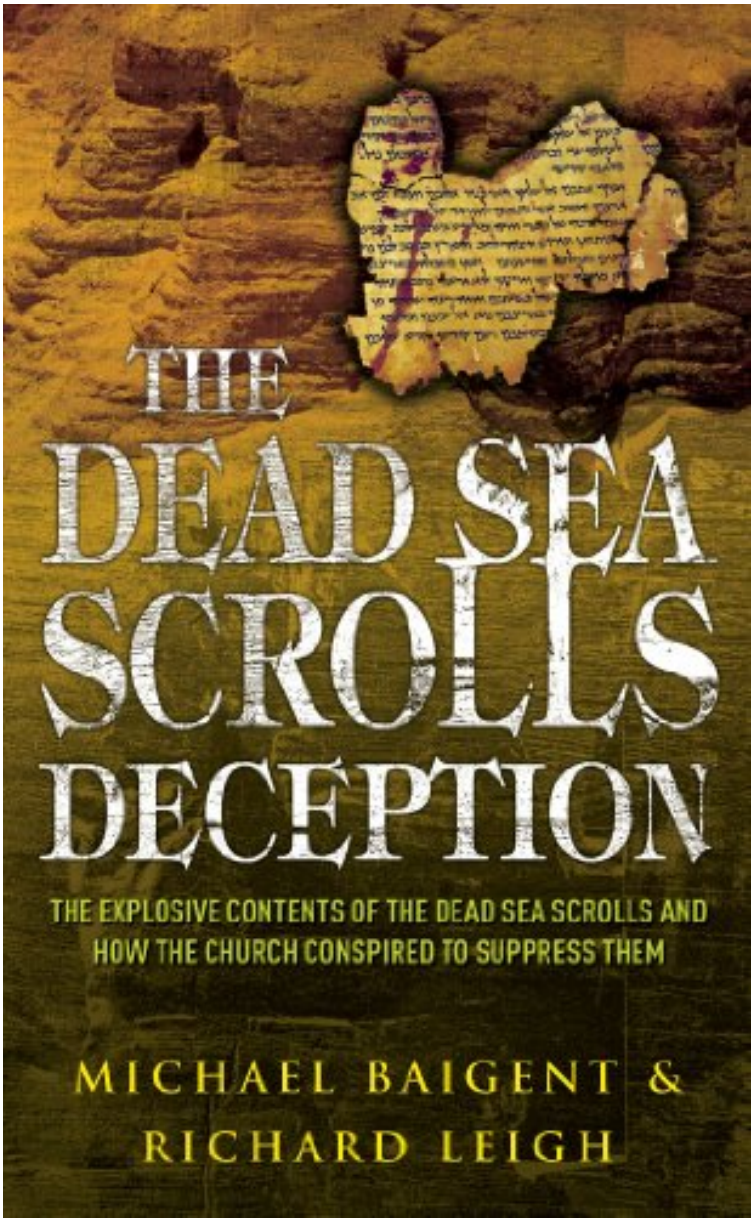
The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception



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Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #295943 dans eBooksPubli le: 2013-04-30Sorti le: 2013-04-30Format: Ebook Kindle

[Ebook pdf] The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception

Par Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh : The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves 20 miles east of Jerusalem in 1947 and 1956. Now Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, co-authors of The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, have succeeded in uncovering what has been described as 'the academic scandal par excellence of the twentieth century': the story of how and why up to 75 per cent of the eight hundred ancient Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts, hidden for some nineteen centuries, have, until very recently, remained concealed from the rest of the world. Through interviews, historical analysis and a close study of both published and unpublished scroll material, the authors are able to reveal the true cause of the bitter struggle between scholars, for these

documents disclose nothing less than a new account of the origins of Christianity and an alternative and highly significant version of the New Testament.ExtraitChapter 1The Discovery of the ScrollsEast of Jerusalem, a long road slopes gradually down between barren hills sprinkled with occasional Bedouin camps. It sinks 3800 feet, to a depth of 1300 feet below sea-level, and then emerges to give a panoramic vista of the Jordan Valley. Away to the left, one can discern Jericho. In the haze ahead lie Jordan itself and, as though seen in a mirage, the mountains of Moab. To the right lies the northern shore of the Dead Sea. The skin of water, and the yellow cliffs rising 1200 feet or more which line this (the Israeli) side of it, conduce to awe -- and to acute discomfort. The air here, so far below sea-level, is not just hot, but palpably so, with a thickness to it, a pressure, almost a weight.The beauty, the majesty and the silence of the place are spell-binding. So, too, is the sense of antiquity the landscape conveys -- the sense of a world older than most Western visitors are likely to have experienced. It is therefore all the more shocking when the 20th century intrudes with a roar that seems to rupture the sky -- a tight formation of Israeli F-16s or Mirages swooping low over the water, the pilots clearly discernible in their cockpits. Afterburners blasting, the jets surge almost vertically upwards into invisibility. One waits, numbed. Seconds later, the entire structure of cliffs judders to the receding sonic booms. Only then does one remember that this place exists, technically, in a state of permanent war -- that this side of the Dead Sea has never, during the last forty-odd years, made peace with the other. But then again, the soil here has witnessed incessant conflict since the very beginning of recorded history. Too many gods, it seems, have clashed here, demanding blood sacrifice from their adherents.The ruins of Qumran (or, to be more accurate, Khirbet Qumran) appear to the right, just as the road reaches the cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea. Thereafter, the road bends to follow the cliffs southwards, along the shore of the water, towards the site of the fortress of Masada, thirty-three miles away. Qumran stands on a white terrace of marl, a hundred feet or so above the road, slightly more than a mile and a quarter from the Dead Sea. The ruins themselves are not very prepossessing. One is first struck by a tower, two floors of which remain intact, with walls three feet thick -- obviously built initially with defence in mind. Adjacent to the tower are a number of cisterns, large and small, connected by a complicated network of water channels. Some may have been used for ritual bathing. Most, however, if not all, would have been used to store the water the Qumran community needed to survive here in the desert. Between the ruins and the Dead Sea, on the lower levels of the marl terrace, lies an immense cemetery of some 1200 graves. Each is marked by a long mound of stones aligned -- contrary to both Judaic and Muslim practice -- north-south.Even today, Qumran feels remote, though several hundred people live in a nearby kibbutz and the place can be reached quickly and easily by a modern road running to Jerusalem -- a drive of some twenty miles and forty minutes. Day and night, huge articulated lorries thunder along the road, which links Eilat in the extreme south of Israel with Tiberius in the north. Tourist buses stop regularly, disgorging sweating Western Europeans and Americans, who are guided briefly around the ruins, then to an air-conditioned bookshop and restaurant for coffee and cakes. There are, of course, numerous military vehicles. But one also sees private cars, both Israeli and Arab, with their different coloured number-plates. One even sees the occasional 'boy racer' in a loud, badly built Detroit monster, whose speed appears limited only by the width of the road.The Israeli Army is, needless to say, constantly in sight. This, after all, is the West Bank, and the Jordanians are only a few miles away, across the Dead Sea. Patrols run day and night, cruising at five miles per hour, scrutinising everything -- small lorries, usually, with three heavy machine-guns on the back, soldiers upright behind them. These patrols will stop to check the cars and ascertain the precise whereabouts of anyone exploring the area, or excavating on the cliffs or in the caves. The visitor quickly learns to wave, to make sure the troops see him and acknowledge his presence. It is dangerous to come upon them too suddenly, or to act in any fashion that might strike them as furtive or suspicious.The kibbutz -- Kibbutz Kalia -- is a ten-minute walk from Qumran, up a short road from the ruins. There are two small schools for the local children, a large communal refectory and housing units resembling motels for overnight tourists. But this is still a military zone. The kibbutz is surrounded by barbed wire and locked at night. An armed patrol is always on duty, and there are numerous air-raid shelters deep underground. These double for other purposes as well. One, for example, is used as a lecture hall, another as a bar, a third as a discothque. But the wastes beyond the perimeter remain untouched by any such modernity. Here the Bedouin still shepherd their camels and their goats, seemingly timeless figures linking the present with the past.In 1947, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, Qumran was very different. At that time the area was part of the British mandate of Palestine. To the east lay what was then the kingdom of Transjordan. The road that runs south along the shore of the Dead Sea did not exist, extending only to the Dead Sea's north-western quarter, a few

