

code for masculine high-style and formality in the Western world in this century—for classicism in fashion—it is, I would think, basic black with white spats and gloves. The problem for a choreographer such as Morris, who is self-conscious about such codes, is that there

is no corresponding set-up for the way a spectator thinks. One person's classic is another person's Classic Comic. When I looked at the spats on Morris, my brain said Fred Astaire. Kisselgoff, reviewing Baryshnikov, talked about Mickey Mouse. •

that had generated the conflict—should Jews sacrifice also to pagan gods? publicly flout traditional practice? cease circumcision?—were settled by it. Extreme Hellenization was out. The easy part was over.

The triumphant Hasmoneans soon established an independent Jewish monarchy. They also assumed the office of high priest. This touched off considerable controversy, since the high priesthood had long been the hereditary domain of the aristocratic family known as the Zadokites, which traced its prerogative back to the days of Solomon. The Hasmoneans were priests, but they were not Zadokites; and their usurpation of office soured the liberation.

The Maccabees' very success doomed any hope of a united front against less aggressive forms of Hellenism on the part of priestly aristocrats, the nation's natural rulers. Any ruling class had to communicate and to cooperate with the elites of other nations, and for this purpose a comfortable command of Greek language and culture went a long way. The large Zadokite family, meanwhile, splintered. One branch, which had fled during the troubles under Antiochus, established a new temple in Egypt; others found ways to continue the family vocation by setting up alternative temples in Samaria and in what is now Jordan. Still others remained in Jerusalem, lending their prestige to the Hasmonean enterprise. ("Sadducee," the term for the sacerdotal aristocracy used by both the first-century Jewish historian Josephus and his contemporaries, the New Testament writers, may derive from "Zadok.") Hasmonean power eventually waned; Herodians took over, then Roman procurators. But the Sadducees remained the principal mediators between the populace and higher (especially foreign) government. The lesson of Antiochus had not been forgotten: good relations with foreign rulers helped insure the religious independence, and hence the integrity, of the Temple.

But in the early flush of freedom after the Maccabean revolt, another Zadokite defied the upstart Hasmoneans openly. Spurning worship in the Temple he considered insidiously defiled by his more powerful rival, this man (had he served formerly as high priest?) withdrew from Jerusalem but stayed close at hand. Around 150 B.C.E., he joined a group of pietists and established his own community—"the keepers of the covenant of the sons of Zadok"—in the Judean desert. We do not know his name, and we know little else about his life. (The above is also conjecture.) In the Dead Sea Scrolls, he appears as the "Teacher of Righteousness." And herein lies the origin of the Essenes.

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## Desert Storm

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BY PAULA FREDRIKSEN

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### Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reader from the Biblical Archaeology Review edited by Hershel Shanks

(Vintage, 336 pp., \$13 paper)

### Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls edited by James H. Charlesworth

(Doubleday, 334 pp., \$28)

### The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered by Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise

(Penguin, 304 pp., \$12 paper)

**T**he Jewish war against Rome, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E., was in many ways the climax of a drama that had begun some two centuries earlier with the Maccabean Revolt. In both rebellions, Jews faced an external enemy whose political culture ultimately collided with Israel's idiosyncratic faith. And in the aftermath of both rebellions Jews had to come to terms with the more insidious threat, which was Hellenism.

The extraordinary history that issued in the Dead Sea Scrolls began centuries earlier. Hellenism, or the civilization that was disseminated throughout the Mediterranean and Near East in the wake of Alexander's conquests in the fourth century B.C.E.), was the first great international culture of the West. Its language was Greek; its matrix, the city; its politics, aristocratic yet participatory; its sensibility, profoundly catholic. Ethnicity, in the orbit of Hellenism, was incidental, since one could "become" Greek through education. Different religions were actually identical, since the learned could recognize, with the right training, that different divinities were expressions of the same religious ideas. The Greek Apollo and the Egyptian Amon-Ra both stood for the luminous unity of the

divine Sun. It was an age of many gods, and the reasonableness of its syncretism was very seductive.

