



7-1-2008

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Roundtable Discussion Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 2

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel
holzapfel@byu.edu

Donald W. Parry
donald_parry@byu.edu

Dana M. Pike
dana_pike@byu.edu

David Rolph Seely
david_seely@byu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Holzapfel, Richard N.; Parry, Donald W.; Pike, Dana M. and Seely, David R. "The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Roundtable Discussion Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 2." *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 9, no. 2 (2008).
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol9/iss2/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



The discovery of the Temple Scroll (11Q19) in 1956 attracted a great deal of attention among Latter-day Saints. We should realize, however, that its contents have a Mosaic temple focus, depending heavily on Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. It therefore does not contain information about modern temple practices.

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Roundtable Discussion Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 2

Richard Neitzel Holzappel (holzappel@byu.edu) is a professor of Church history and the publications director of the Religious Studies Center.

Donald W. Parry (donald_parry@byu.edu) is a professor of biblical Hebrew and head of the Hebrew section in the department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages at Brigham Young University.

Dana M. Pike (dana_pike@byu.edu) is the coordinator for Ancient Near Eastern Studies and is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

David Rolph Seely (david_seely@byu.edu) is a professor of ancient scripture and ancient studies at Brigham Young University.

Donald Parry, Dana Pike, and David Seely are members of the international team of editors for the Dead Sea Scrolls and have contributed to the official Dead Sea Scrolls publication series, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, published by Oxford University Press. This interview was originally conducted on February 27, 2007.

Exploring Latter-day Saint Interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls

In our first installment of this roundtable discussion, we discussed the history and importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹ We now turn our attention to the meaning of the scrolls among Latter-day Saints.

We are currently in the midst of our study of the Book of Mormon in Sunday School classes throughout the Church in 2008. Because this sacred record literally came forth from the ground (see Isaiah 29:4; 2 Nephi 26:16), Latter-day Saints have been open to new archaeological discoveries that have the potential of opening the ancient world to us. Even after the Church was organized in 1830, revelations and translations of ancient records continued to amaze the Saints (see Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, Doctrine and Covenants 7, and the book of Abraham).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the discovery of the Dead Sea

Scrolls captured the attention of many members of the Church. The story of “buried records” resonated with Latter-day Saints. Newspaper articles in the *Church News*, *Deseret News*, and articles in Church periodicals, including the *Improvement Era* and the *Instructor* (the magazine of the Sunday School program), kept interest in the scrolls alive among members who anxiously waited for the next startling news about the Dead Sea Scrolls as the story emerged.

Thinking back over the past sixty years since the discovery of the first texts at the Dead Sea in 1947, we have learned a lot about the dating, origin, and content of the scrolls. Certainly new discoveries and continued scholarly activity on the Dead Sea Scrolls will provide us new insights about this pivotal period in Jewish history and these texts produced during this time. However, much of the general picture is well known even though scholars have not arrived at a consensus on every point of interpretation and context.

We will now continue our roundtable discussion with Donald W. Parry, Dana M. Pike, and David R. Seely as we turn our attention to the scrolls and their relationship to Latter-day Saints. The third, and final, article in this series on the Dead Sea Scrolls will be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Religious Educator*. The article will discuss the great value and significance of the biblical texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Holzappel: *Why have Latter-day Saints been interested in the Dead Sea Scrolls? Has the interest changed over time? Why should we still be interested?*

Seely: Latter-day Saint interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls was largely sparked by Hugh Nibley, who pointed out all kinds of things in the scrolls that reminded us of our beliefs. Many people did not understand the parameters of his conclusions, and so began a long period of sensationalizing the scrolls. Now we have to refocus the discussions and make sure we are on solid ground. I think Latter-day Saints are interested in the scrolls because we are interested in antiquity, Judaism, and the Old and New Testament. But in the end, the doctrinal comparisons between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Latter-day Saint beliefs are probably less significant than many Latter-day Saints realize. For example, much has been made of the fact that the Qumran community had an organization directed by a group of twelve men and that they practiced a form of ritual immersion like the Christians. Yet the leaders of the community were not Apostles, nor did they do things that the early Apostles did. Likewise, the washings attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls are really much more similar to the ritual washings attested in

Judaism than to the baptism for repentance that was practiced by John the Baptist nearby in the Jordan River.

Holzappel: Do you think there has been a maturing among members of the Church regarding their understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls?