miles from Jericho. Around and beyond it there were only rough tracks, one of which followed the course of an ancient Roman road. This route had long been in total disrepair. Qumran was thus rather more difficult to reach than it is today. The sole human presence in the vicinity would have been the Bedouin, herding their camels and goats during the winter and spring, when the desert, perhaps surprisingly, yielded both water and grass. In the winter, or possibly the early spring, of 1947, it was to yield something more -- one of the two or three greatest archaeological discoveries of modern times.The precise circumstances attending the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have already passed into legend. In a number of particulars, this legend is probably not entirely accurate, and scholars were bickering over certain points well into the 1960s. It remains, however, the only account we have. The original discovery is ascribed to a shepherd boy, Muhammad adh-Dhib, or Muhammad the Wolf, a member of the Ta'amireh tribe of Bedouin. He himself later claimed he was searching for a lost goat. Whatever he was doing, his itinerary brought him clambering among the cliffs at Qumran, where he discovered an opening in the cliff-face. He tried to peer inside but, from where he stood, could see nothing. He then tossed a stone into the blackness, which elicited a sound of breaking pottery. This, needless to say, impelled him to further exploration.Hoisting himself upwards, he crawled through the aperture, then dropped down to find himself in a small cave, high-ceilinged and narrow, no more than six feet wide and perhaps twenty-four long. It contained a number of large earthenware jars, about two feet tall and ten inches wide, many of them broken. Eight are generally believed to have been intact, though the quantity has never been definitively established.pardAccording to his own account, Muhammad became frightened, hauled himself back out of the cave and fled. The next day, he returned with at least one friend and proceeded to explore the cave and its contents more closely. Some of the earthenware jars were sealed by large 'bowl-like' lids. Inside one of them, there were three leather rolls wrapped in decaying linen -- the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls to see the light in nearly two thousand years.During the days that followed, the Bedouin returned to the site and at least four more leather rolls were found. At least two jars were removed and used for carrying water. When proper archaeological excavation began, it revealed a substantial number of sherds and fragments -- enough, according to reliable estimates, to have constituted no fewer than forty jars. There is no way of knowing how many of these jars, when first discovered, were empty and how many actually contained scrolls. Neither is there any way of knowing how many scrolls were taken from the cave and, before their significance became apparent, secreted away, destroyed or used for other purposes. Some, it has been suggested, were burned for fuel. In any case, we were told that more scrolls were taken from the cave than have previously been recorded, or than have subsequently come to light. Altogether, a total of seven complete scrolls were to find their way into the public domain, along with fragments of some twenty-one others.At this point, accounts begin to grow increasingly contradictory. Apparently, however, thinking the scrolls might be of some value, three Bedouin took all they had found -- three complete parchments according to some sources, seven or eight according to others -- to a local sheik. He passed the Bedouin on to a Christian shopkeeper and dealer in curios and antiques, one Khalil Iskander Shahin, known as 'Kando'. Kando, a member of the Syrian Jacobite Church, contacted another Church member residing in Jerusalem, George Isaiah. According to reliable scholars, Kando and Isaiah promptly ventured out to Qumran themselves and removed a number of additional scrolls and/or fragments.Such activities were, of course, illegal; By the law of the British mandate -- a law subsequently retained by both Jordanian and Israeli governments -- all archaeological discoveries belonged officially to the state. They were supposed to be turned over to the Department of Antiquities, then housed in the Palestine Archaeological Museum, known as the Rockefeller, in Arab East Jerusalem. But Palestine was in turmoil at the time, and Jerusalem a city divided into Jewish, Arab and British sectors. In these circumstances, the authorities had more pressing matters to deal with than a black market in archaeological relics. In consequence, Kando and George Isaiah were free to pursue their clandestine transactions with impunity.George Isaiah reported the discovery to his ecclesiastical leader, the Syrian Metropolitan (i.e. Archbishop) Athanasius Yeshua Samuel, head of the Syrian Jacobite Church in Jerusalem. Academically, Athanasius Yeshua Samuel was a nave man, untutored in the sophisticated scholarship needed to identify, much less translate, the text before him. The late Edmund Wilson, one of the earliest and most reliable commentators on the Qumran discovery, wrote of Samuel that he 'was not a Hebrew scholar and could not make out what the manuscript was'. He even burned a small piece of it and smelled it, to verify that the substance was indeed leather, or parchment. But whatever his academic shortcomings, Samuel was also shrewd, and his monastery, St Mark's, contained a famous collection of ancient documents. He thus had some idea of the importance of what had passed into his hands.Samuel later said he first learned of the Dead Sea Scrolls in April 1947. If chronology has hitherto

