

Dead Sea Scrolls, Found Recently, Offer Undreamed of Illumination to Holy Bible

(Editor's Note: What are the Dead Sea Scrolls? Are they likely to alter the Bible as we now know it? Do they throw new light on Christ's life? These and other questions have intrigued scholars and laymen alike since the first scrolls were found in a cave near the Dead Sea. It may take 50 years before all the answers are known, but here is an up-to-date look at what has been learned so far.)

By REILMAN MORIN
NEW YORK (AP) — "This is the answer to those who say we do not have the original Bible."

It is now nearly nine years since an archbishop of the Syrian Church, Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, first held in his hands a brittle, dusty roll of parchment. He did not know what it was. He could not read the script which was partially visible where the edges had broken. Yet, something gripped his interest and impelled him to find out about the strange object.

The place was Jerusalem in the summer of 1947. Even today, the archbishop's dark eyes burn with a deep intensity when he describes that moment.

For the cylinder of parchment, together with other rolls, and uncounted thousands of fragments of still others—all found nearby—have come to be known as the "Dead Sea Scrolls."

One of First Men
Archbishop Samuel, who now administers a diocese of his church in the United States and Canada, was one of the first men to see the scrolls after they were taken from the caves near the Dead Sea where they had been buried for centuries.

Since the original finds, other caves yielded up still more scrolls and fragments. Evidently, long ago a whole library was hidden away in the remote, uninhabited wastes on the shores of the Dead Sea.

Who did this? Why? How old were the scrolls? What writings did they contain?

Questions sprung up on every hand. The first shadowy indications of what the scrolls might be astonished the archaeologists and biblical scholars.

For, some books of the Old Testament were quickly identified, along with some of the so-called apocryphal writings.

Thrilling Fact
The most thrilling fact was their age—which was hotly disputed at first. They are 2,000 years old, and more—that is, written during the era of the life of Christ.

Thus, they provide "undreamed-of illumination to the study of biblical literature," said Dr. Frank Cross, distinguished American scholar who is in Jerusalem working on the scrolls.

To Archbishop Samuel, the important point is: "They establish the fact that the Bible was written before and during the time of Christ, not in the Middle Ages as some have claimed. This proves that the Bible in our hands today is the true Bible."

"Now we can say with certainty that the prophecy of Isaiah was written before the birth of Christ. The truth of all the prophecies is reaffirmed and strengthened by this fact."

It will be long years before all the writings found in the caves have been translated and evaluated. Optimistic scholars estimate 10 to 20 years. Others, however, say enough material is at hand to keep them working at top speed for the next 50 years.

Top Speed Slower
Top speed is very slow. Merely unrolling the scrolls is a delicate, painstaking job. Many of the fragments are mere slivers of papyrus that may crumble when touched. They may have to be read with the assistance of infra-red photographs.

To give some idea of the magnitude of the task—Seven fairly complete scrolls were found in the first cave. In addition, fragments of 68 other manuscripts were identified from that cave.

From another, 330 manuscripts, all fragmentary, were taken. Other fragments of writings have been found in eight other "minor caves," as they were described by Dr. Cross and Monsignor Patrick W. Skehan, of Catholic University of America.

Fitting these bits together, apart from translating and evaluating them, will be a gigantic task. Still, a great deal already is known about them. While controversy swirls around many points, big and small, there is a general agreement on some basic facts about the scrolls:

1. They were written between 200 B.C. and 70 A.D. Radiocarbon tests, the age of Roman coins found near them, and other evidence has established this in the opinion of most scholars.

2. They were written mainly on leather, some on papyrus, a few on metal. Then they were sealed with pitch, and carefully placed in large pottery jars. The jars were hidden in the caves.

3. The languages on the scrolls read so far are Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. (The latter, a Semitic tongue, is generally believed to have been the language spoken by Jesus.)

Among the original finds, there was a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah. It has been described as "magnificent." Until this was discovered, the oldest known copy of Isaiah was dated around the 9th Century.

Scholars immediately began checking later texts against this latest find. They were amazed at the accuracy of those in use today. But some experts say some revisi-

ons in the Old Testament may be necessitated.

There was also a document called a "commentary" on the book of the prophet, Habakkuk, found among the original group of scrolls. Dr. Millar Burrows, professor of biblical theology at Yale, and author of the new book, The Dead Sea Scrolls (Viking), has written of this:

"In some respects, this curious little document is the most interesting and important of all those found for the identification and history of the group that produced it."

What was that group?

First Boomings
Here, the first boomings of controversy begin to be heard. Scholars agree that a Jewish monastic sect, parts of whose monastery have been found, probably produced the commentary, made the copy of Isaiah, and wrote the other documents found in the first cave.