Seely: Some of the members of the Church have matured, but sensationalism is still a problem. In my view, a really interesting thing is happening. While Latter-day Saint scholars are trying to take a mature and balanced view, simply the emphasis they put on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Latter-day Saint culture sometimes sends people the wrong message. We think our presentation of the scrolls is mature, but we still hear lots of speculation about some points that probably are not that important in terms of Latter-day Saint doctrine. Some speculate, for example, that there are books found at Qumran that should be considered as canonical. It is significant for Latter-day Saints that the books of Enoch and Melchizedek are attested at Qumran, yet a perusal of the Dead Sea Scrolls fragments of Enoch and Melchizedek only highlights the much more complete versions of these stories found in the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, and in the Book of Mormon. And there is much in these traditions at Qumran that does not necessarily “ring true” by other scriptural standards. As Dana noted in his significant article titled “Is the Plan of Salvation Attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls?”² the texts from Qumran do not demonstrate any understanding of key points of the plan of salvation such as the Fall, the Atonement, universal physical resurrection, and priesthood ordinances.

Holzappel: At one time I thought that maybe the sensationalism was generational. I thought that the first generation, which was enamored with the Dead Sea Scrolls, had died out and that now the next generation was reading the more thoughtful, conservative, cautious scholars. However, my belief was dashed recently in Cleveland when I spoke about the scrolls. After I had given my talk, several teenagers came up to me, simply horrified, and asked, “You mean, there isn’t baptism for the dead and sacrament prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls?” From that experience I realized that I had misperceived what was happening in the Church. This new generation still has access to the old tapes and the old stories.

Pike: Whenever anybody asks me, “Why are Latter-day Saints so interested in the Dead Sea Scrolls?” my first thought is that many Latter-day Saints really are not particularly interested in the scrolls. My second thought, as I have said tongue-in-cheek on a number of occasions, is that a lot of Latter-day Saints are interested in the scrolls because they have never read them. They do not really know what the

scrolls contain. They just know what they have heard about them. I think there are some Latter-day Saints who want external justification for their beliefs. They feel their beliefs are somehow reinforced if the scrolls say this or if the Essenes believe that. Unfortunately this is the wrong way to approach the scrolls and the wrong way to approach personal faith.

I think we are making slow progress in helping those Latter-day Saints who are interested in the scrolls to appreciate the contents and value of the scrolls in a more balanced manner. We have already highlighted the scrolls' contribution to our knowledge of early Judaism in part one of this discussion. Because of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have more knowledge about the world in which John the Baptist, Jesus, and other Jews lived; about Jewish beliefs and practices at that time; about Hebrew and Aramaic; about ancient scribal practices; and about the transmission of biblical texts. However, the scrolls do not represent early Mormonism down by the Dead Sea. The sooner we get away from that assumption, the better.

Parry: Stephen D. Ricks and I authored a booklet to temper Latter-day Saints who had taken their understanding too far from what the scrolls represent and what they teach.³ In this ninety-three-page booklet, we tried to set the record straight on a number of items. In my own presentations, I have also tried to set the record straight among the Latter-day Saints: I emphasize that the most important aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls are the books from the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), because the books from the Hebrew Bible are part of our scriptural canon and contain the words of Christ-centered prophets. I often talk about how the law of Moses and Isaiah's words are centered on Christ. I usually conclude a talk on the scrolls with Isaiah 53, an Atonement-centered text. I think the most important scrolls that we should be looking at are those that are scriptural, because they pertain to Jesus Christ; we should spend most of our time reading such texts.

Dispelling Rumors about the Dead Sea Scrolls

Holzappel: *How did many of the false rumors about the Dead Sea Scrolls start?*

Parry: Two or three decades ago there were publications on the Dead Sea Scrolls that perhaps were less than responsible in content and that attempted to show that the people in the Qumran community were early Latter-day Saints. The articles suggested that the people in the Qumran community were similar to or had practices similar to those of the Latter-day Saints.

Some individuals also gave firesides and produced audiotapes. The outlandish statements from some fireside speakers have damaged the Church's reputation with the scholarly community. All three of us—that is, Dana, David, and myself—have spent the last fifteen years trying to get past such irresponsible approaches and teach audiences what the scrolls are. I always try to emphasize the *biblical* scrolls because they are part of our scriptural canon, and they hold authority for us.