been vague and contradictory, however, it now becomes even more so, varying from commentator to commentator. But some time between early June, and early July Samuel requested Kando and George Isaiah to arrange a meeting with the three Bedouin who'd made the original discovery, to examine what they'd found.When the Bedouin arrived in Jerusalem, they were carrying at least four scrolls and possibly as many as eight -- the three they'd originally found themselves, plus one or more from whatever they or Kando and George Isaiah had subsequently plundered. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan had neglected to mention the Bedouin's impending visit to the monks at the monastery of St Mark. When the Bedouin appeared with their dirty, crumbling and ragged parchments, themselves unshaven and insalubrious-looking, the monk at the gate turned them away. By the time Samuel learned of this, it was too late. The Bedouin, understandably resentful, wanted nothing further to do with Metropolitan Samuel. One of them even refused to have any further dealings with Kando, and sold his portion of the scrolls -- a 'third' share which amounted to three scrolls -- to the Muslim sheik of Bethlehem. Kando managed to purchase the shares of the remaining scrolls, and sold them in turn to the Metropolitan for a reported 24. This cache was believed at first to consist of five scrolls, but proved eventually to contain only four, one of them having broken in two. Of the four texts, one was a well-preserved copy of the book of Isaiah from the Old Testament, the parchment of which unrolled to a length of twenty-four feet. The other three, according to the nomenclature later adopted by scholars, included the 'Genesis Apocryphon', a commentary on the 'Book of Habakkuk' and the so-called 'Community Rule'.Shortly after the Bedouin's abortive visit to Jerusalem -- in late July according to some reports, in August according to others -- Metropolitan Samuel sent a priest to return with George Isaiah to the cave at Qumran. Being engaged in illicit activities, the pair worked by night. They examined the site at length and found at least one additional jar and some fragments; they also conducted, apparently, some fairly extensive excavations. When the first official research party reached the location a year later, they discovered an entire section of the cliff-face had been removed, making a large entrance into the cave below the smaller hole originally explored by the Bedouin. What this enterprise may have yielded remains unknown. In researching this book, we interviewed certain people who insisted that George Isaiah, during the course of his nocturnal explorations, found a number of other scrolls, some of which have never been seen by scholars.Having obtained at least some of the scrolls, Metropolitan Samuel undertook to establish their age. He first consulted a Syrian expert working at the Department of Antiquities. In this man's opinion, the scrolls were of fairly recent date. The Metropolitan then consulted a Dutch scholar working with the Ecole Biblique et Archologique Francaise de Jrusalem, an institution run by Dominican monks and financed, in part, by the French government. He was intrigued, but remained sceptical about the scrolls' antiquity, describing subsequently how he returned to the Ecole Biblique and consulted 'a prominent scholar' there, who lectured him about the prevalent forgeries floating around amongst dodgy antique dealers. As a result, he abandoned his research on the matter, and the Ecole Biblique lost its opportunity to get involved at the beginning. Only the relatively untutored Metropolitan, at this point, seems to have had any inkling of the scrolls' age, value and significance.In September 1947, the Metropolitan took the scrolls in his possession to his superior, the Patriarch of the Syrian Jacobite Church in Homs, north of Damascus. What passed between them is not known, but on his return the Metropolitan again dispatched a party of men to excavate the cave at Qumran. Presumably he was acting on the Patriarch's instructions. In any case, he obviously believed there was more to be discovered.Metropolitan Samuel's visit to Syria in September had coincided with the arrival there of Miles Copeland, who had joined the OSS during the Second World War, had remained with that organisation when it became the CIA and went on to become a long-serving operative and station chief. In a personal interview, Copeland told how, in the autumn of 1947, he had just been posted to Damascus as the CIA's representative there. In the circumstances then prevailing, there was no need to operate under particularly deep cover, and his identity seems to have been pretty much an open secret. According to Copeland, a 'sly Egyptian merchant' came to see him one day and claimed to possess a great treasure. Reaching into a dirty sack, the man then pulled out a scroll, the edges of which were already disintegrating -- fragments were flaking off into the street. When asked what it was, Copeland, of course, couldn't say. If the merchant left it with him, however, he promised he would photograph it and get someone to study it.In order to photograph it, Copeland and his colleagues took the scroll up on to the roof of the American Legation in Damascus and stretched it out. A strong wind was gusting at the time, Copeland remembered, and pieces of the scroll peeled away, wafted over the roof and into the streets of the city, to be lost for ever. According to Copeland, a substantial portion of the parchment vanished in this manner. Copeland's wife, an archaeologist herself, said she could not help wincing every time she heard the story.Using photographic equipment

supplied by the American government, Copeland and his colleagues took, he reported, some thirty frames. This, he said, was not sufficient to cover the entire length of the scroll, which must, therefore, have been considerable. Subsequently, the photographs were taken to the American embassy in Beirut and shown to a prominent official there, a man versed in ancient languages. The official declared the text to be part of the Old Testament book of Daniel. Some of the writing was in Aramaic, he said, some in Hebrew. Unfortunately, however, there was no follow-up. Copeland returned to Damascus, but the 'sly Egyptian merchant' was never seen again and the photographs were left in a drawer. No one, to this day, knows what became of them, or of the scroll itself, although fragments of a Daniel scroll were subsequently found at Qumran, five years after the incident Copeland described. If the scroll Copeland saw and photographed was indeed a text of Daniel, it has never become public.Although it was precisely at this time that Metropolitan Samuel was in Syria with the scrolls he had purchased, it is unlikely that the scroll Copeland saw was one of these, since only three of the scrolls in his possession could be unrolled at all, and only one -- the twenty-four-foot-long Hebrew text of Isaiah -- would have taken more than thirty frames of film to photograph. If this is what Copeland saw, why should it have been identified as Daniel, not Isaiah, and why should the writing have been identified as both Hebrew and Aramaic? It is possible, of course, that the CIA official was mistaken. But when we repeated Copeland's story to a prominent Israeli researcher, he was intrigued. 