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Plagiarism and the Dead Sea Scrolls

August 3, 2008

Charges of impropriety resurface against New York University professor Lawrence Schiffman

Filed under: Uncategorized — larryschiffman @ 2:03 am

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[Update: see this succinct summary of the allegations against Dr. Schiffman.]

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Plagiarism [is] the appropriation of another's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit." — New York University Faculty Handbook

"Plagiarism ... whether intended or not, is academic fraud... You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you ... paraphrase or restate someone else's facts, analysis and/or conclusions." — Statement on Academic Integrity, New York University (Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development)

"A charlatan's job is, to begin with, to protect himself and his ego. While he is always conning people, he must be careful not to make enemies so that he won't be exposed to any threats. He must preserve his façade, or his falsity will be seen through. He ... only enters a situation when it seems to be to his advantage." — Chogyam Trungpa, Letter to the Vajra Guards, November 1975

A little-known case of apparent academic quackery has recently surfaced again, which deserves, perhaps, renewed attention in light of the media's ongoing celebration of Dead Sea Scrolls "scholarship" and the exposure of corruption in this field by various internet bloggers.

Many Dead Sea Scrolls fans, especially in the New York area, will be familiar with Dr. Schiffman's name and appearance. It would, in fact, be difficult to mistake him for anyone else: the big beard, the booming voice that soars out over lecture halls and into living rooms during televised documentaries — there is, in a word, an unmistakable charisma associated with this man, who seems to know exactly how things stand with the scrolls and is not afraid to say it.

To be sure, among scholars Dr. Schiffman is also known for his perplexing attempts to demonstrate that the scrolls belonged to and, in part, were written by a Sadducee sect living at Khirbet Qumran, even though, by his own admission, they contain the writings of many different "Judaisms" of the period.

And, among his students, he is known for the stern severity with which he opposes any inappropriate conduct, such as plagiarizing papers: see the syllabus for one of his courses, where he warns that “papers must be fully footnoted... Students must learn the difference between the documented use of the work of others, and... plagiarism. Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances.”

But behind his complicated arguments, academic severity and booming veneer, is Schiffman himself actually a **plagiarist**? Here are the facts, well known among academics since they were exposed by an Israeli journalist in 1993 (see below), but always discreetly ignored in the United States:

1. “Fine words! I wonder where you stole ‘em.” — Jonathan Swift

In an article entitled “The Problem of Origin and Identification of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” published in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124 (1980), University of Chicago historian Norman Golb broke ranks with the traditional “Qumran-sectarian” school of scrolls scholarship. He argued that the scrolls did not, as had been previously assumed, belong to a sect living at Qumran, but were the remains of libraries from Jerusalem, hidden in the desert either shortly before or during the siege and sacking of the city by the Romans in 70 A.D.

In the course of building his case, Golb focused on a series of historical and palaeographical details, including the discovery at **Masada** of manuscripts similar and, in one instance, identical to the ones found in the caves near Qumran. Other scholars had previously suggested that the Masada texts might have been brought there from Qumran, but Golb rejected this explanation and wrote as follows:

“In the ruins of [Masada] were discovered fragments of fourteen ... scrolls, including ... remarkably, a portion of the so-called “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice” — a **duplicate of a text found in Qumran Cave IV**... The cogent inference to be drawn from the presence of Hebrew manuscripts at Masada is that Jewish *sicarii* inhabiting the site possessed scrolls which they had brought there after taking the fortress in A.D. 66, while other Jews, of Jerusalem, took scrolls with them in addition to basic possessions needed for survival, in withdrawing to that site.”

Expressing a view that, in 1980, was highly unorthodox, Golb wrote that the Qumran and Masada manuscripts were not merely the product of a sect, but were writings of Palestinian Jews in general and were remnants of a literature showing a “wide variety of practices, beliefs and opinions.”

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In the same article, Golb also wrote that the apocalyptic texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls showed that the mentality of various Palestinian Jewish groups prior to 70 A.D. were “factors which may ... help to explain the zeal which led to the Jewish War.”