Pike: After a presentation I gave about five years ago, someone said to me, “It is too bad you had to spend much of your presentation correcting misunderstandings about the scrolls and what they contain.” This included emphasizing that the Temple Scroll [11QTemple^a or 11Q19] does not contain the Latter-day Saint temple endowment ceremony but is a reworking of passages in the Pentateuch and has an Aaronic Priesthood orientation. I also had to emphasize that the sacrament prayers are not in the scrolls.

Parry: Joseph Smith's name is not in the scrolls as some have mistakenly claimed; Zenos and Zenock are not mentioned, and so forth.

Pike: We have been talking a lot about what the Dead Sea Scrolls are not. To actually read the Dead Sea Scrolls in English, even part of them, is to know what they are, what they contain. It is an ongoing struggle to get people to see beyond the seeming exotic and mystical nature of the scrolls and actually read some of them.

Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls in English

Holzappel: *How is reading English translations of the scrolls important for understanding them?*

Pike: Somebody only reading what others have written about the scrolls and not reading the scrolls themselves is like someone only reading what others have written about the scriptures but not actually reading the scriptures. It is backwards. All the nonbiblical scrolls are available in good English translations [see the reading suggestions at the end of this article]. If people are really interested, we hope they will go to the library or bookstore and read at least a few pages of the scrolls in translation. But a word of caution is in order: there is a whole range of publications about the scrolls, from pure nonsense to informed reliable discussions.

Parry: The biblical scrolls have also been published. Now that the Dead Sea Scrolls have all been published and translated into English and other languages and all of them are before us, we can begin to really study them contextually and intertextually. So the three of us here together with others are helping to prepare the next generation of

Latter-day Saints to study the primary texts and to inform both scholarly and popular audiences of what they say.

Holzappel: We can create an analogy: Joseph Smith had to translate the Book of Mormon into English so the next generation could compare it to the Bible. It took Robert J. Matthews to get us comfortable with the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible so the next generation can ask, what are the implications? Once we identify the text, we can start doing something with it.

Pike: Yes, that is true. But that only happens when people study the texts for what they have to tell us.

Holzappel: The book LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls certainly studies the text for what it has to tell us. Are you talking about that book?

Pike: That volume is now ten years old. But the contents still provide a good illustration for Latter-day Saints of how we, because of the Restoration, can appreciate and understand many of the passages and truths in the Scrolls. At the same time we can appreciate the limitations of the scrolls, and we can understand that they sometimes contain what we consider to be false doctrine.

Seely: One current problem with finding good information about the Dead Sea Scrolls is that the Internet is used for instant information, but people have no sense of where this information is coming from. To study the scrolls you should know who you are reading.

Pike: Interested Church members have to use discernment while seeking out credible publications. Readers should have some sense about who the author is and what his or her credentials are.

Parry: That's one of the problems. Lay audiences do not always know who is responsible or competent.

Understanding the Scrolls as Latter-day Saints

Holzappel: Would you say that in each nonbiblical passage, for every one thing that resonates with Latter-day Saints, a reader would find two or three things that do not resonate?

Pike: I do not know about the statistics. About some teachings Latter-day Saints would say, "That's just totally false." The scrolls also contain some corrupted echoes—things that sound similar to our beliefs but that are not completely right. You can see in those echoes how the doctrine went out of the Lord's mouth through the prophets, and after an apostasy it came back into the scrolls less than perfect. One example from the scrolls is the idea that God created the spirit of every person. However, these spirits are never described as His "children,"

and it is stated quite clearly in a few passages that God determined ahead of time—predestined—their lives before they were born [see, for example, 1QH 9.7–10]. The scrolls also contain some doctrines that are good and correct: repent, have faith in God, God loves you, God is merciful, God will help you if you come to Him. There are good doctrines and principles in the scrolls, but these are in the Bible already. Sadly some people have found and enjoyed such teachings in the Dead Sea Scrolls without realizing that most, if not all, of these are in the earlier Hebrew Bible (Old Testament).

Seely: I think we should study the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls just like we study other religions that are not our own. If we go to them for added perspective and appreciation for the truth that we already have, we will gain greater insights. For example, one of the scrolls I worked on discussed the circumcised heart, that is, the fact that we do not have the power to be righteous without the grace of God. Just as Dana said, this concept is actually already in the Bible. It is in Deuteronomy, it is in Paul's writings, it is everywhere. Somehow it was fun to read about the circumcised heart in the Dead Sea Scrolls, too. But if we go to the scrolls to prove the Church is true, we won't be satisfied. On the other hand, if we study the scrolls in the same manner we study Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or even Buddhism and Hinduism, then we can find greater perspective and added appreciation for the truth we do have.

