

MASONIC UNIVERSITY
The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masonic Fraternity
presented by Lyle Simpson at Des Moines Scottish Rite Consistory
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Introduction

Some of you attended the first lecture on the Dead Sea Scrolls that I presented last February. However, many of you were not able to be there. I need to first summarize some of what was covered that evening so that we are all on the same page so that the conclusions I am presenting tonight will make more sense to all of us.

Before I start, keep in mind that I do not claim to be a real expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is really only one in Iowa. He is Dr. Reis, a professor at Grinnell College. His lectures are way too esoteric to be of much value for this discussion tonight because they center on why this word and not that is on this particular Scroll, and what does that change have to do to our interpretation of the Holy Bible today. They have found 41 copies of one particular book of the Bible among the Scrolls and they are all different. He thinks about which one was the word of God?

I became interested in the subject of the Dead Sea Scrolls when I visited Israel in 1990. The Prime Minister of Israel had just ordered their release to the public. I knew that they were discovered in 1947. As a lawyer it concerned me why the Scrolls are only now becoming public, and why would it take a decree of the Prime Minister to make them public? Who was hiding what from whom? This was the greatest archeological find of all time. Why would anyone want to

hide anything so that the public was being denied information of such historic value? Lawyers tend to be suspicious when someone hides something.

I went to Qumran where the scrolls were written, and visited the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem to view the original Scrolls that were found in caves near the Dead Sea. I got involved with the Biblical Archeology Society and started studying their material. I bought all the books that I could find on the Dead Sea Scrolls. My wife says that I even read some of them.

The speaker of one of the lectures that I listened to started by saying that typically in our society when we are in a crowd of strangers and forced to talk about something with others, who are not our close friends or family, we discuss sports because you can have an opinion and be accepted, even if you know little about your subject. Among intellectuals you can look good by discussing Quantum Mechanics or the Dead Sea Scrolls, because both of these subjects are complex, and we really know very little about the subject matter.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have only been released to the public since 1990. Some argue that should never have happened, because they tell a little different story than our current religious traditions. I have listened to 12 lectures presented by the Biblical Archeology Society, and 3 with the Grinnell professor, and have read many books on the subject. I recognize that I am still learning about the subject. Hopefully, we will have time tonight to discuss what I have learned.

I must first put the relevance of the scrolls in history so that you will better understand the importance of their discovery. You cannot understand the

relevance of the Dead Sea Scrolls unless you understand the significance of the Jerusalem Temple. It is even more interesting if you know what has happened to the Original Scrolls written from the time of Moses through the life of Christ, especially if you have read Dan Brown's *The De Vinci Code*. That is what I really want to discuss tonight. If we get time during our discussion, and you want me to elaborate further, I will discuss the Essene Community that I represent who are located in Southern Iowa and are today living the life of those who wrote the ancient Scrolls in Qumran.

Abraham

I recognize that most of you in the room know more about this part of history than I do. Pardon me if I over simplify or misstate a few facts from your point of view. However, to make sure that we are all on the same page for our discussion tonight, we have to understand the relevance of a few of the important people in our religious traditions to see how we got to where we are today. Our religious tradition begins with Abraham.

Abraham was born in Ur, which today is a part of the dessert of Iraq between the Tigers and Euphrates Rivers. He and his tribe moved to Palestine, and were living in Beersheba when he believed that God had commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mt. Moriah to atone for the sins of man so that he could become Holy. Human sacrifice was common in those days, but normally you only sacrificed your enemy. Abraham attempted to obey God's instructions and covered the 53-mile trip over Rocky Mountains and through valleys in only three

days to reach the highest point in what we now call Israel in order to prepare for the sacrifice his son. Christians feel it was his son Isaac, because he was Abraham's first son born of his wife, Sarah. Moslems claim Abraham was to sacrifice Ishmael, who was previously born to Hagar, Abraham's servant, because he was actually Abraham's first child. That, frankly makes the most sense because Sarah resented Ishmael and Hagar and she banished them after Abrahams death.

The legend claims that Abraham believed that God intervened to prevent a human sacrifice of his son, when suddenly a ram appeared and took Isaac's place. Human sacrifice was fairly common in those days. We can be glad today that Isaac survived because he founded the tribes of Israel from whom the faith of all Jews and Christians derives

Moslems are certain that those who believe the Islam faith are the "Chosen People" of God. Moslems claim that since it was Ishmael who was to have been sacrificed, the Holy site of Mt. Moriah rightfully belongs to them.

This story is at best an allegory for the redemption of man through the animal sacrifice of blood. There on this rocky hill, which was the highest point around in Israel at about 2,700 feet above sea level, Abraham felt connected to his one true God; and this moment in about 1800 B.C. was the founding event of Judaism and, ultimately, the Christian and Islam faiths. Thus, the Founder of both faiths caused one of their major conflicts still in existence today. Those of which faith are the rightful "Chosen People" of God?

Moses

We are all familiar with the story of Moses. He is important in the historic tradition of both Judaism and Christianity. He is more important to Judaism for leading the Jewish people on their Exodus out of Egypt. He is more important to Christianity for the legend of the Ten Commandments.

Moses felt that he possessed great secrets, or special knowledge. Until recently secrets were deemed important to protect because they provide power and strength to the possessor. In contrast with our current access to knowledge today through public libraries or the Internet, secrets were maintained in ancient society, and not shared openly with the uninitiated. Secrets gave the possessor control over those lacking their knowledge.

Moses had his scribes record his secrets upon Scrolls so that they may be preserved for his posterity. Moses decreed that these scrolls should be placed in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle, because that was the safest place. As the most sacred place, it was therefore the most protected. He entrusted the Arc of the Covenant and the scrolls to the Levites—one of the twelve tribes of Israel—for their protection. Lineage has always been important for humans. Lineage has historically meant that a father passed his most cherished possessions to his eldest son. The Priests of ancient Judaism passed possession of the scrolls and the Arc of the Covenant down from father to son from the time of Moses for over a thousand years.

Jewish Temple

Ultimately, the Jewish people arrived in Israel. King David decreed that there should be a home built for God here on earth. He felt that the “House of God” should be located on Mt. Moriah because that is the site where Abraham was to have killed his son as proof of his loyalty to God, and where God intervened. This was the place where man first recognized that there is only one God, and not the many gods that people had previously accepted. Therefore Mt. Moriah became the defining place of the Jewish faith. Since that was the closest place on Earth to God, it was the only place where the Jewish people could be redeemed for the Resurrection at the End of Days. Mt. Moriah is their Key to Heaven.

Since King David felt that the Jewish Temple should be built, not as a place of worship for the people, but as God’s house on earth, it was not to be a church in our current sense. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy Sanctorum. The other Priest conducted their business in the rest of the Temple.