Then, in 1985, Golb published another article (in *Biblical Archaeologist*), in which he said (pp. 81-82) that the content of the scrolls was “more than sufficient to show the mentality and religious outlook of **various groups** within Palestinian Judaism” before 70 A.D., and that they “**cast important new light** on aspects of that period’s history, particularly on the question of the influence of the beliefs and practices then current in Palestine on **both the nascent rabbinic Judaism and the earliest forms of Palestinian Christianity**.”

So much for Golb's 1980 and 1985 articles which, of course, on account of their detailed and fundamentally novel analysis of the evidence — emphasizing the wide variety of ideas in the scrolls where others had attempted to fit them into a single "sectarian" current — were rightly seen as posing a severe threat to the traditional Qumran-Essene theory.

2. "Those literary cooks Who skim the cream of others' books..." — Hannah More

Enter Lawrence Schiffman who, in 1990, published an article entitled "The Significance of the Scrolls." The article, similar to other writings that also came out under his name, appeared in *Bible Review*, and was later (in 1992) reprinted in Hershel Shanks, ed., *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Schiffman argued (using a rationale which British scrolls scholar Philip Davies has described as "not merely difficult to accept, but difficult to understand") that the scrolls belonged to a Sadducee sect living at Qumran.

Here, however, are some of the other things he said in the article:

"Very recently several fragmentary texts were published from Masada ..., occupied by rebels during the ... Revolt against Rome. In addition, a manuscript of the Sabbath Songs (angelic liturgy), **known in several manuscripts from Qumran**, was found at Masada. Thus, Jewish defenders of Masada possessed books of the same kind as those in the Qumran collection, but that were not directly associated with the sect itself. In other words, many of the works found at Qumran were the **common heritage of Second Temple Judaism** and did not originate in, and were not confined to, Qumran sectarian circles."

Schiffman did not mention or cite Golb's practically identical argument made ten years previously. On the next page, Schiffman wrote:

"It is now becoming increasingly clear that the Scrolls are the primary source for the study of **Judaism in all its varieties** in the last centuries before the Common Era. In short, this corpus does not simply give us an entry into the sect that inhabited the nearby settlement, but also has an enormous amount to tell us about the **widely varying Judaisms** of the Hasmonaeon and Herodian periods ... these documents are providing a critical background for the study of the **later emergence both of rabbinic Judaism and of the early Christian Church.**"

Compare Golb's earlier statements about the "religious outlook of various groups within Palestinian Judaism" which "cast important new light ... on both the nascent rabbinic Judaism and the earliest forms of **Palestinian Christianity.**"

Schiffman, however, again did not mention or cite Golb's articles.

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Schiffman did not mention or cite this statement of Golb's either.

Note how Schiffman changed the wording a bit but kept the basic ideas (including some of the

vocabulary, such as “factors”): “various groups within Palestinian Judaism” becomes “widely varying Judaisms”; “cast important new light” becomes “has an enormous amount to tell us”; “the question of the influence ... on both the nascent rabbinic Judaism and the earliest forms of Palestinian Christianity” becomes the “background for the study of ... the emergence both of rabbinic Judaism and of the early Christian Church”; etc.

Schiffman, of course, like anyone else, had every right in the world to argue the case for variety in the scrolls; but it was his duty to say where he got his arguments from. According to New York University’s statement on academic integrity (linked at the top of this page), if a student paraphrases without proper attribution, he stands a good chance of getting called before a committee on charges of plagiarism and even of getting expelled.

Schiffman, however, is not a college student, and so he apparently thought he could straddle both sides of the Dead Sea Scrolls debate and get away with stealing Golb’s credit for emphasizing the diversity of ideas found among the scrolls (including ones related with rabbinic Judaism), the Masada connection, and the influence of the apocalyptic ideas of some of the scrolls on the Jewish revolt.

3. “Their writings are thoughts stolen from us by anticipation.” — Alexis Piron

Well, Israeli journalist **Avi Katzman** appears to have had a different point of view and so, in an interview published in *Haaretz* (Jan. 29, 1993), he asked Schiffman why “in different articles you have published, you have not hesitated to take over portions of Golb’s theory without acknowledging as much, and without giving him appropriate credit?”

Given the circumstances, one might have expected Schiffman to give some kind of explanation. He could have said, for example, that the failure to credit Golb was unintended and that he planned to correct it in his next book. Instead, this is what he said:

“This isn’t the issue. *There’s no innovation in Golb’s theory.* He can say what he wants. The idea that we’re not dealing with a sect is self-evident. Does he think that he wrote the Bible?”

