1). This site, now well marked and readily accessible, encourages contemplation and a profound respect for the arduous path taken by the earliest Rosicrucians to American shores. The second site, about 6 km (4 miles) east of there, along the southeast side of Monterey Bay, was later called Grey Eagle Terrace (or Old Terrace) in Seaside, California. Here was the site of the earliest Rosicrucian activity in America. It corresponds to the "sacred" burial place of the Native Americans referred to by H. Spencer Lewis,<sup>68</sup> with an altar located in



Fig. 4. Photograph from the Rosicrucian Order's archives showing H. Spencer Lewis accompanied by his family and others during one of the visits to the Carmel area in ca. 1923-24.

the center of three trees planted in a triangle (which are related as having been seen by H. Spencer Lewis on a visit in 1918). In the formative years of the Order in America, two parcels of land in Grey Eagle Terrace were owned by AMORC from 1919–1924.

The third site is adjacent to the present Mission San Carlos de Borromeo de Carmelo (the Carmel Mission, Fig. 2), founded in 1770 by Father Junipero Serra as the second California mission (after the first in San Diego).<sup>69</sup> This was likely the location of the Temple of Alden so often referred to in Rosicrucian writings and lore, established sometime after Vizcaíno left Monterey Bay, and said to have been occupied until about 1632.<sup>70</sup> This permanent structure (Fig. 3)



Fig. 3. Partially restored Carmel Mission (1938) and a small part of the ruins attributed to early Rosicrucian activity in 1602–1603. (Photo from the archives of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.)

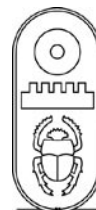
contained a temple room and an underground cellar in which several chests containing papers and other ritualistic materials were deposited. H. Spencer Lewis explored the extensive ruins near Carmel Mission in May 1918 and during subsequent visits (Fig. 4); the records<sup>69</sup> relate that he discovered several Rosicrucian artifacts there, including crosses with a rose

worked in coral and other materials in the center. AMORC officers repeatedly visited and examined the Carmel site through the 1930s (Fig. 5) as part of RCUI activities, ceasing only after major restoration of the mission buildings had begun.<sup>71</sup>

The evidence suggests that the early Rosicrucian presence in California began with seven initiates during Vizcaíno's sojourn at Monterey Bay, who then moved to Grey Eagle Terrace and, sometime later, farther south to establish the extensive complex in Carmel. The Carmel temple complex would, by its sheer size alone, have served many more than seven people, and it may also have facilitated exploration further down the coast to Point Lobos and perhaps beyond. In the early twentieth century, these areas in the Monterey Bay area were considered by H. Spencer Lewis to be too remote from major population and transportation centers, so he



Fig. 5. Tour of the Rosicrucian ruins near Carmel Mission in June 1938, organized by RCUI Dean Orval Graves and Grand Master Thor Kiimalehto. (Photograph from the archives of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.)



chose nearby San Jose, California, to become the site of Rosicrucian Park instead.

Essenes from Qumran and Mt. Carmel, along with the Therapeutae in Egypt and elsewhere, were masters in the arts of physical and mystical healing. This information and tradition form part of the Rosicrucian Order's teachings and heritage today. In a broad sense, the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, may be considered to be an organization devoted to healing. Once the rift between the individual and the divine is healed, then social, political, religious, and intellectual rifts will be healed as a consequence.

Because the activity in California during 1602–1603 was conducted in secrecy, the first exoteric Rosicrucian activity in North America was Johannes Kelpius's mission to Pennsylvania in 1694,<sup>72</sup> which marked the first public century of the Order's activities in America. The activity associated with the Rosicrucians in California occurred concurrently with those in England (during the time of Queen Elizabeth I and Francis Bacon), yet started *before* the publication of the Rosicrucian Manifestos in Germany (in 1614, 1615, and 1616), activities in France (1623), and the general expansion of Rosicrucian and mystical thought that continued well into the 1700s.<sup>73</sup> It also predated the first permanent settlements of Virginia and Massachusetts by the English in 1607–1620.<sup>74</sup>

The 1500s before Vizcaíno's voyage were a time of unprecedented upheaval in the fields of cosmology, religion, and politics, with millennialists such as Martin Luther and Simon Studion, author of the *Naometria*, expressing a view that was in keeping with the social and philosophical convulsions of the time when Rosicrucianism experienced a resurgence in Europe.<sup>75</sup> The millennialist, end-of-the-world view was also in vogue before Johannes Kelpius's voyage to establish Rosicrucian ideas in Philadelphia, and forebodings of similar upheavals in Western Europe formed the backdrop of H. Spencer Lewis's visit and Rosicrucian initiation in France in 1909.<sup>76</sup>

Vizcaíno's visit to California may represent a mystical initiation for the Order itself, with an initiatic filiation reaching back from European Rosicrucianism to the Essenes, the Greeks, and thence to the Egyptians. The seed planted by Vizcaíno, when activated by H. Spencer Lewis, May Banks-Stacey, and their associates<sup>77</sup> produced the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, in a significant departure from the necessarily cloaked and secretive ways of the past.<sup>78</sup> The seeding of the Order in Spanish California therefore represents the first steps toward the establishment of Francis Bacon's New Atlantis in North America, "the land where the eagle spreads its wings," which created a nucleus for spreading the Light from the west coast of the American continent that continues today.<sup>79</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> (San Jose: The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, Jurisdiction of North America, AMORC, 1927, 31 pages).

<sup>2</sup> Available to the public for downloading at <http://www.rosicrucian.org/about/>.

<sup>3</sup> This was a pseudonym of H. Spencer Lewis; see Christian Rebis, *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries*, (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 2005), 163.

<sup>4</sup> Royle Thurston, "To the Temple of Alden," *The American Rosae Crucis*, Vol.3, No.2 (May 1920), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Written by W.S. Cervé, a pseudonym for H. Spencer Lewis, published by Rosicrucian Order, AMORC in 1931.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph M. Lewis, *Cosmic Mission Fulfilled*, (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1966).

<sup>7</sup> C. Rebis, *Rosicrucian History*, 163

<sup>8</sup> Document prepared by the Archivist of the Order, Office of the Emperor, October 30, 2006, transmitted from France to the English Grand Lodge, San Jose, California.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.planetware.com/israel/mount-carmel-isr-ha-cr.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.planetware.com/mount-carmel/carmel-national-park-isr-ha-crnp.htm>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Carmel%2C\\_Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Carmel%2C_Israel); <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03351a.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9058083/Paleolithic-Period>.

<sup>12</sup> See the summaries in English from the Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa (located on Mt. Carmel), <http://arch.haifa.ac.il/excav.php>.

<sup>13</sup> This list places these early references to Mt. Carmel at the time of the New Kingdom of Egypt; see <http://www.essene>.

com/B%27nai-Amen/carmelites.htm for a detailed chronology.

<sup>14</sup> See listing at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precinct\\_of\\_Amun-Re](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precinct_of_Amun-Re).

<sup>15</sup> See H. Spencer Lewis, *The Mystical Life of Jesus*, 25th ed. (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1982), 26–42. This work was originally published in 1929, nearly two decades before the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran were discovered.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05428a.htm>; H.S. Lewis, in his *Mystical Life of Jesus*, pp. 27–28, also notes that En Gedi was the earliest Essene site in Palestine; Essene activity expanded and diversified greatly after they established themselves at Mt. Carmel.

<sup>17</sup> <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txo/essene.htm>. The Dead Sea Scrolls are widely considered to have been produced by the Essenes at Qumran. See: (<http://www.gnosis.org/library/scroll.htm>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead\\_Sea\\_Scrolls#Essenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls#Essenes); <http://reluctant-messenger.com/essene/index.html>; <http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/deadsea.scrolls.exhibit/intro.html>).

<sup>18</sup> Also called Elias; see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah> and <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05381b.htm> for summaries of his religious work and impact.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah> and <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05381b.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> H.S. Lewis, *Mystical Life of Jesus*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> <http://essene.com/Church/nazirene.html>.

<sup>22</sup> G.A. Moss, “Historical Perspectives on Health: The Essene’s Sister Sect in Egypt: Another Medical Site?” *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* 122 (2002): 256–265. This scholarly paper describes the major known Essene sites clustered around the Dead Sea, including En Gedi, which was an oasis occupied since the Stone Age and later an important source of pharmaceutical herbs such as balsam.

<sup>23</sup> The Therapeutae were a branch of Essenes, located most likely at Canopus northeast of Lake Mareotis near Alexandria, Egypt. Moss (“Historical Perspectives on Health,” 2002) describes the striking similarities between the Therapeutae Essenes and the cult of Serapis, a god of healing, music and dance, and quiet reflection centered at Canopus that dates from ~300 BCE, with prominence in Ptolemaic Egypt during the second century BCE. The Temple of Serapis ([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia\\_romana/greece/paganism/serapeum.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/greece/paganism/serapeum.html)), as well as much of Alexandria itself, was destroyed by Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, in ~391 CE, ending some six centuries of activity there.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.completepythagoras.net/mainframeset.html>.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Biographies/Pythagoras.html>.

<sup>26</sup> <http://essene.com/History/PythagorasAndNazareans.html>.

<sup>27</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Jewish-Roman\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish-Roman_War).

<sup>28</sup> H.S. Lewis, *Mystical Life of Jesus*, 152–153.

<sup>29</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusades#First\\_Crusade\\_1095.E2.80.931099](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusades#First_Crusade_1095.E2.80.931099).

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03354a.htm> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmelite>, for in-depth discussions of the Carmelite Order and its history.

<sup>31</sup> Julie Scott, “The Mystery Schools and the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC,” *Rosicrucian Digest*, Vol.84, No.1 (2006): 2–7.

<sup>32</sup> The summary at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_west\\_coast\\_of\\_North\\_America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_west_coast_of_North_America) provides a compact entry into the history of Spanish exploration of the New World. An extensive and detailed account is given by Henry R. Wagner, *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of North America in the Sixteenth Century* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1929), 1–10.

<sup>33</sup> For example, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasco\\_Núñez\\_de\\_Balboa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasco_Núñez_de_Balboa).

<sup>34</sup> W. Michael Mathes, *Vizcaíno and Spanish Expansion in the Pacific Ocean 1580–1630* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1968), 4.

<sup>35</sup> See <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/bio/cabrillo/cabrillo.htm> for a summary, and H.E. Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest 1542–1706* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916) for detailed accounts including Cabrillo’s diary of his expedition, written by members of his crew, either chief pilot Bartolomé Ferrelo (who assumed command of the expedition following Cabrillo’s death) or Juan Paez (Bolton, p. 10). An extensive exposé is given by Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 154–167.

<sup>36</sup> In the 1500s, California was divided into two sections: Baja, which coincides with today’s Baja California (Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 295), and Alta California, which included everything to the north, from present-day San Diego to somewhat north of Cape Mendocino (Ibid., 321).

<sup>37</sup> Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 30–32.

<sup>38</sup> Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 78, 321; see also <http://www.mbnos.noaa.gov/sitechar/rechist.html>.

<sup>39</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acapulco>.

<sup>40</sup> The Manila Galleons carried gemstones and silver from Mexico to trade for spices (clove, nutmeg, mace) from Indonesia and southern Philippines, porcelain, ivory, lacquered items, processed silk from China, and items from Japan (until trade with Japan closed in 1638), providing income for Spanish colonists living in Manila, as well as substantial income for the Spanish crown via the treasure fleets that sailed across the Atlantic Ocean back to Spain ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manila\\_galleon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manila_galleon)). Sailing eastward across the Pacific on their return voyage from the Far East, the galleons typically made first contact with North America at Cape Mendocino ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape\\_Mendocino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Mendocino)), sailing down the coast toward Acapulco.

<sup>41</sup> Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 94–120; see also Alan K. Brown, *A Description of Distant Roads: Original Journals of the First Expedition into California, 1769–1770, by Juan Crespi* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 2001), 12–15.

<sup>42</sup> Mathes, (*Vizcaíno*, 12), documents the loss of Spanish ships due to storms in the Pacific from 1568 through 1578, and the subsequent loss of Spanish supremacy in the Pacific Ocean with the successful raids of the English ships of Francis Drake in 1578–1579.

<sup>43</sup> Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 12–14.

<sup>44</sup> Alberta J. Denis, *Spanish Alta California* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 22–25.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 24; Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 44–48.

<sup>46</sup> Other expeditions were chartered to map the California coast between 1596 and 1598, but these were also unsuccessful for various reasons (see Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 125–153; Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 50–52; Denis, *Spanish Alta California*, 22).

<sup>47</sup> Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 52–53.

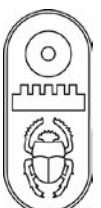
<sup>48</sup> E.L. Stevenson, “Typical early maps of the New World,” *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 39 (1907): 202–204, discusses the evolution of maps of the Americas during the 1500s.

<sup>49</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island\\_of\\_California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_of_California); see also Brown, *Description of Distant Roads*, 29–31.

<sup>50</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strait\\_of\\_Anián](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strait_of_Anián); see also Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 125–138.

<sup>51</sup> Mercator’s 1569 map is found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercator\\_projection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercator_projection); see also <http://mathsforeurope.digibel.be/mercator.htm> for a discussion of this important Dutch cartographer.

<sup>52</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan\\_Bautista\\_de\\_Anza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Bautista_de_Anza); Brown, *Description of Distant Roads*, 38–43, documents the Spanish



expeditions that finally debunked the notion of a “California island.”

<sup>53</sup> James Geoghegan, OCD, “Carmel in Mexico and California in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Carmelite Digest*, 17, no. 4 (2002): 10–26. Geoghegan’s article, based on a presentation he gave in San Diego in 1984, draws heavily from the work by G.B. Griffin, translator, *The Voyage of Sebastian Vizcaíno to the Coast of California, together with a map and Sebastián Vizcaíno’s letter written at Monterey, December 28, 1602* (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1933).

<sup>54</sup> Extensive documentation of Vizcaíno’s voyage to the California coast can be found in Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 180–272; Denis, *Spanish Alta California*, 22–88; Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 43–134; Mathes, *Vizcaíno*; and Brown, *Description of Distant Roads*, 15–19.

<sup>55</sup> Names of the officers and their assigned ships are given in Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 55–57, and in Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 184–185.

<sup>56</sup> The names, ages, and backgrounds of the friars are given definitively by Geoghegan, “Carmel in Mexico,” 14–15; see also Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 183. Brown, *Description of Distant Roads*, 29–31, provides additional and insightful details about the Carmelite mission in California.

<sup>57</sup> See Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 53. The account was probably written between 1603 and 1611, according to Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 378.

<sup>58</sup> Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 184.

<sup>59</sup> Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 106.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 91; Denis, *Spanish Alta California*, 31; Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 94.

<sup>61</sup> Geoghegan, “Carmel in Mexico,” 17, 25; Denis, *Spanish Alta California*, 31–32.

<sup>62</sup> Mathes, *Vizcaíno*, 94.

<sup>63</sup> See the eloquent description of the valley by Charles Francis Saunders and J. Smeaton Chase, *The California Padres and their Missions* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 294.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.monterey.org/museum/historytour/theatre.html>.

<sup>65</sup> An entry into the history of Father Serra can be found at [http://gocalifornia.about.com/cs/missioncalifornia/a/ft\\_serra.htm](http://gocalifornia.about.com/cs/missioncalifornia/a/ft_serra.htm).

<sup>66</sup> Wagner, *Spanish Voyages*, 404, note 160.

<sup>67</sup> A description and location of the church are at <http://www.sancarloscathedral.net>.

<sup>68</sup> R.M. Lewis, *Cosmic Mission Fulfilled*, 166–167.