'It might be very interesting,' he said, in confidence. 'It might be a scroll that hasn't been seen yet.' If we could obtain any further information, he said, 'I'll exchange with you...additional data concerning missing scrolls. Which implies, needless to say, that such data exist and have never been made public.While Copeland's photographs were being examined in Beirut, Metropolitan Samuel was persisting in his efforts to confirm the age of the scrolls in his possession. A Jewish doctor who visited his monastery put him in touch with scholars from Hebrew University. They in turn put him in touch with the head of Hebrew University's Department of Archaeology, Professor Eleazar Sukenik. On 24 November, before Sukenik came to view the scrolls held by the Metropolitan, a secret meeting occurred between him and a figure subsequently identified only as an Armenian antique dealer. Neither had had time to obtain the requisite military passes. They were therefore obliged to meet at a checkpoint between the Jewish and the Arab zones of Jerusalem, and to talk across a barrier of barbed wire. Across this barrier, the Armenian showed Sukenik a fragment of a scroll on which Hebrew writing could be discerned. The Armenian then explained that an Arab antique dealer from Bethlehem had come to him the day before, bringing this and other fragments alleged to have been found by Bedouin. Sukenik was asked if they were genuine and if Hebrew University were prepared to purchase them. Sukenik requested a second meeting, which occurred three days later. This time he had a pass, and was able to look closely at a number of fragments. Convinced they were important, he resolved to go to Bethlehem to see more, dangerous though such an undertaking was at the time.On 29 November 1947, Sukenik slipped furtively out of Jerusalem and made the clandestine trip to Bethlehem. Here he was told in detail how the scrolls had been discovered and was shown three scrolls which were for sale -- those which the Metropolitan had missed -- and two of the jars that contained them. He was allowed to take the scrolls home, and was studying them when, at midnight, dramatic news came over the radio: a majority of the United Nations had voted for the creation of the state of Israel. At that moment, Sukenik resolved to purchase the scrolls. They seemed to him a kind of talismanic portent, a symbolic validation of the momentous historical events that had just been set in motion.This conviction was shared by his son, Yigael Yadin, then chief of operations for the Haganah -- the semi-clandestine militia which during the struggle for independence in 1948 was to evolve into the Israeli Defence Forces. For Yadin also the discovery of the scrolls was to assume an almost mystical significance:I cannot avoid the feeling that there is something symbolic in the discovery of the scrolls and their acquisition at the moment of the creation of the State of Israel. It is as if these manuscripts had been waiting in caves for two thousand years, ever since the destruction of Israel's independence, until the people of Israel had returned to their home and regained their freedom.Towards the end of January 1948, Sukenik arranged to view the scrolls held by Metropolitan Samuel. The meeting, again, was to be clandestine. It was to occur in the British sector of Jerusalem, at the YMCA, where the librarian was a member of the Metropolitan's congregation. Security was particularly tight here, the YMCA being situated directly across the road from the King David Hotel, which had been bombed, with great loss of life, in 1946. To enter the zone, Sukenik had to obtain a pass from the British District Officer, Professor Biran.Endeavouring to pass himself off as just another scholar, Sukenik carried a handful of library books with him and made his way to the YMCA. Here, in a private room, he was shown the Metropolitan's scrolls and allowed to borrow them for inspection. He returned them to the Metropolitan on 6 February, unable to

raise sufficient funds to purchase them. By that time, the political and economic situation was too tense for any bank to authorise the requisite loan. The local Jewish authorities, faced with the prospect of impending war, could not spare anything. No one else was interested.Sukenik tried to bring down the price, and the Syrian agent representing the Metropolitan arranged to meet him a week later. By that time, Sukenik had contrived to raise the money required. He heard nothing, however, from the Metropolitan or the agent, until some weeks later a letter arrived from the Syrian declaring that the Metropolitan had decided, after all, not to sell. Unknown to Sukenik, negotiations were already in train by then with American scholars who had photographed the scrolls and insisted a much better price could be elicited for them in the United States. Sukenik, needless to say, was mortified by the lost opportunity.Metropolitan Samuel had contacted the Jerusalem-based Albright Institute (the American School of Oriental Research) in February, and a complete set of prints had been sent by the Institute to the acknowledged expert in the field, Professor William F. Albright,at Johns Hopkins University. On 15 March, Professor Albright replied confirming Sukenik's conviction of the importance of the discovery, and setting the seal of approval on the Qumran texts. He also, unwittingly, provided support for those intent on attributing to the scrolls the earliest date possible:My heartiest congratulations on the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times! There is no doubt whatever in my mind that the script is more archaic than that of the Nash Papyrus...I should prefer a date around 100 BC...What an absolutely incredible find! And there can happily not be the slightest doubt in the world about the genuineness of the MS.On 18 March, a suggested press release was drawn up. In the meantime, the scrolls had been