

New Evidence that Jesus Was the “Wicked Priest” of Qumran

by Marvin Vining*

There have been many theories about the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the persons and events they describe. However a consensus has emerged: most scholars now reject the idea that the scrolls are directly connected with Jesus and early Christianity. In fact, scholars who espouse the view that the scrolls speak directly of Jesus and Christian origins—such as Edmond Wilson, J. L. Teacher, John Allegro, Barbara Thiering and Robert Eisenman—have been much maligned by consensus scholars through the years.¹ Oxford professor Geza Vermes wrote, “Only the sensation-seeking media have been taken in by their theories.” Arguably so, but only if one classifies Vermes’s very own publisher as part of the sensation-seeking media. This quote of Vermes’s appears on page 64 of his signature book *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*.² Flip to the back cover and you will note that Penguin UK is marketing this book with an ironic teaser, a Dead Sea Scrolls passage from the Messianic Apocalypse that Matthew’s Gospel has Jesus quote nearly verbatim: “He will heal the wounded and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor” (4Q521 2–4 II, 12; cf. Mt 11:4–5). Public interest in the scrolls has never waned, largely because the Christian audience intuits there is much more to be learned about Jesus and early Christianity than consensus scholars are willing to admit.

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In April 2008, Bear & Company published a book I was fourteen years in the making called *Jesus the Wicked Priest: How Christianity Was Born of an Essene Schism*. *JTWP* is grounded in the consensus Qumran-Essene hypothesis of scrolls authorship (thus I will refer to the Qumran covenanters throughout this paper as Essenes for brevity), but I believe major corrections are now required in order to sustain and advance that hypothesis. As the title of my book suggests, I argue Jesus was raised an Essene but broke from them at the outset of his ministry due to sharp theological differences; this is why the Essenes thereafter referred to Jesus as a “Wicked Priest.” *JTWP* is atypical of books in the genre: it is as much a theological exploration of Jesus and his message as it is a work of Dead Sea Scroll historiography. Admittedly the theological nuances of *JTWP* are sometimes distracting to those primarily interested in my historiography. Therefore I have written this secularized summary of *JTWP* in order to help scholars of all faiths more clearly understand my work so they may begin debating it.

This paper, however, goes well beyond a mere summary. Major theoretical corrections of this nature are best classified by what philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn called a *paradigm shift* because they have such far-reaching implications.³ Kuhn pointed out that before revolutionary theories can take hold, enough scholars must begin doing the “normal science” needed to validate the new theory, such as working out how the new theory answers questions that have long confounded proponents of the old theory. Since this is my first opportunity to present my work directly to the community of biblical scholars, I will raise several more technical arguments here than I did in my book and also suggest some areas for further study.

Overview

Wicked Priest (הכֹּהֵן הַרָשָׁע) is a Dead Sea Scrolls sobriquet for the enemy and contemporary of the Teacher of Righteousness, another scrolls sobriquet for the leader of the community. References to the Wicked Priest appear at least six times in the Habakkuk Commentary (1QpHab)⁴ and at least once in the Psalms Commentary (4Q171). The prevailing theory is that the Wicked Priest is an unidentified Maccabean king/priest, which would place the Wicked Priest in the Hasmonean era, from 150 to 30 BCE. Supposedly the radiocarbon dating estimates, paleographic estimates and hermeneutical arguments converge in support of the Maccabean Wicked Priest theory. But consensus scholars have been misconstruing the data; and in many cases ignoring and suppressing data that does not fit their theories altogether.

Radiocarbon Dating

The radiocarbon dating estimates do not support the Maccabean theory nearly as well as consensus scholars say they do; in actuality radiocarbon dating supports the Jesus as Wicked Priest view.

Geza Vermes was primarily responsible for formulating the consensus theory that the Wicked Priest was either Jonathan or Simon Maccabeus.⁵ Jonathan reigned as high priest from 161 to 143 BCE and Simon reigned from 142 to 135 BCE. In 1994, the Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) laboratory of the University of Arizona estimated the date of the Habakkuk Commentary manuscript (1QpHab) between 120 and 5 BCE (2σ).⁶ Vermes has argued that the Arizona AMS results decisively support his theory:

[T]he Habakkuk Commentary, chief source of the history of the Qumran sect, is definitely put in the pre-Christian era between 120 and 5 BCE. In consequence, fringe scholars who see in this writing allusions to events described in the New Testament will find they have a problem on their hands.⁷

My proposed date for 1QpHab is about 23 CE, which differs from the top end of the Arizona AMS estimate by at least twenty-eight years. But Vermes's theory differs from the bottom end of the Arizona AMS estimate by at least fifteen years (Simon) and perhaps as much as forty-one years (Jonathan). While Vermes is deservedly an authority in the fields of ancient Hebrew texts and history, he is *not* an expert in the field of radiocarbon dating or statistics, and I long suspected his interpretation of the Arizona AMS test results was in error. Subsequent to publication my book, I consulted with physicist A. J. Jull who actually ran the Arizona AMS tests. Jull confirmed that, despite Vermes's rhetorical posturing, there is really no decisive advantage for either theory based on radiocarbon dating of 1QpHab alone. Both theories' candidates fall slightly outside the two-sigma range and, from a statistical viewpoint, neither miss is better than the other.

Vermes's opinion on the Arizona AMS test of 1QpHab might have some bearing, but only if it were based within his field of expertise, for example, on internal dating evidence found in text itself. There appears to be little such evidence. According to Vermes's own translations, all the verbs used in regard to the Wicked Priest in 1QpHab are in perfect tense. Biblical Hebrew had only two verb tenses: perfect and imperfect. Absent surrounding context, there is no way of discerning whether an action occurred in the writer's immediate present or

distant past, from what would have been 5 minutes earlier for the writer or 500 years earlier. Do 1QpHab's perfect tense verb references to the Wicked Priest rule out my candidate since the MS was dated earlier than Jesus lived? Not when one considers practical variance, no. The reason the text of 1QpHab may describe 23 CE events, although the manuscript dates between 120 and 5 BCE, could be simply that it was drafted on old, stored parchment. Thus the Arizona AMS date range of 1QpHab is still formally undecidable as to either theory's candidates.

The Psalms Commentary (4Q171) is a different matter. Curiously, Vermes and other consensus scholars seem to be completely ignoring that the Arizona AMS lab also tested 4Q171, a manuscript that likewise mentions the Wicked Priest. The Arizona AMS lab estimated that 4Q171 dates from 5 to 111 CE (2 σ), which accords perfectly with my theory but presents a difficult problem for Vermes.

Why? The Arizona AMS estimate for 4Q171 is a spot-on match for my theory. By contrast, Vermes is faced with an anachronism: both his candidates for the Wicked Priest *predate by at least 140 years* the Arizona AMS results of 4Q171. This anachronism would present no problem for Vermes if 4Q171 could be construed to speak of the Wicked Priest in the distant past, but Vermes's own translation of 4Q171 has the author speaking of the Wicked Priest in shifting verb tenses, and that places the Wicked Priest in the Christian era.

Note Vermes's translation below:

The wicked watches out for the righteous and seeks [to slay him. The Lord will not abandon him into his hand or] let him be condemned when he is tried (Ps 32:33).