To understand the scrolls, we need to remember that the scroll writers were people who found themselves in a crisis, with apostasy all around them. They sought a meaningful relationship with God, and they found something. What they found was not the fulness of the gospel, yet it is still worth studying from their perspective. But if we want to look just for parallels, then we would be better off just reading the scriptures.

Pike: Well said. When we go looking for parallels to “prove” the Church, we do injustice to both the restored gospel and the scrolls.

Holzappel: *I think we are maturing to the point that we can reach out beyond ourselves, and as Krister Stendahl proposes, look at other traditions with “holy envy.” We can look at another faith’s tradition and say, “Wow, I like how Jews read the scriptures. The Torah is really important to them.” Or, “I like how they keep the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day is really important to them.” In that sense now Latter-day Saints can look back at the Dead Sea Scrolls and appreciate that they were written by a people who were, as David said, trying to approach God, to find a relationship with Him, in a really hostile world. Their world was caving in around them, economically and politically, yet they were trying as best they could to hold*

out. And I think if we approach the scrolls with that attitude, our study could take us on a really remarkable journey. We should get away from trying to prove the Church is true with the scrolls.

Pike: Amen. And for those who are really interested in what the scrolls have to say, there is much to appreciate.

Parry: Elder Dallin H. Oaks significantly mentioned the Dead Sea Scrolls in the April 2006 conference: “The Lord will eventually cause the inspired teachings He has given to His children in various nations to be brought forth for the benefit of all people. This will include accounts of the visit of the resurrected Lord to what we call the lost tribes of Israel and His revelations to all the seed of Abraham. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows one way this can occur.”⁴ That gives us another way to look at the Dead Sea Scrolls, not at their text and not at what their compositions say, but at their discovery.

Holzappel: *Are you suggesting that some of the records containing “inspired teachings” might be discovered by scholars then?*

Parry: It would be both interesting and significant to hear more of this topic from Elder Oaks.

Pike: Because we are missing significant gospel information in the Dead Sea Scrolls and because some of the doctrine that is there is false from our perspective as Latter-day Saints, we cannot approach the Dead Sea Scrolls as pure teachings from the Lord. The scrolls are not going to teach us anything about the gospel that we do not already know. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was not the Lord trying to bring forth more scripture. Instead the scrolls, especially the ones that are copies of biblical books, are a form of truth from “out of the earth,” as mentioned in Moses 7:62, but they are not a complete package of pure, unadulterated restored doctrine.

I gave a Sperry Symposium presentation a while ago on the modern recovery of the world of the Bible as part of the restoration of all things.⁵ In it I posited that the Lord’s influence is manifest in the modern rediscovery and translation of ancient Near Eastern texts and antiquities—events that began to occur at the same time as the Restoration of the gospel. But people do not study Babylonian creation myths to learn the doctrine of the Creation. Likewise, even though they are closer to the biblical tradition, we would not study the scrolls to learn about things that have already been more fully and accurately revealed through latter-day prophets. The Lord told us to study history, geography, people, and languages; learn about the world, He said, past and present (see D&C 88:78–79). Our studies should start from that perspective—not the perspective of proving something or

finding something juicy that we can use to convert our neighbors.

Holzappel: *The enthusiasm for ancient texts is contagious, and there is something remarkable about antiquities discovered. It is a remarkable moment when something that has been preserved is found, and there is some excitement about seeing something and touching something from the time of Jesus.*

Pike: All three of us would agree that it is exciting to sit down with ancient texts and feel a connection with people from two thousand years ago. It is exciting to be able to read the texts and enjoy them. That's why we do what we do. Our only caution here is not to elevate the Dead Sea Scrolls beyond what they are and what they can contribute to our understanding.

Seely: I concur with all of that. It needs to be said that Latter-day Saints have an enthusiasm for this because we base our doctrine on voices from the dust, previously unknown texts that came forth from out of the ground. To our credit we are trained to be thrilled about ancient texts because we have the Book of Mormon, and we have Joseph Smith and his interest in Egyptian things. This enthusiasm is understandable, and if correctly applied it can be fruitful.