taken to Beirut and placed in a bank there for safekeeping. Later in the year, Metropolitan Samuel was to pick them up, and in January 1949 he took them to the United States, where they were to spend the next few years in a New York bank vault.On 11 April, the first press release appeared, issued by Yale University, where Professor Millar Burrows -- director of the Albright Institute -- was head of the Department of Near Eastern Languages. The press release was not entirely truthful. No one wanted swarms of amateurs (or rivals) to descend on Qumran, and so the discovery was alleged to have been made in the library of Metropolitan Samuel's monastery. But for the first time, fully a year after they'd initially surfaced, the existence of the Dead Sea Scrolls became known to the general public. On page 4 of its edition for Monday, 12 April 1948, The Times ran the following article under the headline 'ANCIENT MSS. FOUND IN PALESTINE':New York, April 11Yale University announced yesterday the discovery in Palestine of the earliest known manuscript of the Book of Isaiah. It was found in the Syrian monastery of St Mark in Jerusalem, where it had been preserved in a scroll of parchment dating to about the first century BC. Recently it was identified by scholars of the American School of Oriental Research [the Albright Institute] at Jerusalem.There were also examined at the school three other ancient Hebrew scrolls. One was part of a commentary on the Book of Habakkuk; another seemed to be a manual of discipline of some comparatively little-known sect or monastic order, possibly the Essenes. The third scroll has not been identified.It was not an article calculated to set the world of scholarship aflame. So far as most readers of The Times were concerned, it would have meant little enough, and would anyway have been effectively up-staged by other news on the same page. Fourteen German SS officers who'd commanded extermination squads on the Eastern Front were sentenced to hang. According to the chief prosecutor, the judgment 'was a landmark in the campaign against racial intolerance and violence'. There were also reports of a massacre in the Holy Land the previous Friday. Two Jewish terrorist organisations -- the Irgun and the Stern Gang -- had wiped out the Arab village of Deir Yasin, raping girls, exterminating men, women and children. The Jewish Agency itself expressed 'horror and disgust' at what had happened. In the meantime, according to other reports on the page, there was fighting in Jerusalem. Arab artillery had bombarded the western quarter of the city at dusk. Quantities of new field-guns had arrived from Syria and were aimed at Jewish sectors. The city's water supply had again been cut off. Rail supplies had been disrupted. Renewed fighting for the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road was expected to be imminent. Elsewhere in the Holy Land, Arab terrorists had murdered two British soldiers, and Jewish terrorists one. (Forty-two years later, while this was being checked and copied from microfilm in a local library, there was a bomb alert and the premises had to be evacuated. Plus a change...)Hostilities in the Middle East were to continue for another year. On 14 May 1948 -- the day before the British mandate was scheduled to expire -- the Jewish People's Council met in the Tel Aviv Museum and declared their own independent state of Israel. The response from adjacent Arab countries was immediate. That very night, Egyptian aircraft bombed Tel Aviv. During the six and a half months of fighting that followed, Israel was to be invaded by troops from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, while the King of Transjordan proclaimed himself monarch of all Palestine.The

final ceasefire took effect on 7 January 1949. According to its terms, the large central section of what had formerly been Palestine was to remain Arab. This territory was occupied and then annexed by Transjordan, which on 2 June 1949 began to call itself simply Jordan. Thus Qumran passed into Jordanian hands, along with the Arab east side of Jerusalem. The border between Israel and Jordan -- the Nablus road -- cut through the centre of the city.Amidst these dramatic historical events, the scrolls attracted little public attention or interest. Behind the scenes, however, political, religious and academic forces were already beginning to mobilise. By January 1949, the Department of Antiquities for Transjordan and Arab Palestine had become involved, under the auspices of its director, Gerald Lankester Harding. So had Father Roland de Vaux, director, since 1945, of another institution -- the Dominican-sponsored Ecole Biblique, situated in the Jordanian-controlled eastern sector of Jerusalem, and for the last sixty years a centre of French-Catholic biblical scholarship in the city.A year and a half had now elapsed since the scrolls were first found. To date, however, no trained archaeologist had visited the site of the discovery. The Albright Institute had tried, but the war, they decided, rendered any such endeavours too dangerous. It was at this point that a Belgian air-force officer, Captain Philippe Lippens, appeared on the scene. Lippens had arrived in Jerusalem as a member of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation. But he was also Jesuit-trained, and a graduate of the Oriental Institute at the University of Louvain. He had read of the scrolls, and now approached de Vaux, who until then appears to have been sceptical about their significance. If he managed to locate the cave of the original discovery, Lippens asked, would de Vaux confer legitimacy on the undertaking by acting as technical director for subsequent excavations? De Vaux assented.On 24 January, Lippens established the support of a British officer commanding a brigade of the Jordanian Arab Legion, and, through this officer, the support of Lankester Harding in Amman. With Harding's blessing, the British Army's archaeological officer was despatched to Qumran, to search for the cave in which the original discovery had been made. He was accompanied by two Bedouin from the Arab Legion, who located the cave on 28 January. Inside, they found remains of the linen in which the scrolls had been wrapped and numerous pieces of pottery. A fortnight or so later, early in February, Harding and de Vaux visited the cave together. They found enough shards for more than forty jars and the remains of thirty identifiable texts, as well as many more unidentifiable fragments. Within