Interpreted, this concerns the Wicked [Priest] who [watched the Teacher of Righteousness] that he might put him to death [because of the ordinance and the law which he sent to him]. And God will pay him his reward by delivering him into the hand of the violent of the nations, that they may execute upon him [judgment]. (4Q171 IV, 6–10)

This is a *peshet* on Psalms 32:33 (more later), essentially a Midrash revealing how the author believed this verse applied to his contemporary times. It says the Wicked Priest “watched” the Teacher of Righteousness (perfect tense: already happened). Most scholars agree the second “him” refers to the Wicked Priest, whom God “will pay” his reward by delivering him into the violent of nations (imperfect tense: has not yet happened).⁸ The Wicked Priest was thus living at the moment this text was drafted. Even if the second “him” refers to the Righteous Teacher and not the Wicked Priest, the shifting verb tenses imply that the Teacher was living at the time this text was written, and that implies the Wicked Priest was at the very least a warm corpse. According to the Arizona AMS test results and these shifting verb tenses, the Wicked Priest and Teacher of Righteousness both lived in the Christian era.

All these arguments go out the window if the MSS tested were copies of originals no longer in existence, of course. But Qumran scholars have always been hesitant to label a Dead Sea Scrolls MS a copy absent compelling scribal evidence.⁹

Equally problematic is the Groningen theory advanced by Florintino García Martínez and Adam S. van der Woude,¹⁰ that argues for a series of six candidates to correlate with what they see as references to six separate Wicked Priests in 1QpHab. The Groningen theory still fails to address the reference to the Wicked

Priest found in the Psalms Commentary and its troublesome late Arizona AMS estimate. Perhaps there will be a forthcoming seventh candidate for the Wicked Priest!

This is a perfect time to apply Occam's razor. If in order to maintain the Maccabean theory it is now necessary to appeal to the idea that recovered MSS are copies of originals no longer in existence, or to endlessly multiply Wicked Priest candidates, it is time to consider letting this theory go. Absent compelling reasons otherwise the simpler explanation tends to be the better explanation. Once my version of the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory is fully understood, I believe scholars will see it is the simpler explanation, and by far the more coherent.

Paleography

Using paleography (the study of shifts in how letters were formed in order to determine when a MS was written) Frank Cross dated 1QpHab in the Early Herodian era, from 30 to 1 BCE—a very near miss for my theory.¹¹ I argue in *JTWP* that paleography is of little value in deciding between the two theories, for early Qumran scholars like Cross may have pegged events described in the Dead Sea Scrolls to the wrong historical periods at the outset of their analysis, and there is likely more variance than scholars yet realize.

Keep in mind 1QpHab was one of the first manuscripts discovered and published and Qumran scholars have always viewed it as the chief source of the history of the community. Many consensus paleographical dates were based on Vermes's Maccabean theory. However, careful review of Cross's major work on this subject shows that he, himself, recognized there are no absolute dates in the

paleographic dating of manuscripts, only relative ones. The absolutes are always subject to change if new evidence is presented.¹²

As for finding extra variance, there are numerous factors scholars have not fully considered.

First, if a scribe learned to write within a particular period, it would be logical that he would keep that handwriting style all his life, while the handwriting style changed around him due to adaptation by the younger generation. I saw this exact same phenomenon as a child when my father, an attorney, showed me old courthouse records; I personally witnessed how elderly men who wrote out deeds fifty years earlier used the same archaic handwriting style until the day they died. Cross, himself, recognized that “allowance must be made always for the extension of the professional life of a conservative scribe beyond his generation.”¹³ The professional life of an Essene scribe ran from thirty years of age (1Q28a I, 15) to one hundred years of age (*War* 2.151), which makes for a span of seventy years. I need only twenty-one years beyond Cross’s estimate of 1QpHab for my restoration to be viable, so my restoration is well within reasonable variance—especially when one considers that 1QpHab is likely to have been written by a high-ranking elder due to its content.

Second, Norman Golb has pointed out that Cross’s claim that he could date a MS within a twenty-five year range was unprecedented among paleographers who had previously held that a MS could be dated only within a seventy-five to a hundred year range. Golb further pointed out that early Qumran scholars seem to have incorporated De Vaux’ Qumran-Essene hypothesis into their dating analysis.¹⁴ In other words, the tight paleographical ranges Cross claimed were

possible of the Dead Sea Scrolls are viable only if all the scrolls were drafted in the “scriptorium” supposedly discovered in the Qumran ruins, as de Vaux claimed. If the scrolls were not all drafted at Qumran, it opens Qumran paleography up to *geographical variance*, because it is logical that handwriting styles may not have evolved everywhere at the same time (presumably handwriting styles would have evolved more slowly in rural areas with less interaction with the outside world and more rapidly in high trafficked areas). Golb rejects de Vaux’ version of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis primarily because he observed that the scrolls were written in too many hands for all these scribes to have lived at Qumran alone.¹⁵ Later in this paper, I will present hermeneutical arguments in support of Golb’s handwriting observation: I will present evidence that the Teacher of Righteousness wrote the Thanksgiving Hymns (1QH) while he resided at Capernaum and not Qumran, as most scholars suppose.

Hermeneutics

This largely reduces my reconstruction to a matter of hermeneutics. I employ the *hermeneutic circle* method throughout *JTWP*. Which is to say, I alternate between global and detailed textual interpretations until my reconstruction coheres: the whole should support the parts and the parts should support the whole. I also suggest and adopt a modest epistemological standard. Namely, if radiocarbon science cannot conclusively prove or disprove the dates needed for my reconstruction, then I contend its correctness should be judged by whether it is coherent and both internally and externally consistent. My reconstruction should make overall sense to the reader, it should explain more data than previous attempts, and it should withstand close and rigorous scrutiny without

yielding contradiction, either with itself or with the historical sources upon which I rely.

A New and Better Way of Conceptualizing Peshet

Peshet refers to the hermeneutical practice found in the Dead Sea Scrolls of relating an author's contemporary persons, places or events to biblical literature in a highly esoteric manner, such as found in the Habakkuk (1QpHab), Psalms (4Q171) and Nahum (4Q169) Commentaries. Thiering and Eisenman have been severely criticized because their peshet methods lack objectivity, but frankly consensus scholars have been just as guilty. So far, most scholars have been assigning peshet interpretations on an ad hoc basis to fit their theories, offering no internal logical explanation of the peshet method whatsoever. In *JTWP*, I offer a conceptual framework of peshet that scholars should find a great deal more coherent and intelligible.

Basically, like many ancient peoples the Essenes appear to have followed a cyclical view of time as described by Mircea Eliade in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*;¹⁶ not that they necessarily believed history literally repeated itself, rather, the archetypes found in their sacred scriptures repeated until God's purposes were fulfilled in the coming apocalypse. Anthropologist James Frazer coined a term for a similar belief structure in his famous work *The Golden Bough*¹⁷ called *imitative magic*. Imitative magic is the association of ideas by similarity, the idea that like produces like.

Viewed within this conceptual framework, the Essene peshet method followed fairly predictable patterns. First, their esoteric references were almost always pulled from their favorite scriptures, especially if there were archetypal

threads running through multiple books. Second, there was usually some sympathetic association with the contemporary person, place or event according to Essene perceptions. Finally, the scriptural passages from which the esoteric references were drawn usually justified the Essene belief that they were God's elect and would emerge victorious over their enemies. This last tendency probably explains the main reason the Essenes adopted the highly esoteric peshar method in the first place: it was their way of speaking of their enemies in code, so that if their texts ever fell into the wrong hands they would be practically indecipherable.