<sup>69</sup> A tour of all the California missions is available at [missions.bgmm.com/index.htm](http://missions.bgmm.com/index.htm). The current stone mission building, constructed from 1793–1797, is located near the thatch-roofed log structures built by Juan Crespí (Brown, pp. 96, 98) in 1773. A detailed description of sequence of church buildings on the site is given by Mardith K. Schuetz-Miller, *Building and Builders in Hispanic California 1769–1850* (Tucson, Arizona: Southwestern Mission Research Center, 1994), pp. 167–170, and by Frances Rand Smith, *The Architectural History of Mission San Carlos Borromeo* (Sacramento: California Historical Survey Commission, 1921). The initial structures, once the mission relocated to the Carmel Valley in 1771 (Denis, pp. 127–128), were built of cedar and cypress logs planted vertically into the ground and topped by flat dried-mud roofs. In 1774 other structures were added including a granary built partly of adobe brick and of logs topped by a straw roof and other log buildings used as residences for skilled workers and their families. Around this time a new adobe church was built, in which Fathers Serra and Crespí were buried; the present stone church was built atop this adobe church. The extensive adobe brick ruins in front of the present church (see Fig. 3) are said officially to mark the place of Father Serra’s spartan living quarters (Saunders and Chase, p. 300) although it is recorded that he lived in a hut (Saunders and Chase,

p. 299), consistent with Brown’s research using Juan Crespí’s original and unedited journals which demonstrates the use of logs and thatched roofs for the structures erected and used during this period. The first available mention of these adobe structures was by Father Lasuén in 1800 (Smith, pp. 28–31; see also his Plates 36–45). Lasuén states that these structures were the best rooms that the mission had besides the church; however, no records indicate when they were constructed (Smith, p. 58), and they do not match the many descriptions of the buildings used as residences, storage, or other purposes through that time (Smith, pp. 20–28). The adobe structure was later incorporated into a large quadrangle adjacent to the church building, which was added in 1814 (Smith, p. 31). The design and construction materials of the pre-1800 adobe structures described by Lasuén are different than those of the other Mission structures that were made primarily either of quarried stone (for the church) or logs (the other buildings). The large adobe room that formerly adjoined the church building on its eastern side (partly housing the Capilla chapel, built on that location in 1818 to help preserve the older structures from continued weather-related deterioration; Smith, p. 31 and his Plate 7) was two stories tall including the second-story loft and a sloping roof (Smith, Plate 7). Although the buildings comprising the remainder of the quadrangle completed in 1815 were also said to have been made of adobe (Smith, p. 71), construction methods apparently varied, with the best buildings, probably those seen by Lasuén, being located closest to the church.

<sup>70</sup> Document prepared by the Archivist of the Order, Office of the Emperor, May, 2007, transmitted from France to the English Grand Lodge, San Jose, California.

<sup>71</sup> See <http://www.carmelmission.org/4thgrader/missionhistory.html> for a synopsis of the Mission’s history and restoration.

<sup>72</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Kelpius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Kelpius); see also Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History*, 150–151.

<sup>73</sup> See Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History*, 46–97, for a synopsis and discussion of the events of this period in Europe.

<sup>74</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony\\_and\\_Dominion\\_of\\_Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_and_Dominion_of_Virginia) for a concise summary of the early colonization of the Eastern Seaboard. A clear account of the religion, culture, journey across the Atlantic, and activities of the English Pilgrims is given by <http://www.pilgrimhall.org/plgrmhll.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History*, 37.

<sup>76</sup> For example, see Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History*, 170.

<sup>77</sup> The role of men and women in founding the Rosicrucian Order in America is emphasized by Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History*, 175–176; and by Steven Armstrong, “Hidden Harmonies: Rediscovering the Egyptian Foundations of the Rosicrucian Path,” *Rosicrucian Digest*, Vol. 85, No.1 (2007): 47–50.

<sup>78</sup> See the many writings of the late Raymond Bernard, including *Messages from the Celestial Sanctum*, (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1980), and *Secret Houses of the Rose-Croix*.

<sup>79</sup> Many people in and out of the Order contributed to the development of this article. Ms. Nere Erkiaga, of the Basque Special Collections Library of the University of Nevada, Reno, was helpful in pointing me to rare books about Vizcaíno and his expeditions, along with tutoring in Basque pronunciation. I am extremely grateful to Grand Master Julie Scott for her support and facilitation of research within the Rosicrucian Order during the past year. Thanks to Jean-Louis Abraham for his extensive research support and Philip O’Connell for scanning the poem “To the Temple of Alden.” Many others within the Grand Lodge in San Jose, the Château d’Omonville, and elsewhere within the Order have guided my investigations and I am grateful to all for their help.

# ANCIENT LITERATURE ON THE ESSENES

**S**everal ancient authorities discussed the Essenes and their community in considerable detail. The principle sources are given here, including Philo and Josephus. The Essenes are also mentioned by Pliny, Solinus, Porphyry, Eusebius and Epiphanius during antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Although the direct Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent of “Essene” has not been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient and modern authors have consistently used the Greek name “Essaioi” (Essenes) to refer to this group, with varying explanations for its etymology.

## Philo Judaeus (20 BCE–50 CE)

From *EVERY VIRTUOUS PERSON IS FREE*:

“There are some among them called Essenes—in number more than four thousand—from, as I think, an incorrect derivation from the Greek homonym *hosiotēs*, holiness, because they are above all others, worshippers of God. They do not sacrifice any animals, but rather endeavor to make their own minds fit for holy offering. They, in the first place, live in villages, avoiding cities on account of the habitual wickedness of the citizens, being sensible that as disease is contracted from breathing an impure atmosphere, so an incurable impression is made on the soul in such evil company.

“Some of them cultivate the earth, others are engaged in those diverse arts which promote peace, thus benefiting themselves and their neighbors. They do not lay up treasures of gold or silver, nor do they acquire large portions of land out of a desire for revenues, but provide themselves only with the absolute necessities of life. Although they are almost the only persons among humanity who are without wealth and possessions—and this by their own choice rather than want of success—yet they regard themselves as the richest, because they hold that the supply of our wants, and contentment of mind, are riches, as in truth they are.

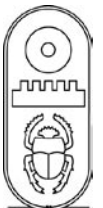
## No Weapons of War in the Community

“No maker of arrows, darts, spears, swords, helmets, breast-plates, or shields—no manufacturer of arms or engines of war, nor any person whatever who makes things belonging to war, or even such things as might lead to wickedness in times of peace, is to be found among them. Traffic, inn keeping, or navigation, they never so much as dream of, because they repudiate every inducement to covetousness. There is not a single slave to be found among them, for all are free, and mutually serve each other. They condemn owners of slaves, not only as unjust, inasmuch as they corrupt the principle of equality, but also as impious, because they destroy the law of nature, which like a mother brought forth and nourished all alike, and made them all legitimate brothers and sisters, not only in word but in deed; but this relationship, treacherous covetousness, rendered over-bearing by success, has destroyed by engendering enmity instead of cordiality, and hatred instead of love....

“For...the seventh day is held holy, on which they abstain from all other work, and go to the sacred places called synagogues, sit according to order, the younger below the elder, and listen with becoming attention. Then one takes the Bible and reads it, and another of those who have the most experience comes forward and expounds it, passing over that which is not generally known, for they philosophize on most things in symbols according to the ancient zeal.

## The Love of God is Made Manifest Among Them

“They are instructed in piety, holiness, righteousness, economy, politics, in knowledge of what is truly good, bad and indifferent, to choose things that are necessary,



and to avoid the contrary. They use therein a threefold rule and definition, viz.: love of God, love of virtue, and love of humanity. Of their love to God, they give innumerable demonstrations—e.g. their constant and unalterable holiness throughout the whole of their life; their avoidance of oaths and falsehoods, and their firm belief that God is the source of all good, but of nothing evil.

“Of their love of virtue they give proofs in their contempt for money, fame, and pleasures, their continence, endurance, in their satisfying their wants easily, simplicity, cheerfulness of temper, modesty, order, firmness, and every thing of the kind. As instances of their love of humanity, are to be mentioned their benevolence, equality, and their holding all things in common, which is beyond all description, and about which it will not be out of place to speak here a little.

### **The Essenes Hold All Things in Common**

“First, then, no one has his or her own house, so that it also belongs to all. For, besides that, they all live together in sodalities; it is also open to those of the community who come from other places. Moreover, they all share one common treasury and store of provisions, common garments, and common food for all who eat together. Such a mode of sleeping together, living together, and eating together, could not be so easily established in fact among any other people; and indeed it would be impossible. For whatever they receive daily, if they work for wages, they do not retain it as their own, but give it to the common stock, and let everyone that likes make common use of it.

“Those that are sick are not neglected because they can earn nothing, but have what is necessary for their aid from the common stock, so that they ever fare richly without wanting anything. They manifest respect, reverence and care for the aged, just as children do for their parents, administering to them a thousand times with all plentifulness both with their hands and their counsels in their old age.”<sup>2</sup>

### **From CONCERNING THE JEWISH PEOPLE:**

“Our lawgiver, Moses, formed innumerable disciples into a community called Essenes, who, as it appears, obtained this appellation by virtue of their holiness. They dwell in many cities of Judea, and in villages, and in large and populous communities. Their order is not founded upon natural descent, but upon admiration for virtue and sincere love for humanity. . . . there are properly speaking no newly born ones among the Essenes, no children, no youths, as the dispositions of these are unstable and liable to change from the imperfections incident to their age but they are all full grown adults. . . .

### **Freedom in their Way of Life**

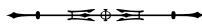
“They all dwell together in the same place, form themselves into companies, societies, combinations, and unions, and work together all their life for the common good of the community. The different members of the order are engaged in different employment; they work cheerfully and industriously, and never try to leave their employment on account of cold, heat, or any change of weather. They go to their daily work before the sun rises, and do not leave off till some time after it has set, when they return home rejoicing no less than those who have been exercising themselves in gymnastic contests.

“They believe that their employment is a sort of gymnastic exercise of more benefit to life, greater pleasure both to soul and body, and of a more enduring advantage than any mere athletic labors, because they can cheerfully continue in their work as a recreation even when youth and bodily strength are gone. Those who are acquainted with the cultivation of the land are engaged in agriculture; others, again, who understand the management of animals, attend to the flocks; some are skilful in the management of bees; and others again, are artisans and manufacturers, thus guarding against the want of anything. They do not omit anything, which is requisite to supply the absolute necessities of life.



“The appointed steward and general manager receives the wages which the different people get for their respective employments, and forthwith buys plenty of food and other necessaries of life. They eat at the same table, and have every day the same food, being lovers of frugality and moderation, and averse to luxury and extravagance as a disease of both mind and body. Not only is their table in common, but their dress too is in common. They have a store of rough cloaks in the winter, and in the summer cheap garments without sleeves, to which every one can go and freely take whichever kind he or she wants, for whatever belongs to one belongs to all, and whatever belongs to all belongs to each individual.

“If one of them is sick, that person is cured from the common resources, and is attended to by the general care and anxiety of the whole body. The elderly, even if they happen to be childless, end their lives in a most happy, prosperous, and tenderly cared for old age, as if they were not only the parents of many children, but were even also particularly happy in an affectionate offspring. They are looked upon by such a number of people as worthy of so much honor and provident regard, that they think themselves bound to care for them even more from inclination than from any tie of natural affection....”<sup>3</sup>



**Flavius Josephus (37– post 100 CE)**  
**From *THE JEWISH WAR*:**

“There are three sects of philosophers among the Jews. The followers of the first are called Pharisees, of the second Sadducees, and of the third, who really seem to practice holiness, Essenes. Jews by birth, they love each other more than the others. They reject pleasure as an evil, and regard continence and not yielding to passions as virtues. Rather than marriage, they prefer to adopt the children of others while still tender and

susceptible of instruction, and regard them as their own relations, and train them in their practices. They do not, however, repudiate marriage, and its consequent succession of the race in themselves....

**Attitude Towards Worldly Goods**

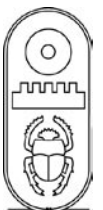
“They despise riches, have all things in common in a very admirable manner, and there is not one to be found among them who is richer than another; for it is a law that those who enter the sect must give up their possessions to the society as common property, so that there is not to be seen among them all, either the abjectness of poverty or the distinction of riches; but as every person’s goods are cast into a common treasury, they all, like siblings, have one heritage....

“They have no separate city, but some of them live anywhere; and if any of the society come from other places, whatever they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go to those whom they have never seen before as if they had been most intimate.

**Religious Practices**

“Their piety towards God is extraordinary, for they never speak about worldly matters before the sun rises, but offer up, with their faces towards it, some of the prayers transmitted by their forebears, as if they supplicated it to rise. Hereupon, they are all sent by the overseers, every one to work in the department in which one is skilled; and, having diligently labored till the fifth hour, assemble again together in one place, girt round with their linen apron, and have a baptism with cold water. After this lustration they resort to a special house, in which no one of another faith is admitted, and go to the refectory purified as into a holy temple. Having quietly taken their seats, the baker gives every one a loaf of bread according to order, and the cook places before each one a dish with one sort of food.

“The priest commences with prayer, and no one is allowed to taste the food before



grace is said. Thanks is also returned after the meal; for both at the commencement and at the conclusion they praise God as the giver of their food. Whereupon they put off their white garments as if they were sacred, and return again to their work until evening. On returning again they take their supper together, at which strangers, who happen to be in the place, are allowed to sit down with them. No noise or tumult ever desecrates their house, but they let every one take part in the conversation in turn; and the silence of those who are within appears to those that are without as some awful mystery. The cause of this is the uninterrupted sobriety, as well as the fact that their eating and drinking are so measured out as just to suffice the cravings of nature.

### **Helping the Needy and Showing Mercy Are Paramount**

“While they do nothing without the injunctions of their overseers, yet there are two things in which they have free action, viz., helping the needy, and showing mercy; to help the deserving when they are in want, and to give food to the hungry, they have perfect liberty; but to give anything to their relations is not allowed without the permission of the overseers. They are just dispensers of their anger, curbers of their passions, representatives of fidelity, ministers of peace; and every word with them is of more force than an oath. They avoid taking an oath, and regard it as worse than perjury; for they say that a person who is not believed without calling on God to witness is already condemned of falsehood. They take extraordinarily great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and select that especially which is beneficial both for the soul and body; hence they investigate medical roots and the property of minerals for the cure of distempers.

### **Admittance and Discipline in the Community**

“When any desire to enter the sect, they are not immediately admitted, but

although they have to remain a whole year without, yet they are obliged to observe the sect’s ascetic rules of living, and the sect gives each petitioner an axe, an apron as mentioned above, and a white garment, if they have shown proof of continence during this time, they approach nearer to the Essenian life and partake of the holier water of purification; but they are still not as yet admitted to the sect’s common table. Having thus given proof of their perseverance, the conduct of each petitioner is tested for two more years, and, if found worthy, the petitioner is admitted into the society.

“However, before the initiate touches the common meal, the initiate swears, by most awful oaths, first to fear God, and next to exercise justice towards all people—neither to wrong any one of their own accord nor by the command of others; always to detest the wicked and side with the righteous; ever to keep faith inviolable with all others, especially with those in authority, for no one comes to office without the will of God; not to be proud of their power nor to outshine their subordinates, either in their garments or greater finery, if they themselves should attain to office; always to love truth and strive to reclaim all liars; to keep their hands clear from stealing, and their minds from unholy gain; not to conceal anything from the community, nor disclose anything belonging to them to those without, though it were at the hazard of their own lives.

“Initiates, moreover, swear not to communicate to anyone their doctrines in any other way than they have received them; to abstain from robbing the commonwealth; and equally to preserve the writings of the society and the names of the angels. By such oaths they bind those who enter the community.

“Such as are caught in heinous sins are excommunicated from the society; and the excommunicated frequently die a miserable death. For, being bound by oaths and customs, they cannot receive food from any

out of the society, so that they are forced to eat herbs till, their bodies being famished with hunger, they perish. Hence they compassionately receive many of them again when they are at their last gasp, thinking that suffering, approaching unto death, is sufficient for their sins.

“In their verdicts they are most exact and just, and never give sentence if there are less than a hundred of the community present: but what is then decreed is irrevocable. Next to God they have the highest veneration for the name of the lawgiver, Moses, and punish with death any one who blasphemes it. To submit to the elders and to the majority they regard as a duty: hence, when ten of them sit together, no one will speak if the other nine do not agree to it. They avoid spitting before the face, or to the right hand, and are also stricter than all other Jews not to touch any labor on the Sabbath day—for they not only prepare their Sabbath-day’s food the day before, that they may not kindle a fire on that day, but they will not move a vessel out of its place....