Applying Doctrine and Covenants 91 to the Dead Sea Scrolls

Holzappel: *The Lord revealed Doctrine and Covenants 91 in response to Joseph Smith's question about translating the Apocrypha. Since then many Latter-day Saint scholars have applied the section to almost every discovery: Nag Hammadi, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and others. What do you think? Should we apply Doctrine and Covenants 91 to the Dead Sea Scrolls?*

Parry: We seek truth wherever we may find it. I have personally applied parts of the Dead Sea Scrolls to my life: some of the pseudepigraphical, some of the apocryphal, and some of the sectarian texts. I have also used Doctrine and Covenants 91 to help other Latter-day Saints have the proper perspective with regard to the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls. In section 91 the Lord says, "Concerning the Apocrypha—There are many things contained therein that are true; . . . there are many things contained therein that are not true" (D&C 91:1–2). That's exactly the case with the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls. You may find a truth in one of them, and then you may find something that is contrary to our understanding of the gospel in another. With those contrary things you must say, "These are uninspired thoughts or interpolations of humans."

Seely: Doctrine and Covenants 91 distinguishes between what is canonical and what is not to us. Since none of the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls are canonical, we must at least recognize the distinction and apply the Lord's guidance about noncanonical material. We can also perhaps apply the idea of searching for truth in noncanonical material prescribed by Doctrine and Covenants 91 to science, literature, and art. It is a big concept we have here.

Pike: Since you are asking us, Richard, what do you think?

Holzappel: *Some members of the Church recall the Book of Mormon passage, "many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the [Bible]" (1 Nephi 13:29), and assume that we might find those "plain and precious things" in new textual discoveries, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. I am much more cautious today and have often considered another passage to help me put this in context. In the book of Moses, the Lord promises Moses, "I will raise up another like unto thee; and [my words] shall be had again among the children of men" (Moses 1:41). I have come to believe that the "plain and precious" truths will be restored through a prophet, not a scholar. That additional truths—historical and contextual—could come forth through scholarship is a given, but I think the "saving truths" will come through someone raised up by the Lord and called and anointed as a prophet. In that light, I think some caution is necessary before we apply section 91, a revelation dealing with a specific set of books that in Joseph Smith's day had been marginalized by the Protestants, to any and all textual discoveries. The recently discovered Gospel of Judas, a Gnostic text discovered in Egypt and recently popularized by National Geographic, is a good example. I do not think section 91 has anything to say about this text.*

Nevertheless, I would not want to apply section 91 only to the Apocrypha; certainly there should be some broader application of the passage when reading other ancient texts such as the scrolls because they contain Biblical material, "whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom" (D&C 91:5).

Pike: Agreed. But the principle that is articulated in section 91 is helpful and valuable when reading texts, like the scrolls, that are not part of our canon of scripture but are somehow connected to the biblical tradition. I mean, we should expect to find *some* truths in these texts!

Parry: Doctrine and Covenants 91 helps us, as members of the Church, remain grounded so that we do not get too carried away with parabiblical texts, that is, big texts that are biblical in nature and form and yet are not part of the canon. In that way, section 91 is a great blessing to the Church because it reminds us to be cautious when we

approach texts such as the nonbiblical Dead Sea Scrolls.

Seely: This approach in section 91, “whoso readeth it, let him understand” (D&C 91:4), could be used by two different people for two different ends. One could see it as a warning, and the other could see it as an invitation. So we must be careful about this. Some people read section 91 as an invitation to seek truth everywhere, and they end up sensationalizing things.

Holzappel: *Certainly we can all agree with David on this point—there have been many sensationalized talks, tapes, and books that have hurt us. I remember an experience in southern California when I was a stake mission president. The full-time missionaries had been teaching a promising family, but their progress suddenly plateaued. As we discussed what steps we might take to move the family forward one of the missionaries said, “I think it’s time for the ‘DSS’ discussion!” I was unfamiliar with this acronym for a particular missionary discussion, though I knew what DSS stood for in an academic setting—the Dead Sea Scrolls. When I pressed the missionary, he said they had a special discussion regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls that proved the Church was true. I was shocked and amazed. I asked him how the Dead Sea Scrolls could prove the Church was true. I was disturbed by his response; he had actually gotten almost everything wrong about them. I took some time to help this well-meaning and devoted missionary understand the historical context and content of the scrolls. I concluded our discussion by gently informing him that the scrolls could not “prove the Church is true” since those that wrote them and those that collected them were not proto-Mormons; they were not even Christians. I could discern the disappointment in his countenance. I was dashing a false testimony about the value of the scrolls. At the end of our conversation, I asked him where he had gotten these ideas, and he told me about a set of tapes on the subject that had been popular among some missionaries.*

I did some research about these tapes and discovered rather quickly that the speaker did not have any academic training that would have made him capable of translating or placing the scrolls into context. He was a popular fireside speaker who was apparently well known for his Dead Sea Scrolls presentations. In them he made outlandish claims about the scrolls and their relationship to the Restoration. It seems the more incredible the claims, the more popular he had become.