For example, note this passage from the Nahum Commentary:

Whither the lion goes, there is the lion's cub, [with none to disturb it]. (Nah 2:11)

[Interpreted, this concerns Deme]trius king of Greece who sought, on the counsel of those who seek smooth things, to enter Jerusalem. [But God did not permit the city to be delivered] into the hands of the kings of Greece, from the time of Antiochus until the coming of the rulers of the Kittim. But then she shall be trampled under their feet. (4Q169 3-4 I, 2-3)

The references to the Seleucid kings Demetrius and Antiochus are rare instances where the Essenes depart from their cryptic writing style and actually use historical names (likely Demetrius III Eucerus, d. 88 BCE, and Antiochus XIII Asiaticus, d. 64 BCE). But note the reference to the Kittim in the last line. Why did the author bother to use an esoteric reference here when he spoke openly of the Greeks earlier? It stands to reason that the Kittim were the next occupying power of Israel, the Romans. The Greeks were gone at this point, so there was no need for the clandestine reference; the Romans were the new military threat.¹⁸ The

reason the author chose the Kittim reference is because the Romans, like the Greeks, were a great western sea power, and Numbers 24:24 predicts that the Kittim, a great western sea power, will be destroyed. The author was prophesying that the Romans would fail in their conquest of Israel, just as the Greeks did (this is the imitative magic “like produces like” aspect of the method).

Other good peshet examples are the multiple references to the Manasseh and Ephraim found in the Nahum Commentary. Consensus scholars believe Manasseh and Ephraim refer to the Pharisees and Sadducees, but what internal logic is there to this identification? The consensus view is in error: Manasseh and Ephraim refer to Jesus, his brother James, and their respective followers. The global interpretation of *JTWP*, that I will develop shortly, is that the Essenes were Jesus’s enemies who planned and carried out his crucifixion. Following this theme, later books of the Hebrew Bible mention a Manasseh, a wicked king of Judah in the sixth century BCE (2 Kg 21:1–18; 24:3–4; 2 Chr 33; see also the Prayer of Manasseh). Because Jesus relaxed the rigid asceticism practiced by the Essenes, they would have referred to him and his followers as “seekers of smooth things” (4Q169). Likewise, the evil king Manasseh “seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel” (2 Chr 33:9). The Essenes would have perceived Jesus’s miracles just as Manasseh’s “soothsaying and augury and sorcery” (2 Chr 33:6). Manasseh was tortured into repentance by the king of Assyria (2 Chr 33:11–14), just as the Essenes perceived Jesus was tortured into repentance by Pilate (cf. 4Q171 IV, 9–10; 1QpHab VIII, 16–IX, 2; IX, 8–12). Another archetypal similarity likely to have influenced the Essenes can be found in the first Manasseh mentioned in Genesis, the eldest son of Joseph (Gen

41:51). Jesus likewise would have been popularly perceived as an eldest son of Joseph: “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (Mt 13:55). The first Manasseh had a younger brother, Ephraim, who was born in Egypt (Gen 41:52), just as Jesus’s brother James may have been born in Egypt due to Joseph and his family’s flight there to escape Herod’s persecution of the firstborn (Mt 2:13–23).

Otto Betz’s Herodian/Essene Identification

A major critical weakness of Thiering’s version of the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory is that one would logically expect a well-defined presence of the Dead Sea Scroll authors in the New Testament as Jesus’s enemies; Thiering claims such a presence is there, but she has been unable to demonstrate this in plain language and proof texts sufficient to convince the main body of scholars. Likewise a criticism often raised of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis is that the Essenes appear to be completely missing from the New Testament. Thanks mainly to the late Otto Betz I believe I have solved both problems.

Sometime in 1993, I read James H. Charlesworth’s book *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*¹⁹ where I discovered Otto Betz’s Mark 3:6 Herodians/Essenes identification in Betz’s contributing chapter. A vocal critic of Thiering,²⁰ Betz never realized that he laid a global foundation for the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory, for Mark 3:1–6 was the inciting incident to the crucifixion. Upon closer examination, I began finding numerous points of correlation with the scrolls that confirmed the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory. I tried handing off my discoveries to established scholars, but when no one took me seriously I determined to do the work myself. I returned to university and pursued graduate studies in philosophy and religion, thinking there was such an ironclad bias against the

Jesus as Wicked Priest theory I should wait until my work was published and reviewed before doing my doctoral work. I never realize it would take fourteen long years.

My core arguments in *JTWP* involve me reconstructing gospel events by closely analyzing their parallel accounts. That is, I assume events described by multiple gospel writers did in fact occur, and therefore redactional differences in their stories (due to each writer's different sources, different theology, or whatever) may logically relate to one another and give us a fuller picture of what really happened—like the tale of the blind men and the elephant. Betz used this type of analysis to identify the Herodians as the Essenes. Rigid disciples of Bultmann may reject this type of analysis on principle, but I contend the proof is in the pudding: the Dead Sea Scrolls now reveal that the New Testament gospel accounts are far more trustworthy historical sources than heretofore believed.

About a year before he died, Betz confirmed in a letter to me that his Herodian/Essene identification was in furtherance of work begun by Yigael Yadin.²¹ Yadin followed up on C. Daniel's theory that the Herodians of Mark were Essenes. Daniel cited the story of how the Essene Manaemos predicted Herod the Great would become king recorded by Josephus (*Ant* 15.371–79). Herod thereafter honored the Essenes by granting them special favors; hence there is good reason to believe the common people would have nicknamed the Essenes "Herodians." In order to advance the Qumran-Essene hypothesis, Yadin confirmed Daniel's theory by analyzing the Temple Scroll. Yadin reasoned that the Herodians mentioned in Mark 8:14–21 were members of the Qumran community, because according to the Temple Scroll the community had

modified the Torah's procedure for cleansing of the altar during the Feast of Milluim (11Q19 XV, 9–14; cf. Ex 29; Ez 43:18–27).

In *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Betz wrote:

Yadin did not discuss the other passages in which 'the Herodians' are mentioned. The identification of the Herodians with the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls seems to correspond to Mk 3:6: together with the Pharisees the Herodians were fiercely opposed to the attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath and "held counsel against him, how to destroy him."²²

Betz noted that a parallel of this pericope is found in Matthew, where Jesus cited and ridiculed a statute peculiar to the scrolls, the prohibition against rescuing an animal fallen into a pit on the Sabbath (Mt 12:11; cf. CD XI, 13–14). On the basis of his and Yadin's combined research efforts, Betz concluded that the New Testament Herodians were the Essenes.

In *JTWP*, I complete the Herodian/Essene identification. Both Mark and Mathew record that Jesus encountered the Pharisees and Herodians in the tribute to Caesar pericope (Mk 12:13–17 // Mt 22:15–22). The church father Hippolytus reports that the Essenes were so averse to idolatry that they would not handle or even look at a coin with a pagan image on it (*Refutation of All Heresies* IX, 21). Thus, when Jesus told his accusers to produce a pagan coin, look at it, and "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," Jesus was evidently singling out the Herodians/Essenes for their hypocrisy. We can now say with confidence that the Herodians were the Essenes, for every occurrence of the Herodians in the New Testament gospel narratives has now been correlated with the Essenes. And each pericope in which the Herodians appear supports the global Jesus as Wicked

Priest theory, for in each and every one the Herodians are opposed to Jesus. Note, incidentally, that by completing the Herodians/Essenes identification using a classical source alone I have strengthened the Qumran-Essene hypothesis: I have confirmed that Yadin's and Betz's Herodian/Essenes identifications based on the scrolls were correct, and that the authors of the scrolls were the Essenes recorded by the ancient historians.