King David did not live to see his Temple built. His son, King Solomon, carried out his wish and almost bankrupted his nation to build the first Jewish Temple over 3,000 years ago. The design of the Temple was a stone formalization of the tabernacle tent originally ordered built out of sheep skins by Moses to house the Ark of the Covenant upon his return from receiving the Ten-Commandments on Mt. Sinai.

Mt. Moriah is a plateau of only 37 acres. The physical appearance of the terrain is much like the plateaus of Utah or Idaho. It is situated on the edge of a

dessert. It is separated by the Kindron Valley from the Mt. of Olives. In that Valley is the Garden of Gethsemane, which means olive press. My wife and I were just there a year ago. From the room where the last supper took place, which Israel tour guides claim still exists, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to Calvary is all within one square mile. I do not believe the room that I was shown existed at the time of Christ, but the location of the original room had to be within a few blocks of that location. In addition, I now know through current archeological excavations that the ground level at the time of Christ was actually approximately 20 feet below where I was standing.

The ancient Scrolls from the time of Moses were stored in the caves and crevices under the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple. These Scrolls and, at least for many centuries, the Ark of the Covenant, were carefully guarded and sequestered 24 hours a day by the Priests who followed in succession through their family lineage from father to son, each passing the responsibility to the next generation.

The Holy of Holies was in permanent darkness except for one day each year, on the Day of Atonement, when, in commemoration of sacrifice of Abraham, the High Priest entered with the blood of the national sin offering, “the scapegoat”, as a sacrifice to God so that the Jewish people would be pure and free from their sins so that they would be ready for Redemption, or the End of Days, when they could then enter Heaven. This Jewish Temple was their ticket to Heaven, and was therefore essential to Judaism for purifying the Orthodox Jews, for entry into the presence of God at End of Days. The Jewish population

still believes this tradition. Most Christians have a modified version of that belief today. Christians do not have to wait until the End of Days to get into heaven.

Temple Destruction

In 586 BC the Babylonians destroyed King Solomon's Temple. The leadership of the Jewish people was then exiled into Babylon. In 570 B.C. Ezekiel prophesied that the Jewish Temple would be restored, and he described in great detail the architecture of the Temple that was to be rebuilt upon Mt. Moriah when the exiled Jews returned to Jerusalem. Because his description was contemporaneous with the destruction of the Original Temple built by King Solomon we know what the original Temple really looked like. Recording Ezekiel's vision had significant effect on later Jewish thinking. Even King Zerubbabel, in the earlier part of the 6th Century B.C. fostered rebuilding the Temple following the Jews return from Babylonian Captivity.

Construction of the Second Temple commenced in 520 B.C., and almost 1,000 years after King Solomon built the first temple, the Second Temple was finally completed by King Herod in around 20 B.C. This Second Temple was totally destroyed by the Romans after they ordered the exile of Jews out of Israel in 67 A.D. The Roman Emperor had decreed that no stone was to be left stacked upon another stone of the Temple. Only evidence of the foundation of Harrods Temple remains today.

Every Jew, at least in Israel, is buried facing the Temple site of Mt. Moriah so that they are ready to ascend to heaven upon the coming of their predicted

Messiah which would signal the End of Days. According to Jewish tradition certain conditions must exist for this event to occur. For a fundamentalist Jew, the Torah—which are those Jewish scriptures representing the law of God—demands that animal sacrifices can only be performed at the Holy Temple which must be on Mt. Moriah.

The term “Temple” to a Jew means only the House of God. God’s House must be located on Mt. Moriah and nowhere else. Therefore, without the Temple there can be no sacrifices to God. Without sacrifices there can be no shedding of blood. Without shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sin. Without forgiveness of sin how can one be truly holy? How can one become pure enough to enter the very presence of God? Therefore, how can one enter the Kingdom of Heaven without the Temple? If you cannot enter Heaven, how can one become saved from the fires of Hell?

The loss of the Temple Mount to Moslems is a matter of eternal security or damnation for the Orthodox Jew. Thus the conflict of the loss of their Temple site is a fundamental issue that goes to the very soul of an Orthodox Jewish person. The House of God on Mt. Moriah has been central in the Jewish faith since the time of King David, long before there were Moslems in the world. Therefore Jews feel that the Holy site of Mt. Moriah is rightfully theirs.

Today there are no visible remains of King Solomon's temple above ground, although there is evidence of the foundation of Herod's Temple. On the ramp leading up to the Temple Mount is a sign of the Highest Rabbi advising orthodox Jews that they cannot pass that point. Their holy site was desecrated.

The site is therefore contaminated. The Orthodox Jew is forbidden from even going upon the Temple Mount. The closest point that an Orthodox Jew can get to their holy site is the Western Wall. This is a wall approximately 75 feet high and maybe three blocks long depending upon where you look. It is constructed of large quarried stone blocks. The Jewish population treats a portion of that wall as sacred because that is as close as they can get to the site of their ancient temple. The wall dates back to the time of King Solomon. Male Jews stand in front of the wall praying while swaying back and forth. Many put written prayers in the cracks between the stones. Some are most likely praying “to get your off of our temple site.” It is therefore called the “Wailing Wall”. Thus, within one square block, you can see all of the conflict of the Middle East. Some Jewish people have been literally fighting to regain their Temple Mount ever since.

Qumran

Only one year after Israel became a state the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in caves located near the ancient community of Qumran within a mile of the Dead Sea. This area is in the West Bank outside of the land given to Israel by the U.N. The question that I raised was: How did they get there and where did they come from?

By the year 250 B.C. the more orthodox Priests of the Sadducees, conflicted with the Priests of the Pharisees. They could not accept the more modern trends then being practiced in Jerusalem. These priests went a long days journey of approximately 20 miles to the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is the lowest spot on earth. It is filled by the Jordan River that flows about 120 miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Since there is no place for the water to flow out, when the water evaporates, it leaves salt. The Dead Sea is almost 1/3 salt. You can literally lie on the top of the water. It was there that the priests built the Community of Qumran, and where they copied the original ancient Scrolls, which were still located in the caves under the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple.

These copies were the Scrolls that were found in 1947 by a Bedouin shepherd, and together with all Scrolls found since, regardless of where they were found, are now generally known to us as the "Dead Sea Scrolls".

They were discovered when a Bedouin shepherd threw a stone into a cave entrance on the side of a sheer cliff about 30 feet above his head and heard a tink instead of a thud. He climbed the face of the cliff and discovered earthen jars. Inside were numerous papyrus scrolls. All of the books of the Old Testament with the exception of the Book of Esther were found among the scrolls. In addition were many other Scrolls, including the *Scroll of the Rule* that governed the life of members of the Qumran Community, and now the life of my Southern Iowa clients.