#### **Four Segments of the Community**

“They are divided, according to the time of leading this mode of life, into four different classes, and the juniors are so much inferior to the seniors, that the latter must wash themselves when they happen to touch the former, as if they had been defiled by a stranger. They live to a great age, so that many of them live to above a hundred years—arising from the simplicity of their diet, as it appears to me, and from their order. They despise suffering, and overcome pain by fortitude. Death, if connected with honor, they look upon as better than long life.

“Concerning the steadfastness of their minds in all cases, the war with the Romans has given ample proof; in which, though they were tortured, racked, burned, squeezed, and subjected to all the instruments of torment, that they might be forced to blaspheme the lawgiver or eat what was forbidden, yet they could not be made to do either of

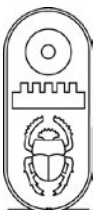
them; nor would they even once flatter their tormentors or shed a tear, but, smiling through their torments and mocking their tormentors, they cheerfully yielded up their souls, as those who would soon receive them back again.

#### **The Immortality of the Soul**

“For they firmly believe that the bodies perish and their substance is not enduring, but that the souls are immortal—continue forever and come out of the most subtle ether—are enveloped by their bodies, to which they are attracted through a natural inclination, as if by hedges—and that when freed from the bonds of the body, they, as if released from a long servitude, rejoice and mount upwards. In harmony with the opinion of the Greeks, they say that for the good souls there is a life beyond the ocean, and a region which is never molested either with showers or snow or intense heat—is always refreshed with the gentle gales of wind constantly breathing from the ocean; whilst to the wicked souls they assign a dark and cold corner, full of never-ceasing punishments.

“And it seems to be according to the same opinion that the Greeks assigned to their most valiant, whom they called heroes and demigods, the Island of the Blessed, but to the souls of the wicked the regions of the impious in Hades; as also their fables speak of several there punished, as Sisyphus and Tantalus and Ixion and Tityus. This they teach, partly because they believe that the souls are immortal, and partly for the encouragement of virtue and the discouragement of vice. For good people are made better in their lives by the hope of reward after their death, whilst the passions of the wicked are restrained by the fear they are in that, although they should be concealed in this life, after death they must suffer everlasting punishment....

“There are also some among them who undertake to foretell future events, having been



brought up from their youth in the study of the sacred Scripture, in divers purifications, and in the sayings of the prophets; and it is very seldom that they fail in their predictions.

“There is also another order of Essenes who, in their way of living, customs, and laws exactly agree with the others, excepting only that they differ from them about marriage. For they believe that those who do not marry cut off the principal part of human life—that is, succession—especially that, if all were of the same opinion, the whole race would soon be extinguished....”<sup>4</sup>

#### From *THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS*:

“The Essenes, as we call them, were also exempted from this necessity [of taking an oath of allegiance to Herod]. These people live the same kind of life that among the Greeks has been ordered by Pythagoras. I have discoursed more fully about them elsewhere.”<sup>5</sup>

## Leaving All to God

“The doctrine of the Essenes delights in leaving all to God. They regard the soul as immortal, and say that the attainment to virtue must be fought for with all our might. Although they send consecrated gifts to the Temple, yet they never bring any sacrifice on account of the different rules of purity, which they observe; hence, being excluded from the common sanctuary, they offer sacrifices in themselves (spiritually). Otherwise, they are in their manner of life the best of people, and employ themselves wholly in the labor of agriculture.

“Their uprightness is to be admired above all others who endeavor to practice virtue; such uprightness...is not of recent date, but has existed among them from times of yore, striving most scrupulously not to disturb the community of goods, and that the rich should not enjoy more of the common property than the poor.”<sup>6</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Christian Ginsburg, *The Essenes: Their History and Doctrines* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1864).

<sup>2</sup> Philo Judaeus. “Every Virtuous Person is Free.” 75-91. Translated in Ginsburg, 32-36. Philo texts from: Philo of Alexandria, *Opera Omnia*, Collected and edited by Thomas Mangey, (London: Erlangae, Svmv W. Waltheri, 1749), vol 2, 457 ff and 622 ff. Available online at [www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book33.html](http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book33.html).

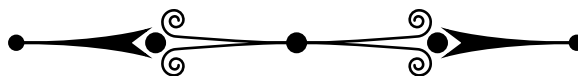
<sup>3</sup> Philo Judaeus. *Concerning the Jewish People*. Translated in Ginsburg, 36-40. Philo’s complete work has been lost, however, these fragments on the Essenes were preserved in Eusebius’s

*Preparation for the Gospel*, Book 8 Sec 11-18. Available online at [www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book37.html](http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book37.html).

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Josephus. *The Jewish War*. Book 2, Chapter 8, Sections. 2-13. Translated in Ginsburg, 41-50. Available online at [www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/josephus/war2.html](http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/josephus/war2.html).

<sup>5</sup> Flavius Josephus. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 13, Chapter 5, Section 9. Translated in Ginsburg, 49-50. The entire text of Josephus’s *Antiquities* is available online at <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> Flavius Josephus. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chapter 1, Section 5. Translated in Ginsburg, 52-53.



# THE DISCOVERY AND PUBLICATION OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

*Michael Wise, Ph.D.; Martin Abegg, Jr., Ph.D.; and Edward Cook, Ph.D.*

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**T**he story of the journey of the ancient Scrolls from the caves of Qumran to publicly available translations reads like a modern detective thriller. Here, scholars and participants in this saga retell these events.

## Discovery and Publication

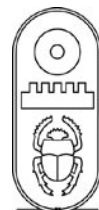
Archaeology is the study of *archaia*, “old things,” but for a long time nobody knew that old things were interesting. The past, they thought, was pretty much the same as the present, and so in illuminated medieval Bibles King David is pictured in a medieval suit of armor. But people began to gain a sense of historical perspective during the Renaissance, and some things began to be valued because they were old. The wealthy began to collect antiquities: *archaia*. When Napoleon and his legions entered Egypt in the early nineteenth century, they opened up not only a new arena of cultural interchange, but a rich new source of *archaia*. The antiquities trade began in earnest at that time, along with colonialism, its sponsor, and a new science—archaeology.

Private collectors and professional archaeologists have always vied for the same antiquities. “That belongs in a museum!” is the cry of Indiana Jones and his professional colleagues as they struggle against mere collectors. Both parties, of course, are willing to pay for their antiquities under the right circumstances. An awareness of that fact led certain Bedouin of the Taamireh tribe to preserve some old scrolls that they had found in the Judean desert in 1946 or 1947. They happened to enter a narrow cave, they said, and there they were, rolled up in stone jars. Could not someone be found to buy the manuscripts—old, dirty, and tattered as they were?

The original seven scrolls were early divided into two lots. One lot of four was purchased by the Syrian Orthodox archbishop of Jerusalem, Athanasius Samuel, the other lot of three by a scholar at the Hebrew University, E. Y. Sukenik. Samuel, wishing to authenticate the antiquity of his purchase through experts, eventually showed his texts to specialists at the American Schools of Oriental Research. They realized that Samuel’s scrolls had been written at least two thousand years earlier, not the oldest *archaia* ever, but centuries older than the oldest manuscript ever discovered in the Holy Land. These excited scholars announced the discovery of the oldest known biblical manuscripts to the press on April 11, 1948, and Sukenik followed suit days later. The original seven scrolls are the *Charter of a Jewish Sectarian Association* (then called the *Manual of Discipline*, text 5 in the present collection), *Tales of the Patriarchs* (text 2), *Thanksgiving Psalms* (text 3), *A Commentary on Habakkuk* (text 4), *The War Scroll* (text 8), and two copies of the book of Isaiah.

Samuel took the scrolls to the United States and continued to try to sell them for years, without success. Potential buyers were aware that some scholars doubted the scrolls’ authenticity and that questions lingered about the propriety of Samuel’s removing the scrolls from their country of origin. Finally, in 1955, an agent of the young state of Israel paid Samuel \$250,000 for his four scrolls, and the texts were reunited with Sukenik’s three scrolls. Today they are the prize displays of the Shrine of the Book museum in Jerusalem.

But by 1955, no one really cared anymore whether Israel or the archbishop had the scrolls, because by then the industrious Bedouin had discovered nine more caves containing scrolls



equally ancient. Another cave would turn up in 1956, for a total of eleven. The first astonishing discovery was succeeded by a steady stream, as the caves of Judea seemed eager to disgorge everything that had silently lain in their depths for millennia. These eleven caves, it should be noted, were all in the general vicinity of the Wadi Qumran, near the northwest end of the Dead Sea, and their treasures do not exhaust the total number of discoveries. Ancient writings were also found in caves near the Wadi Murabba`at and the Wadi Daliyeh and in the ruins of Masada. Except for the Masada texts, the other discoveries came from times and milieus different from those of the Qumran texts. When people use the phrase “Dead Sea Scrolls,” they sometimes mean all of these treasure troves, but more usually only the Qumran scrolls are meant. That will be our own usage in the pages that follow.

The total number of scrolls, when the books were intact, may have been as high as 1,000. Some have vanished without a trace, but scholars have identified the remains of about 870 separate scrolls. Their long centuries in the earth have reduced the vast majority of them to bits and pieces, mere scraps, some no larger than a fingernail. The fourth cave alone, where the biggest cache of manuscripts was unearthed, contained an estimated 15,000 fragments.

The great glut of material—a bonanza that far exceeded the wildest dreams of scholars—was not without its problems. The biggest was simply finding scholars equipped with enough knowledge and time to sort through the material. The government of Jordan in whose territory, after 1948, the Qumran caves lay—allowed foreign scholars to form a team in the early 1950s to deal with all the incoming texts. These eight young men were to have the responsibility—and the privilege—of publishing everything.

The scroll team began well, publishing its first volume of texts in 1955, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert, Vol. 1: Qumran Cave 1* (abbreviated as *DJD 1*). This book contained

additional fragments from the first cave the Bedouin had entered, pieces of documents that had turned up after the first seven scrolls were removed. “Work of this nature is of necessity slow,” wrote G. L. Harding, director of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, in the foreword. “It may well be a few years before the series can be completed.” Harding could not have foreseen that forty years later the work would still not be complete. What explains the achingly slow pace of publication?

For one thing, the work required considerably more time than originally estimated. The first seven scrolls were all more or less intact (although some were in better repair than the others). The publishing program consisted of simply publishing photographs of the texts, which were (and still are) legible to anyone who can read ancient Hebrew. But undamaged scrolls like these turned out to be the exception. Most were fragmentary, and it required considerable painstaking work to even figure out which fragments originally belonged to the same scroll. That work necessarily had to be done before even preliminary translations and interpretations could be issued. (This work, by the way, still continues, and new “joins”—ways of connecting the fragments—are discovered from time to time. We propose a few ourselves in the pages that follow.)

The work of collecting and joining fragments, then, required much painstaking work and not a little ingenuity. The original team did this phase of its work well, but in hindsight it is clear that the task was too large and the team too small. The second volume of *DJD* came out in 1961, with texts from Murabba`at, and *DJD 3* followed in 1962, containing all the texts from Caves 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10, the so-called Minor Caves (for comparatively few scrolls were found in these caves). *DJD 4* (1965) contained a single manuscript of the book of Psalms from Cave 11. Only with *DJD 5* (1968) were several manuscripts from the “mother lode,” Cave 4, issued.

At this point the already slowing pace of publication ground to a complete halt. As a

result of the Six-Day War of June 1967, the Palestine Archaeological Museum, where the scroll fragments were stored, had become the property of the state of Israel. The members of the scrolls publication team—most of whom held decidedly pro-Arab convictions—were reluctant to continue under Israeli auspices, even after the authorities assured them they could continue their work without interference.

Eventually the Israelis and the team worked out an agreement, and the team published *DJD* 6, containing a number of minor texts, in 1977. By this time, however, the scholarly community was growing increasingly unhappy with the official scrolls team. The scrolls that had already been published had revolutionized study of the Bible, early Judaism, and early Christianity. The thought that hundreds of texts—more than half of what had been found—had never been seen outside a small circle of privileged editors was maddening, “the academic scandal of the century” in the words of Britain’s Geza Vermes.

In fact, after a *modus operandi* had been reached with Israel, there was no good reason why the rest of the texts could not be published rapidly. The team had finished most of the initial work of reconstruction by 1960. But they had come to feel that a simple publication was no longer enough. The scrolls had become an entire subdiscipline of ancient history, and a “proper” publication now had to include vast analyses, large syntheses, and detailed assessments placing every fragment in its place in the history of Judaism, Christianity, and humankind. This was a daunting task for a large team; for a small team it was simply impossible. And, although the team had slowly begun to increase its size—taking on a few Israeli members and select graduate students (those who studied with team members) in the 1980s—it still refused to allow other scholars access to the texts. In academia, of course, knowledge is power, and the scrolls editors enjoyed theirs immensely.

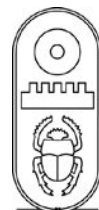
Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, complaints about the slow pace of publication snowballed. Team members continued to publish individual texts from time to time, but

control of the process always remained in their hands. Even when a text was published it seemed like *noblesse oblige* and the perceived arrogance behind the slow pace of publication acted as a catalyst, goading “outsiders” to work toward achieving unfettered access. New obstacles to publication had arisen as well: several members of the original team had died and others were battling poor health.

Finally, in the early 1990s, the monopoly of the official team was broken, both from within and from without. In 1990, John Strugnell, head of the scrolls team since 1987, was forced to resign by the Israel Antiquities Authority for derogatory comments he made about Judaism. The Authority put Israeli scholars in charge of the project, and they began to invite more scholars to join the team, intending to speed up the pace of publication.

But outside forces played the decisive role. The official team had compiled a concordance—a comprehensive word list that also provides the context in which each word listed occurs—of all the words in the unreleased texts. The team had always limited use of the concordance to themselves, but before Strugnell’s departure he allowed certain academic libraries to receive copies of the concordance. Since the concordance listed each word along with one or two on either side of it, theoretically one might reconstruct not only entire lines, but entire scrolls.

A graduate student at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Martin Abegg, with his adviser, Ben Zion Wacholder, put the theory into practice. He carried out the reconstruction with the aid of a desktop computer, and the first volume of hitherto unreleased scrolls was published in September 1991. The publication was a bombshell, and it triggered another. Later that same month, the director of the Huntington Library in southern California, William Moffett, announced that the library had in its possession photographs of all of the unreleased Dead Sea Scrolls and that scholars would be allowed full access to them. These twin attacks on the monopoly of the scrolls



team proved decisive. After initially threatening legal action, in November 1991 the new editor-in-chief of the official team, Emanuel Tov, announced that all scholars would have free and unconditional access to all the photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This victory over scholarly secrecy and possessiveness made the book you hold in your hand possible.

### **How the Dead Sea Scrolls Were Written**

What, exactly, are the Dead Sea Scrolls? The objects themselves are documents written with a carbon-based ink usually on animal skins, although some are inscribed on papyrus. The scrolls were written right to left using no punctuation except for an occasional paragraph indentation—no periods, commas, quotation marks, or any of the other reader helps to which we are so accustomed. Indeed, in some cases there are not even spaces between words: the letters simply run together in a continuous stream. The codex, the early form of the book with pages bound on one side, had not yet been invented, so the “pages,” or columns, were written consecutively on the scroll. To read them one slowly un-rolled the scroll, and then, to be polite, rewrapped it, like rewinding a modern videotape. Not a few of the scrolls testify that the ancients failed to rewind as often as we do. The scrolls are written in several languages and half a dozen scripts, and though all are religious texts, within that category their contents are amazingly varied.