Well, let’s take a closer look at this: “There’s no innovation in Golb’s theory.”

As is well known, Golb, starting with the above-linked 1980 article, published a series of works arguing that the Dead Sea Scrolls were the remains of Jerusalem libraries, containing the writings of multiple Jewish groups. At the very end of the 1980 article (see footnote 80 on p. 24), he carefully distinguished his theory from the “overly specific” view of Karl Rengstorf, who in the early 1960’s had argued that the scrolls were the **library of the Jerusalem Temple**. Golb wrote:

“While it is true that a number of the scrolls give prominence to the sons of Zadok and the priestly order, most of them do not, so that the assignment of all of the scrolls to the single library of the Temple becomes a matter of arbitrary choice ... narrowing down the conception of intellectual and spiritual life prevailing within Jerusalem before the war.” Golb’s own, broader conclusion was that the scrolls were “remnants of a literature showing a wide variety of practices, beliefs and opinions which was removed from Jerusalem before and during the siege....”

Then, in 1985 (*Biblical Archaeologist*, p. 80), Golb wrote of “collections of literary scrolls — that is, **libraries** — removed far from their original home,” and concluded that the scrolls stemmed “not merely from sectarians but from **first-century Palestinian Jews in general**,” and that they were “removed from Jerusalem by inhabitants of the city before and during the siege on the city.”

Let's look at that statement of Schiffman's again: "*There's no innovation in Golb's theory.*" The statement is obviously untrue, because no one, until Golb came along, had argued that the scrolls were the remnants of Jerusalem-area literary collections. Was Schiffman incapable of comprehending the articles which he himself had apparently chosen to make use of without crediting their author? Or was he attempting to confuse the issue? I mean, what better response to someone who suggests that you have committed plagiarism, than to assert that the plagiarized ideas are themselves not original? After all, they're **self-evident**. They could have occurred to **anyone**, so why include a reference to the person who actually came up with them?

4. "That's not a lie, it's a terminological inexactitude." — Alexander Haig

Whatever the answer to this question may be, Schiffman repeated his plagiarisms in his 1994 book *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (almost two years after the Katzman interview). See, e.g., pp. 49, 335, 403 and 447, discussing the "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice" text found at Masada and Qumran: "The common heritage of Qumran and Masada [is] typical of the literature read by the intellectual and religious elites of Second Temple Judaism"; "most of the apocryphal-type texts found in the Qumran caves were probably copied elsewhere"; "we reject this view [i.e., that the Masada texts came from Qumran]"; etc., all of this without any citation of Golb.

What's more, not content with appropriating Golb's ideas, Schiffman also began publishing **misinformation** about Golb's theory. In his above-cited *Bible Review* article, he stated: "I should perhaps comment briefly on the hypothesis recently put forward by Professor Norman Golb of the University of Chicago. According to him the Qumran scrolls are the library of the Jerusalem Temple, brought from Jerusalem and hidden at Qumran during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome." Schiffman then repeated this misleading assertion in his 1994 book, where we read (see p. 413) that "the hypothesis that the scrolls are the library of the Jerusalem Temple is put forward by Golb..."

Interestingly, while Schiffman apparently did not have the courage or good will to cite Golb when using his arguments, he did, at this single spot in his book, provide several sources that purportedly backed up his false characterization of Golb's theory. These included, for example, Golb's 1990 *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* article "[Khirbet Qumran and the Manuscripts of the Judaean Wilderness: Observations on the Logic of Their Investigation.](#)" But in this as in his other articles, Golb (see footnote 68 on p. 113) specifically described his view as being that "the various Qumran texts originated in libraries in Jerusalem that were hidden away for safekeeping before or during the siege of A.D. 70."

The other Golb articles that Schiffman cited were published in 1989 and 1987 (in *The American Scholar* and *The Sciences*), but he omitted the important 1980 and 1985 articles, thereby leaving readers with the impression that Golb's work in the field dated not from *well before*, but from *around the same time or even after* Schiffman began publishing his own "multiple Judaism" articles on the scrolls, and directing them away from the specific evidence of his plagiarism (see the first and second sections above).