another fortnight, the first official archaeological expedition had been mounted.In the years that followed, scrolls became big business indeed, and traffic in them came to constitute an extremely lucrative cottage industry. Fragments were being smuggled to and fro in dirty wallets, in cigarette boxes, in assorted other makeshift containers. Forgeries began to appear, and wily local merchants had no shortage of gullible purchasers. The popular press portrayed anything resembling ancient parchment as immensely valuable. In consequence, Arab dealers were loath to settle for anything less than hundreds of pounds, and on at least one occasion a thousand -- and this, it must be remembered, was in the days when a house could be mortgaged for 1500.When Metropolitan Samuel took his scrolls to the United States, Jordanian radio reports claimed he was asking a million dollars for them. Fears arose that scrolls would be bought not only for private collections and as souvenirs, but also as investments. At the same time, of course, the scrolls themselves were dangerously fragile, requiring special conditions of light and temperature to preserve them from further deterioration. In many of them, indeed, the process of deterioration was already irreversible. As the black market burgeoned, so did the prospect of ever more valuable material being lost irretrievably to scholarship.Responsibility to do something about the matter devolved upon Gerald Lankester Harding of the Department of Antiquities. Harding concluded it was less important to insist on the letter of the law than to rescue as many scrolls and fragments as he could. In consequence, he adopted a policy of purchasing scroll material from whomever happened to have it. This affected the legal status of such material by tacitly acknowledging that anyone who possessed it had a legitimate claim to it. In their negotiations and transactions, Harding's agents were authorised to ignore all questions of legality and (up to a point) price. He himself, being fluent in Arabic, befriended not just dealers, but the Bedouin as well, and let it be known he would pay handsomely for anything they might obtain. Nevertheless, Metropolitan Samuel was accused of having 'smuggled' his scrolls out of the country, and the Jordanian government demanded their return. By that time, of course, it was too late. Eventually, the Bedouin of the Ta 'amireh tribe were given what amounted to a 'cave-hunting monopoly'. The Qumran area became, in effect, a military zone, and the Ta 'amireh were charged with policing it, 'to keep other tribes from muscling in on the scroll rush'. Whatever the Ta 'amireh found, they would take to Kando, who would remunerate them. Kando would take the material to Harding and be remunerated in turn.In October 1951, members of the Ta 'amireh tribe arrived in Jerusalem with scroll fragments from a new site. Both Father de

Vaux of the Ecole Biblique and Harding were away, so the Bedouin approached Joseph Saad, director of the Rockefeller Museum. Saad demanded to be taken to the site in question. The Bedouin went off to consult, and failed to return.Saad obtained a jeep, a letter of authority from the archaeological officer of the Arab Legion and some armed men and drove to the first Ta 'amireh camp he could find, outside Bethlehem. The next morning, as he was driving into Bethlehem, he saw one of the men who had approached him the day before. Dispensing with all niceties, Saad proceeded to kidnap the Bedouin:As the Jeep slewed to a stop, Saad called the man over and immediately demanded more information about the cave. Fear came into the Arab's eyes and he made as if to move on. The soldiers leapt down from the jeep and barred his way. Then, at a nod from Saad they lifted the man bodily and pushed him into the back of the truck. The driver let in the clutch and they roared off back the way they had come.Subjected to this sort of persuasion, the Bedouin agreed to cooperate. Saad obtained reinforcements from a nearby military post, and the contingent headed off down the Wadi Ta 'amireh towards the Dead Sea. When the terrain became impassable,they abandoned the jeep and began to walk. They walked for seven hours, until they came to a wadi with walls hundreds of feet high. Far up in the cliff-face, two large caves could be seen, with clouds of dust issuing from them -- the Bedouin were already inside, collecting what they could. At Saad's arrival, a number of them emerged. The soldiers accompanying Saad fired into the air and the Bedouin dispersed. Of the two caves, one, when the soldiers reached it, proved to be huge -- twenty feet wide, twelve to fifteen feet high and extending some 150 feet back into the cliff. It was the next morning before Saad got back to Jerusalem. Exhausted after his expedition (which had included fourteen hours of walking), he went to sleep. He woke later in the day to find Jerusalem in a state of upheaval. Friends of the Bedouin had spread the news of his 'kidnapping' and incarceration. One commentator observed afterwards that it was 'perhaps' a mistake to have used force: this served to drive documents underground and made the Bedouin more reluctant to relinquish what they found.Saad's expedition led to the discovery of four caves at Wadi Murabba'at, just over eleven miles south of Qumran and some two miles inland from the Dead Sea. The material found here was less difficult to date and identify than from Qumran, but of nearly comparable import. It derived from the early 2nd century AD -- more specifically, from the revolt in Judaea orchestrated by Simeon bar Kochba between AD 132 and 135. It included two letters signed by Simeon himself and furnished new data on the logistics, economics and civil administration of the rebellion, which had come within a hair's-breadth of success -- Simeon actually captured Jerusalem from the Romans and held the city for some two years. According to Robert Eisenman, this insurrection was a direct continuation of events dating from the previous century -- events which involved certain of the same families, many of the same underlying principles, and perhaps also Jesus himself.Shortly after the discovery of the caves at Murabba'at, activity around Qumran began to gather momentum. Having returned from Europe, Father de Vaux began to excavate the site, together with Harding and fifteen workers. These excavations were to continue for the next five years, until 1956. Among other things, they exhumed a complex of buildings, which were