### **The Languages Used in the Scrolls**

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the dominant view of the Semitic languages of Palestine in this period was essentially as follows: Hebrew had died; it was no longer learned at mother’s knee. It was known only by the educated classes through study, just as educated medieval Europeans knew Latin. Rabbinic Hebrew, the written language of the Mishnah, Tosephta, and other rabbinic literature of 200 C.E. and later, was considered a sort of scholarly invention—artificial, not the language of life put to the page. The spoken language of the Jews had in fact

become Aramaic. Even in this tongue, literary production was thought to be meager. Accordingly, prominent scholars writing in the mid-1940s (on the eve of the scrolls’ discovery) expressed doubts that the composition of a Semitic Gospel was even possible. Edgar Goodspeed, for example, argued: “The Gospel is Christianity’s contribution to literature. It is the most potent type of religious literature ever devised. To credit such a creation to the most barren age of a never very productive tongue like Aramaic would seem the height of improbability. For in the days of Jesus the Jews of Palestine were not engaged in writing books. It is not too much to say that a Galilean or Jerusalem Jew of the time of Christ would regard writing a book in his native tongue with positive horror.”<sup>1</sup>

The discovery of the scrolls swept these linguistic notions into the trash bin. Here were hundreds and hundreds of texts, tangible evidence of substantial literary productivity. Apart from copies of biblical books, about one out of six of the Dead Sea Scrolls is inscribed in Aramaic. Clearly the writing of an Aramaic Gospel was eminently possible. Yet the vast majority of the scrolls were Hebrew texts. Hebrew was manifestly the principal literary language for the Jews of this period. The new discoveries underlined the still living, breathing, even supple character of that language. A few texts pointed to the use of Hebrew for speech as well as writing. These works (for example, *A Sectarian Manifesto*, text 84) displayed a missing-link type of Hebrew, intermediate between the form of Hebrew used in the Bible and that used by the rabbis. Rabbinic Hebrew was shown to be no invention, but simply a development from the ordinary spoken Hebrew of biblical times.

The scrolls have therefore proven that late Second-Temple Jews used various dialects of Hebrew along with Aramaic. (These two languages are closely related—Aramaic is to Hebrew as French is to Italian.) For writing, however, they generally tried to imitate biblical Hebrew, an older form of the language. The situation would be analogous to our trying today to write in the style of Elizabethan



English. Not all the scrolls writers could perform this feat equally well, so the “correctness” of the Hebrew varies considerably. Modern scholars actually appreciate the mistakes more than the deft performances, because the mistakes arise out of the writer’s own language usage. The written form teaches us about the spoken.

A small minority of the scrolls were written in Greek. Their discovery has vouchsafed us a further glimpse into the linguistic complexity of first-century Jewish society. Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek: each was being used in particular situations of speech and writing. We are only just beginning to discover some of the rules for those uses, to bring to bear the more sophisticated perspectives of sociolinguistics. Since, as noted above, many of the Dead Sea Scrolls have but recently become known to a wide range of scholars, we are presently at an early stage of linguistic understanding.

### Scripts Used for Writing the Scrolls

The script most commonly used to write these texts, whether Hebrew or Aramaic, has come to be called the *Jewish script*. Before the discovery of the scrolls, we knew relatively little about it. The Jewish script proves to be a development of an earlier script of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., one that has been known to scholars since the nineteenth century. Perhaps surprisingly, that script had originally been used only for Aramaic, not for Hebrew. In the time of the scrolls it came to be used for Hebrew as well. Whereas Hebrew won the battle of the languages, when it came to script Aramaic was the victor. The scrolls reveal various forms of the Jewish script: beautiful, careful chancellery hands decorated with serifs, informal varieties, cursive and extremely cursive (i.e., illegible and extremely illegible!) types. From this script later developed the medieval scripts used to write Hebrew, and one descendant became that most often used in modern printed Hebrew Bibles and books.

Also surviving among a small group of the scrolls, however, is a developed form of the ancient Hebrew script that the Aramaic form

had supplanted among the Jews. This script had been the standard in the days of David and Solomon and on down to the time of Jeremiah. In our period this form of writing, known as *Paleo-Hebrew*, was especially used for copies of the books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and of Job. Presumably the scribes who chose it regarded those books as the oldest of the Hebrew Scriptures; Paleo-Hebrew was therefore most appropriate. The scrolls have shown, then, that the Jews of Jesus’ day used scripts descended from both earlier Aramaic and earlier Hebrew scripts.

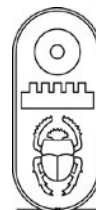
In addition, three different *cryptic*, or secret, *scripts* have emerged. Before the discovery of the scrolls, we had never seen these forms of writing. While cryptic writing as a concept goes back as far as the third millennium B.C.E. in ancient Mesopotamia, these are the oldest forms associated with Hebrew ever discovered. The most important of these secret scripts has come to be called Cryptic Script A. Perhaps fifteen scrolls use Cryptic Script A either entirely or for marginal notes (see especially *The Sage to the “Children of Dawn,”* text 55, and *The Phases of the Moon*, text 57).

As Edgar Allan Poe once noted in an essay; *A Few Words on Secret Writing*, “Few persons can be made to believe that it is not quite an easy thing to invent a method of secret writing which shall baffle investigation. Yet it may be roundly asserted that human ingenuity cannot concoct a cipher which human ingenuity cannot resolve.” Cryptic Script A, likewise, has yielded up its secrets to modern scholars, who have discovered that it is a simple substitution cipher—that is, each symbol of the cryptic alphabet corresponds to one symbol of the regular Hebrew alphabet.<sup>2</sup>

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Edgar Goodspeed, “The Original Language of the Gospels,” in *Contemporary Thinking About Jesus: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas S. Kepler (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1944), 59.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 4-11.



# BALEV TAHOR: THE BLESSINGS OF THE WISE

From the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q525:1.1-2,2.1-12)

**O**ne of the most striking of the original materials among the scrolls found at Qumran is this fragment found in Cave 4. The Jewish antecedents forming the background of such Christian literature as the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5:3-10) are clear. This is classic Wisdom literature, echoing Proverbs 1:1-6, and other Dead Sea Scrolls texts such as "The Book of Secrets" and "The Secret of the Way Things Are."<sup>1</sup> Although the Hebrew text uses the masculine gender, reflecting the composition of this segment of the Essenes at Qumran, we understand the mystical message to be universal.

Sons of mine, be attentive now,  
for I shall teach about her,  
the Wisdom which God granted me,  
Wisdom and Understanding He instilled  
within me  
to teach to all the Sons of Truth.

Bless the walker with the heart immaculate,  
whose tongue knows no foul word.

Bless those who adhere to her laws,  
clinging not to evil ways.

Bless those who celebrate over her,  
and are not overcome with foolishness.

Bless those who seek her with pure hands,  
and never with a heart dishonest.

Bless him who embraces Wisdom  
and lives by the Torah of God Most High,  
who conforms his mind to her path,  
who conforms his actions to her discipline,  
who welcomes her reproof.



Queen of Qumran, by Victoria Franck Wetsch, S.R.C.

He will not spurn her in moments of pain,  
he will not forget her when trouble comes,  
not even when terror strikes.

In the humility of his being,  
he will not evade her influence,  
but make her his constant meditation.

Even during days of danger,  
he is busy performing the commandments,  
and all his life he bears her in mind  
and sets her up before his eyes--  
never to walk in evil ways!

Singular, unified his heart!  
He will take his seat with kings.

Know this, my sons, and never wander  
from this way.<sup>2</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> See Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr. and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 423.

<sup>2</sup> "Balev Tahor" Translation © 2007 by Shawn Eyer.

# THE ESSENES, QUMRAN, AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

*Stuart J. Malkin, Ph.D., F.R.C.*

The importance of the Essenes and their creation of the Dead Sea Scrolls are of interest because the scrolls contain well over eight hundred separate documents recording biblical history and because the amazing inhabitants of Khirbet Qumran created the scrolls before 100 CE.<sup>1</sup> Tomes have been written about the scrolls and their Essene connection, but reported here are only some of the reliably recorded details, together with a record of our own observations, made on site at Qumran in 1965 (Fig 1).



Fig 1. The Caves at Qumran (Photo by the Author).

Recent (1990) hypotheses discount that the Essenes created most of the scrolls. Some conspiracy theories suggest that the Essenes created none of the scrolls. A personal visit to Qumran in 1965 has convinced us that more credit is due the Essenes than is attributed to them by some writers.

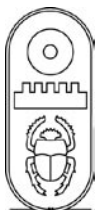
## Who Were the Essenes?

Qumran was inhabited by the Hebrew sect called the Essenes, which was a Jewish religious community that existed in Palestine at the time the site was active. The Essenes were apparently important during those times. Ancient literature regarding the Essenes is more abundant than for the other two major Jewish sects, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Where the Essenes came from is unknown. "It is most probable that they descended from the Hasidim of pre-Hasmonean times, who aligned with Judas Maccabee against Antiochus IV Epiphanes about 170 BCE."<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of the word *Essene* is a mystery. There is no Hebrew word for these people, only the Greek. Dupont-Sommers suggests that the word *Essene* may come from the Hebrew words *Essenoi* or *Essaioi*,

with his interpretation being the expression "Men of Council."<sup>3</sup>

Firsthand reports concerning the Essenes are attributed to the Jewish philosopher of the Egyptian Diaspora, Philo of Alexandria, who lived between 20 BCE and 50 CE. Philo remarks that, "The Essenes live in a number of towns in Judea, and also in many villages and in large groups. They do not enlist by race, but by volunteers who have a zeal for righteousness and an ardent love....They possess nothing of their own, not house, field, slave, neither flocks nor anything that feeds and procures wealth....Everything they do is for the common good of the group. They work at many different jobs and attack their work with amazing zeal and dedication, working from before sunrise to almost sunset without complaint, but in obvious exhilaration. Their exercise is their work. Indeed, they believe their own training to be more agreeable to body and soul, and more lasting, than athletic games, since their exercises remain fitted to their age, even when the body no longer possesses its full strength.



“They are farmers and shepherds and beekeepers and...in diverse trades. They share the same way of life, the same table, even the same tastes; all of them loving frugality and hating luxury as a plague for both body and soul. Not only do they share a common table, but common clothes as well. What belongs to one belongs to all. Available to all of them are thick coats for winter and inexpensive light tunics for summer...”<sup>4</sup>

Philo’s account, although remarkable, is probably more accurate than not. The reader should not confuse the cloistered Essenian way of life with the validity of their accomplishments as the Dead Sea Scroll(s)



Fig 2. Scriptorium at Qumran (Photo by the Author).

scribes, confirming the hypothesis formed during our 1965 visit. During this author’s visit to Qumran, a hypothesis was formed that is hopefully well founded, and that will be explored as we continue.

### The Qumran Site

The remains of Khirbet Qumran are near the end of the Wadi Qumran, a dry “stream bed” in the northwest corner of the Dead Sea. Some of the eleven Dead Sea Scroll caves are visible from and within easy walking distance of Qumran. It was a small settlement, with perhaps 100-200 Essenian inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

Recently (1997-2001), archeologists Hanan Eshel and Magan Broshi discovered that the Essenes lived in some of the caves and

in tents adjacent to (but not in) the stone complex.<sup>6</sup> That is an interesting discovery, meaning that the scriptorium (Fig 2), “kitchens,” pay office, dining room, assembly area, and other authenticated loci comprised the “civic center,” which was separate from the “residential” area.

### The Dead Sea Scrolls

Two millennia passed from the time the scrolls were written until they were discovered in 1947. They are the most significant and oldest manuscripts that give scholarly authority to biblical texts and to the history of their time. The Dead Sea Scrolls have engendered both academic and lay interest. They are a unique resource for understanding the genesis of two of the world’s great religions. Lay interest in the scrolls is unusually intense.<sup>7</sup> The traditional and abbreviated version of the discovery tells us that “In 1947, young Bedouin shepherds, searching for a stray goat in the Judean Desert, entered a long-untouched cave and found jars filled with ancient scrolls. That initial discovery by the Bedouins yielded seven scrolls and began a search that lasted nearly a decade and eventually produced thousands of scroll fragments from eleven caves. During those same years, archaeologists searching for a habitation close to the caves that might help identify the people who deposited the scrolls, excavated the Qumran ruin, a complex of structures located on a barren terrace between the cliffs where the caves are found and the Dead Sea.

“Within a fairly short time after their discovery, historical, paleographic, and linguistic evidence, as well as carbon-14 dating, established that the scrolls and the Qumran ruin dated from the third century BCE to 68 CE They were indeed ancient! Coming from the late Second Temple Period, a time when Jesus of Nazareth lived, they are older than any other surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures by almost one thousand years.”<sup>8</sup>

Scholar Donald Binder advanced an early argument in support of the Essene authorship. He tells us that Roland de Vaux, the first and



Fig 3. Sea Level, Approaching Qumran (Photo by the Author).

premier archeologist of Khirbet Qumran, posited the notion that the Essenes and the scrolls are indisputably connected. Most researchers have since accepted his conclusions. “De Vaux upheld the linkage by observing that the pottery in the caves can be dated to the same period as the abandoned site (1 CE), and, moreover, that inscriptions on ostraca (potsherds) found at Qumran match the style of writing found in the scrolls.

“The link between the scrolls and the Essenes has been ascertained through a comparison of the sectarian writings with descriptions of the Essenes found in the first-century writings of Philo, Josephus, and Pliny the Elder. Although discrepancies exist between the accounts, the similarities are striking and have convinced most researchers that the Dead Sea sect and the Essenes are one and the same.”<sup>9</sup>

### Visit to Qumran

In June of 1965, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan still controlled the area of the Dead Sea known as Wadi Qumran, which is now part of Israel (Fig 3). It was under Jordanian auspices that we visited the now famous site of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In those days, with permission, it was possible to enter the caves, witness the excavations, visit Qumran and, most importantly, meet with the site archeologists. We did all of that.

It was some years later that the ultimate importance of the scrolls was determined. As time unfolded, the history of biblical humanity became recorded history. Thanks to the Essenes, portions of the Bible and other vague oral history recitations became historically valid.

The 1990 hypotheses that no scrolls were created at Qumran seem unfounded. The photograph labeled “Scriptorium” was taken during our visit, along with information from the on site archeologists that: 1) long tables used for scribes were excavated from the room,<sup>10</sup> 2) ink wells were found there, 3) the adjacent caves contained the now famous cylindrical jars filled with the scrolls (as well as thousands of scroll fragments), and 4) the jars are unique to Qumran and, as one archeologist posited, were created locally for the purpose of scroll storage.

We visited Cave IV (Fig 4) in which it is reported that more than forty percent of the scrolls were discovered.<sup>11</sup> We spoke with an Arab worker who personally removed cylinders from the cave and who observed the contents of the cylinders (“scrolls, indeed,” exclaimed the worker). In the years that followed, many of the published photographs of Cave IV are mirrors of this photo, which was artlessly taken with an inadequate camera—the



Fig 4. Cave IV of Qumran (Photo by the Author).

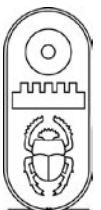




Fig 5. 1965 Excavations. (Photo by the Author).

author at the time not realizing the immense importance of the scrolls as time eventually revealed.



Fig 6. Grain Grinding Stones. (Photo by the Author).

Excavations in 1965 were still in progress (Fig 5) and contained, among many artifacts, cylinder fragments, scroll fragments, and hundreds of potsherds, indicating the presence of both the Essenes and the subsequent Roman invaders.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the interesting aspects of Essenian daily life were the presence of grain grinding stones (Fig 6) and the assembly hall/classroom (Fig 7). It was an easy task to visualize Qumran as it might have been.



Fig 7. Classroom area. (Photo by the Author).

As you might appreciate, there is an aura about the place, filling one's spirit with the continued presence of the Essenian aroma. It was a thrilling experience for us. Today, more than forty years later, we still remember every moment of our visit.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Material not otherwise annotated is oral history, garnered by the author in pursuit of information during a visit to Qumran in June 1965. The onsite archeologists, names unknown, are the source of this orally transmitted material.

<sup>2</sup> Goodfellows Christian Ministry, Essenes, <http://members.aol.com/Wisdomway/deadseascrolls.htm>

<sup>3</sup> André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings From Qumran*, trans. G. Vermes, (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1962), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Dupont-Sommer, 43. Found above in "Ancient Literature on the Essenes" and online at [www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philobook37.html](http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philobook37.html).

<sup>5</sup> Oral History: See note 1.

<sup>6</sup> Donald D. Binder, "Qumran," <http://www.pohick.org/sts/qumran.html>.

<sup>7</sup> "Dead Sea Scrolls" Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9033047>.

<sup>8</sup> Scrolls from the Dead Sea, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/scrolls/toc.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Binder, "Qumran," <http://www.pohick.org/sts/qumran.html>.