A short time after this experience, I went to hear John C. Trever speak on the scrolls at the University of California–Irvine. Trever, as a young scholar working at the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR) Center in Jerusalem, was shown the Isaiah Scroll and produced the first color photographs of the complete text in 1948. After examining it, Trever

concluded that the scroll was the oldest Hebrew manuscript yet discovered and that the text was of significant importance to the study of the Bible. He was well known among scroll scholars.

The talk was informative and interesting because he was there at the beginning. At the end of his presentation, I was literally stunned when he said that some churches misused the scrolls for their own purpose and then specifically mentioned The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His criticism was direct and pointed. Following the lecture, I made my way to the front to talk with him. I had met him before, so I reintroduced myself and then asked him about his comments about the Church. He informed me that he had a set of tapes in his possession by a Latter-day Saint scholar who taught at BYU, and from these tapes he had made his assessments about Mormons and the scrolls. It was the very speaker that I had learned about from the young missionary. Apparently some missionaries had given the set of tapes to an investigator in an effort to convert him. The investigator passed them along to Trever for his evaluation. To say the least, after Trever listen to the tapes he reported back to the investigator that the tapes were full of ridiculous statements, some of which were sheer fabrication. The investigator stopped visiting with the missionaries, whom he no longer trusted.

I attempted to correct his impression about the Church. I told him that the man was not a recognized Latter-day Saint scholar and that he was not an employee at BYU. I mentioned that there were an increasing number of competent Latter-day Saint scholars; in particular I told him about the work of S. Kent Brown and C. Wilfred Griggs. I had recently completed a graduate class on the scrolls at BYU under the direction of S. Kent Brown and knew that good work was being done on the scrolls by members of the Church. In the end, I am not sure I changed his mind about the Church, but hopefully he understood that one lay fireside speaker does not represent informed attitudes about the scrolls by Latter-day Saint scholars.

In the years that followed, through my continued graduate studies at Hebrew Union College and at the University of California–Irvine, I learned a lot about the world of the Dead Sea Scrolls. I discovered that some of the early assertions about the scrolls were unwarranted and that some of the dogmatic statements about the people of the scrolls and what they believed were surely wrong. In the process I also discovered that some Latter-day Saints had been too willing to find “Mormonism” in the spaces between letters and lines in the scrolls. Often unsupported and unfounded assertions about similarities in practice, organization, and beliefs between those who wrote and collected the Dead Sea Scrolls and those in the Church were not only in error but were also wrongheaded.

Teaching the Dead Sea Scrolls in Seminary and Institute

Holzappel: If you had a child studying the Old Testament or the New Testament in seminary or institute, what one thing would you want your child's teacher to know about the Dead Sea Scrolls? In fact, what one thing about the Dead Sea Scrolls should all seminary and institute teachers know?

Parry: In our discussions here about the scrolls, we have scarcely mentioned the most significant scrolls—those that comprise the Hebrew Bible. Of the 900 plus compositions that make up the Dead Sea Scrolls, approximately 225 are from books from the Old Testament, such as Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, and so forth. These biblical scrolls represent the world's oldest copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible (although most of the scrolls are fragmented), dating to more than a thousand years older than the Aleppo Codex, the Leningrad Codex, or any other Masoretic-type texts. This fact is of considerable importance because of what we are learning about the great care that the Jews took in copying and transmitting these scriptures. A Book of Mormon passage recognizes their great labors and diligence (see 2 Nephi 29:4). Furthermore, the Dead Sea Scrolls' biblical and parabiblical texts shed much light on the formation of the canon. Many scholars from various religions are now more open to the idea that perhaps there were other scriptural books (with full religious authority) than those published in what we now call the Old Testament. These scholars continue to discuss the implications of an "open canon" in both formal and informal settings. There is much, much more that can be said about the biblical scrolls—variants that shed light on specific readings in Isaiah, Samuel, Psalms and other books, missing psalms, the meaning of specific Hebrew words, and so on.