The Bedouin shepherd sold the Scrolls he found to an Arab merchant by the name of Kando. There is a story that Kando sold some to a merchant butcher who was wrapping meat in a Scroll where a member of the Jewish Bureau of Antiquities was shopping and realized what it was. I have never been

able to verify the butcher story but it certainly adds color to the mystery. Ester must have gone out wrapped around some persons meat.

Most affecting the Jewish community is that they found the complete Apocalyptic Temple Scroll that previously four other books of the Bible had only alluded to, that is important to Judaism. Now we have the entire record in a 28 foot long Scroll written in Hebrew and easily read.

The Scrolls show that the purpose of Qumran, intended by those that built it, was to serve as the House of the Lord temporarily until God could regain control over his own House in Jerusalem from the Pharisees. The members of the Qumran community felt God was in exile with them. Keep in mind that for the first part of Qumran's existence the rebuilding of the Temple on Mt. Moriah was started, but not completed. Therefore there was no Temple for use of the Priests in Jerusalem until just before the birth of Jesus. The existence of the Qumran community might explain why King Herod decided to complete the Temple's construction. No one knows for sure.

No one lived within the buildings of Qumran. The residents lived in caves, or possibly tents, surrounding the Community. The few buildings were for their collective purposes. Only men were allowed in the Community Building. The community was built by laying stones on top of each other to form walls. The roof of the Community Building is gone, but the walls and floors remain. I have stood in the room where the scrolls were claimed to have been written. It was an awesome feeling. Although I have since learned that the building was more probably two stories, and the scriptorium may have been the upper level, the

room I was in was on the ground floor. There was no second floor.

Nevertheless, when Qumran was excavated they found this room. The room still contained tables and with the tables were inkwells. The ink in the inkwells matched the ink used on the scrolls which were found in caves only a block or two from the Qumran Community.

I was so impressed that I called a friend who is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Archeology at the University of Southern California. He responded by saying, "Yes I know. I was part of the excavation team and I have one of the inkwells sitting here on my desk." That humbled me.

You have a picture of me standing in the room in Qumran where the Scrolls were written in your materials. This is to prove that I was really there, and to show you what Qumran looked like then. Today, there are platforms built to look over the community and concession and gift stands for the tourists. It reminds me of Niagara Falls that would really be more beautiful if you had to hike back 5 miles to see it instead of driving your automobile right out on top of it.

The Qumran Community felt that their purpose was to provide a temporary site for the Lord's word until a time when someone would restore the Temple. Once built, that they would then be able to sacrifice two lambs per day as an offering to the Lord until the "End of Days." At that time, the Lord would take those who were faithful to eternity and the rest of us, including all other Jews, would be damned. That notion was a powerful control device over the masses. It still is today.

There is some evidence that Christianity is rooted in the Qumran community. John the Baptist is thought to have been a member of that community. If Jesus spent three years in the wilderness it is likely that was spent in Qumran as that was the period of training before a man could be a full fledged member. The first year an apprentice kept their own possessions. The next year, the Fellow Craft turned his possessions over to the Community, but could get them back if he left. The third year, now knowing that he can live in poverty without his possession he was required to turn them over to the Community.

There is significant difference between the beliefs and social practices of those living within the Qumran community and the life of Jesus. There are some other conflicts, or deviations, between Christianity from the orthodox teachings of the Qumran Community. Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors who would not be accepted within the Qumran community. The members of the Qumran community only ate with the initiated. However, they both ate bread and wine with their meals.

Orthodox members of the community felt it was a sin to work on the Sabbath and, therefore, would not lift a hand to save a lamb even if it was in danger on the Sabbath. Christ healed people on the Sabbath. Jesus was inclusive. Everyone was welcome. The Qumran Community was exclusive. You had to live by their strict standards and believe as they did to even be admitted.

However, some Christian teachings are found in at least one scroll containing blessings similar to those found in the Book of Beatitudes. If the origin

of Christianity were in the Qumran Community, it could explain how Christianity survived. Because early Christianity was flexible and people oriented, while Qumran was centered only on God, Jesus' teachings were unorthodox, but survived to today, where those beliefs exclusive to the Qumran community did not, except for a few like those of my clients in southern Iowa.

CHRISTIANITY

In regard to Christianity, there is no question the scrolls hidden in the caves were written from two hundred and fifty years prior until about 40 years after the crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore they were contemporaneous with the life of Christ. None of the New Testament writings had yet been composed by that point in time. The activities of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul and all other people of the New Testament lived contemporary with the last phase of Qumran occupation. There is no question that they crossed paths. Qumran was only 20 miles from Jerusalem. It is interesting that there is no reference to the Essenes anywhere in the New Testament writings, nor have New Testament sources with the exception of the Beatitudes been found in the Qumran caves.

However, there are important similarities between the Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament. What they show are certain Christian traditions that were directly absorbed through sharing of Jewish culture. The differences between Christianity and Judaism at the source of beginning are far less dramatic and are certainly more subtle than our current traditions. Jesus was a Jew and did not intend to form a new religion, or to abandon his Judaism.

Jesus apparently wished to kick the Romans out of Israel so that the Jewish people could live in peace and harmony. The Priests of Qumran were searching for the Messiah. In fact they were looking for two. One a kingly messiah, and one a priestly messiah. There is some thought that when Jesus threw out the money- changers at the Jerusalem Temple he was really demonstrating that he was both. He was of the lineage of King David, and by challenging the money- changers he was showing that his power was equal to the Priests. The Qumran Community was expecting the Messiah during their lifetime, most probably yet today or tomorrow. They believed that when the Messiah came that all true believers would raise up from the dead to have life for eternity. They were ready, but they were certain that all others who were not living their life were doomed.

Both the Qumran and the early Christian communities felt that their groups represented the "Ideal Israel". The Damascus document refers to the Essene community as the "new covenant" which is a phrase used in the New Testament describing the account of the Last Supper. The Community Rule advocates a communal lifestyle with pooled resources. A lot of phrases and concepts adopted within Christianity certainly owe their roots in early Judaism as reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

There are some significant differences, however. The Qumran community was highly organized and within clear boundaries excluding or controlling access to outsiders. The Jesus movement mixed freely with outsiders, thus, they moved in opposing directions. In adherence to the law in the Qumran community was

intensified over that of the rest Israel. During the Jesus movement, the law became qualified.

One reason that scholars feel that Christianity was rooted in Qumran is because the Dead Sea Scrolls describe the "Teacher of Righteousness". However, he was not regarded as divine. Nevertheless, in one small fragment found in cave four, was found the phrase "He shall be proclaimed the Son of God, and the Son of the Most High they shall call him." However, it is impossible to tell without a context whether the words referred to a messianic figure. This Teacher of Righteousness preached many of our Christian messages. He had twelve Disciples and was violently killed by the authorities. There are many parallels to what we now know to be our tradition of Christianity. Yet this person lived 100 years earlier than Jesus.