<sup>10</sup> One of the arguments against Essenian authorship is that the long tables frequently cited as scriptorium artifacts were not traditionally used by scribes. The argument is that scribes traditionally sat on the ground, legs crossed, with the writing tablets on their legs. That would be a valid argument for tablets, but the Essenian scribes were creating long scrolls, for which long tables were ideally suited.

<sup>11</sup> Dead Sea Scrolls, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead\\_sea Scrolls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_sea Scrolls).

<sup>12</sup> Oral History: See Note 1.

# WERE JOHN THE BAPTIST OR JESUS ESSENES?

*Robert Feather, MIMMM, C. Eng.*

**R**obert Feather is a Member of the Institution of Metallurgists and a Chartered Engineer. He is a member of The Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Society of Biblical Literature, The Egypt Exploration Society, and The Historical Metallurgy Society. The author of two works on the Dead Sea Scrolls, [The Mystery of the Copper Scroll of Qumran: the Essene Record of the Treasure of Akhenaten \(2003\)](#) and [The Secret Initiation of Jesus at Qumran: the Essene Mysteries of John the Baptist \(2005\)](#), Professor Feather created the present essay especially for this issue of the Digest dealing with the questions raised concerning the Essenes' Messianic hopes, and connections with Egypt.

As part of his Easter 2007 messages Pope Benedict XVI made the surprise statement that he now believes Jesus celebrated the Passover Supper according to Essene rites and implied that he thought the meal took place in an Essene house somewhere in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> He did not go so far as to say he now believes Jesus had been an Essene, but reading between the lines it is the logical conclusion of his statement.

Referring to contradictions in the Gospels on the timing of the crucifixion, the Pope said: "Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples probably according to the calendar of Qumran, that is to say, at least one day earlier—he celebrated without a lamb like the Qumran community and did not recognize the Temple of Herod and was waiting for a new Temple."

Many Christians, especially Catholic theologians, were thrown into a state of disarray. Previously they had tended to try to maintain as large a gulf between Jesus and the Essenes as possible, but here was the

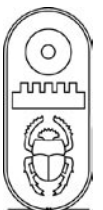
head of the Church confounding traditional thinking that Jesus had emerged from a Pharisaic background. In my second book, [The Secret Initiation of Jesus at Qumran](#),<sup>2</sup> I developed a strong case, not only to link Jesus to the Essenes, but also to place him as a long-time member of their community at Qumran, and this suggestion met strong resistance from Christian scholars, especially the more conservative. Now that the head of the Catholic Church has made a statement supporting much of what I have been contending, theologians have had to accept the possibility of an entirely new perspective for the origins of Christianity.

One can only admire the Pope's forthright thinking, but wonder what was the motivation behind this unexpected statement. I have several theories about the reasoning behind the Pope's comments:

1. Relatively recent excavations have confirmed the existence of an Essene community living in the Essene Gate part of the city of Jerusalem in Second Temple times.

2. The ongoing problems caused by claims in the [Da Vinci Code](#) and other books, such as [The Templar Revelation](#) and [Holy Blood, Holy Grail](#), that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and had a child with her.<sup>3</sup> If Jesus is now to be seen as following an Essene lifestyle, the implication is that he would have remained celibate and not married. Conceding one somewhat undesirable scenario completely eliminates a potentially much more damaging theory.

3. The Dead Sea Scrolls and books, like my own, have produced increasing evidence to support the likelihood that early members of Jesus' followers, including John the Baptist, and even Jesus himself, were members of the Qumran community.



The consensus tendency, before Pope Benedict's pronouncements, was to resist the conclusion that John the Baptist was a *long-term* member of the community, or that Jesus had ever been a member. Certainly John the Baptist's rebellious character does not seem to be consistent with his remaining very long within the quiescent structure of the Qumran community. This resistance among Christian theologians and historians has almost certainly been motivated by a desire to retain the uniqueness of the Christian message and avoid the implication that another sect might have been the source of many of its beliefs and practices.

However, even staunch Catholic traditionalists, like Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, of the École Biblique in East Jerusalem, were forced to admit as early as 1960, long before much more persuasive information had become available from the Dead Sea Scrolls, that Paul, the architect of Christianity, was definitely in contact with someone who knew Essene teaching thoroughly, and that Timothy, one of Jesus' close followers, belonged to the same circle as John the Baptist.

In fact, some earlier scholars, such as Dr. Joseph Klausner in 1925 and Heinrich Graetz<sup>4</sup> in the nineteenth century, were firmly convinced long before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls that John the Baptist was at one time an Essene. The opinion of these latter scholars is largely based on analysis of the Christian Scriptures and the descriptions of John the Baptist given by Flavius Josephus, a contemporary Roman/Jewish historian (37–ca. 100 CE). The most relevant quotation from the Christian Scriptures indicating John the Baptist's membership in the Qumran Essene community comes from Luke 1:80:

*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing to Israel.*

The Gospel of Luke endorses the probability that John the Baptist attained

intellectual and religious maturity elsewhere than at his home when it refers to him spending his early life in the desert. For example, when the Evangelists describe the Baptist as "living in the wilderness and eating a diet of locusts and wild honey," it is understood by most scholars to be a reference to the Qumran-Essenes, as anyone banished from membership would have previously taken a vow only to eat prepared food that had been blessed by the leader of the community. However, once evicted they would be forced to eat only wild food.



*John the Baptist (with aspects of Bacchus)*  
(1513-1516), by Leonardo Da Vinci.

John the Baptist's baptizing ritual was very reminiscent of the ritual immersion practiced by the Essenes; and, in the words of an earlier commentator, Israeli professor Yigael Yadin, "The influence of the sect's teachings is recognizable in the views, practices, ideology, and even the very phraseology of the founders of Christianity."<sup>5</sup> Professor Yadin had little doubt that John the Baptist was a member of the community for a period of his life. Other experts of the Christian Scriptures, like the German Otto Betz and Jean Steinmann of France, believed that John the Baptist grew up as an Essene, almost certainly in the wilderness at Qumran.<sup>6</sup>



## Analysis of scholarly opinion on John the Baptist's membership in the Qumran-Essene Community<sup>7</sup>

Member at some period in his life	In contact and influenced	Little contact or influence
(Josephus)*	Jean Danielou	H. Rowley
R. Eisler	Jack Finnegan	Frank Cross
Otto Betz	Daniel Schwartz	Pierre Benoit
Jean Steinmann	Raymond Brown	Cyrus Gordon
Yigael Yadin	R. Harrison	Edmund Sutcliffe
John Allegro	Charles Scobie	John Pryke
Barbara Thiering	John Robinson	Joan Taylor
Charles Fritsch	Oscar Cullmann	James Charlesworth
Millar Burrows	Robert Webb	Carsten Thiede
David Flusser	William Brownlee	Ian McDonald
Kurt Schubert	George Brooke	
Michael Grant	Lucretta Mowry	
Joseph Fitzmyer	James VanderKam	
Magen Broshi	The Jesus Seminar	
Jozef Milik**	Pope Benedict XVI	
Geza Vermes		
Robert Feather		

Chart © Robert Feather

\* The extensive descriptions of John the Baptist by Flavius Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities* have been taken by some scholars, such as H. Lichtenberger, as a portrayal of John as an Essene.

\*\* Jozef Milik's opinion was communicated to the author during interviews in 1999 and 2001.

### So What of Jesus' Earlier Years?

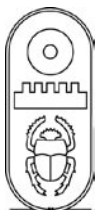
Between descriptions of the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry, the Christian Scriptures give sparse detail of his formative years. The brief mention there is comes from Luke 2:41–52, where we are told he came up “according to custom” to Jerusalem at the age of twelve. Jesus then stayed on in Jerusalem to converse with, and confound, the learned persons of the Temple.

The tradition of a boy going up to Jerusalem “according to custom” at twelve years of age is in itself rather strange, as the normal “Son of the Commandment” (Bar Mitzvah) ceremony, or coming of age for a Jewish child, occurs when the child is thirteen. An explanation may be that the earlier age involved a biblical linking to the beginning of the prophet Samuel's ministering period, which commenced during his twelfth year.

What happened after this event and up to the time of the beginning of Jesus' ministry is not clear from the Gospels, which say nothing about the eighteen intervening years. Why would the Christian Scriptures be silent about a period spanning more than half of Jesus' critically formative adult life?

When Jesus reached the age of sixteen, his parents were required by law to place him in a recognized school. From the knowledge that Jesus and the Christian Scriptures subsequently exhibited, it seems certain that they opted for the intense learning center of Qumran.

Our information on the requirements for recruitment to the community comes largely from three sources: the Dead Sea Scrolls; Josephus, Philo, and Pliny; and a recently found ostrakon, or pottery fragment with a written inscription. For continuity of the story, we need to take a brief look at all three sources.



## The Dead Sea Scrolls

The Qumran Dead Sea Scroll called the Community Rule (also known as the Manual of Discipline), sets out the requirement for a ten-year period of study, after which, at the age of twenty, students had to undergo a public examination before their peers to verify their integrity and their understanding of the Law. A year of probation followed, and then the student was again examined. If he passed this test, he served a further year of probation before a proposal for full membership in the Brotherhood was put to the vote. If accepted, he was required to swear an oath of loyalty. The minimum age to hold office in the Brotherhood was twenty-five, and the “fourth degree of holiness” (referred to by Josephus) could not be reached before the age of thirty. (It is interesting to note the similarity in the use of the terms *brotherhood*, *degree*, and *master* to those used in the Masonic movement. This subject is discussed more extensively in *The Mystery of the Copper Scroll of Qumran*.<sup>8)</sup>

The most likely scenario is, therefore, that Jesus “graduated” at the age of thirty and then chose to become an “urban Essene,” taking his own path with his own cadre of followers. Basing himself in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, he set forth with several close disciples to preach the basic message of the Essenes and Torah, enriched by his own divine revelation.

### Josephus, Philo, and Pliny

Recruitment to the community appears to have taken place at any age, but the preferable age for an apprentice was when the child was quite young. Philo and Pliny report that adults were taken in for qualification, but Josephus says boys were also admitted for training.

### Recently Found Ostrakon

The excitement was almost palpable as people crowded around pictures of an ostrakon, or inscribed pottery fragment, trying to get a better view. The subject of the Copper Scroll, which had drawn delegates to an international conference in Manchester,

England, in 1996, was for the moment forgotten. This was the star turn of the day. Esther Eshel, of Bar-Ilan University, was showing what appeared to be the first-ever archeological proof that the inhabitants of Qumran considered themselves a community—a *Yahad*.

The ostrakon contains a legal text in Hebrew, apparently recording the surrender to the community by a new recruit of his personal property. The procedure is entirely consistent with that prescribed in the Manual of Discipline, and as such represents the first solid outside evidence that conventional scholarship is correct in its assessment of activities at Qumran.

That the Gospels and historical external evidence tell us almost nothing of Jesus’ formative years is not surprising, if those years were spent at Qumran. If I am correct, he was closeted away in a desert environment from an early age and excluded from outside contact with his parents and family.

The minimum age given in the Rule of the Congregation for when a novice could attain his full accreditation, thirty years, is exactly the same age as the Gospels state for the reappearance of Jesus into the outside world. By the time Jesus reached this age, he would have been fully immersed in the teachings of the Qumran-Essenes, and their protocols would have been engraved on his conscious and subconscious mind. This is a potent piece of correlation, which does not appear to have been connected to Jesus before.

It is not surprising, therefore, that so many of the echoes of the Qumran-Essenes can be detected in the later transcribed words and recordings of Jesus’ acts. If the view that John the Baptist was also at one time or another a regular visitor to, or even for some period a resident member at Qumran, it is reasonable to assume that his rebellious nature may have inspired Jesus to reassert his own radicalism. What is more natural than on reaching his majority at the age of thirty, Jesus should strike out on his

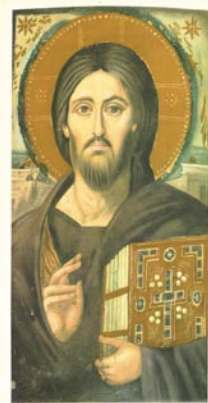
own, leave the community, and seek out John the Baptist for reassurance and communion?

The Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John say Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a village that certainly existed at the time of his birth. Nazareth, the town he is said to have lived in during most of his early life, is less easily identifiable. The question marks that hang over this period of Jesus' life, and the uncertainty of Nazareth as a place of prolonged residence for Jesus, may well have

relevance when it comes to considering an alternative place of residence for his maturing years. Although Nazareth is now a bustling town of some forty thousand people, neither Talmudic texts nor the Masoretic Testament (Hebrew Scriptures, or Old Testament), the Apocrypha, or Josephus can help verify the existence of the Nazareth of the Christian Scriptures (New Testament).

Tellingly, Jesus, in the New Testament, performs many miracles, healings, and exorcisms across the Holy Land, but never performs anything in Nazareth. Josephus, one-time commander of the Galilee region, lists its towns and villages, but makes no mention of a place called "Nazareth." The only possible external reference to Nazareth comes from a fragmentary ancient Hebrew inscription dated to the end of the third century CE., found at Caesarea, on the north coast of Israel. This lists twenty-four priestly "allotments" of duty rotations (Hebrew, *mishmarot*) and the places from which they derived. The eighteenth allotment is given in Hebrew as *nzrt*, which could be read as Nazareth.

Archeological work at Nazareth in 1889, led by Father Prosper Viaud, and between 1955 and 1970, led by Father B. Bagatti, has yielded some clues about a possible early history, and excavations are said to have revealed graffiti in lower layers under the existing Church of the Incarnation. These are



Oldest known Icon of Christ Pantocrator from St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai (6th-7th century).

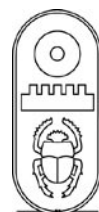
believed to indicate an early Judeo-Christian presence, but nothing from the first century CE.

If there is little proof that Nazareth actually existed in Jesus' time, why is the name mentioned in the Christian Scriptures? The explanation put forward by a number of scholars as the most likely reason is that it has been confused with the term *Nazirite* or *Nazarene* (*Nazorene*). The Nazirites were a select Jewish group who took a vow of dedication to the Lord and followed a spiritual lifestyle. The three lifelong Nazirites mentioned in the Bible are Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist; intriguingly, the term has been associated with the Essenes.

So where does current conventional scholarship stand on the possibility of a connection between Jesus and other characters from the Christian Scriptures, and the Qumran-Essene community? Surprisingly, a number of eminent observers of early Christian history, such as Dr. Matthew Black; Dr. Hugh Schonfield; and Hyam Maccoby, who was visiting professor at Leeds University until his death in May 2004; make little more than passing reference to the "Qumran-Essene effect." Their views can be summarized as follows: "The oldest roots of the Christian movement in 'Galilee' are to be sought in a group of dedicated Nazirites, sectarians who continued the ancient Israelite institution of the lifelong Nazirate."<sup>9</sup>

Even a modernist writer such as John Crossan, professor of Biblical Studies at De Paul University, Chicago, has a virtual blind spot when it comes to considering how the Qumran-Essenes might have influenced Jesus or the Christian Scriptures. When he does mention the Dead Sea Scrolls, his facts are questionable.<sup>10</sup>

In all these works, the associations of Jesus and John the Baptist with Qumran are highly contentious, accepted by many



scholars but disputed by others, as the following paragraphs point out.

The present state of opinion from authoritative scholars such as Magen Broshi (former curator, Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum), Geza Vermes (professor emeritus, Oxford University), and Professor George Brooke (Manchester University), is weighted in favor of John the Baptist having been a member of the Qumran-Essene community at some period in his life. The tendency, however, is to resist drawing a similar association for Jesus. This resistance, as one would expect, is far stronger from Christian, particularly Catholic, commentators, such as Father Émile Puech (director of research, CNRS, Paris), Professor Carsten Peter Thiede (minister, Church of England), Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (École Biblique, Jerusalem), and Professor J. Van der Ploeg (University of Nijmegen, Holland).

The more the emerging information is examined and the existing material reevaluated, the more apparent it becomes that the hotbed of spiritual industry bubbling away at Khirbet Qumran on the northwestern edge of the Dead Sea was a cauldron from which were cast many of the templates of early Christian ideas—a background that early Christian writers were readily able to adapt to the experiences of Jesus.