Dr. Cross says flatly: "The people of the scrolls were Essenes, a well-known apocalyptic sect within Judaism." Other scholars are less positive in the identification, using the term, "Essene-type" sect.

The Essenes are not mentioned in the Gospels. Two other major parties within Judaism, the Pharisees and Sadducees, do appear. Dr. Cross says the absence of any mention of the Essenes is not due to ignorance of them by the early Christians, but "From lack of antipathy."

Moral Excellence
The sect, and the way its members lived—in austerity, sharing common meals, under strict discipline—has been described by the historians, Pliny and Josephus, and the Jewish philosopher, Philo. He wrote of the Essenes:

"Their moral excellence triumphed and everybody treated them as independent and free by nature, praising their common meals and their indescribable good fellowship, the clearest proof of a life which is perfect and exceedingly happy."

Josephus noted that, unlike many of their contemporaries, the Essenes believed in immortality. He describes their tortures at the hands of the Romans, and says: "Smiling in their agonies, and mildly deriding their tormentors, they cheerfully resigned their souls confident that they would receive them back again."

A widely-held theory about the Dead Sea Scrolls is that the Essenes hid their books—a great library—in the caves during the Jewish revolt against the Romans. Their community apparently was destroyed by the Roman Tenth Legion on its way to the siege of Jerusalem.

Scholars quickly began looking for parallels between Jesus' teachings and the ideals of the Essenes. Rev. Duncan Howlett of Boston, together with Dr. Krister Stendahl of the Harvard Divinity School, recently listed these points, among others:

"Both emphasized the spiritual to an extraordinary degree. Both objected to the temple practices of Jerusalem. Both opposed the taking of oaths. Both opposed animal sacrifices. Both believed in immortality."

Both believed decidedly in the validity of the prophecies which they found in the Old Testament. Both believed that Old Testament prophecies were coming true in their time. Both believed in the coming of the Messiah.

But Rev. Howlett and others also have emphasized that Jesus and the Essenes differed sharply on many points. Dr. Filson has listed a dozen fundamental differences. And while noting this, he noted, as well, the fact that there were parallels between Jesus and the Pharisees, too, he said:

"They all had a common heritage. The church did not arise in a vacuum. It was the heir of the Old Testament and of God's work with the people of Israel."

Religious scholars have been aware that the writings in the scrolls, their implications regarding the Bible, its teachings and the life and words of Christ—that the discoveries might puzzle and worry devout Christians.

Cross wrote in the "Christian Century": "The critical scholars—Catholic, Protestant, and secular—at work on the scrolls here in Jerusalem, are not walking about in trepidation, lest their faith (or lack of it) be altered by the next manuscript fragment they turn over."

On the contrary, he said, the information coming from the scrolls permits Christians to "enter into this rich, variegated world of sectarian Judaism in the First Century with new boldness and understanding; the strange world of the New Testament becomes less baffling, less exotic."

"No Christian need stand in dread of these texts; on the contrary, we should thank God we can more easily become 'contemporaries of Christ' in historical understanding."

Theatre Time Table
ELGINORE
"ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS" at 1:35, 3:45, 5:10 and 7:15
"NAT 'KING' COLE STORY" at 1:10, 3:30, 5:45, 7:30 and 10:05
CAPITOL
"THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY" at 1:00, 3:05, 5:15 and 7:25
"SPY CHASERS" at 3:05, 5:15 and 7:30
HOLLYWOOD
"ULYSSES" at 1:45, 3:55 and 6:05
"GIRL RUSH" at 3:35, 5:15 and 7:35

Own Request Places Man Back in Pen

JOLIET, Ill. (AP) — A 33-year-old ex-convict who has spent many years in Stateville penitentiary has returned to the prison, at his own request.

Warden Joseph E. Ragen said James Pennerman telephoned him from a Chicago rooming house Friday, sobbing, "I'm sick and hungry and want to return."

After parole authorities investigated, Ragen had them bring Pennerman to the prison. It was the fourth time he returned to Stateville, Ragen said. In 1919 Pennerman, then 16, was sentenced to a term of one year to life on a burglary charge. He was returned three times on parole violations and was paroled again in December, 1954.

Ragen said Pennerman was sent to the prison hospital. His case will be considered by the parole board, the warden said.

Polio Pioneer, Poster Boy to Join Ceremony

NEW YORK (AP) — The 1956 March of Dimes poster boy and the first polio pioneer will take part at noon Sunday in Hyde Park ceremonies commemorating the 74th birthday anniversary of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who founded the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

The poster boy is Tommy Woodward, 5, of Baltimore, Md. Randy Kerr, 8, of Vienna, Va., is the polio pioneer. He was the first child to get a shot in the 1954 field trials of the Salk vaccine.

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