identified as the 'Essene community' spoken of by Pliny.Pliny himself perished in AD 79, in the eruption of Vesuvius which buried Pompeii and Herculaneum. Of his works, only the Natural History survives -- which, however, deals with both the topography and certain events in Judaea. Pliny's sources are unknown, but his text refers to the sack of Jerusalem in AD 68, and must therefore have been composed some time after that. There was even for a time a legend, now discredited, that, like Josephus, he accompanied the Roman army on its invasion of Palestine. In any case, Pliny is one of the few ancient writers not just to mention the Essenes by name, but to locate them geographically. He locates them, quite specifically, on the shores of the Dead Sea:On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the noxious exhalations of the coast, is the solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all the other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and has only palm-trees for company. Day by day the throng of refugees is recruited to an equal number by numerous accessions of persons tired of life and driven thither by the waves of fortune to adopt their manners...Lying below the Essenes was formerly the town of Engedi...next comes Masada.De Vaux took this passage as referring to Qumran, assuming that 'below the Essenes' means 'down', or to the south. The Jordan, he argued, flows 'down', or south, to the Dead Sea; and if one continues further south, one does indeed come to the site of Engedi. Other scholars dispute de Vaux's contention, maintaining that 'lying below' is to be understood literally -- that the Essene community was situated in the hills above Engedi.Whether Qumran was indeed Pliny's community or not, de Vaux was spurred on to further efforts. In the spring of 1952, he endeavoured to wrest the initiative from the Bedouin and make a systematic survey of all caves in the vicinity. The survey was conducted between 10 and 22 March 1952 by de Vaux, three other

members of the Ecole Biblique and William Reed, the new director of the Albright Institute. They were accompanied by a team of twenty-four Bedouin under the authority of three Jordanian and Palestinian archaeologists. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was the Bedouin who did all the work, clambering up the steep, often precipitous cliff-faces and exploring caves. The archaeologists preferred to remain below, compiling inventories, drawing up maps and charts. As a result, the survey was not very comprehensive. The Bedouin, for example, chose not to divulge the existence of certain caves they had found. Several scrolls did not come to light until much later. And one is known never to have been recovered from the Bedouin.Altogether, the survey encompassed some five miles of cliff-face. It examined 267 sites according to de Vaux, 273 sites according to William Reed. According to de Vaux,it yielded thirty-seven caves containing pottery. According to Reed, it yielded thirty-nine. The official map produced at the conclusion of the expedition shows forty. Shards were found for more than a hundred jars, a highly speculative figure. Such imprecision is typical of Qumran research.But if the 1952 survey was amateurish, it also produced one genuinely important discovery. On 20 March, two days before the end of the survey, in the site designated Cave 3, a research team found two scrolls -- or, rather, two fragments of the same scroll -- of rolled copper. The writing on it had been punched into the metal. Oxidisation had rendered the metal too brittle to be unrolled. Before it could be read, the scroll would have to be sliced open in a laboratory. Three and a half years were to pass before the Jordanian authorities allowed this to be done. When they at last consented, the cutting was performed in Manchester under the auspices of John Allegro, a member of de Vaux's team. The first segment of the scroll was finished in summer 1955, the second in January 1956.The scroll proved to be an inventory of treasure -- a compilation or listing of gold, silver, ritual vessels and other scrolls. Apparently, at the commencement of the Roman invasion, this treasure had been divided into a number of secret caches; and the 'Copper Scroll', as it came to be known, detailed the contents and whereabouts of each such cache. Thus, for example:ITEM 7. In the cavity of the Old House of Tribute, in the Platform of the Chain: sixty-five bars of gold.According to researchers, the total hoard would have amounted to some sixty-five tons of silver and perhaps twenty-six of gold. To this day, there is some argument as to whether the treasure ever in fact existed. Most scholars, however, are prepared to accept that it did and that the scroll comprises an accurate inventory of the Temple of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the locations indicated by the scroll have been rendered meaningless by time, change and the course of two millennia, and nothing of the treasure has ever been found. A number of people, certainly, have searched for it.In September 1952, six months after the official survey, there surfaced a new source of scrolls. It proved to be a cave within some fifty feet of the actual ruins of Qumran, which de Vaux and Harding had excavated in 1951. Here, at the site demarcated Cave 4, the largest discovery of all was made -- again, predictably, by the Bedouin. Some years would be required to piece this material together. By 1959, however, most of the fragments had been organised. The work was conducted in a large room, which came to be known as the 'Scrollery', in the Rockefeller Museum.The Rockefeller Museum -- or, to give it its official name, the Palestine Archaeological Museum -- had first opened in 1938, during the British mandate, and was built from funds donated by John D. Rockefeller. It contained not only exhibition space, but also laboratories, photographic dark-rooms and the offices of the Department of Antiquities. Shortly before the mandate ended in 1948, the museum had been turned over to an international board of trustees. This board was made up of representatives of the various foreign archaeological schools in Jerusalem -- the French Ecole Biblique, for example, the American Albright Institute, the British Palestine Exploration Society. For eighteen years, the Rockefeller was to exist as an independently endowed institution. It managed to retain this status even through the Suez Crisis of 1956, when many of its staff were recalled