Recently, the Book of Luke has been discovered in Hebrew. Previously, the King James Bible interpreted the Greek version of the Book of Luke. The Greek version was an interpretation of the original Hebrew. However, the Hebrew version that was found is different than our version of the Book of Luke.

Even the use of water was a commonality and yet a difference between our view of Christianity and the Qumran community. In the Qumran community, water was used as purification. In Christianity, water was used as an initiation, although the use of water with both traditions implies cleansing.

Another dubious parallel is the Eucharist. There is a description in Qumran cave one, in the rule of the congregation, of a meal attended by two messiahs in which bread and wine are eaten after being blessed. Josephus

describes that the Essenes ate bread and new wine at their meals. The Christian Eucharist seems to have originated in a Passover meal, which has a specific cultic significance. It is not a regular daily meal of Jews as it was with the Essene practice.

Jesus

There are many concerns of scholars today that the Dead Sea Scrolls are inconsistent with the King James Version of the Bible. Some are only by inference. An example is that the Scrolls were still being written during the life of Jesus. Yet his resurrection is not recorded. Some think that an event that unique would deserve some mention.

Some attribute Paul as the originator of the concept of the resurrection of Jesus. There are many other distortions of the orthodox teachings brought about by Greek translations. For instance, the book of Isaiah was only known through the Greek translation. An original Hebrew version was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the Greek word you can translate the concept that Mary was a virgin. In Hebrew or Aramaic Mary was identified only as a "young women" using language that cannot be interpreted as proof of a virgin birth.

When Constantine held the Nicene conference in about 325 he was faced with a war between the orthodox Christian and the Greek tradition originated with Saul, or Paul. In effect Constantine chose the Greek version and declared it to be the true story. Our heritage has followed from that path ever since. There was fear among some scholars and many religious leaders that release of the original scrolls will destroy the faith of the world's masses and cause chaos. Now

I finally understood why it took the order of the Prime Minister of Israel to reveal the contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the public.

Masada

The Essene's occupying Qumran obviously heard what was occurring throughout the land when the Romans started evicting the Jews from Israel. Some scholars feel that because the scrolls got more militant in later years that the members of Qumran may have confronted the Roman General Vespasian and been annihilated by the Roman army. Most, however believe that the members of the Qumran Community packed up, hid their Scrolls in earthen jars in the nearby caves to be retrieved later, and moved to the top of Masada on the south end of the Dead Sea some few miles away. Masada is a plateau that looks much like Devils Tower in Western Wyoming. It rises 1,500 feet above the floor surrounding the Dead Sea; which places it only about 200 feet above sea level. The top is flat and is less than a half mile long and one-quarter mile across. 967 of the former inhabitants of the Qumran community remained there for four years, thereby defying the rule of Rome.

The Romans, not to be defied, surrounded Masada with 15,000 soldiers and 15,000 slaves. You can still see the foundation of the communities where they lived at the foot of the mountain almost straight down when viewed from the top. The Romans spent four years trying to capture those on top of Masada, ultimately building a huge ramp out of the sand to reach the top. Those of Jewish faith feel that suicide is a mortal sin. However those on top of Masada

did not want to be captured and put to death at the hand of Rome or put into slavery. They preferred death on their own terms. They elected ten from among their numbers, and from among those they each drew lots choosing one. When the Romans were near the top the ten who were selected killed all the remaining Essenes, and the one who lost the draw killed the remaining nine. That left only one member of the community to tell their tale. They still had water. They had burned all but one of their granaries to deny their grain to the Romans. They left one granary to prove that the only reason they were killing themselves was to avoid Roman rule and becoming slaves. This was the ultimate insult, or act of defiance, to Rome. The death of the Masada community explains why the Dead Sea Scrolls were never recovered. There was no one left to return and recover them. Today, all Israel soldiers receive their weapon on top of Masada. When they raise their fist in salute they are saying "Remember Masada". We are never going to be exiled from our land given to us as the chosen people of God again.

Masonry

So what does this have to do with Masonry? About the time that I first Visited Israel a historian named John Robinson, was researching the Jacobite rebellion that occurred in England in 1387. His reason for the research was because he could not figure out how as many as 100,000 men could rise up at the same time with only property that was destroyed being that of the King or the Knights Hospitaliters, a Catholic Order. Why wasn't all property in their path destroyed? He was startled to discover evidence that this riot was organized.

He studied how that could have happened. He published his findings in a book entitled, *Born In Blood*, in 1989.

What happened to the original Scrolls that were located under the Temple Mount that the members of the Qumran Community copied? Among the Dead Sea Scrolls was found a Copper Scroll. It was the only Scroll made from metal, thus showing its importance. The Copper Scroll contained a complete inventory of all of the Scrolls and riches that were then buried in the caves under the Temple on Mt. Moriah, as well as in 46 other sites, most of which have not been located as of today. The Copper Scroll not only listed each item in some detail, it also told the items exact location under the temple; such as: twenty paces from the boulder and three hands above the second step is a jar containing the Scroll of Genesis and three gold coins. Next to that jar is another with whatever.

The original ancient Scrolls were under the Jerusalem Temple site when the Roman army destroyed the Temple, and they remained there after the Romans left because the Romans did not know of their existence. No one other than the Temple Priests who were charged with their preservation, and those Priests who fled to Qumran, knew they were there. These Priests were, of course, banished from their country with all other Jews.

The story of what happened to the Original Scrolls is among the most interesting of our Masonic literature today. For those of you who have read Dan Brown's popular *The De Vinci Code* you know part of the story.

Before the Priests left Israel, however, they each promised to tell their eldest son or their child they most trusted, what was under the temple mount and

why this information was so important. This information is still being passed down from father to son today. Those with this information have identified each other, and are now calling themselves the “Priori de Scion” in France. Those in England are called “Rex Deus”; meaning “God is King”. Christopher Knight has personally interviewed members of both the French and the British Priori who share the same information about what was under the Temple Mount today.

By medieval times some with this information had become members of influential European families, in one case a King, one time a Pope, and several Bishops of the Church. Leonardo de Vinci was a later a member of the Priori. In fact he was the Grand Master of the Order of his day. Interestingly enough he died in the arms of the then King of France, and I have been in the room twice where DaVinci died.

Those who had been entrusted with the information conveyed from the ancient Priests of the Temple wanted to recapture the holy lands in order to recover the ancient scrolls, organized the crusades. We now know that was the real purpose that motivated rallying the public to conduct and support the crusades.

Knights Templars

After Jerusalem was finally opened for Western travel following the Second Crusade, nine members of the Priori de Scion got permission to set up headquarters on Mt. Moriah, a block from the golden dome, where the Islamic Mosque now located on the Temple Mount is located. They called themselves the “Knights of the Temple of Solomon of Jerusalem”. They swore an Oath of

“Secrecy, Obedience and Poverty”. That is a most unusual oath. Until recently no one knew what it meant.