To assess what the relationship of John the Baptist and Jesus might have been to Qumran, it is necessary to understand a bit more about this strange, quirky, secretive, male-dominated, nonconformist Jewish community, and why the predominantly Christian researchers involved in early Dead Sea Scrolls studies tended to shy away from linking Jesus and John the Baptist to Qumran.

### **The Qumran Community**

The community that lived at Qumran never referred to themselves in their own documents as *Essenes*. The name is one applied to them by the Roman/Jewish historian Josephus.

Since detaching themselves from the Temple environment, around 140 BCE., the community shunned its ceremonies and castigated the officiating Sadduceean priests for not adhering to the correct calendar, amongst other objections. However, the Second Temple was, to the Essenes, a place of intense contradiction. The holy place, central in concept to their inheritance, was occupied by alien forces and governed by the whims of Herod, a lackey of Rome.

The Temple's size and shape were not to their liking and, worse still, from around 31-30 BCE onward, two lambs were sacrificed every day by the Temple priests for the "well-being" of the Roman emperor and the Roman Empire. This animal sacrifice was an anathema to many Jewish groups, and especially to the Qumran-Essenes. No wonder they interpreted the earthquake of 31 BCE, which caused widespread destruction in the area of the Judean Desert and severe damage to their own settlement, as a portent that they were right and that their belief in an imminent apocalypse was justified.

Although they put immense store in traditional Hebrew teachings, they followed an apparently alternate form of Judaism, which yearned for and echoed the early days of Mosaic Sinai, and which, I maintain, dates back even further to the ancient monotheism of Akhenaten and Jacob.

It is evident from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Essenes of Qumran considered themselves an elite messianic group; they had retreated from the fray of the Temple and the priesthood and sought refuge in the wilderness to protect their piety. The opening verses of Isaiah, chapter 40, aptly describe their role:

*A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."*

As we go through a brief description of their unique teachings and behavior patterns it will be evident that many were transferred to Christianity.

Successive “right teachers” had the role of ensuring that the community adhered to the true interpretation of the Torah, while they waited for a prophet similar to Moses and an unprecedented *two messiahs*.

This waiting was to be accompanied by immersion in the Holy Scriptures and by following an ascetic, celibate way of life. Each year a cumulative total of 120 nights was to be spent in prayer and study. Personal possessions and income were to be given to the yahad, the community, and in turn the community looked after the individual’s needs. Living and eating was communal, and garments were plain and purely functional. There are many similarities in this unselfish way of life to the modern ashrams of America and the kibbutzim of modern Israel.

Within the community, at least at the outset, there was a strong hierarchical structure. At the top sat the right teacher. Priests, aided by Levites (individuals of priestly descent), dictated the doctrine of the group. All full members could vote in an assembly on nondoctrinal matters, while general day-to-day administration was in the hands of a triumvirate of three priests and twelve helpers. Each member had a specific place in the hierarchy in relation to level of learning and holiness, as determined by their peers.

Throughout the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls that describe the feelings and activities of the Essenes, there are repeated themes and motifs that endow these works with a sense of collective purpose: of sons of light fighting sons of darkness, messianic portents, battles with evil, the fruits of righteousness. Their fundamental themes embody persons who are:

Righteous—*Zaddikim*

Pious—*Hassidim*

Holy—*Kedushim*

Meek—*Anavim*

Endowed with God’s Spirit—*Ruachim*

Faithful—*Emunim*

The first three are recognizably strongly Jewish; the latter three carry noticeable overtones that would later become strongly applied in Christianity.

There is a continual reference throughout their scrolls to the part played by the Tabernacle priests. It is clear that the Essenes considered themselves the keepers of the covenant and part of the direct line of priests that attended the holy shrines.

So whom were the Qumran-Essenes waiting for? The answer is contained in a number of the Dead Sea Scrolls texts that indicate they were waiting for two, and some scholars read three, messiahs. These messiahs, one priestly and one royal, are given various titles in different scrolls:

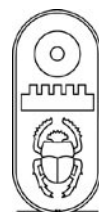
**Priestly:** Interpreter of the Law, the Star; the Messiah of Aaron, who was of princely descent.

**Royal:** Prince of the Congregation, the Scepter; the Messiah of Israel; the King Messiah.

In addition, they expected the return of a prophet similar to Moses. Fortunately, there are quite detailed descriptions of these messiahs in a number of their scrolls, so one would assume it should be relatively easy to identify whom they were talking about. Unhappily that is not the case, and conventional scholarship makes little attempt to utilize this information.

### A Davidic Messiah?

The idea of the kingly messiah referred to by the Essenes is inevitably taken as being someone emerging from the Davidic line of kings, commencing with King David himself. The tacit assumption by most scholars is that King David was the role model for this returning royal messiah. If King David wasn’t the role-model messiah, ordinary scholarship has nowhere else to go. The assumption, however, is fraught with problems. King David (who ruled in approximately 1000 BCE) noticeably failed to live up to the righteous ideals demanded in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Kings, and Chronicles.



David had Uriah, an officer in his army, murdered in order to marry Uriah's wife, and brought destruction on seventy thousand Israelites for his evil doings. In a parable by the prophet Nathan, David is roundly condemned for his evil acts against God and told that his descendants will suffer as a result of his murderous deeds. This is hardly a worthy pattern for a future messiah. In fact, formal messianism in Jewish scripture does not appear until the time of Daniel in the second century BCE, so King David is even less likely to have been the role model the Qumran-Essenes were thinking of.

One has to wonder, therefore, where the Qumran-Essenes obtained their quite detailed and well-developed philosophy of these anticipated messiahs and messianism—which, in any event, appear to predate any of the royal kings of Israel. The problem of identifying the two messiahs, one kingly and one priestly, alluded to in the Hebrew Scriptures but distinctly specified in the Qumran-Essene literature, is so contentious that modern scholarship either ignores the problem or scratches around to try to find possible candidates using very weak evidence.

Nowhere does the Pentateuch or any succeeding text of the Hebrew Scriptures suggest that, when the faithful in Israel worshiped at the Tabernacle or later in the Temple at Jerusalem, they looked to the Aaronic high priest as a foreshadowing of a future messianic high priest. Almost in desperation, some scholars have even suggested Zerubbabel, the rebuilder of the First Temple, or Joshua, the postexilic high priest, as possible contenders.

The phrase “Davidic line” is, in my view, only an indicator of a longer royal line predating King David. In fact, in Qumran texts, and in most biblical texts, the messianic king is deliberately *not* referred to as Davidic. Although many of the motifs in the expectation of a future king may be drawn from Israel's experience of kingship, other motifs can clearly be traced to pre-Hebrew Scripture's kingship periods of Israel's history. Indeed, how can King David be the personification of a messianic figure when the same messianic figure is seen by Isaiah and Zechariah, and by Dead Sea Scrolls texts such

as 4Q285, as a “suffering servant” of God who is frustrated in his ambitions and killed for his efforts? None of these characteristics can be applied to King David. One eminent scholar, Kenneth Pomykala, like others, has postulated that any reference by the Qumran sect to a messiah of Israel should be regarded categorically as non-Davidic.<sup>11</sup>

Why should this be, unless there was some memory of another

previous line of royalty? In the same way as there is no reference to Jerusalem in the so-called *New Jerusalem Scroll*, there appears to be limited reference to a Davidic messiah in other sectarian Qumran-Essene scrolls. That the references to a Davidic messiah are limited, however, has not prevented most scholars from falling back on the assumption that David *was* the Essenes' role model for a future messiah, even given the fact that there are alternative explanations that have not yet been explored.

### John and Jesus' continuity with the Qumran-Essenes

When one looks at other factors that tend to confirm the continuity of specifically



David and Solomon, detail from the *Icon of the Harrowing of Hell (Anastasis)*, 11th century, in the Nea Moni in Chios.

Essenic thinking and practices that have been transmitted on into Christianity, and by extension into Islam, it becomes irresistible not to conclude that both Jesus and John the Baptist must have been intimately involved with Qumran. One of the main contentions in my work has been that the Qumran-Essenes had an allegiance in terms of holy and secret knowledge to the earliest forms of Hebrew religion, as developed in Egypt, prior to the Exodus, and specifically linked to the monotheistic Pharaoh Akhenaten.

If the early Jesus movement owed a powerful debt to the beliefs practiced at Qumran, then it would not be surprising to find that some of Akhenaten's teachings and imagery would be transferred across and reflected in the early Jesus movement and later Christianity. The examples of these phenomena are numerous, but there is space here only to refer briefly to two of them.



*Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek*, Dieric Bouts the Elder, 15th century.

## Melchizedek

Melchizedek is a complex character that appears in their texts as a figure of major importance to the Qumran-Essenes. There are detailed descriptions of this figure in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in Rabbinic writings, as well as references in the mainstream Bible, but no one is certain who Melchizedek relates to, despite endless speculation. Just as the

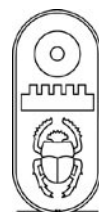
Qumran-Essenes revered this character, so Jesus has also to be associated with the kingly-priestly figure.

As if to verify my contention that Melchizedek incorporated the concept of Akhenaten's high priest, Meryra, new light on the Christian Scriptures' Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews has been shed by the fragmentary first century BCE document found in Cave 11 at Qumran, known as the *Heavenly Prince Melchizedek* (11Q Melch.). The description in Hebrews depicting Christ as the "Son of God" and "without beginning of days or end of life," as "priest according to the order of Melchizedek," now makes sense as reflecting the same image of Melchizedek portrayed by the sectarian Dead Sea Scroll.

This interpretative understanding was taken still further in discussion at a recent international conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. A paper by Margaret Barker published in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*<sup>12</sup> maintains that Jesus knew of and understood Melchizedek; that he may have patterned his life on the Qumranic conception of Melchizedek; and that his earliest followers built on that understanding. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus is "...a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (5:6).

That this is the same high priestly figure of the Qumran-Essenes is underlined by a further reference to him as the superior priest. Suggestions that this priest is Aaron, or a Zadok of his lineage, is excluded by the insistence that Jesus, like Melchizedek, is in the Greek wording *agenealogetos*, "without a genealogy." As Professor Joseph Fitzmyer, of the Catholic University of America, points out, "Every priestly family was supposed to be able to trace its lineage from Levi via Aaron and Zadok. Aaron's lineage itself was known from Exodus 6:16-19, but Melchizedek's lineage was unknown."<sup>13</sup>

Analysis of the Melchizedek that Jesus of the Christian Scriptures was to emulate,



however, shows that this attribution, as explained by Deborah W. Rooke, of King's College, London, was "not merely of *high* priesthood but of *royal* priesthood."<sup>14</sup> The relationship is spelled out in Hebrews, but although the royal association is assumed to be to King David, scholars are at a loss to explain why there is no specific Davidic categorization for this royal element.

David is not referred to by name in Hebrews. Instead, the king specifically mentioned is the King of Salem, who is related to the patriarchal period of Abraham, long predating the Israelite kings, and a royal figure who had nothing to do with King David. Once again, there is no Israelite king that conventional scholarship can turn to, and the issue is stuck in the mire of preconceptions. Indeed, it is made crystal clear that the Melchizedek Jesus aspired to emulate was the King of Salem in Genesis:

*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God. (14:18)*

A number of other scholars have noted that the Melchizedek of Hebrews can definitely be linked to the Melchizedek in the Qumran scrolls (11Q Melch.), and this character, as discussed above, is certainly not Davidic.<sup>15</sup>

Even if a royal association were tied only to the Genesis descriptions and not also to the Qumranic descriptions, we would have to ask why an apparently pagan king, the king of Salem, should be singled out as a prototype for a divine personage. Not only is he seemingly a pagan king; he is not even a Hebrew! The answer, I suggest, lies partly in the Amarna letters, where Jerusalem is specifically chosen by Akhenaten as "his holy city forever." The appellation of King Melchizedek can then clearly be seen as a sacral name combining the royal aspect of King Akhenaten and his High Priest, Meryra.

The problem of why Abraham and Jesus should want to associate themselves with an apparently pagan figure is thus entirely explained by the fact that Akhenaten and

Meryra, his High Priest, were not pagan, but together with Jacob and Joseph, were the first true monotheists. Thus Abraham acknowledges Melchizedek's God El Elyon (God Most High) as his own God in their encounter in Genesis (14:18–24).

For this high priestly figure to have no ancestors can only mean that he was the first of his class. Once again, the literal evidence points strongly in the direction of Meryra, the first High Priest of Akhenaten's new monotheism, who we know from Egyptian records was a hereditary Egyptian prince—a requirement also spelled out in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As becomes dramatically apparent in the explosive archeological evidence documented in *The Secret Initiation of Jesus at Qumran*, this assumption is almost certainly correct.

## Amarna

Both the Christian Scriptures and historical tradition maintain that Jesus and his parents, Mary and Joseph, fled to Egypt from Judea around 4 to 7 BCE to escape the tyrannical threats of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:13–20).

If one had to predict where the family of Jesus might have stopped *en route* in their journey through Egypt, on the basis of the proposed connections I claim existed between the Qumran-Essenes and Akhenaten, and between the Qumran-Essenes and the earliest followers of Jesus, the following four destinations would have been definite favorites in their itinerary:

1. Lake Mereotis (Marioot), near Alexandria, traditional location of the Therapeutae, close Egyptian associates of the Essenes;
2. Valley of Natrun, traditional location of the Therapeutae;
3. Leontopolis, near Heliopolis (Cairo), site of the temple founded by Onias IV, who, I maintain, was the Essenes' Teacher of Righteousness;
4. Amarna, site of Akhenaten's holy city.





Journey of the Holy Family in Egypt, highlighting the location of their longest stay, near Amarna (Akhetaten). © Robert Feather, based on a map published by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism. From *The Secret Initiation of Jesus at Qumran*.

In horse-racing parlance, my shortest odds would be on Amarna, and the combination odds of all four of these highly significant Essenic connected places featuring as important locations in the Holy Family's journey would be about ten thousand to one.

Take a look at the figure illustrated in this article. It shows the route, strongly entrenched in Egyptian legend and tradition, taken by the Holy Family in Egypt. All four suggested locations are included in the journey and are considered the most important of the numerous monastic centers that have grown up in Egypt. So which of these locations is believed to be the most important of all?

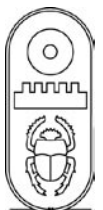
The words of Pope Shenouda III, guardian of the national traditions of the Coptic Church in Egypt, give us the answer: "Now it was time for the Holy Family to set out for what is, arguably, the most meaningful destination of all in the land of Egypt, the place where there would be 'an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt'—Gabal [Mount] Qoussqam."<sup>16</sup>

Nestled in the foothills of this mountain lies the monastery of Al Muharrag, on the site where the Holy Family were reputed to have lived for six months, their longest stay at any one place in their four-year travels through Egypt. It was the culmination of their journey, and to this day the area surrounding the monastery is redolent of the Coptic Christian ethos, so much so that it is named the Second Bethlehem. Why should this place have become so important to the earliest Christians? At first glance it appears to be in the middle of nowhere. The answer, I suggest, is that it really is not in such an obscure location. The location was directly opposite the place where Akhenaten established his Holy City and built a huge Temple in honor of Aten—his name for God.

At the turn of the millennium, the vast site of Amarna would have been as bleak and desolate as it is today. The only pockets of habitation would have been small settlements on the west bank of the Nile, near the village of Qoussqam. The monastery of Al Muharrag lies directly opposite Amarna, at what was then one of the closest habitable places to Amarna.

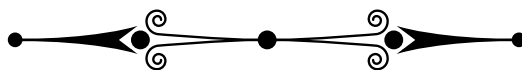
Whatever you believe about the legends surrounding the journey of the Holy Family in Egypt, there is almost always a kernel of truth that kindles a legend. That kindling has resulted in a surfeit of historical Christian places of worship in the vicinity of the Nile, some often in quite remote locations, which makes it difficult to justify the charge that they were invented to attract tourists.