The Essenes Are the Scribes

But this is just the beginning. The Herodians do not appear frequently enough in the New Testament to be the well-defined enemies the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory requires, nor do the numbers match up with the populous Essenes needed for the Qumran-Essene hypothesis. When I studied the pericopae in which the Herodians appear I noticed an interesting pattern: they almost always appear alongside the Pharisees. And in some Gospels the two groups are not called Pharisees and *Herodians*, they are called Pharisees and *scribes* (Mk 3:6 // Lk 6:7; Mk 12:13–17 // Mt 22:15–22 // Lk 20:19–26). There are sixty-two references to the scribes in the New Testament, and the scribes are generally portrayed as Jesus's enemies—just like their fellow travelers, the Pharisees. Is it really that simple? Could the Essenes be the New Testament scribes? Is this how the common people, such as those who wrote the Gospels, would have referred to them? Yes, it is just that simple. Charlesworth noted that the Essenes were the only known group in early Judaism “preoccupied with writing and copying,”²³ and a *scribe* (Hebrew סֹפֵר, Greek γραμματεῖς) by very definition of the word means a “writer.”²⁴ Moreover many scholars believe the Essenes authored scribal literature, such as 1 Enoch. The curious Copper Scroll is

also easily explainable as a hidden treasure map of annual tithe and storehouses, and keeping records of the tithe and storehouses was a documented scribal duty (Neh 13:13). The New Testament records that the scribes held the same Davidic messianic expectations one finds in the scrolls (Lk 20:39–44; cf. 4Q285; 4Q161), the same rigorous proselyte system (Mt 23:15; cf. *War* 2.137–142; 1QS VI, 14–23), and the same degree of hierarchy and formality (Mt 23:6–7; cf. 1QS VI, 9).

I develop numerous arguments in *JTWP* that the Essenes were the scribes. But the most important argument is this: the New Testament writers paint a clear picture that the scribes were Jesus's enemies; therefore if the Essenes were the scribes, it stands to reason that the scrolls should contain important details of Jesus's life as seen from the point of view of his enemies, such as when Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers:

Because of the blood of the city and the violence done to the land. . . . (Hab 2:17)

Interpreted, *the city* is Jerusalem where the Wicked Priest committed abominable deeds and defiled the Temple of God. (1QpHab XII, 7–9)

Note the reaction of the Essenes/scribes in Mark's parallel account of this event:

And they came to Jerusalem; and Jesus went into the Temple, and began to cast out those that bought and sold in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers. . . . The *scribes* and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy him, because the people were astonished at his doctrine. (Mk 11:15–17; my emphasis)

As the above passage suggests, the New Testament goes on to record that the scribes were principle figures behind Jesus's crucifixion (Mk 14:1; 15:31; Lk 22:2, 66; 23:10; Acts 4:5, 10). Therefore if my reconstruction is correct, logically the scrolls should reveal that the Essenes had Jesus crucified.

Restoring Jesus's Trial and Crucifixion

As an experienced criminal defense lawyer, I had a decisive advantage over most scrolls scholars in formulating this aspect of my reconstruction because I understand a thing or two about federal jurisdiction and criminal procedure.

Most scholars wrongly assume the Jewish elders prosecuted Jesus under Pontius Pilate because the Jews were not allowed to administer the death penalty. First-century Jews were perfectly free to execute their own criminals according to Jewish law (Mk 6:14–29; Jn 10:31–39; Acts 7:58); what they were not free to do was usurp the terrifying Roman penalty of crucifixion (*War* 2.117).²⁵ Thus, when the prosecutors reportedly called out to Pilate, “We have a law, and by that law [Jesus] ought to die” (Jn 19:7), we are witnessing the workings of first-century Roman federalism. In other words, the Jewish elders specifically sought to have Jesus crucified, a manner of execution prescribed under Jewish law but enforceable only by the Romans. This jurisdictional quirk points directly to the Essenes, for the Dead Sea Scrolls show that the Essenes amended the Torah to include crucifixion (11Q19 LXIV, 6–13), and this is the only known time in history that any Jewish law ever sanctioned crucifixion as a means of execution.²⁶ The occasional New Testament nickname “Herodians” implies that Essene law would have been the only Jewish law followed by Herod and Pilate. Matthew confirms this: Jesus reportedly said, “the scribes and Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses” (Mt 23:2), and we now know the Essenes were the scribes.

Betz's Herodian/Essene identification provides far more than a global foundation for my reconstruction; upon closer examination it shows exactly why the Essenes wanted Jesus crucified. Mark 3:1–6 records that Jesus healed the

withered hand of an unidentified man on a Sabbath in a Capernaum synagogue, and the Essenes were so infuriated they immediately rushed out and planned Jesus's death with the Pharisees. In *JTWP*, I show that the man Jesus healed was the Teacher of Righteousness, the leader of the Essenes, and that Jesus dared to perform this feat on the solemn day of Yom Kippur (Mk 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8). Jesus further angered the Essenes and the other Jewish sects when he disrupted the Jerusalem temple, making his crucifixion a foregone conclusion, but the Mark 3:1–6 Sabbath incident was where all his troubles began.

The New Testament does not provide much detail concerning Jesus's fateful Sabbath violation, but there are plenty of details found in extracanonical literature. The Gospel of Nicodemus records a sidebar conversation (Nicodemus claims he was Jesus's defense lawyer), where it was explained to Pilate that the prosecutors were "angry because [Jesus] wrought cures on the Sabbath day" (Nic 2:16). In the Report of Pontius Pilate, which second-century lawyer Justin Martyr claimed was the official trial record, Pilate reported to Caesar that a multitude of Jews delivered Jesus to him and "they charged him with one heresy in particular, namely, that Jesus said the Sabbath was not a rest, nor to be observed by them." Pilate also reported one of Jesus's healings that came up at the trial, and it bears a striking similarity to Mark 3:1–6: "And again there was another who had a withered hand, and not only the hand but rather half of the body of the man was like a stone, and he had neither the shape of a man nor the symmetry of a body: even he healed him with a word and made him whole."²⁷

Mark 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8

In *JTWP*, I correlate the Mark 3:1–6 Capernaum synagogue incident with the Yom Kippur incident of 1QpHab XI, 3–8. To review both passages:

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. And they watched him, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of their heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. (Mk 3:1–6)

Woe to him who causes his neighbors to drink; who pours out his venom to make them drunk that he may gaze on their feasts! (Hab 2:15)

Interpreted, this concerns the Wicked Priest who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to the house of his exile that he might confuse him with his venomous fury. And at the time appointed for rest, for the Day of Atonement, he appeared before them to confuse him and to cause them to stumble on the day of fasting, their Sabbath day of rest. (1QpHab XI, 3–8)

For these passages to correlate, the place, time and persons must coincide. Namely, the Teacher of Righteousness' "house of his exile" must have been in Capernaum; the synagogue incident described in Mark's Gospel must have taken place on Yom Kippur; and the Teacher must have been born with a withered hand for Jesus to heal.