Above all, these members of the Priori did not want to be detected digging under the third most important Mosque in all of Islam, and thereby be responsible for starting another Islam holy Jihad. They spent almost six years going through solid rock to get under the Golden Dome to the caves that were under the Jerusalem Temple. In 1124 their benefactor, Lord William St. Clair from Roslyn, Scotland, who had financed the members of the Priori, showed up and left with many crates containing something. No historian knew what he had obtained. When he returned to Jerusalem the next year he brought with him another 300 young knights, many from royalty, who together with the original nine, formed what we now know to be the "Knights Templars," and were recognized by the Church as a Monastic Order.

We now know that the Knights Templar had a belief about Christianity that was different than that of the current Church, but they kept their beliefs a secret. The belief is that their view of Christianity originated with their possession of the Original Scrolls handed down from the time of Moses through the life of Christ. Each member had sworn an oath of “secrecy, obedience and poverty”, so we will never know for sure.

The Knights Templar was supported by Bishop Bernard and, with his sponsorship and later that of Bishop Benedict, they soon became the strongest and most independent Monastic Order in the World. They were the only monastic order in history that answered only to the Pope, and were protected by

him from all other authorities. In that capacity, kings and heraldic lieges could not tax the Knights Templars, nor could they tax their property. Many people throughout Europe granted them land and showered them with gifts.

Those that joined the Knights Templar had to give up their wealth to the collective Order. Although that was a unique requirement, it was the same economic principal that applied to the members of the Qumran Community.

As warrior knights they publically proclaimed that their reason for their creation and their being in Israel was to guard the routes to the Holy Land. They built forts in Palestine, and castles throughout Europe. They built ships and handled cargo to the Middle East for themselves and as the first shippers for hire for the public. They became the first merchant seamen and, because they could be trusted they became the first bankers in the world. Even Kings entrusted their treasury to these warrior monks. After all, who would even think of stealing from a warrior knight?

Although the Temple of King Solomon is the building the Templars venerated as the central icon of their fraternal order, it was under the ruins of the Herod temple where the Moslem's had built their Golden Dome venerating where Mohammed had ascended to Heaven that the Knights Templars actually excavated. Knights Templars artifacts were recently found in the caves under the temple site. The scrolls and other ancient artifacts listed in the Copper Scroll were missing. What happened to them?

We do know that the Knights Templar acquired their initial wealth at the time they were excavating under the Temple Mount. We know from the Copper

Scroll how millions of dollars in gold coins were originally there. We know also that the Knights Templar acquired the collective wealth of all who subsequently joined.

Because they received extraordinary sanction as a monastic order, answerable only to the Pope by a special Papal decree, and because they became the shipping and banking magnets of the World, they became all powerful. This was unheard of in history. Scholars today had not known why or how the Knights Templars acquired such power in such a short period of time; and what allowed the Order to become the most powerful political institution on earth, ultimately with control over Kings and the Church at the peak of their existence, until very recently. What all this means was first discovered by John Robinson, but later elaborated upon by Knight and Lomas.

Robinson's story is that while the Templars were becoming arrogant, it was possible for Philip the Fair, the King of France, to have his stooge, Clement V, placed on the throne of St. Peter. Because of the way he was elected, Clement was not accepted as a valid Pope by much of the rest of the Christian World. Therefore he set up his Vatican in Avignon, France rather than face the risk of assassination in Rome. King Phillip the Fair's objective was to avoid repayment of his debt to the Templars that they had loaned him to finance the last Crusades. The year before Phillip the Fair had ordered all Jewish people in France arrested and deported. He retained their wealth. It was an easy way to fill his Treasury. It worked once before; therefore, he ordered all 15,000 of the Knights Templars then in France, to be arrested all at the same time early in the

morning on Friday, October 13, 1307, with the tacit consent of the Pope. (Ever wonder why we fear Friday, the 13th today?). The King had many put to the rack until they confessed accepting a different form of Christianity along with many other forms of heresy, including some rather disgusting behavior he claimed they had performed as celibate monks that were designed to get public support of his actions.

The King expected to acquire the great wealth located in the vaults of the Templars Preceptory of Paris. Instead he found that treasures had been secreted away, including some wealth of his own that they were protecting. Interestingly, the Templars eighteen ships, which had been located in French ports the night before, were never again located. Pirate activity is known to have dramatically increased during that era.

It is known that many Templars wound up in Scotland aiding Robert the Bruce in his fight against the King of England. Bruce had recently been excommunicated by the previous Pope, and was fighting those same people who were in power in England and who had just destroyed the Order of the Knights Templars. He needed knights to fight his war and was considered “safe refuge” for renegade Templars.

What does this have to do with Masonry?

About the same time John Robinson was doing his research, two young men in England had just been initiated into the Masonic fraternity. Over a beer they argued over why Masons say the some of the dumb things we say in our

ritual. For instance, why would you say that: “This will make you a brother of pirates and corsairs”? No one in their right mind would have dreamed it up. Who wants to be a brother to a pirate? They decided to try and figure out where the Masonic ritual came from.

Christopher Knight put the ritual over history and the story that eventually came out is incredible. They got so fascinated that they spent years in research. From their studies they eventually published a book, entitled “*The Hiram Key*”. You can get your own copy at Barnes and Noble and will have to read it to get their complete story. I happened to pick up a copy to browse through in a bookstore while waiting for my wife to shop in the nearby shopping center. I thought from the cover and the fact that I was at the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri that it must be another Southern Baptist attack of Free Masonry. When I saw what it really was I could not put the book down, so I bought it.

I wrote to the authors thanking them for their work. I was the first 33rd degree Mason to write to them so Christopher Knight started corresponding with me and we developed a friendship. Few masons today know their story on the origins of Masonry. The Grand Lodge of England denies their story, and would have you believe that the Masonic fraternity originated with the stone masons of Europe who built the Medieval Cathedrals of the Catholic Church. Chris Knight says that their motive in perpetuating this myth is because it allows the Royalty of England to control the Grand Lodge. Their claim is that the Masonic fraternity commenced in 1717 when their Grand Lodge was chartered. All Masonic Lodges today trace their Charter to the Grand Lodge of England. If it were

proven that Masonry commenced prior to 1717 they would have no justification for their authority over Masonry today.

I paid the way for Christopher Knight, to come to Des Moines to visit me when he was in the United States promoting his book. He has been here twice and both times stayed with me in my home. The first time, I invited 60 members of the leadership of the Des Moines Valley of Scottish Rite to my home to hear his story. It was well received. Therefore, I invited Chris to return to Des Moines when he published a sequel to his first book, entitled *The Second Messiah*, and hosted a public presentation at the Des Moines Scottish Rite to introduce Christopher Knights and Robert Lomas findings to the members and their guests.