Hellenism affected urban Jewish culture profoundly, abroad and at home. So thoroughly did the Western Diaspora communities of Egypt, Asia Minor and Italy adopt Greek as their language that Jews in Alexandria eventually produced the first great vernacular translation of the Scriptures, known as the Septuagint. In the homeland, cosmopolitan Jerusalemites sought to build a gymnasium, or a cultural center for the study of athletics, literature, music and philosophy; some even endured surgery to remove the signs of circumcision, considered a mutilation by the Greeks. Antiochus Epiphanes, the post-Alexandrian ruler of Seleucid Syria, simply took this assimilationist program further by mandating it; when protest surfaced, he pushed harder. Following through on the logic of Hellenistic ecumenicalism, he ended by erecting an altar to Olympian Zeus, reasonably enough, in the Temple of the Jews' own high god in Jerusalem.

All hell broke loose. By the time the fighting ended in 164 B.C.E., the Seleucids had been routed, the Hasmonean family, under Judah Maccabee and his brothers, had assumed national leadership and the religious and cultural issues

The Essenes were a sectarian movement within late Second Temple Judaism; by the first century they numbered, on Josephus's estimate, some 4,000 members. Those of the larger branch married, lived in towns and still communed in Jerusalem. A smaller, all-male group settled as a celibate community by the Dead Sea, at a site that archaeologists claim never supported more than a few hundred people. Occupied on and off for a period of some two centuries, this settlement was finally destroyed by the Roman legion on its march to crush the Jewish rebels in Jerusalem in the spring of 68 C.E.

In advance of the Roman destruction, these Essenes hid their books in the desert caves of Qumran. Their library was vast and varied. It has yielded a treasure of ancient Hebrew manuscripts of virtually every book, in whole or in part, in the Jewish Bible. The Essenes produced extensive commentaries on these, as well as documents specific to the sect—*The Manual of Discipline* or the *Community Rule* (rules for the monastic group), the *Covenant of Damascus* (rules for the town-dwellers), the *Temple Scroll* (plans for a new or renewed Temple, of gigantic size, to be built once Good had triumphed over Evil) and the *War Scroll* (plans for the apocalyptic final battle):

This shall be a time of salvation for the people of God, an age of dominion for all the members of His company, and of everlasting destruction for all the company of Satan. . . . The dominion of the Kittim shall come to an end and iniquity shall be vanquished, leaving no remnant: [for the sons] of darkness there shall be no escape. . . . At the season appointed by God, His exalted greatness shall shine eternally to the peace, blessing, glory, joy and long life of the sons of light.

These long buried texts reveal how these people lived and what motivated them. The Essenes saw themselves as the "sons of light" living in the final days, at the very edge of time before God decisively redeemed his people; and they dedicated every moment and every aspect of

life to preparing, with fierce and austere commitment, for the coming Kingdom of God.

Thanks to Hershel Shanks and others who over the years have contributed to his journal, the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, a superb popular introduction to this amazing library is now available. Handsomely produced and generously illustrated with photographs, maps and charts, *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* allows the reader to enter into two bewildering communities: the community of the Essenes and the community of the scholars who study them.

Several essays review the riveting story of the discovery of the Scrolls in 1948. In the tension and the turmoil of a world on fire—the rebirth of the Jewish Commonwealth, the partition vote in the United Nations, Jerusalem divided, invading Arab armies—E. L. Sukenik, an archaeologist at Hebrew University, shuttled back and forth across the Green Line, desperate to get his hands on the textual treasures held by Arab and Armenian antiquities dealers. Some he secured; more, he knew, lay beyond his grasp.

The majority of texts remained on the Jordanian side of the city, monopolized for more than a generation in one of the most shameful demonstrations of arrogance and avarice in the annals of scholarship, by a tiny team of scholars working out of the Ecole Biblique in East Jerusalem. (The team had no Jewish members.) Meanwhile Sukenik's son, Yigael Yadin, surreptitiously purchased four more scrolls for his country in 1955, by answering an ad in *The Wall Street Journal*. Twelve years later, by then a renowned Israeli general, he secured also the manuscript of the *Temple Scroll*. The monopoly at the Ecole Biblique continued, however, until John Strugnell, the chief editor, in a notorious interview in 1990 in the Israeli newspaper *Ha-aretz*, began the process that ultimately broke the cartel. Shanks reprints this interview, synthesizes the story of the Scrolls' liberation and concludes his volume with a calm assessment of the contribution made by greed, insecurity and anti-Semitism to the unconscionable delay in the publication of this library.