Neither the 1987 *Sciences* nor the 1989 *American Scholar* article are available on-line, but anyone can easily consult them at the library. The first states merely that the scrolls "originated not with an obscure sect but with Palestinian Jews... [and] depict ... the **surprising breadth of Jewish literary culture** during the centuries between the Old and New Testaments"; and the second argues at length that "the writings came from **libraries**; the great number of scroll remnants points to their origin in a center of learning and study ... such as only Jerusalem was before 70 A.D... Because of the loss of [Jerusalem's] archival records [in a fire of 66 A.D. described by Josephus], no documentary texts of the years immediately before 70 A.D., but only **remnants of the libraries that evidently abounded in the city**, have been found subsequently in the Judaean wilderness."

Did Schiffman simply not read any of these articles which he cited in support of his deceptive attribution of Rengstorf's Temple-library theory to Golb? Was he incapable of comprehending the difference between the "library of the Jerusalem Temple" and "the libraries that evidently abounded in the city"? The multiple-libraries theory was, of course, set forth at great length in Golb's 1995 book *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?* and, to the best of my knowledge, Schiffman has remained curiously silent about the lack of "innovation" in Golb's work since then.

Steal and ye shall be promoted: During the fifteen years that have elapsed since he blurted out that "Golb can say what he wants," Schiffman has apparently been promoted to department chairman and popular Dead Sea Scrolls icon without the slightest investigation of his actions ever taking place at NYU. After all, who really cares about a little bit of hanky-panky here and there? We all know that rules are meant to be broken anyway.

As I recall this episode in light of the recent allegations about continuing misconduct in this field of studies, I'm obliged to ask which is worse, the act of plagiarism itself or the decision to **misrepresent** the theory of the scholar whose ideas one has decided to filch. Apparently, it has become normal procedure in academic circles to play vicious games with one's scholarly adversaries, disseminating falsehoods about their views and appropriating them at the same time without proper attribution. Those who base their careers on such conduct cleverly illustrate Hugh Kingsmill's words, "A charlatan makes obscure what is clear; a thinker makes clear what is obscure."

And who, in the end, elevates such individuals to the status of popular authorities? To some of us the answer is quite clear: it's a sick system that glorifies an academic thief.

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Plagiarism: the Lawrence Schiffman case

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2008

Did NYU department chair plagiarize Chicago historian's work?

The following is a succinct summary of allegations of unethical conduct that have been raised against Dr. Lawrence Schiffman, Chair of the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University.

(1) Schiffman appropriated University of Chicago historian Norman Golb's arguments (published in 1980 and 1985) concerning (a) the connection between texts found at Qumran and Masada; (b) the variegated nature of the Dead Sea Scrolls; and (c) their previously neglected relationship with rabbinical Judaism and the Jewish revolt, all of this on several consecutive pages of an article he published in 1990 and without crediting Golb;

(2) When questioned about his plagiarism by prominent Israeli journalist Avi Katzman in 1993, Schiffman responded: "There's no innovation in Golb's theory." Despite being questioned about his use of Golb's ideas by Katzman, Schiffman again used the ideas in his 1994 book without crediting Golb.

(3) Schiffman, in his 1990 article, falsely stated that Golb had argued that the scrolls were the "library of the Jerusalem Temple," a view defended by a German scholar (K. Rengstorf) in the early 60's and explicitly rejected by Golb on numerous occasions, including in the 1980 article;

(4) In his 1994 book, Schiffman repeated the same misrepresentation, citing three articles by Golb (from 1987, 1989 and 1990) each of which shows instead that Golb never argued the scrolls were the Temple library; and

(5) In his book, Schiffman carefully omitted any mention of Golb's 1980 and 1985 articles, thereby covering his tracks and making it seem that he and Golb both came up with the multiple-Jewish-groups view around the same time. By falsely attributing Rengstorf's theory to Golb, Schiffman again implied that there was no "innovation" in

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Golb's theory.

We are, in sum, if the allegations are true, dealing with a classic case of combined plagiarism and misrepresentation.

Yet the allegations have been discreetly ignored at NYU and elsewhere.