Knight and Lomas found that when Phillip the Fair of France had the Knights Templar arrested in France on Friday October 13, 1307, Edward II of England had just ascended to the throne. He was having enough problems with his Lords because his first act as King was to reinstate his gay lover that his father had banned. The king hesitated to arrest the Knights in England because Knights Templars were members of his Court. He was already having problems with his Court and did not want another issue. Only after the Pope threatened to excommunicate him did he finally order their arrest. Being condemned by the Pope was more than the Court could handle. Their accepting arrest of the Knights Templar would be far more acceptable. The King delayed acting, however, until January 24, 1308.

In those few months the English Knights Templars merely disappeared. The 10,000 Knights Templars in England went underground while remaining in

plain sight. How did they do that? This is in a country at a time when traveling 25 miles was a day's journey. A stranger had to be vouched for by someone known in the locality, or be arrested as a suspected highway robber by the local Sherriff. Nothing happened fast. What we now know as the Masonic fraternity was born to protect those then being persecuted by both their King and Pope, and that organization grew by acquiring new initiates from those who were opposed to the policies of Church and State. Shortly after formation of our fraternity the great plague killed 1/3 of the European population. There was all forms of social unrest and displeasure with the Church that did not save their loved ones, and a King who oppressed them with greater taxes. Thus the ranks of the only organization opposed to the Church and the King grew in numbers and in power.

The opening question for an initiate to join their ranks was "In whom do you place your trust?" If your answer was the King or the Pope you were removed immediately from the room before your blindfold was removed so that you could identify those who were assembled. The only force left that was an acceptable answer to that question was God. Everyone else had abandoned the Knights Templar.

So what happened next? The Qumran Community, and subsequently the Order of the Knights Templars, was totally democratic. All decisions, and the election of their leadership was by majority vote of all members. The members of the organization were the ultimate authority. That was a new concept prior to Qumran. Before that power was considered derived only from divine authority

who the people felt had ordained the Pharaoh or the King. He or she therefore ruled by Divine right.

The Knights Templar learned about democratic rule from the ancient Scrolls and they also adopted it as their form of government. The Masonic fraternity continued that tradition. Finally that change in where power ultimately rested finally became the law of the land of England in 1714, following the War of Roses. The power then rested in Parliament because the members of the House of Commons were elected by the people.

Thus the people finally ruled England, and the English King became only a figurehead. Therefore it was now safe for the Masonic fraternity to surface; and they finally became known publicly in 1717. The system the rule of Masonry was then the structure of the government and the law of the land in England.

What does that have to do with us?

How does that event affect us today? People who were Masons were among those immigrating to the America's to avoid religious oppression in England. Henry VIII may have thrown out the Church and created the Episcopal religion in England, but he ruled as ruthlessly as did the Pope. People migrated to the Americas for freedom to worship as they chose to worship.

Our country was formed with Masonic principles. Masons who missed Lodge that night conducted the Boston Tea Party. Many of the leaders of the revolution were masons. George Washington, Lafayette and even Benedict Arnold were active masons. So were Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Ultimately the Masonic principles that had formed the legal structure of England

came to America, and became central to our Constitution. A majority of those who wrote our Constitution were Free Masons. Our Constitution was the first attempt to create a new sovereign government where the ultimate power vested solely in the people, which principle originated in Qumran, was discovered by the Knights Templar, translated into the government of England and was now refined in our Constitution.

Contrary to the message of the far right today, our Constitution was formed to create freedom from religion, and was not formed to assure that American's were Christian. Most of those who fathered our Country, including Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, were Deist, not Theist. They did not believe in a supernatural God. They identified their God as the forces of the Universe, not someone in Heaven who directed our individual lives. Even George Washington, who was an Episcopalian, was not unmindful of the danger of religion and dictators, whether they were Potentates, Kings or Popes.

Our Constitution was the first experiment in history applying pure masonry as the structure to run a country. Even in England the Church remained a dominant power. Americans were to be free from the power of religious leaders so that they could worship, or not worship, as each individual chose for themselves. Power was to rest exclusively in the people, and not to be controlled by any institution, sovereign authority, of king. Therefore, we should celebrate every Friday the 13th of October because without Philip the Fair in 1307 we would probably not have our Constitutional form of government today.

For those of you who have now read in the *DaVinci Code*, you know that the research of Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas lead them to a Chapel located 10 miles south of Edinburgh in the community of Roslyn. The Chapel, known as the Rosslyn Chapel, was built in 1440 on the Sinclair estate by a descendent of William St. Clair. Until recently, no one has known why it was built, or what it was built for celebrating. During the wars between England and Scotland churches were destroyed, but the Rosslyn Chapel was never touched. Why not?

Christopher Knight and Robert Loomis discovered that the footprint of the Rosslyn Chapel was identical to the original King Solomon Temple. It sat on the same terrain features and was oriented in the same way as the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. The western wall appeared to have been destroyed, but upon examination they discerned that it was intentionally built that way. Above where the Holy of Holies would be there was a lamp in the form of an arrow pointing straight down. Inscribed on the wall was a statement that said, "If you understand this you know all that you need to know." Christopher Knight took sonar tests and discovered an empty space, or vault under the stone floor. They have been attempting to put together a world-class team to open the crypt and have been seeking permission of the Trustees of the Rosslyn Chapel to get authority to open it and to provide its contents to the public because of their immense historic significance. Their reception has been very cold. He believes that they belong to the Rex Deus/Priori de Scion.

Dan Brown in his recent novel, *The DaVinci Code* attempts to tell us why the Trustees so far have not consented. If he is correct, the Trustees are a part of Rex Deus and they do not want us to have this knowledge because it would undermine their authority. Knowledge is still power. Mr. Brown added a rather interesting dimension to what Christopher Knight and Robert Loomis had found. He suggests that the scrolls that were under the Rosslyn Chapel. However, with the remodeling of the Louvre Museum in Paris to provide for a new entry for the public, Dan Brown claims that the Scrolls (the “Holy Grail”) was moved to a permanent site under the inverted pyramid. That makes perfect sense symbolically, and he may be right. How more protected could they be? No one is going to get access them as a part of the Louvre, which is among the most guarded museums in the world today.

The Scrolls Tell a Story

So where does that leave us? If we cannot see the original scrolls, we still do have the Dead Sea Scrolls; or rather what is left of them that have been discovered to date. When the first scrolls were first discovered Israeli Antiquity distributed them to scholars to decipher. Even though they were written in Hebrew which can easily be read today, many were only scraps of papyrus or leather. They were exposed by the scholars, to whom they were entrusted, to the atmosphere and many have deteriorated. The scholars smoked, drank, and ate their lunch on top of the Scrolls while they performed their duties. Some

parts of the Scroll were actually scotch taped to each other. It was an abominable effort.