But what a project! Paleographers nervously face ancient *mille feuilles* of crumbling leather. Editing is now a race against time, as the writing itself,

having survived nineteen centuries in the caves of Judea, literally disappears before scholars' eyes. (Little wonder: in one of the most wrenching photographs in the book, Father J. T. Milik sits, circa 1950, in a nimbus of Levantine sunlight, burning cigarette in hand, bent cheerfully over these fragile fragments.) One essay details the small technological miracles that enable historians to read from new photographs what they can no longer see on the page itself; another essay shows how to organize these various sheets, pieces, bits and crumbs so that something like connected prose can emerge. The authors communicate their excitement and their love of this work; and it is hard not to cheer when they mildly mention some ingenious and simple solution to a problem that, one scant paragraph before, seemed insuperable.

Scarcely less messy than the physical shape of this library is the whirl of mutually exclusive, authoritatively argued interpretations that surrounds it. Shanks gives a nice sample of these, cheek-by-jowl, and it is fun to overhear the professors do one of the things that they do well, which is argue. Something like broad academic consensus does seem to exist on the place of the Essenes in the history of late Second Temple Judaism. Highly fraught and sensationalist questions, however, continue to obscure their relation to another first-century, and originally Jewish, apocalyptic movement. What, if anything, do the Scrolls have to do with Christianity?

To consider this question, we must reflect on how we know what we know about Christian origins, and most particularly about Jesus of Nazareth. Our earliest and best evidence stands collected in the New Testament, though "early" and "best" do not in all instances equal "good." Our earliest witness is Paul. His seven authentic letters appear to have been written midcentury, approximately twenty to thirty years after Jesus's execution. Paul was an urban Jew of the Western Diaspora; his first language was Greek; his bible was the Septuagint. This puts him at several removes—cultural, linguistic, geographical—from the Aramaic speaking, rural, prophetic movement begun by the Galilean Jesus. Paul himself insists that he never knew Jesus, and makes clear that he does not think much of his other Jewish colleagues who did. It was the risen Christ, not the earthly Jesus, who was the object of Paul's burning commitment. If all we had from this period were Paul's letters, we would know precious little about Jesus—not where he lived or where he died, nothing of what he did, little of what he said.

For this we must turn to the gospels, but there we encounter other problems.

## The Narcissists

O what self-love their kindness shows,  
filling your glass before it has been emptied,  
making their house your house. The pool?  
Jump in. The boat? Go on, take a ride.  
Dinnertime? A gift at every plate,  
each one to remind you how loving your host can be,  
how fortunate you are to be a guest.  
Their comradeship speaks itself so warmly  
that you lose your way: this is not friendship,  
not love exactly: this is the way they know  
to teach you to love them truly for themselves.

PETER DAVISON

The gospels were written in Greek, where and by whom (Gentiles? Christian Jews?) we don't know. Originally anonymous, the names we know them by—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John—were ascribed only in the second century. A gap of some forty to seventy years stretches between the death of Jesus and these compositions, during which time the Jews fought, and lost, the war with Rome. The evangelists mix historical material from and about Jesus with contemporary polemic (especially against Jews), various theological agenda and their own particular readings of the Septuagint, which they mined for biographical facts about Jesus. (This is how the Jesus of Matthew and Luke comes to be born "of a virgin": the Greek translation of Isaiah 7:14 had *parthenos*, "virgin," for the Hebrew *'almah*, "young girl.") Thus, though they provide more on the topic than Paul's letters, the gospels cannot be approached directly for information about Jesus any more than, for example, Oliver Stone's *JFK* can be used for JFK: both present a mix of fact, reasonable conjecture, creative filling-in-of-holes and flat-out fiction. As historians, we have to sort through.

**T**hese problems of language, location and historicity complicate any direct comparison of the Scrolls and the New Testament material. One is the lush literature of a priestly, separatist, largely Hebrew and Aramaic speaking Judean sect, much of it for internal consumption; the other, spare and mobile, exclusively Greek, missionary in intent and effect, built for the road. The Scrolls are the MS-DOS to the New Testament's Mac, and the first century equivalent of interfacing software—humans who went between both groups—is not in evidence.

The several essays on Christianity and the Scrolls in Shanks's volume, the great majority of those in *Jesus and The Dead Sea Scrolls*, edited by James H. Charlesworth, and the whole of the interpretive argument advanced by Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* proceed as if this were not a problem. The result is a one-from-column-A, one-from-column-B sort of reading, noting similarities and commenting on differences, without making a case for the historical value of these observations. But mere synchrony cannot establish influence, and textual pointillism gives only the impression of an argument; and, as with its visual counterpart, the coherence dissolves the closer one looks.