Seely: There are some similarities between doctrine in the non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls and latter-day doctrine, but some of the similarities are superficial. We should always remember that the scroll writers were not Latter-day Saints—they were a religious sect of Judaism. So they have a lot to teach us about spirituality, our relationship with God, and familiar religious ideas. But they cannot teach us Latter-day Saint doctrine.

Pike: I would hope that all CES teachers have at least a basic idea of what is in the scrolls—what they can teach us, and what they cannot teach us. What do they have to offer? I think one of the greatest things about the scrolls is the example of the community that created them. As David mentioned, these were very devout Jewish people who were

doing the best they could with what they knew and what they understood. Some of the people in the Qumran community sacrificed much, seriously cutting themselves off from Jerusalem temple practices to pursue their spiritual ideals. The text says that the community wanted to be holy enough for the angels of God to reside among them.

But again, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, Qumran was not a community authorized by God with legitimate prophets who were speaking on behalf of the Lord with legitimate priesthood keys and authority. And so what similarities there are between Latter-day Saint beliefs and the Qumran community's beliefs exist because we both have connections to the stream of biblical, Old Testament tradition. The connections are real and interesting but are often quite superficial. For example one scroll indicates that community governance included a council of "twelve laymen and three priests schooled to perfection in all that has been revealed of the entire Law" (1QS8). Some Latter-day Saints say, "Oh, that sounds like the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles." Well, in a way it does, but there are two important considerations to keep in mind. One is that twelve was an important number in ancient Israel. There were twelve tribes of Israel, each of which, at least sometimes, had a tribal leader (see Numbers 1:1–18), and that is probably why there were twelve Apostles in Jesus's day and why there are twelve Apostles now. More importantly, the Qumran council was presided over by three *Aaronic* priests and included twelve laymen. There *is* a sense of presiding priesthood, but their version of presiding authority is certainly *not* what is represented in the New Testament nor accepted by Latter-day Saints in this dispensation.

They did not have legitimate Aaronic Priesthood keys. In my mind the community at Qumran is conceptually similar to Christian Protestants in the 1500s. The Qumran community was protesting some of the religious practices of their day. However, that did not make them completely legitimate in the eyes of the Lord, anymore than did the early Christian Protestants' actions, even though they were headed in a good direction as best they could. Qumran was *not* a Restoration community.

Holzappel: *What cautions would you give to Church teachers about the Dead Sea Scrolls?*

Pike: As with many topics, I think it is better to say nothing about the Dead Sea Scrolls than to provide students with inaccurate and incomplete information about them. If teachers want to spend some time learning about these texts from responsible sources and if they feel

that including occasional comments about them in class is beneficial to what they are trying to teach, then great. The scrolls are certainly important and fascinating, but the nonbiblical portion is not essential for most CES courses.

Parry: At the end of a talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls, my concluding words often are, “Read the Book of Mormon: it teaches of Jesus. Read the Old Testament and the New Testament and other scriptures: they are Christ-centered texts; they teach us about Jesus. If you have a few other moments, then you can read other texts, but spend most of your time in the scriptures.” **RE**

Notes

1. See the *Religious Educator* 8, no. 3 (2007): 127–46.
2. See Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike, eds., *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 73–94.
3. See Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Questions and Responses for Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000).
4. Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, April 2006, 80.
5. See Dana M. Pike, “Recovering the World of the Bible [as Part of the Restoration of All Things],” in *Prelude to the Restoration: From Apostasy to the Restored Church* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 159–84.

Further Reading on the Dead Sea Scrolls

Abegg, Martin G., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English*. New York: HarperOne, 2002.

Herron, Ellen Middlebrook, ed. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Catalog of the Exhibition of Scrolls and Artifacts from the Collections of the Israel Antiquities Authority*. Public Museum of Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.

Parry, Donald W., and Dana M. Pike, eds. *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997.

Parry, Donald W., and Stephen D. Ricks. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Questions and Responses for Latter-day Saints*. Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000.

Tov, Emanuel. *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Reference Library*. CD-ROM. Prepared by FARMS. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

VanderKam, James C., and Peter Flint. *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity*. San Francisco: Harper, 2002. This book contains an introduction to the discovery and history of the Qumran community, a survey of the manuscripts, and a discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their significance for the study of the Old and New Testaments.

Vermes, Geza, trans. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. ed. London: Penguin, 2004.