The findings of most of these scholars have not been published. Why? Knowledge is still power. They tell a different story and many did not want this information to reach the public. Since the Prime Minister of Israel finally ordered that the scrolls be publicly released in 1990, we have now been able to read them for ourselves. The few remaining intact that were acquired by Israel Antiquities, and twenty years later were finally placed in the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem, and are now hermetically preserved. During the assembly of the pieces of parchment most were put between sheets of glass. At the time of their discovery the Director of Antiquity of Israel was a photographer. He photographed them. If it were not for the Huntington Library in California we would not know what most of the scrolls say today. They assembled and preserved copies of the photographed scrolls and thus have preserved the information that they contained. It is from interpreting the Scrolls viewed from their pictures that many of the books that you can acquire today were written. Thanks to the Prime Minister, you can purchase a book that shows you the Hebrew on one side and an English translation next to it form almost any book store today.

The Copper Scroll gave us a significant inventory of the scrolls in existence at the time of the Roman destruction of the Temple. You can imagine what a shock it was to the citizens of Qumran when their holy Temple was destroyed. The only Scroll to be made out of copper was the inventory. That

undoubtedly meant to the Essenes that what it contained was special and they wanted to be assured that it would be preserved. The Copper Scroll also describes the contents of 46 locations, most of which have yet to be discovered, if their contents even remain in existence today. Scrolls are still being found today.

So what have we learned tonight?

We have learned how our traditions have been affected by history.

We now can see what all of the conflict is about between the Jews of Israel and the Palestinian people. We also now know that: if it had not been for a greedy King of France who arrested the Knights Templar in his country on Friday the 13th, 1307 to steal their wealth, and his zeal to protect his image among the rulers of Europe that forced Pope Clement V to order the rulers throughout the Christian world to arrest the Knights Templar in their jurisdiction, and because the timidity of Edward II who was attempting to avoid any further controversy as he assumed power in England, causing him to delay long enough that the brothers in England could organize what we now know to be our Masonic fraternity.

We know that would not be here tonight discovering a far more meaningful story of our origin than the one fostered upon us by the Grand Lodge of England who has said that we originated as stone masons in Europe if it had not been for the events in history that I have shared with you tonight.

Lyle L. Simpson, 33^o

Notes: -- Not published.

Judaism

The Jewish people of that day had brilliant insight into many subjects. As an example, they knew that blood flowed from the heart. They knew that the moon was reflected light from the sun. They were advanced theologically, and sophisticated symbolically. They had a firm concept of immortality and paradise. They had a symbolic sense of light and dark, right and wrong, and they developed strict rules to apply to life to avoid the dark side of life. The Apocalyptic Scroll describes the “way of the soul” on judgment day. The Scrolls show a rich and dynamic Judaism. They also show a great chiasm between those that believed and those that did not.

The Scrolls provide a bigger and more colorful picture of early Judaism. Expectation of the imminent end of history is clearly more widespread than other ancient Jewish sources suggest. The people of the Essene Community were convinced that Armageddon was right around the corner—next week. Clearly they felt it was likely within their lifetime. You had to be ready to go.

The most dramatic evidence in the Scrolls of the split within Jewish society is the calendar. The calendar affected the law of purity. Not only were people and places holy, but specific times were holy. One had to be precise to please God. Observing the festivals on the wrong dates invalidated these holy times and rendered the temple ineffective if not actually profane. Obviously, the wrong dates broke the divine law and incurred the wrath of god. And, of course, only the correct calculation of time could estimate the arrival of the end of history. Our

days were numbered and the members of the Qumran Community wanted to know which day.

At first scholars took the 364-day calendar based on the sun as opposed to the 354-day or so based upon the moon, shown in the scrolls to be a sectarian period invention. Now it is widely conceded that the solar calendar may have enjoyed a continuous history in Judah whether or not along side the other. One of the lessons of the scrolls is that different versions of Judaism coexisted in the last century of the pre-Christian era. The real question now is whether there ever was a single and agreed upon Judaism before that time.

One of the greatest finds in the Dead Sea Scrolls was the complete Apocryphal scroll, which was 28 feet long. A Bedouin merchant by the name of Kando knew that there was a ready market in Dead Sea Scrolls and started acquiring them from the Bedouin shepherds. At one point, he even destroyed a scroll out of fear of being caught. Maybe that was the Book of Esther. It was the only Book of the Bible not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Kando had cut up some scrolls because he could make more money selling the scraps and pieces than he could in selling the entire Scroll.

Kando also hid a fairly well preserved scroll that was 28 feet long below the floorboards in his store and became one of the objects of search for the Israeli Army in the 1967 war. They raided Kando's store, opened a loose floorboard and discovered the complete Apocryphal scroll.

Prior to this, the law of the Jewish faith was gleaned from narratives in the book of Macabees, the writings of Josephus, a few of the Apocryphal Books

presented in the Christian canons and some other Jewish writings. The picture presented in the Dead Sea Scrolls is monolithic. The information received from the Scrolls provide a bigger and more colorful picture of early Judaism.

Expectation of the end of history is clearly more widespread than other ancient Jewish sources suggest.

Formerly we understood the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now from the Dead Sea Scrolls we also have the view of the Essenes and Zealots. Therefore, the Dead Sea Scrolls have in essence revolutionized the perception of early Judaism. In the first place, they are written primarily in Hebrew and are easily read by scholars today. The ongoing life of the scriptures is widely attested in the scrolls. Sometimes the content, such as the Books of Moses, were reorganized to harmonize them with each other books and make them more logical, as they were in the Temple Scroll.

The Dead Sea Scrolls condemn certain contemporary practices that were rejected by the writers of the scrolls, foretold the imminent destruction of the wicked, and reveal the will of god and the secrets of salvation to the righteous few. The scriptures in short were being molded into a world view in the writings of the Essenes.

Before the discovery of the dead sea scrolls, most of the pictures of early Judaism are created out of the narratives of the book of Maccabees, writings of Josephus, a few of the Apocryphal books preserved in some Christian canons, and some other Jewish writings.

The picture that this formed from the Scrolls is largely a monolithic normative religion divided into four groups, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots, with the Pharisees and Sadducees of more major interest because prior to the Dead Sea Scrolls we possessed no ancient writing clearly attributed to the other groups.

The Dead Sea Scrolls revolutionized the perception of early Judaism because they were primarily in Hebrew. Engaged in direct controversy, they interact closely with the scripture and they offer first hand evidence of some quite unusual doctrines. They expose bitter controversy over law and Temple and over the meaning of the scriptures. They are permeated by a belief of an eminent end of the world order. They witness the ongoing production of religious literature when most previous scholars had claimed by the start of the millenium prophecy had ended, canonization had taken place, and official Judaism had established itself at least within the area directly influenced and affected by the Jerusalem power brokers.