The preponderance of these witnesses to an earlier legend is concentrated around Amarna, the site of Akhenaten's ancient capital. The grain of truth, if there is one, behind the legends in this region indicates that the main destination of the Holy Family was the Amarna area. *Something* must have sparked the tradition, and the raft of other evidence that points to Amarna as a site of special interest to the Qumran-Essenes and, by association, to the earliest followers of Jesus underlines the essential truth of this assertion.<sup>17</sup>



## Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20070405\\_coena-domini\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070405_coena-domini_en.html).
- <sup>2</sup> Robert Feather, *The Secret Initiation of Jesus at Qumran* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005; London: Baird/Watkins, 2006).
- <sup>3</sup> Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Black Swan, 2004); Lyn Picknett, Clive Prince, *The Templar Revelation* (London: Corgi, 2007); Henry Lincoln, Richard Leigh, Michael Baigent, *Holy Blood, Holy Gnaul* (New York: Random House, 1983).
- <sup>4</sup> Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (London: Macmillan, 1922); Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946).
- <sup>5</sup> Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (Suffolk, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).
- <sup>6</sup> Otto Betz, "Was John the Baptist an Essene?" *Biblical Revue* (December 1990); Jean Steinmann, *Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition* (New York/Boston: Harper and Brothers, 1958).
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); H. H. Rowley, "The Baptism of John and the Qumran Sect," in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1959); Daniel Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tuebingen, Germany: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992); R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist According to Flavius Josephus' Recently Rediscovered "Capture of Jerusalem" and Other Jewish and Christian Sources* (New York: The Dial Press, 1931); Barbara Thiering, *The Gospels and Qumran*, (Sydney Theological Explorations, 1981); Otto Betz, "Was John the Baptist an Essene?" *Biblical Revue* (December 1990); Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*; John Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of Christianity* (Metuchen, NJ: Criterion, 1967); William H. Brownlee, *John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls* (n.p.: Interpretation, 1955); Lucretia Mowry, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962); R. K. Harrison, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961); Charles Scobie, *John the Baptist: The Scrolls and Christianity* (Bloomfield, CT: Talbot, 1969); John A. Robinson, "The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community," *Harvard Theological Studies* 50 (1957); Oscar Cullmann, "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955); Kurt Schubert, *The Dead Sea Community: Its Origin and Teachings* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1959); Jean Danielou, *The Work of John the Baptist* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK: Helicon, 1966); Jean Steinmann, *Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition* (New York: Harper, 1958); Jack Finnegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Raymond E. Brown, "Second Thoughts: The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament," *The Expository Times* (October 1966); Charles Fritsch, *The Qumran Community* (New York: Macmillan, 1956); Millar Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1958); Pierre Benoit, *Paul and Qumran* (Chicago: Priory Press, 1968); Frank Moore Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (New York: Doubleday, 1961); Carsten P. Thiede, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Jewish Origins of Christianity* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Cyrus Gordon, *Adventures in the Nearest East* (Fair Lawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957); Edmund Sutcliffe, *The Monks of Qumran* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1960); Robert L. Webb, "John the Baptist and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, supplement series 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield University, 1991); James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1992); David Flusser, *Jesus* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969); Michael Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World* (New York: Scribner, 1973); James C. VanderKam, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christianity," in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reader from the Biblical Archaeology Review* (New York: Random House, 1992); Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); John Pryke, "John the Baptist and the Qumran Community," *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1964); Ian McDonald, "What Did You Go Out to See? John the Baptist, the Scrolls and Late Second Temple Judaism," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, ed. by T. Lim, et al. (New York: T & T Clark, 2004). The Jesus Seminars, listed in the middle column of the table, are meetings of a group of biblical scholars who discuss New Testament topics and then vote to determine a majority view. Founded in 1985 in America, the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar on the issue of John the Baptist's relationship with the Essenes is purportedly summed up by John W. B. Tatum, who says the Baptist may have been an Essene at some period in his life (*John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1994)). Geza Vermes, in a lecture at University College London, December 7, 1998, declared, "On balance John the Baptist was a member at Qumran" (Taylor, *The Immerser*). Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), "Homily given at the Mass of the Lord's Supper," April 5, 2007, at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Rome. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20070405\\_coena-domini\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070405_coena-domini_en.html).
- <sup>8</sup> Robert Feather, *The Mystery of the Copper Scroll of Qumran* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2003).
- <sup>9</sup> Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1961); Hugh Schonfield, *The Passover Plot* (London: Element, 1993); *Those Incredible Christians* (London: Element, 1985); In a lecture at the Spiro Institute, London, on March 15, 2000, Maccoby spoke for over two hours on the origins of Christianity without once mentioning the Essenes.
- <sup>10</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 1995).
- <sup>11</sup> V. K. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). See also Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll, *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- <sup>12</sup> Margaret Barker, "The Time Is Fulfilled: Jesus and the Jubilee," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 53, no. 22, 2000.
- <sup>13</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).
- <sup>14</sup> D. W. Rooke, "Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections of the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb. 7," *Biblica* 81 (2000).
- <sup>15</sup> Yigael Yadin, "A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," *Israel Exploration Journal* 15, (1965); M de Jonge and A. S. Van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1966); J. A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *Journal of Biblical Studies* 86 (1967).
- <sup>16</sup> Mamdouh El-Beltagui, *The Holy Family in Egypt* (Cairo: Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 1999). According to local traditions, the Holy Family stayed in Egypt for three years and eleven months; Coptic Christians celebrate their journey each year on June 1 (see Christian Cannuyer, *L'Égypte Copte* (Paris: Gallimard/IMA, 2000). The route of the Holy Family in Egypt, according to Coptic tradition.
- <sup>17</sup> This text and the images and chart marked © are Copyright © 2007 Robert Feather. All Rights Reserved. Printed with Permission of the Author.



# DOCUMENTS FROM THE MODERN ESSENE MOVEMENT

**T**he Modern Essene movement has several sources of inspiration. As one of the leading scholars of modern religious movements put it, "Essene material is directly derivative of two occult best-sellers – [The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ](#), by Levi H. Dowling; and [The Mystical Life of Jesus](#), by Rosicrucian author H. Spencer Lewis."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these, two documents which are particularly honored in modern Essene work are [The Essene Gospel of Peace](#), and [The Gospel of the Holy Twelve](#). Unfortunately, neither ancient manuscript has yet been presented for the kind of scholarly study that the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag-Hammadi Library have enjoyed, however, these texts are a source of inspiration to the women and men of the modern Essene community.

## THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY TWELVE

In 1881, The Rev. Gideon Ouseley came into possession of what is said to be an original Gospel manuscript, taken from the Middle East to Tibet by Essenes to preserve it. Rev. Ouseley published his translation of this work as [The Gospel of the Holy Twelve](#), and it has also been compared to the lost Gospel of the Nazarenes. Here is a selection from this work.

### What Is Truth?

#### Lecture 90

1. AGAIN the twelve were gathered together in the Circle of palm trees, and one of them even Thomas said to the other, What is Truth? for the same things appear different to different minds, and even to the same mind at different times. What, then, is Truth?

2. And as they were speaking Jesus appeared in their midst and said, Truth, one and absolute, is in God alone, for no man, neither any body of men, knoweth that which God alone knoweth, who is the All in All. To men is Truth revealed, according to their capacity to understand and receive.

3. The One Truth hath many sides, and one seeth one side only, another seeth another, and some see more than others, according as it is given to them.

4. Behold this crystal: how the one light manifests in twelve faces, yea four times twelve, and each face reflecteth one ray of light, and one regardeth one face, and another another, but it is the one crystal and the one light that shineth in all.

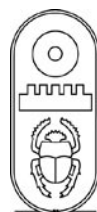
5. Behold again, When one climbeth a mountain and attaining one height, he saith, This is the top of the mountain, let us reach it, and when they have reached that height, lo, they see another beyond it until they come to that height from

which no other height is to be seen, if so be they can attain it.

6. So it is with Truth. I am the Truth and the Way and the Life, and have given to you the Truth I have received from above. And that which is seen and received by one, is not seen and received by another. That which appeareth true to some, seemeth not true to others. They who are in the valley see not as they who are on the hilltop.

7. But to each, it is the Truth as the one mind seeth it, and for that time, till a higher Truth shall be revealed unto the same: and to

“Behold this crystal: how the one light manifests in twelve faces, yea four times twelve, and each face reflecteth one ray of light, and one regardeth one face, and another another, but it is the one crystal and the one light that shineth in all”



the soul which receiveth higher light, shall be given more light. Wherefore condemn not others, that ye be not condemned.

8. As ye keep the holy Law of Love, which I have given unto you, so shall the Truth be revealed more and more unto you, and the Spirit of Truth which cometh from above shall guide you, albeit through many wanderings, into all Truth, even as the fiery cloud guided the children of Israel through the wilderness.

9. Be faithful to the light ye have, till a higher light is given to you. Seek more light, and ye shall have abundantly; rest not, till ye find.

10. God giveth you all Truth, as a ladder with many steps, for the salvation and perfection of the soul, and the truth which seemeth to day, ye will abandon for the higher truth of the morrow. Press ye unto Perfection.

11. Whoso keepeth the holy Law which I have given, the same shall save their souls, however differently they may see the truths which I have given.

12. Many shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, we have been zealous for thy Truth. But I shall say unto them, Nay, but, that others may see as ye see, and none other truth beside. Faith without charity is dead. Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

13. How shall faith in what they receive profit them that hold it in unrighteousness? They who have love have all things, and without love there is nothing worth. Let each hold what they see to be the truth in love, knowing that where love is not, truth is a dead letter and profiteth nothing.

14. There abide Goodness, and Truth, and Beauty, but the greatest of these is Goodness. If any have hatred to their fellows, and harden their hearts to the creatures of God's hands, how can they see Truth unto salvation, seeing their eyes are blinded and their hearts are hardened to God's creation?

15. As I have received the Truth, so have I given it to you. Let each receive it according to their light and ability to understand, and persecute not those who receive it after a different interpretation.

16. For Truth is the Might of God, and it shall prevail in the end over all errors. But the holy Law which I have given is plain for all, and just and good. Let all observe it for the salvation of their souls.<sup>2</sup>

## THE ESSENE GOSPEL OF PEACE

*In 1928 Edmond Bordeaux Székely first published what he described as a translation of [The Essene Gospel of Peace](#), an ancient manuscript said to have been discovered in the Secret Archives of the Vatican, and among Old Slavonic manuscripts in the Royal Library of the Habsburgs. During the remainder of his life, Székely continued to publish these materials, which have become the cornerstone of much modern Essene work, and also international health and wellness movements.*

## The Holy Streams

### From [THE TEACHINGS OF THE ELECT](#) (Book 4)

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Into the innermost circle have you come, into the mystery of mysteries, that which was old when our father Enoch was young and walked the earth. Around and around have you come on your journey of many years, always following the path of righteousness, living according to the Holy Law and the sacred vows of our Brotherhood, and you have made of your body a holy temple wherein dwell the angels of God. Many years have you shared the daylight hours with the angels of the Earthly Mother; many years have you slept in the arms of the Heavenly Father, taught by his unknown angels. You have learned that the laws of the Son of Man are seven, of the angels three, and of God, one. Now you shall know of the three laws of

the angels, the mystery of the three Holy Streams and the ancient way to traverse them; so shall you bathe in the light of heaven and at last behold the revelation of the mystery of mysteries: the law of God, which is One.

Now in the hour before the rising of the sun, just before the angels of the Earthly Mother breathe life into the still sleeping earth, then do you enter into the Holy Stream of Life. It is your Brother Tree who holds the mystery of this Holy Stream, and it is your Brother Tree that you will embrace in your thought, even as by day you embrace him in greeting when you walk along the lakeshore. And you shall be one with the tree, for in the beginning of the times so did we all share in the Holy Stream of Life that gave birth to all creation. And as you embrace your Brother Tree, the power of the Holy Stream of Life will fill your whole body, and you will tremble before its might. Then breathe deeply of the angel of air, and say the word "Life" with the outgiving of breath. Then you will become in truth the Tree of Life which sinks its roots deep into the Holy Stream of Life from an eternal source. And as the angel of sun warms the earth, and all the creatures of land and water and air rejoice in the new day, so will your body and spirit rejoice in the Holy Stream of life that flows to you through your Brother Tree.

And when the sun is high in the heavens, then shall you seek the Holy Stream of Sound. In the heat of noontide, all creatures are still and seek the shade; the angels of the Earthly Mother are silent for a space. Then it is that you shall let into your ears the Holy Stream of Sound; for it can only be heard in the silence. Think on the streams that are born in the desert after a sudden storm, and the roaring sound of the waters as they rush

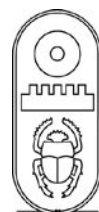
past. Truly, this is the voice of God, if you did but know it. For as it is written, in the beginning was the Sound, and the Sound was with God, and the Sound was God. I tell you truly, when we are born, we enter the world with the sound of God in our ears, even the singing of the vast chorus of the sky, and the holy chant of the stars in their fixed rounds; it is the Holy Stream of Sound that traverses the vault of stars and crosses the endless kingdom of the Heavenly Father. It is ever in our ears, so do we hear it not.

Listen for it, then, in the silence of noontide; bathe in it, and let the rhythm of the music of God beat in your ears until you are one with the Holy Stream of Sound. It was this Sound which formed the earth and the world, and brought forth the mountains, and set the stars in their thrones of glory in the highest heavens.

And you shall bathe in the Stream of Sound, and the music of its waters shall flow over you; for in the beginning of the times so did we all share in the Holy Stream of Sound that gave birth to all creation. And the mighty roaring of the Stream of Sound will fill your whole body, and you will tremble before its might. Then breathe deeply of the angel of air, and become the sound itself, that the Holy Stream of Sound may carry you to the endless kingdom of the Heavenly Father, there where the rhythm of the world rises and falls.

And when darkness gently closes the eyes of the angels of the Earthly Mother, then shall you also sleep, that your spirit may join the unknown angels of the Heavenly Father. And in the moments before you sleep, then shall you think of the bright and glorious stars, the white, shining, far-seen and far-piercing stars. For your thoughts before sleep are as the bow of the skilful

"Into the innermost circle have you come, into the mystery of mysteries, that which was old when our father Enoch was young and walked the earth"



archer, that sends the arrow where he wills. Let your thoughts before sleep be with the stars; for the stars are Light, and the Heavenly Father is Light, even that Light which is a thousand times brighter than the brightness of a thousand suns. Enter the Holy Stream of Light, that the shackles of death may loose their hold forever, and breaking free from the bonds of earth, ascend the Holy Stream of Light through the blazing radiance of the stars, into the endless kingdom of the Heavenly Father.

Unfold your wings of light, and in the eye of your thought, soar with the stars into the farthest reaches of heaven, where untold suns blaze with light. For at the beginning of the times, the Holy Law said, let there be Light, and there was Light. And you shall be one with it, and the power of the Holy Light Stream will fill your whole body, and you will tremble before its might. Say the word "Light," as you breathe deeply of the angel of air, and you will become the Light itself; and the Holy Stream will carry you to the endless kingdom of the Heavenly Father, there losing itself in the eternal Sea of Light which gives birth to all creation. And you shall be one with the Holy Stream of Light,

always before you sleep in the arms of the Heavenly Father.

I tell you truly, your body was made not only to breathe, and eat, and think, but it was also made to enter the Holy Stream of Life. And your ears were made not only to hear the words of men, the song of birds, and the music of falling rain, but they were also made to hear the Holy Stream of Sound. And your eyes were made not only to see the rising and setting of the sun, the ripple of sheaves of grain, and the words of the Holy Scrolls, but they were also made to see the Holy Stream of Light. One day your body will return to the Earthly Mother, even also your ears and your

"And when darkness gently closes the eyes of the angels of the Earthly Mother, then shall you also sleep, that your spirit may join the unknown angels of the Heavenly Father"

eyes. But the Holy Stream of Life, the Holy Stream of Sound, and the Holy Stream of Light, these were never born, and can never die. Enter the Holy Streams, even that Life, that Sound, and that Light which gave you birth; that you may reach the kingdom of the Heavenly Father and become one with him, even as the river empties into the far distant sea.

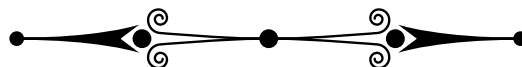
More than this cannot be told, for the Holy Streams will take you to that place where words are no more, and even the Holy Scrolls cannot record the mysteries therein.<sup>3</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Co., 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Gideon Ouseley, *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve* (1892).