We know the Mark 3:1–6 pericope took place in a Capernaum synagogue because a combined reading of the Synoptic Gospels places it there (see especially Matthew 12:9 in full parallel context, Mk 2:1–3:6 // Mt 12:1–15 // Lk 6:1–11). Therefore if Mark 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8 then the Teacher of Righteousness’ “house of his exile” must have been in Capernaum, not Qumran as most scholars now suppose. In the Thanksgiving Hymns, a Dead Sea Scroll manuscript that most scholars believe the Teacher wrote, the author said of his surroundings: “I [thank Thee, O Lord, for] Thou hast placed me beside a fountain of streams in an arid land, and close to a spring of waters in a dry land, and beside a watered garden [in a wilderness]” (1QH^a XVI, 4–5), and also: “Thou hast caused me to dwell with the many fishers who spread a net among the face of the waters” (1QH^a XIII, 8). These descriptions perfectly fit fertile Capernaum and rule out desolate Qumran. As long argued by Norman Golb, some of the scrolls found at Qumran may have been written elsewhere.²⁸

Luke dates his version of the synagogue pericope (Lk 6:6–11) on “another Sabbath” (6:6) immediately after “the second Sabbath after the first,” or more literally, after “the second-first Sabbath” (σάββατω δευτεροπρωτω) (Lk 6:1), a difficult phrase that has never been satisfactorily explained.²⁹ I explain that the first Sabbath refers to Rosh Hashanah, the first of Tishri and start of the High Holy days. Yom Kippur always occurs on the tenth of Tishri.

I did not address this in *JTWP*, but upon reflection I now realize I must look to the 364-day Qumran calendar in order to be consistent with my reconstruction (both the Teacher and Jesus were Essenes and would have honored Essene Sabbaths). Fortunately one property of the Qumran calendar is that annual

Sabbaths such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fell on the same day of the week year after year, thus greatly simplifying my work. The following chart of the seventh Jewish month of Tishri according to the Qumran calendar is based on information compiled by James VanderKam³⁰ and will greatly assist us in visualizing the particular Sabbath in question. All the Sabbaths are represented in bold; the annual Sabbaths are also underlined.

VII					
Sunday		5	12	19	26
Monday		6	13	20	27
Tuesday		7	14	21	28
Wednesday	<u>1</u>	9	<u>15</u>	<u>22</u>	29
Thursday	2	<u>10</u>	16	23	30
Friday	3	11	17	24	
Sabbath	4	12	18	25	

chart 1.

Most New Testament editors nowadays omit the σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω language of Luke 6:1, believing it to be a scribal gloss.³¹ Exegetes who urge σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω be maintained usually suggest it refers to a series of Sabbaths, the most popular theory being the series of Pentecost Sabbaths. I agree with the series of Sabbaths theory, but I think Rosh Hashanah is a much better fit. Luke 6:1 has Jesus and his disciples gleaning grain to eat out of the fields, and the best time to glean edible grain right off the stalk is harvest time just before

the Feast of Tabernacles; Pentecost grain was harvested green and needed to be cooked before it was edible. The Feast of Tabernacles fell on the fifteenth of Tishri, as shown in the preceding chart.

Luke emphasizes that 6:1–5 and 6:6–11 were two separate Sabbaths in verse 6:6 where he says the synagogue pericope occurred on “another Sabbath” (ἐτέρω σαββάτῳ) following the grain field pericope, a detail not found in the other Synoptics. In *JTWP*, I was struggling with the idea that 6:1–5 and 6:6–11 may have occurred on morning and nightfall of the same day, that a regular Sabbath may have coincided with the eve of Yom Kippur, thus requiring Jesus to have disrupted a Kol Nidre service. But one of my readers pointed out (much to my embarrassment) that Kol Nidre services did not begin until 800 years after Jesus’s death, when Spanish Jews were forced to celebrate Yom Kippur at night to avoid detection. My confusion stemmed from the fact that many English New Testament translations stress the immediacy of these two pericopae so I was conditioned to read it that way. The NIV, for example, translates Καὶ μεταβὰς ἐκεῖθεν ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν: “Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue” (Mt 12:9). It is possible the author of one of the Old Latin variants of Luke 6:1 struggled with this same confusion. George Wesley Buchanan and Charles Wolfe, who thirty years ago wrote the most thorough commentary on Luke 6:1 I have found so far, pointed out that one of the four MSS variants of Luke 6:1 reads, “early in the morning on the Sabbath” (*Sabbato mane*).³² Evidently the author of this variant believed either σαββατῳ δευτεροπρωτῳ of Luke 6:1 or ἐτέρω σαββάτῳ of Luke 6:6 was in error and tried to correct the problem, like many New Testament translators today. One look at the Qumran

calendar cleared up all my confusion. My reconstruction allows Luke to be right on all accounts: the grain field pericope occurred on the fourth of Tishri, the “second-first Sabbath” after Rosh Hashanah; then the synagogue pericope occurred on the tenth of Tishri, on “another Sabbath” just as Luke claimed. The continuous narrative of these two pericopae in the other Synoptics (Mk 2:23–3:6 // Mt 12:1–15) merely implies that there were no intervening Sabbaths, that Mark 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8 had to occur on Yom Kippur and could not have taken place on a later Sabbath, such as the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth of Tishri.

The Feast of Tabernacles is also an important reference point for my reconstruction. Namely, when the Herodians/Essenes rushed out of the Capernaum synagogue and planned with the Pharisees how to destroy him (Mk 3:6), “Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there” (Mt 12:15). Likely Jesus withdrew to his hometown Nazareth, where he hid out with his family a day or so because he knew “the Jews sought to kill him” (Jn 7:1), then he journeyed to Jerusalem. Upon his arrival, Jesus announced to a surprised crowd that he knew he was marked for death for making “a man’s whole body well?” (Jn 7:19–23; read in full context 7:1–23 for Jesus’s itinerary). The reason his listeners were surprised at Jesus’s announcement that their fellow travelers were trying to kill him was because Jesus had outdistanced other news carriers. John records Jesus’s announcement took place when the “Feast of Tabernacles was at hand” (7:2). The Feast of Tabernacles falls on the fifteenth day of Tishri: the Yom Kippur incident in the Capernaum synagogue had occurred just days earlier and Jesus was still mindful of it.³³

Most definitively, if Mark 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8, then the Teacher of

Righteousness must have been born with a withered hand for Jesus to heal. This important detail is how I was able to spot this entire reconstruction and why I felt a special calling to see this work through to the end. I, myself, was born with a withered hand. Therefore when I read in the Thanksgiving Hymns, “I know through the understanding which comes from Thee that *righteousness is not in a hand of flesh*, that man is not the master of his way and that it is not in mortals to direct their step . . .” (1QH^a VII, 12; my emphasis) I knew firsthand the emotions the Teacher was dealing with: he was struggling to understand why God made him different than everyone else. Mark 3:1–6 had long been a personally moving passage to me, and I have long known it was the inciting incident to the crucifixion. When I read Betz’s Herodian/Essene identification and then read the Thanksgiving Hymns passage above, I knew exactly what I had found. A birth defect of this nature is very rare: the chance that these three particulars of place, time and person would randomly coincide is roughly one in fifteen million.³⁴

To further confirm Mark 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8, note this additional description of the Yom Kippur incident in the Habakkuk Commentary:

O traitors, why do you stare and stay silent when the wicked swallows up one more righteous than he? (Hab 1:13)

Interpreted, this concerns the House of Absalom and the members of its council, who were silent at the time of chastisement of the Teacher of Righteousness and gave him no help against the Liar who flouted the law in the midst of the whole [congregation]. (1QpHab V, 8–12)

This confirms Betz’s analysis that the Herodians/Essenes and Pharisees were both present in the synagogue during the Mark 3:1–6 pericope (cf. Lk 6:7).³⁵ The “House of Absalom” refers to the Pharisees: its peshar rationale is that the

Pharisees failed to come to the aid of the Teacher when Jesus/the Liar “flouted the law in the midst of the whole [congregation],” like Absalom shamed his father, David (2 Sam 13).