to their home countries. The only casualties of the crisis were Gerald Lankester Harding, dismissed from his post as director of the Department of Antiquities, and the scrolls themselves. During hostilities, they were removed from the museum, placed into thirty-six cases and locked up in a bank in Amman. They were not returned to Jerusalem until March 1957, 'some of them slightly moldy [sic] and spotted from the damp vault'.In 1966, however, the Rockefeller, with the scrolls it contained, was officially nationalised by the Jordanian government. This move was to have important repercussions. It was also of questionable legality. The museum's board of trustees did not object, however. On the contrary, the president of the board transferred the museum's endowment fund from London, where it had been invested, to Amman. Thus the scrolls and the museum housing them became, in effect, Jordanian property.A year later, the Middle East erupted in the Six Day War, and Jordanian East Jerusalem fell to Israeli troops. At five o'clock on the morning of 6 June 1967, Yigael Yadin was informed that the museum had been occupied by an Israeli paratroop unit.After becoming, in 1949, chief of staff of the Israeli Defence

Forces, Yadin had resigned in 1952 and studied archaeology at Hebrew University, earning his PhD in 1955 with a thesis on one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. That year he began teaching at Hebrew University. In 1954 he had travelled to the USA on a lecture tour. There, after speaking at Johns Hopkins University, he met Professor William F. Albright and asked why the American had published only three of Metropolitan Samuel's four scrolls. Albright replied that Samuel was anxious to sell the scrolls and would not allow the fourth to be published until a purchaser had been found for all of them. Could a purchaser not be found in the States, yadin asked: 'Surely a few million dollars for such a purpose is not too difficult to raise.' Albright's reply was astonishing. The scrolls, he said, would probably sell for as little as half a million. Even so, however, no American institution or individual appeared to be interested.There were, in fact, two reasons for this apparent apathy. In the first place, facsimile editions of the first three scrolls had already been produced; and this, for most American researchers, obviated the need for the originals. More significant, however, was the legal status of the scrolls' ownership. The Jordanian government had branded Metropolitan Samuel 'a smuggler and a traitor', claiming he had had no right to take the scrolls out of Jordan; and the Americans, by virtue of publishing the contraband texts, were accused of collusion in the 'crime'. This, needless to say, deterred prospective purchasers, who had no desire to lay out a substantial sum of money, only to find themselves embroiled in complex international litigation and, quite possibly, end up with nothing. Yadin, on the other hand, had no need to fear the Jordanians. Relations between his country and theirs couldn't possibly sink any lower.On 1 June, Yadin was telephoned by an Israeli journalist stationed in the States, who called the advertisement in the Wall Street Journal to his attention. Yadin resolved immediately to obtain the scrolls, but recognised that a direct approach might jeopardise everything. In consequence, he worked almost entirely through intermediaries, and it was a New York banker who replied to the advertisement. A meeting was arranged for 11 June 1954, a price of $250,000 for the four scrolls was agreed on and a wealthy benefactor found to provide the requisite money. After a number of frustrating delays, the transaction was completed at the Waldorf Astoria on 1 July. Among those present was a distinguished scholar, Professor Harry Orlinsky, whose role was to ensure the scrolls were indeed genuine. In order to conceal any Israeli or Jewish interest in the deal, Orlinsky introduced himself as 'Mr Green'.The next day, 2 July, the scrolls were removed from the vault of the Waldorf Astoria and taken to the Israeli Consulate in New York. Each scroll was then sent back to Israel separately. Yadin returned home by ship, and a code was arranged to keep him informed of each scroll's safe arrival. Details of the transaction were kept secret for another seven months. Not until 13 February 1955 did a press release reveal that Israel had acquired the four scrolls of Metropolitan Samuel. Along with the three scrolls previously purchased by Sukenik, they are now in the Shrine of the Book, which was established specifically to house them.By the end of 1954, then, there were two entirely separate bodies of scroll material and two entirely separate cadres of experts working with them. In West Jerusalem,there were the Israelis, addressing themselves to the scrolls acquired by Sukenik and Yadin. In East Jerusalem, at the Rockefeller, there was a team of international scholars operating under the direction of de Vaux. Neither group communicated with the other. Neither had any contact with the other. Neither knew what the other possessed or what the other was doing, except for what leaked out in scholarly journals. In several instances, specific texts were fragmented, some pieces being in Israeli hands, some at the Rockefeller -- which made it, of course, that much more difficult to obtain any sense of the whole. So ridiculous was the situation that certain individuals were tempted to do something about it. Former Major-General Ariel Sharon reported that, in the late 1950s, he and Moshe Dayan devised a plan for an underground raid on the Rockefeller, to be conducted through Jerusalem's sewer system. The plan, needless to say, was never implemented.Now, however, in 1967, hearing of the capture of the Rockefeller, Yadin immediately dispatched three colleagues from Hebrew University to ensure that the scrolls were safe. He recognised the implications of what had happened. Because the Rockefeller Museum was no longer an international institution, but a Jordanian one, it would pass into Israeli hands as a spoil of war.Revue de presse"if it succeeds in advancing the publication of material from Qumran, it will have achieved genuine good" (Times Literary Supplement)"It is enough to make anyone curious about the early days of Christianity weep with frustration" (Mail on Sunday)"A sensational story ... this scandal has gone on for far too long" (The Times)"The damning evidence is all here and it looks pretty conclusive" (In Dublin)