We end with factoids. Thus one essay notes that the community at Qumran had meals in common, and so did Jesus

with his disciples at the Last Supper. True. The Gospel of John contrasts the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness as ethical designations (the Sons of Light are the good guys, and so on); both at Qumran and in John, these realms are in conflict. Oh. The Qumran community expected two messiahs; Christians claimed Jesus to be the messiah. Right. Both Jesus and the Essenes thought the Bible, the Temple and the poor were important. And so on, especially through the 334 pages of *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (a good third of which is notes, most of them lost on a popular audience). Most of the essays in this volume conclude—and I agree with the conclusion—that there seems to be little or no evidence of influence between the Essenes and Jesus in either direction. But then, whence the book? Whence its title? Whence the blurb, promising that the Scrolls revolutionize our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth?

Eisenman and Wise promise an interpretive revolution. They provide it by reading the Scrolls in relation not to Jesus himself so much as to supposed events in the history of the (authentic?) Christian movement under his brother, James the Just. The library at Qumran, they argue, represents the views of a pro-Maccabean priesthood, anti-gentile, violently xenophobic and nationalistic, temperamentally if not actually identical to the Zealots of the disastrous anti-Roman campaign in 66 C.E. To make their case, Eisenman and Wise date some Scrolls material at least a century later than most scholars would. They also provide modern Hebrew transcriptions of some Scrolls fragments, which they then translate to support their hypothesis. But since these transcriptions are themselves questionable or contested—and a glancing comparison with the tattered originals shown in the plates inspires little confidence—they ultimately serve an aesthetic purpose rather than a scientific one. Finally, matching some Scrolls material to snippets of much later Greek Christian traditions, the authors create what they call "Jamesian Christianity" (a term that for me persistently evoked nineteenth-century Boston rather than first-century Judea). Pro-law, pro-patria, anti-Paul, this James would have been more at home in the twentieth century's Easter Rising than in the first century's.

Eisenman and Wise construct a coherent revisionist picture of the Qumran community. They do so by completely obscuring the relation of the early Pauline and later Christian evidence to the Jewish Jesus and the earliest community gathered in his name. Do all these different people, groups and movements really have so little to do with each other? Can the Scrolls tell us anything

useful about Jesus, Paul, Christianity? The answer is yes on both counts. Jesus of Nazareth and the community at Qumran are two points on an arc that passes from the Maccabees through Paul, from the later books of the classical prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—in the Jewish canon to the Book of Revelation, which concludes the New Testament. It is the arc of a biblical perspective on God and history that scholars label "apocalyptic eschatology," "the revelation of the Endtime": the conviction that God is good; that he is in control of history; that he will not countenance evil indefinitely; and that, accordingly, if things are bad, God must be about to bring them to an end, before he establishes his Kingdom. In the brief time remaining, one should prepare.

Certain key elements appear variously, and in various combinations, in Jewish and later Christian apocalypses. Some mention a cosmic battle between Good and Evil just before the End; others, the resurrection of the dead, or perhaps only of the righteous. Some attribute a major role to a messiah or (as at Qumran) several messiahs; in the Christian version we find a messiah who comes twice, his more military role, and the establishment of the Kingdom, relegated to his Second Coming. More frequently, archangels or God himself directs the Endtime scenario. Jerusalem is restored and made beautiful; the Temple is rebuilt, renewed or enlarged; the twelve tribes are gathered in from Exile; gentiles cease worshiping their idols, acknowledge the God of Israel and worship with Israel in the New Jerusalem; righteousness pours down like waters; social and natural harmony pervade.

In the meantime, however, things are terrible: this is how one knows what time it is on history's clock. Happy people do not write apocalypses, and the genre itself attests to a measure of alienation, resentment and powerlessness. In the cultural and religious confusion of the Hellenistic and early Roman period, some Jews found comfort in their conviction that God would not let things drift; that, for example, he did not want idols in his Temple and if one were placed there, it was a sign that times had become terminably terrible. The worse things got, the better they were about to become.

The Teacher of Righteousness felt the same way: if the False Priest controlled the Temple, the End must be at hand. Almost two centuries later, in a world with Herodians and Romans in charge, Jesus went to his cross proclaiming the imminent arrival of God's Kingdom. A generation after that, Paul confidently preached the same message, now linked to Jesus's Second Coming as cosmic redeemer: "Behold," he wrote in Ro-

mans, his final letter, "salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed." Josephus chronicled other first-century, charismatic Jewish prophets of the End, many of whom met their death at Rome's hand. At roughly the same time, during a period of anti-Christian persecution, John of Patmos was prompted by an angel to voice the same conviction: "Behold, the time is near."