<sup>3</sup> *The Essene Gospel of Peace: The Teachings of the Elect* (Book 4). Translated and Edited by Edmond Bordeaux Székely IBS / PO Box 849 / Nelson BC V1L 6A5 (Nelson BC: International Biogenic Society, 1981).



# THE ANCIENT AND MODERN ESSENES

*Martina Hill, S.R.C.*

**T**he author has been teaching regularly about Essene awareness in Northern California for more than seven years. In this essay she outlines some of the major sources for modern Essene work, and its modern manifestations.

A number of years ago, prominent Dead Sea Scrolls translator, Dr. Martin Abegg, as part of a class through the Biblical Archeology Society, posed an interesting question: "So you want to be an Essene?"

Perhaps his intention was to inspire a profound question-and-answer session, to encourage participants to open up the vaults of history, integrate information from ancient manuscripts, and allow the ways and wisdom of these ancients to come to life.

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

In the late 1940s a young Bedouin shepherd boy, Mohammed Ahmed el-Hamed (nicknamed *edh-Dhib*, the Wolf), known among his people for being keenly observant, threw a stone up into a mountain in the region of the Dead Sea. He then heard the sound of breaking potsherds, and climbed the mountain to investigate what was to become one of the great archeological finds of recent times.

More than nine hundred carefully preserved scrolls were eventually unearthed, including early books from the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures, providing texts more than a thousand years older than those which had been previously used to provide translations of Jewish Scriptural texts.

The version of the Book of Psalms found at the Dead Sea provided much clarification, as parts of those texts had been previously lost; and in addition other works

were found, including the Thanksgiving Psalms, and many devotional prayers. Twenty-two manuscripts with material from the Book of Isaiah were found there, along with twenty-five manuscripts with material from the Book of Enoch, which is not currently part of Biblical cannon accepted by official Judaism and Christianity, but which follows patterns also manifested in the Christian book of Revelation, and includes more than twenty sayings similar to those of Jesus recorded in the New Testament.

The rules of the community were found there, as well as some vessels and scrolls from Jerusalem, and some texts that differ from Essenian philosophy, lending further credence to the theory that the scrolls are not exclusively Essene writings, but rather, a varied library used for comparative teachings.

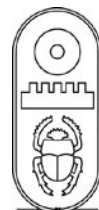
More than fifty members of the Dead Sea Scrolls translation and scholarship team over the past six decades have provided more than 150 volumes, have pieced together tiny fragments, and brought a diversified wealth of expertise to the Dead Sea Scrolls study and quest. Questions have been answered regarding Essene timekeeping and calendars, the Essene vision of purity, and definitions of their priesthood. Much in the way of visionary and prophetic literature has been brought forward, and life at this community from 350 BCE to 60 CE has been further chronicled.

## Ancient Authors on the Essenes

Throughout the centuries historians and theologians have been studying the extensive writings of ancient historians of the early Common Era regarding the Essenes. Writings of



*Qumran*, James Collins, F.R.C.



the Roman Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, and the historian and mystic philosopher, Philo (Judaeus) of Alexandria, described ancient Essenian life, character, and organizing patterns rather carefully. Both of these writers wrote extensively in antiquity, and the work of both historians agrees on most points regarding the Essenes. The work, *The Essenes by Josephus and his Contemporaries*, by Dr. Edmond Bordeaux Székely, is a helpful summary focusing on the Essene commentaries by these ancient authors.

It should also be noted, that the Essene and/or early Essenian Christian presence can be traced to the Lake Mareotis region of Alexandria, Egypt; the Amarna ruins of central Egypt; Jerusalem; the Mount Carmel School of the Prophets; and private homes throughout the Judean regions. The Qumran community at the Dead Sea essentially consisted of priestly males; however, the Essenes had communities for married couples, for example, which suggests that a search for clarity concerning these ancients should not be limited to information from the Dead Sea, where, as Dr Székely wrote, when it became time for the brothers to leave the desert and go to another place, “the scrolls stayed behind as buried sentinels, as forgotten guardians of eternal and living truth.... The Essene brothers hid their teachings in the minds of the few who could preserve them for their descendants, and the Scrolls of Healing, lay neglected beneath the shifting sands of the desert....”<sup>1</sup>

Josephus actually began studies to become an Essene (the word, “Essene” means “Healer” in Aramaic, a Semitic language related to Hebrew). Some of his descriptions include:

“...there were three sects, of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.... The doctrine of the Essenes tends to teach all that they confidently may trust their fate in the hands of God.... They say that the soul is immortal, and they aspire to lead a righteous and honest life.... Their ‘Yea’ and ‘Nay’ were with them as binding as a sacred oath...on account of the sense of justice that they ever show and the courage and

intrepidity that they manifest in ever defending truth and innocence.... They never keep servants.... Therefore they serve and assist each other.... They are very industrious and enterprising...the third class of philosophers among the Jews, and the class that is most esteemed for their just and moral life.... They willingly adopt the children of other people.... They show great kindness to such children, hold them dear, and teach them all forms of knowledge and science, morals, and religion.... none of them seem to live in abundance or need....among them are seen neither haughtiness nor slavish subjection.... Everybody having taken his place in supreme silence and stillness....”<sup>2</sup>

The Essenes described their spiritual experience as “Walking Between the Worlds,” indicating a high level of initiatic, mystical awareness. And there were various levels of unfoldment and responsibility within the order, and several levels of priesthood. Former Rosicrucian Emperor, H. Spencer Lewis, carefully tracked Essene patterns and connections to the life and ministry of Jesus in his books, *The Secret Doctrines of Jesus* and *The Mystical Life of Jesus*.

His studies, experiences, and research on the Essenes led him to the materials from the archives of the Great White Brotherhood in Tibet, India, and Egypt. He led an entourage to Egypt, including a visit to the ancient Essene community location at Lake Mareotis, near Alexandria. He pointed out that secret teachings were suggested in worldly parables, and that Jesus’ teachings were for both an inner circle and an outer circle.<sup>3</sup>

### **Modern Voices in the Essene Tradition**

Today, with the increase of work surrounding the Dead Sea Scrolls, the research teams, the increase of studies concerning Judeo-Christian origins, Biblical Archeology, and the discovery in Egypt of the Gnostic writings in the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945, we may be living in a time when many of our Judeo-Christian perceptions could evolve in some areas and gradually change the lives of many.



Popular author, Gregg Braden, an Earth Sciences expert, works with Essene studies in the context of various spiritual traditions and sacred sites, in his books, *The Isaiah Effect*, *Beyond Zero Point*, *The God Code*, and *Secrets of the Lost Mode of Prayer* (and a *Dead Sea Scrolls* tape series with Deepak Chopra). He confirms the observation of Essene texts in a monastic library in Tibet.<sup>4</sup>

In 1917 Dr. Edmond Bordeaux Székely observed, copied, and later translated, *The Essene Gospel of Peace*, which he reportedly discovered in the Vatican Archives. This work, in four volumes, along with philosophical, practical, healing arts applications, and his poetic offerings, have inspired some extensive movements and activities around the world. More than ten million copies of *The Essene Gospel of Peace: Book 1* have been distributed.

Although this, and the other Tibetan manuscripts are not officially in the public view at this time, the latest research generally corroborates Dr. Székely's studies, writings, and approaches, and *The Essene Gospel of Peace* has been observed in Tibet.<sup>5</sup> Could this be the time for another expedition, perhaps including some members of the Dead Sea Scrolls research team, with modern equipment for copying and analysis?

The ancient Essenes were described as living to an average age of one hundred years, and not uncommonly to ages of 120 and beyond, by the historians of their day. In those times, the average life span was only thirty-five years. They were vegetarians, lived a nature-based lifestyle, and engaged in some practices which today we might describe as yogic. They further claimed to be carrying the fullness of the teachings of Moses, brought out of Egypt.

Gabriel Cousens, M.D., in his books, *Conscious Eating*, and *Spiritual Nutrition*, explains much about the Essene ways and lifestyle of healing, employing live (uncooked) foods and a plant-based diet, along with fasting and mineralization principles, toward the curing of many diseases, including mental disorders. His book, *Sevenfold Peace: World*

*Peace Through Body, Mind, Family, Community, Culture...*, which elaborates on the Sevenfold Peace of the Essenes that is mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls, has been used by the United Nations Peacekeeping Council for studies on world peace.

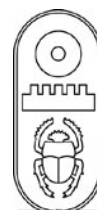
Dr. Cousens's work with meditation for world peace, for example, *Peace 21*, now in its twenty-first year, has been used by the UN General Assembly. He is also founder of the Tree of Life Rejuvenation Center in Patagonia, Arizona, and also at the Dead Sea itself. Also, his *Peace Everyday Initiative* is being practiced worldwide, and has been endorsed by key figures, including the Dalai Lama.

### **Connections between Qumran and Amarna**

One of the members of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Robert Feather, a researcher and metallurgist, assigned to investigate the Copper Scroll found at Qumran, has written two very interesting books on the manifold connections between the Qumran community at the Dead Sea and Akhenaten's Egypt: *The Copper Scroll* and *The Secret Initiation of Jesus at Qumran*. His writings have been corroborated by senior researchers on the team, including Jozef Milik.

Feather establishes extensive connections between the priestly garments and altar designs and coverings used by King David, King Solomon, and the Egyptians. He demonstrates similarities between Akhenaten's Temple at Amarna and the temple at Qumran, such as the use of four-part washing areas and ten ablution pools, three-to-one dimensions, and exact degrees of orientation.

Feather reveals that the Copper Scroll contains a sixty-four-part "treasure map," containing locations for what would have been about one-fourth of the world's gold (which creates a mystery as to why these simple-living monks would have such access). After fifty years of searching in Judea for the gold and artifacts without success, the search of the Amarna ruins yielded multiple finds of



gold bricks, in the locations described, with the Pharaoh's seal in the locations described. Feather also establishes plausible theories for a multitude of Hebrew-Egyptian and Essene connections over the centuries, as well as many Egyptian practices evidenced in Qumran excavations.

### **Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Essenianism**

Those involved with Rosicrucian Tradition have been fascinated with the Essenes throughout the modern period. In the eighteenth century, the founders of the Masonic Order of the Golden Rosy Cross of the Ancient System claimed descent from the Essenes through Ormus, a mysterious disciple of St. Mark, who is said to have combined the Essene and Egyptian Mystery traditions in 151 CE.<sup>6</sup> Whether this is taken literally or allegorically, it is a way of demonstrating the spiritual continuity of Essene and Rosicrucian tradition.<sup>7</sup>

Christian Rebis further documents the continuation of this search during the nineteenth century:

“Meanwhile, the dogmatism of the Church disheartened those who were in search of a true and original Christianity. This was the case with Abbé Ferdinand Chatel (1795-1857), the promoter of his ‘French Catholic Church,’ which was linked with the Neo-Templar Order of Fabr -Palaprat. Certain others, such as Pierre Leroux, believed Essenianism to be the true Christianity. His book *De l’Humanit , de son Principe et de son Avenir* (Regarding Humanity, Its Principle and Future; 1840) described Jesus as being an Essene in contact with Eastern traditions.

“Daniel Ram e followed the same line with *La Mort de J sus, R v lations historiques . . . d’apr s le manuscrit d’un Fr re de l’ordre sacr  des ess niens, contemporain de J sus* (The Death of Jesus, Historical Revelations; 1863). Thus,

Essenianism. . . continued to preoccupy those who were in search of the Primordial Tradition. It was combined with Egyptosophy, a passion for the wisdom of a people whose basis was being rediscovered.”<sup>8</sup>

### **The Modern Essene Movement**

In continuity with the continuing search for Essene Spirituality, the Modern Essene movement was greatly inspired by several spiritual works published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve* by Gideon Ouseley (1892), *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* by Levi H. Dowling (1908), *The Essene Gospel of Peace* by Edmond Bordeaux Sz kely (1928), and *The Mystical Life of Jesus*, by H. Spencer Lewis (1929).<sup>9</sup>

Contemporary Essenes, as they study to understand the ancients, are generally found to focus on health-related teachings for body, soul, and spirit. This generally includes

vegetarianism, with a focus on “live foods” (fresh fruits, nuts and legumes, baby greens and sprouts, and other vegetables); and perhaps veganism, peace meditations, and breathing exercises.

Professor Sz kely interpreted seven aspects of Peace, based on his work and studies which are

necessary for full health on all levels: Peace with the Body, with the Mind, with the Family, with Humanity, with Culture, with the Kingdom of the Earthly Mother, and with the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the individual is in harmony within and without.

The forces of the world around and within the individual are conceived of as a vast Tree of Life, with many interactive polarities. There is a correspondence between all that is, above and below. Consciousness, Nature, and Experience can lead us to a realization of Truth, which is ever evolving,



Lake Moeris in the Fayum, locality of the Essene-Therapeutae school in Egypt. (Photograph from the archives of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC)

and must be discovered anew by each seeker. As seekers grow in knowledge and wisdom, their responsibility for shepherding and safeguarding the planet and the cosmos on all levels grows.

With new doors opening up daily for careful students in the area of the Essene Philosophy and world spirituality in general, many people today at least recognize the word “Essene,” so that this ancient and modern movement may continue to contribute and inspire peace in our world.

Recently in the worldwide press, it was noted that Pope Benedict XVI announced during the week before Easter that Jesus and his disciples followed the Essene calendar, and celebrated the Passover meal without a lamb, leading to the possibility that he was a vegetarian:

“In all likelihood, however, [Jesus] celebrated the Passover with his disciples in accordance with the Qumran calendar, hence, at least one day earlier; he celebrated it without a lamb, like the Qumran community which did not recognize Herod’s temple and was waiting for the new temple.”<sup>11</sup>

Even more clearly, the current Pope writes in his 2007 book, *Jesus of Nazareth*:

“The earnest religiosity of the Qumran writings is moving; it appears that not only John the Baptist, but possibly Jesus and his



*The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic*, by Victoria Franck Wetsch, S.R.C.  
Script by Shahan Shammass, F.R.C.

family as well, were close to the Qumran community. At any rate, there are numerous points of contact with the Christian message in the Qumran writings. It is a reasonable hypothesis that John the Baptist lived for some time in this community and received part of his religious formation from it.”<sup>12</sup>

Yet, apparently few people in this busy world took note. Although an active Essene / Gnostic awareness and dedication is taking place, and groups and teachers have been at work, both within and outside of the Rosicrucian Order, there is still a hush and a quiet about these Masters. And yet, at the same time, often modern awareness is moving toward the particular understanding and practices of the ancient Essenes concerning the Cosmic, healing, Nature, and regarding higher practice and devotion.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Edmond Bordeaux Székely, ed., trans., *The Essene Gospel of Peace: Book 1*, (Nelson, BC, Canada: International Biogenic Society, 1981), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond Bordeaux Székely, *The Essenes by Josephus and his Contemporaries*, (Nelson, BC, Canada: International Biogenic Society, n.d.), 11-45.

<sup>3</sup> H. Spencer Lewis, *The Mystical Life of Jesus*, (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929), 21, 224.

<sup>4</sup> Gregg Braden, *Beyond Zero Point: The Secrets of the Lost Mode of Prayer*, VHS Video, (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc., 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries*, (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 2005), 104-105.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation* (London: KPI, in association with Islamic Publications, 1986), 376-379.

<sup>8</sup> Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History*, 120-121.

<sup>9</sup> *The Essene Gospel of Peace and The Gospel of the Holy Twelve* are widespread in Essene work. *The Aquarian Gospel* and *The Mystical Life of Jesus* are suggested as inspirations for the modern Essene movement by J. Gordon Melton in *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Co., 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Edmond Bordeaux Székely, *The Teachings of the Essenes from Enoch to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (Nelson, BC, Canada: International Biogenic Society, 1957). [http://www.thenazarenway.com/sevenfold\\_peace.htm](http://www.thenazarenway.com/sevenfold_peace.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), “Homily given at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper,” April 5, 2007, at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Rome. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20070405\\_coenadomini\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070405_coenadomini_en.html).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

A M O R G



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