Jesus’s Torture and Crucifixion

Subsequent to the Yom Kippur incident, the Psalms and Habakkuk Commentaries record Jesus’s suffering under Pontius Pilate:

And God will pay [the Wicked Priest]³⁶ his reward by delivering him into the hand of the violent of the nations, that they may execute upon him [judgment]. (4Q171 IV, 9–10)

Shall not your oppressors suddenly arise and your torturers awaken; and shall you not become their prey? Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you. (Hab 2:7–8)

[Interpreted, this concerns the] Priest who rebelled [and violated] the precepts of [God . . . to command] his chastisement by means of the judgments of wickedness. And they inflicted horrors of evil maladies and took vengeance upon his body of flesh. (1QpHab VIII, 16–IX, 2)

Because of the blood of men and the violence done to the land, to the city and to all its inhabitants. (Hab 2:8)

Interpreted, this concerns the Wicked Priest whom God delivered into the hands of his enemies because of the iniquity committed against the Teacher of Righteousness and the men of his Council, that he might be humbled by means of a destroying scourge, in bitterness of soul, because he had done wickedly to his elect. (1QpHab IX, 8–12)

Jesus’s crucifixion is not specifically mentioned here, but keep in mind that crucifixion was an everyday occurrence under Greek and Roman occupation.

Jesus was nearly scourged to death, just as Mel Gibson's controversial film *The Passion of the Christ* graphically depicts; torture so extraordinarily violent it would have left exactly the impression on first-century Jews we read above.

Jesus's crucifixion is described in the Nahum Commentary after the fact, when the Jewish persecution of the early Christians described in the book of Acts was underway:

[And chokes prey for its lioness; and it fills] its caves [with prey] and its dens with victims. (Nah 2:12)

Interpreted, this concerns the Furious Young Lion [who executes revenge] upon those who seek smooth things and hangs men alive, . . . formerly in Israel. Because of a man hanged alive on [the] tree, He proclaims, "Behold I am against you," says the Lord of Hosts. (4Q169 3-4 I, 4-9)

In *JTWP*, I present the Pharisee Saul/Paul of Tarsus as a likely candidate for the Furious Young Lion. The Essenes and Pharisees were closely linked, as the numerous joint appearances of the "scribes and Pharisees" in the New Testament indicate. As this passage shows, the global peshar rationale for the Nahum Commentary is that the book of Nahum has historically been used as inspiration during war against Israel's enemies: this is how the Essenes would have viewed their persecution of the early Christians, "those who seek smooth things" and follow "a man hanged alive on [the] tree." Like the Manasseh and Ephraim references we saw earlier, the peshar rationale for choosing the book of Nahum to interpret these events was densely concentrated: Capernaum, where Mark 3:1-6=1QpHab XI, 3-8 and many other gospel events took place, was a hotbed of early Christian activity, both before and after Jesus's crucifixion; Capernaum in

the Semitic means literally “the village of Nahum” because it was popularly believed the prophet Nahum’s hometown.

The Teacher of Righteousness

A glaring weakness of the Maccabean theory is that scholars have never been able to identify the illusive Teacher of Righteousness, the enemy and contemporary of the Wicked Priest. In *JTWP*, I present the former high priest Simeon as my candidate for the Righteous Teacher (Lk 2:25–35). Simeon did not die after Jesus’s circumcision as commonly supposed; “let thy servant depart in peace” (Lk 2:29) means he went into exile. According to the Gospel of Nicodemus, Simeon died shortly before Jesus’s trial (Nic 12:16). My arguments in favor of Simeon as the Righteous Teacher are complex, based inextricably on theology and therefore a full discussion is best deferred to the book for now. But I can summarize the high points and point out areas for further study.

A central aspect of my reconstruction is that I uncovered the Essene and early Christian belief in reincarnation—which incidentally strengthens the Qumran-Essene hypothesis significantly, because Josephus records the Essenes held beliefs similar to the Platonists (*War* 2.154–158) and Pythagoreans (*Ant* 15.371) that had not yet been correlated with the scrolls. Basically, the Physiognomic Horoscopes (4Q186) show clear and unmistakable evidence of *metempneumosis*, a term I coin to describe the ancient Hebrew belief in migration of the spirit (Hebrew רוּחַ, Greek πνεῦμα; cf. Ec 12:6–7; Wis 8:19–20; Lk 1:17; Jn 3:8). For example, “His spirit consists of six³⁷ in the House of Light and three in the Pit of Darkness” (4Q186 1 II, 7–8). In each of these horoscopes, the person’s physical description matches up with numbers of times his spirit spent in a

postmortem heaven or hell. The idea that one's physical characteristics reflect prenatal sin is a very common reincarnation belief, found the world over (cf. Jn 9:2).

In addition to opening an exciting new chapter of dialogue with followers of Eastern religions and Hasidic Jews, the Essene belief in reincarnation answers some troublesome anomalies that have long vexed proponents of the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory. Most importantly, the Damascus Document reports the covenanters of Qumran originated "three hundred and ninety years" after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians which historians date in the year 586 BCE (CD I, 5–6). It also reports that "twenty years" transpired before God raised "the Teacher of Righteousness" (CD I, 9–11). Thus the Damascus Document apparently places the Righteous Teacher in the early Hasmonean era, at least 150 years before Jesus was born, which seems to rule out the Jesus as Wicked Priest theory. But what if the Righteous Teacher were an office held by a series of persons, as many scholars have suggested?³⁸ What if the Righteous Teacher were believed to be the same person through a series of reincarnations, just as followers of the Dalai Lama believe of their leader? Unlike the Groningen theory that needlessly multiplies Wicked Priests, there is now clear and compelling textual evidence to support my view that there may have been at least one other Righteous Teacher: the Habakkuk, Psalms and Nahum Commentaries describe the life and death of Jesus, not events in the early Hasmonean era.