Jews survived two more rebellions against Rome, one in the Diaspora in 115-117 C.E., one led by Bar Kochba in Judea in 132-135 C.E. Some continued to write apocalypses; but militant messianism had discredited itself as a viable expression of Jewish piety. As gentile churches increasingly claimed the Septuagint as their scripture—augmented, by the end of the second century, by the collection of specifically Christian writings we know as the New Testament—Judaism returned to Aramaic and Hebrew as the languages of prayer and learning. No Western Jewish community ever produced a Latin vernacular translation of the Bible. To the degree that Hellenism represented philosophical learning on the one hand, and the dominant political culture on the other, Jews learned to do without both—and without the Temple and without the Land. Yet the people and the religion survived, one of the two great religions from Western antiquity.

The other great survivor, also born of the momentous encounter of Jewish apocalyptic hope and Roman political domination, was Christianity. Christianity represents Judaism's "Yes" to Hellenistic culture. Modeled on the synagogue community both socially and liturgically, its language and scriptures were Greek, its homeland the Western Diaspora, its culture deliberately international, its theology an intimate marriage of biblical narrative and Greek philosophy. Under Constantine and later Theodosius, the church became a central institution of Roman imperial culture. It too, though for different reasons, renounced a vivid hope in the imminent coming of a historical Kingdom of God.

Yet the great hope is there, in the Bible itself: the conviction that God controls history and that he will make good on his promise of redemption. Plagues, persecution, wars, earthquake, triumph or disaster: in every generation people see the signs of the End. Predictions of the apocalypse are constantly disconfirmed, but they are never lastingly discredited.

We see a crest in the wave now. The enhanced gravitational pull of the approaching end of the millennium; the existence, for the first time since Titus's army leveled the Temple, of a Jewish nation in its biblical homeland; the theologizing of ozone depletion, ecological disaster and AIDS as signs of divine pun-

ishment—all have created a kind of lunar high tide in popular apocalyptic. Read carefully, then, the stories that come out of Waco, or Seoul, or Crown Heights. You will glimpse, between the lines, the shape of the hope that motivated both the Macabees and the Teacher of Righteousness, Jesus of Nazareth and the embattled defenders of Jerusalem.

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**TRB** continued from page 6

group should be given pause by the White House's demonstration that even one year's balanced budget is impossible under current arrangements. The nightmare scenarios show that balancing the budget is, indeed, politically unthinkable. The merit of a constitutional amendment is that it will, of necessity, change what is politically thinkable.

The nightmare scenarios unintentionally demolish one argument in particular against a balanced budget amendment. That is the fiscal policy argument: we need the flexibility to run a deficit in slow times, to stimulate the economy. The idea of fiscal policy is supposed to be that the government budget can be a damping mechanism on swings in the economy. You run a deficit in bad times and a balance or even a surplus in good times. If it is now politically unthinkable to achieve a balanced budget, let alone a surplus, even in the best of times, the mechanism is seriously broken. It has got to be fixed before it can be of use again.

(The current version of the amendment would allow deficit spending on a three-fifths vote of both houses of Congress. So the mechanism remains available for emergencies in any event.)

A columnist in *The Washington Post* sneers that only the "policy elites" are still fixated on the deficit, while "most people" are more concerned with achieving and enjoying economic prosperity—and what's more, "they're right." No, they're not right. Of course what really matters is actual economic prosperity, and not some bookkeeping number called the federal deficit. But we unhappy few, if few we are, cannot be bullied out of our belief that the deficit imperils America's long-term prosperity. In the courage of our unhappiness, we defy weapon-words like "elites"!

Anyway, both sides of the balanced budget amendment debate play the tire-

some game of populist one-upmanship. The pro-amendment forces also claim to represent "the people" who are furious at "Beltway elites" running the nation into debt.

Polls suggest that the pro-amendment forces are right about what "the people" are thinking. The people want a constitutional amendment mandating a balanced federal budget, even though most of them have no idea what accomplishing this would really involve. The real effect of such an amendment would be to protect "the people" from their own appetites. But the people want a balanced budget amendment, and the people should get what they want. They deserve it. May their dreams come true.

**MICHAEL KINSLEY**

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