Until recently, scholars agreed in understanding the scrolls to be the library of an Essene group as an organized but sectarian community to be contrasted with the "official" Judaism that the Essenes then opposed. It is now agreed that the scrolls reflect a range of Jewish beliefs and practices as related in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods with a much more diverse and dynamic pattern of religious beliefs practices. Apparently there was not a singular Jewish faith of that day anymore then there is in the United States today. In Israel, there

is one official faith, but varying degrees of participation. In the United States today we have three distinct synagogues in Des Moines.

An example of the Essene community differences with the priests of Jerusalem is their attitude toward the law. The scrolls depicted Judaism involved in developing from the scriptures, not only a law for all Israel, but more especially from the Essene community from the rest of doomed Israel. The dominant principal behind this concern for law was the divine requirement of all of Israel to become holy. Many of the legal works found in Qumran caves, especially in cave No. 4, reflect an intensive preoccupation with the problem of impurity and purification through specific rituals. If Israel had to be holy, even more so had the true sectarian Israel to be holy. In other words, it was not just for the priests to be holy, but the people. They, in effect, had used the concept of holiness and the rigorous application of the law to establish their own social and religious boundaries and the Essenes asserted their claims to be the only true Israel.

The expectation of the end of history, or "the end of days," was clearly more widespread than other ancient Jewish sources had suggested, as was their belief in the imminent arrival of a messiah. However, the scrolls did not suggest a uniform Jewish belief in one sort of messiah, a Davidic figure, instead there are angelic redeemers, priestly messiahs, teaching messiahs, and sometimes no messiah at all. The predominant view was that there would be more than one Messiah. However, none were anticipated to be the son of God.

It was widely agreed that the righteous were soon to be vindicated and the wicked punished. But who the righteous were and how and by whom the

salvation would come, the scrolls do not agree, and apparently neither did anyone else in the Jewish community.

The Scrolls raised the question whether it was ever possible for Jews to tolerate more than one calendar with separate festivals. At least we now know that different versions of Judaism coexisted at the time of Christ.

The scrolls also show a clear disenchantment with the temple and its authorities which had reached an extreme level. There are all sorts of references to the wicked priests. Solidarity in the community and obedience to its authority constituted the way of salvation and inner purity was as important as outward ritual. Apparently there was a conviction that one becomes in communion with the heavenly call to the angels through living a pure life.

The scrolls do reveal a deep religious sensibility and sensitivity to a period that just prior to the age of the rabbis and the transaction of Jewish faith at the time of their departure from Israel.

CHRISTIANITY

In regard to Christianity, there is no question the scrolls hidden in the caves were written from two hundred years prior until about 40 years after the crucifixion of Jesus and none of the new testament writings had yet been composed by that point in time. The activities of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul and others, were contemporary with the last phase of Qumran occupation. There is no question that they crossed paths. It is interesting that the New Testament makes no reference to the Essenes nowhere in the New Testament writings, nor have New Testament sources with the exception of the Beatitudes been found in the Qumran caves.

However, there are important similarities between the Qumran scrolls and the New Testament. What they show are certain Christian traditions that were directly absorbed through sharing of Jewish culture. The differences between Christianity and Judaism at the source of beginning are far less dramatic and more subtle.

There is a description of a Messianic sect still waiting for one or two messiahs that does not identify the followers of Jesus. Both the Qumran and the early Christian communities felt that their groups represented the ideal Israel. The Damascus document refers to the Essene community as the "new covenant" which is a phrase used in the account of the Last Supper. The community rule advocates a communal lifestyle with some pooled resources. A lot of phrases and concepts adopted within Christianity certainly owe their roots in early Judaism as reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are some significant

differences, however. The Qumran community was highly organized and within clear boundaries excluding or controlling access to outsiders. The Jesus movement mixed freely with outsiders, thus, they moved in opposing directions. In adherence to the law in the Qumran community was intensified over that of the rest Israel. During the Jesus movement, the law became qualified.

Within the Dead Sea Scrolls, the “teacher of righteousness” was not regarded as divine. However, in one small fragment found in cave four, was found the phrase "he shall be proclaimed the son of god, and the son of the most high they shall call him." However, it is impossible to tell without a context whether the words referred to a messianic figure. Frankly it could refer to an enemy, such as a foreign king. However, the language is strikingly similar to that of Luke's account of the annunciation of the birth of Jesus.

Recently, the Book of Luke has been discovered in Hebrew. Previously, the King James version interpreted the Greek book of Luke.

Even the use of water was a commonality and yet a difference. In the Qumran community, water was used as a purification. In Christianity, water was used as an initiation, although the use of water with both implies cleansing.

Another dubious parallel is the Eucharist. There is a description in Qumran cave one, in the rule of the congregation, of a meal attended by two messiahs in which bread and wine are eaten after being blessed. Josephus describes that the Essenes ate bread and new wine at their meals. The Christian Eucharist seems to have originated in a Passover meal which has a specific cultic significance. It is not a regular daily meal as it was the Essene practice.

Jesus

The concern of many scholars today is that the Dead Sea Scrolls are inconsistent with the King James Version of the Bible. For one thing, the scrolls were still being written during the life of Jesus. Yet his resurrection is not recorded. Now you would think that an event that unique would deserve some mention.

There are letters between James and Saul, or Paul, as we know him; complaining that Paul was distorting the story of Jesus. James was the leader of the Qumran Community. Paul, you may recall, was a tax collector. He came into the picture about 20 years after the death of Jesus and apparently was embellishing the story of Jesus in his preaching in Greece. There are many other distortions of the orthodox teachings brought about by Greek translations. For instance, the book of Isaiah was only known through the Greek translation. An original Hebrew version was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Mary was identified only as a “young women” using language that cannot be interpreted as proof of a virgin birth.

When Constantine held the Nicene conference in about 325 he was faced with a war between the orthodox Christian and the Greek tradition originated with Saul, or Paul. In effect Constantine chose the Greek version and declared it to be the true story. Our heritage has followed from that path ever since. There is fear among some scholars that release of the original scrolls will destroy the faith of the world’s masses and cause chaos. That may be a valid concern, but my

assessment is that would not be the result. We will discuss why I say that in some detail in the last session.

The Knights Templar understood this distinction and practiced the Qumran interpretation of life as do my clients in Southern Iowa.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are among the most important of our religious finds because they were written contemporaneously with our religious roots and have not been embellished or distorted by interpretation over time. They stand on their own. They are as important an historical documentation for what they do not say, as for what they contain. They reaffirm many aspects of our religious tradition. They challenge some of our deep felt beliefs. The fact that they do not report Jesus as a divine spirit whose life was resurrected is very important as a matter of history. However, as I stated In the beginning of our discussion, your religion is the symbols you use to describe your ultimate concerns. Facts are irrelevant to beliefs. My feeling is that the information contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls will change the evolution of religious thinking in the future. However, they will make little difference to us today. We will discuss why in the last session of this series.

In the meantime, what do you think? Let's have some discussion of what we have covered so far.