So what else has reincarnation to do with identifying the Teacher of Righteousness? As I said it is complex: it has to do with the fact that the Essenes awaited the same messianic figures at the turn of the era later recognized by the early Christians. However, the Essenes believed the Davidic Messiah would

defer all scriptural interpretive authority to the Teacher of Righteousness and, since the Essenes were rigid fundamentalists, in effect the Teacher would have run the whole show. Had the Teacher not tried to assert this authority over Jesus, and had Jesus maintained continuity with the Essenes, the Teacher would have been remembered as a second forerunner to Jesus in addition to John the Baptist/Elijah (Mal 4:5; Mk 9:11; Mt 1:13–15). Instead, Jesus and the early Christians cut all ties with the Teacher and his prophetic role was forgotten. The church father Origen noted in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (VI, 4–5) that when the Pharisees asked John the Baptist if he was the Christ, Elijah or “the prophet” (Jn 1:25), they were inquiring about three separate figures. Origen, with his characteristic sharp eye for scripture, noted a key reference to the anonymous prophet in the book of Deuteronomy, a reference found in Moses’s final address to Israel: “[And the Lord said to me], I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him. And whosoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require a reckoning of him” (Dt 18:18–19). This same passage is quoted in the Messianic Anthology from Cave 4 at Qumran as the first of three proof texts that apply to the Righteous Teacher. In my view, this passage is an esoteric reference to Moses incarnate. This explains why the Essenes held their Teacher in such awe: the Teacher was believed to be a new and better Moses—*literally* a new and better Moses.

This logical thread is how I was able to identify former high priest Simeon as the Righteous Teacher. A lot of scholars will disapprove of my method. *JTWP* will probably be best understood as a “mixed” work of faith and science. Parts of the book are relatively straightforward secular scholarship, yet there are parts

where I start with traditional Christian faith claims and use those claims as working hypotheses to make greater sense of the scrolls. For instance, Christians believe Jesus fulfilled the Hebrew prophecies concerning the long awaited Davidic Messiah. In *JTWP*, I point out that Malachi prophesied there would be two forerunners to the Davidic Messiah: Elijah in verse 4:5 and the “messenger of the covenant” in verse 3:1, the latter of whom I believe was the Teacher of Righteousness. To my knowledge, there is little direct evidence that Malachi heavily influenced the authors of the scrolls. But if one accepts my Essenes/scribes identification, the New Testament records that the scribes were very much influenced by Malachi (Mk 9:1; cf. Mal 4:5). My point is this: whether Jesus in fact fulfilled Malachi’s prophecies is, for Christians, a matter of faith, but if Jesus and the Righteous Teacher were initially believed by the scrolls authors to fulfill those same prophecies there is a valid scientific basis for studying them. This is just one of many, many controversies my work is sure to start.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The Dead Sea Scrolls have always presented New Testament scholars with a dilemma: Jesus apparently cannot have been an Essene because his teachings on universal love and other doctrinal differences make such a hypothesis impossible, yet there are distinctively Essene influences in Jesus’s teachings that imply Jesus had an Essene upbringing. *JTWP* resolves this dilemma by recognizing that Jesus’s relationship to the Essenes was dynamic. Because Jesus was raised an Essene some of their influences are present in his teachings, but it is really his differences with the Essenes that make Jesus interesting. By studying the scrolls we can better frame Jesus within his historical context, better understand which doctrines Jesus accepted and which he rejected, and better

understand teachings of Jesus which were entirely new—scholars have always known that. But we are no longer limited to speculation how Jesus *might* have interacted with the Essenes because they were part of his general milieu. We now know how Jesus *actually did* interact with the Essenes because the New Testament and Dead Sea Scrolls are finally opened to one another. A fantastic harvest of information awaits New Testament scholars due to my Essene/scribe identification. If my reconstruction is correct it changes everything: we now have a whole new world of information about the historical Jesus to explore; a new way of answering old questions; a new method of exegesis to develop. We now have before us a working historical hypothesis that combines New Testament and Dead Sea Scrolls research into the same field, and breakthroughs like this do not come around that often. The theological implications will be enormous, affecting some of the most controversial issues facing Christians today. For instance, Israeli archeologist Magen Broshi has shown that the Essenes were fanatical misogynists.³⁹ The Gospels reveal that Jesus often defined himself against the scribes and Pharisees on women's issues (Mt 19:3–8; Lk 7:36–50; Jn 8:4–11). Now that we know the scribes were the misogynistic Essenes it will be very hard to deny that Jesus was a feminist. How this knowledge will affect the role of women in contemporary Christian churches remains to be seen, but it should definitely shake things up.

This brings up one last comment: I believe I have definitively put to rest the idea that the Vatican has been conspiring to suppress Dead Sea Scrolls publication and scholarship.⁴⁰ In *JTWP*, I explore the possibility that Jesus's conception may have involved a human father believed to be the Angel Gabriel,

based on a literary tradition found in the scrolls and other ancient Jewish texts that have been published for decades. If the Vatican were suppressing the scrolls, they certainly would have suppressed *that*. Yes, there was institutional resistance through the years to the new ideas the scrolls presented about Jesus and early Christianity, just as there will surely be institutional resistance to my work now. But resistance is not the same thing as a full-blown conspiracy. In my estimation, the main reason scholars have not been able to fully understand the relation of the Essenes to Jesus and early Christianity before now is due to the enormous complexity of the material.

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¹ A thorough history of Dead Sea Scrolls research to date, that focuses especially on attempts to connect the scrolls with the New Testament, is Garry W. Trompf, “The Long History of Dead Sea Scrolls Scholarship,” *Journal of Religious History* 26, no. 2 (2002): 123–44.

² Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 2004). All Dead Sea Scrolls translations herein are from Vermes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible translations are from the Revised Standard Version.

³ See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (3d. ed; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁴ There are five full references to “Wicked Priest” in the text, and 1QpHab XII, 8 has the phrase “the Wicked” added above the line.

⁵ See Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4; also James H. Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdemans, 2002), 92–93.

⁶ A. J. Jull, *et al*, “Radiocarbon Dating of Scrolls and Linen Fragments from the Judean Desert,” *Radiocarbon* 37 (1995): 11–19.

⁷ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 13–14.

⁸ See note 36, *infra*, and discussion of this text in context at page 26, *infra*. 4Q171 is admittedly fragmentary and nearly unreadable, so many scholars will find it inconclusive. However if 4Q171 speaks of the imminent torture of the Wicked Priest, and if this MS has been reliably dated to gospel times, it is obviously of central importance to my theory and is sure to be hotly debated.

⁹ In this case, quite the opposite is true: Thiering correctly points out that only one copy of each peshet scroll was ever found, which creates a *prima facie* presumption they are all originals.

¹⁰ Florentino García Martínez and Adam S. van der Woude, "A 'Groningen' Hypothesis of Qumran Early Origins and Early History," *Revue de Qumrân* 14 (1990): 521–42.

¹¹ F. M. Cross, Jr., Introduction to J. C. Trevor, ed., *Scrolls from Qumran Cave 1* (Jerusalem: Albright Institute of Archeology 4, 1972), 4.

¹² See Cross's chapter "The Development of the Jewish Scripts," in G. Ernest Wright, ed., *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 250 notes 28–29.

¹³ *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 192 note 29.

¹⁴ Norman Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 254.

¹⁵ *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 97–98, 151–52.

¹⁶ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (2d ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ See James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (abridged from 2d and 3d eds.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 28–37.

¹⁸ My interpretation contradicts Vermes's view that the Furious Young Lion of the Nahum Commentary was Alexander Jannaeus. The first Roman to reportedly occupy Israel was Pompey in 63 BCE (*War* 1.19–29, 141–158). The Nahum Commentary generally speaks of the Furious Young Lion in the perfect and imperfect tense, which must place him at a *later* date than the Roman occupation,

for the latter event is spoken of in the perfect tense. Yet Alexander Jannaeus died in approximately 76 BCE, seven years *before* Pompey's occupation (*War* 1.106).

¹⁹ James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1992).

²⁰ See Otto Betz and Rainer Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 112–13.

²¹ Personal letter from Otto Betz dated November 4, 2003.

²² James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 29, 68 note 281.

²⁴ The other duties of the Hebrew scribes are currently under debate. I submit my Essenes/scribes identification is now relevant to this debate and will help us see the bigger picture.

²⁵ I reject John 18:31–32 on the basis of form criticism, something I never do lightly. These verses are obviously an attempt on behalf of the author of the Fourth Gospel to validate Jesus's predictions of how he would die. But it is highly doubtful they have any basis in historical fact. The Synoptics and Acts overwhelmingly demonstrate the Jews had sovereignty to execute their own criminals according to Jewish law, and I have found nothing in classical sources to indicate otherwise.

²⁶ We find crucifixion neither in the original Torah nor in the Mishna. The Mishna prescribed death by four means: burning, stoning, strangling, and beheading (*Sanhedrin* 7:1). Crucifixion is not among them.

²⁷ This letter occurs in a Syriac manuscript in the British Museum, dated in the sixth or seventh century. I am quoting from *The Lost Books of the Bible and*

Forgotten Books of Eden, eds. Rutherford Hayes Plat and J. Alden Brett (New York: Penguin, 1994).

²⁸ Consensus scholars have long known about these 1QH passages I cite, but they typically explain them away as a mystic poet's fanciful allusions to the dismal surroundings of Qumran. Scholars who still wish to pursue the Maccabean theory now find themselves in the difficult position of having to argue that a transmuted interpretation of these passages should be preferred to their literal meaning. Vermes once wrote of Thiering and Eisenman's work, "In my opinion, all these theories fail the basic credibility test: they do not spring from, but are foisted on, the texts." Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 21. Will Vermes continue to foist his Maccabean theory upon the texts now that a more coherent and literal interpretation has been presented?

²⁹ See George Wesley Buchanan and Charles Wolfe, "'The Second-First Sabbath' (Luke 6:1)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978): 259–62; also Ephraim Isaac, "Another Note on Luke 6:1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 96–97.

³⁰ James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 55. The first person to work out the details of charts like these was Annie Jaubert, following an earlier suggestion by Dominique Barthélemy.

³¹ The major New Testament Greek versions UBS and NA27 presently consider σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω of Luke 6:1 a variant reading. There are four known MSS variants of Luke 6:1 and σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω is found in two of them. See George Wesley Buchanan and Charles Wolfe, "'The Second-First Sabbath' (Luke 6:1)," 259.

³² *Ibid.*, 259. *Sabbato mane* is a Luke 6:1 variant from an Old Latin MS known as (e).

³³ This argument needs further study. Some exegetes believe that John's Gospel followed a 354-day lunar calendar, whereas the Synoptics followed a 364-day solar calendar. This could account for the discrepancy that the Synoptics present the Last Supper as a Passover meal, but John records that Jesus was crucified before his Jewish captors celebrated Passover, literally at the time the Passover lambs were being slaughtered. Annie Jaubert was the first to suggest the two liturgical calendar theory in her book *La date de la Cène* (Paris, 1957), and many scholars have followed her lead. See Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., "Are Both the Synoptics and John Correct about the Date of Jesus's Death?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 123–32; but see James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 57–58. Assuming it is possible to accurately reconstruct the lunar calendar for the Second Temple period, it has always been difficult to establish the exact date Jesus began his ministry. In *JTWP*, I assumed Jesus began preaching in 23 CE, based on what I think is reliable evidence Jesus was born in 7 BCE and Luke 3:23's report that Jesus was "about thirty years old" when he began his ministry. However Luke 3:1 reports that John the Baptist began his ministry (some scholars think John's ministry preceded Jesus's ministry by about six months) during the "fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" which historians have dated at 29 CE. The exact date of Jesus's ministry is important because the annual Sabbaths of the lunar calendar fluctuated around the fixed Sabbaths of the solar calendar from year to year. I think the prudent move is to analyze a range of lunar calendars that cover all possible dates of Jesus's

ministry. Only then can we say with complete confidence that Feast of Tabernacles in John 7:2 would have given Jesus enough time to travel from Capernaum to Nazareth to Jerusalem after the Mark 3:1–6=1QpHab XI, 3–8 incident, yet get there fast enough to have outdistanced other news carriers.

³⁴ According to the Gospels, Jesus visited approximately 25 different cities during his ministry: assuming the Teacher's house of exile at Capernaum was one of these cities, the chance that Jesus would have randomly visited Capernaum during the 1QpHab XI, 3–8 incident was 1 in 25. There were 52 regular and 7 annual Sabbaths in the Qumran calendar: the chance that the non-descript Sabbath recorded in Mark 3:1–6 randomly occurred on the Essene date for Yom Kippur was 1 in 59. Like my own birth defect, I believe the Teacher's withered hand was the result of what is now called *amniotic band syndrome*. Amniotic band syndrome is a congenital disorder caused by entrapment of fetal parts in fibrous amniotic bands while in utero. Amniotic banding affects approximately 1 in 10,000 live births (this is a conservative estimate for our purposes, for this birth rate applies to deformities of the body in general, not just a withered hand). To find the combined random probability of these three occurrences, we simply multiply $1/25 \times 1/59 \times 1/10,000 = 1/14,750,000$.

³⁵ Due to poor sentence construction, arguably Mark 3:6 can be interpreted to say the Pharisees went out of the synagogue to meet with the Herodians who were not present. But this interpretation is directly contradicted by the parallel Luke 6:7 verse showing two groups were present in the synagogue, "the scribes and Pharisees."

³⁶ Vermes's translation uses the pronoun "him" here which raises a slight problem of identifying the referent. But most scholars agree that "him" refers to the previously mentioned Wicked Priest, which is why I included it in brackets. See the full passage, *infra*, at page 6. The reason most scholars believe this "him" refers to the Wicked Priest and not the Teacher of Righteousness is because the latter interpretation would support the view of John Allegro that the Teacher was tortured and killed, ergo the Teacher could have been Jesus.

³⁷ Vermes inserted the word "parts" at this point in the texts in an attempt to make sense of these passages: "His spirit consists of six (parts) in the House of Light." But I think it is more responsible scholarship to pull the interpretive comment altogether and let the reader draw his or her own conclusions based on the surrounding context.

³⁸ One of the first scholars to publish this view was Theodore H. Gaster in his 1957 book *The Dead Sea Scriptures*. See the third edition (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 30, 555.

³⁹ Magen Broshi, "Beware the Wiles of the Wanton Woman," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9, no. 4 (July / August 1983): 54–56.

⁴⁰ See Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (New York: Touchstone, 1991), especially 121–25. Notably, Baigent and Leigh accused Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now the Pope) of suppressing the scrolls because the *Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jerusalem* was then under his supervision. Time has shown that Pope Benedict XVI openly embraces scrolls scholarship. In fact, in 2007 he gave a sermon in which he stated Jesus and his disciples were likely associated with the Qumran community per Annie Jaubert's

two liturgical calendar theory. See Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Basilica of St. John Lateran, Holy Thursday, April 5, 2007.