Some may conclude that in this field, anyone who, like Golb, does not belong to the "inner sanctum" of traditional Qumranologists may expect to be smeared, misrepresented, and plagiarized by one or another member of the Qumran-sectarian clique, without any accountability whatsoever vis-a-vis the larger academic community.

For full details, including links to Golb's 1980 and 1985 articles, see the [Nowpublic article](#) linked here and at the top of this page.

Posted by plagiarist-schiffman at 12:47 PM

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Lawrence Schiffman to speak at Jewish Museum

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2008

Plagiarism charges dog "incoherent" Judaica lecturer

On October 30, 2008, at the Jewish Museum in New York, Lawrence Schiffman will give a lecture entitled "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Judaism and Christianity."



Schiffman chairs the Skirball Department of Judaica at New York University. The lecture accompanies the museum's Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, which has just opened.

Is the museum aware of recently aired allegations that Schiffman plagiarized a number of key historical arguments developed by another scholar?

An orthodox rabbi, Schiffman has based his academic career on the rather peculiar and idiosyncratic idea that some of the scrolls were written by a sect of Sadducees living at Qumran -- an idea that various authorities in the field have called "incoherent" and "difficult to understand."

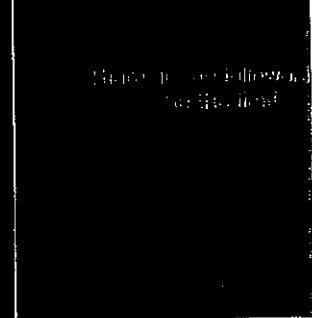
Some readers may be surprised to learn that Schiffman is now also presenting himself as an expert on the history of Christianity. A little joke is making the rounds that this an excellent response to scholars of Christianity who falsely present themselves as experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls (see here for a recent example).

Posted by [lawrence.schiffman.speaks](#) at [2:20 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

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● Plagiarism and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Did NYU department chairman pilfer from Chicago historian's work?

by Peter Kaufman | August 4, 2008 at 02:35 pm
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A little-known case of apparent academic quackery has recently surfaced again, which deserves, perhaps, renewed attention in light of the media's ongoing celebration of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship and the dogged exposure of corruption in this field by several internet bloggers. (These include an author writing on this site who has examined the religious orientation of science museum exhibits and the rigging of academic conferences on the scrolls.)

Before going into the details, let's take a brief look at New York University's policy on plagiarism and other unethical research activities:

"Every member of the University ... is expected to conform to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Activities such as *plagiarism* [and] *misrepresentation*... are expressly prohibited.... Plagiarism [is] the appropriation of another's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit." — New York University Faculty Handbook

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Now that we have reviewed this official policy of the institution where he is entrusted with a teaching position, let us take a look at the case of Lawrence Schiffman, Chairman of the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. [Update: see this succinct summary of the allegations against Dr. Schiffman.]

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Instead, on the next page of his article, he went on to state that the influence of the

apocalyptic Dead Sea Scrolls could be seen “in the messianic pressures for Jewish resistance against Roman rule that were **factors in fueling the two Jewish revolts**, the First Revolt of 66-70 C.E., and the Second Revolt, the so-called Bar Kokhba revolt, of 132-135 C.E., both of which had messianic overtones.” Compare Golb’s earlier statement about the “**factors** which may ... help to explain the **zeal which led to the Jewish War.**”

Schiffman did not mention or cite this statement of Golb’s either.

Note how Schiffman changed the wording a bit but kept the basic ideas (including some of the vocabulary, such as “factors”): “various groups within Palestinian Judaism” becomes “widely varying Judaisms”; “cast important new light” becomes “has an enormous amount to tell us”; “the question of the influence ... on both the nascent rabbinic Judaism and the earliest forms of Palestinian Christianity” becomes the “background for the study of ... the emergence both of rabbinic Judaism and of the early Christian Church”; etc.

Schiffman, of course, like anyone else, had every right in the world to argue the case for variety in the scrolls; but it was his duty to say where he got his arguments from. According to New York University’s statement on academic integrity (linked at the top of this page), if a student paraphrases without proper attribution, he stands a good chance of getting called before a committee on charges of plagiarism and even of getting expelled.

Schiffman, however, is not a college student, and so he apparently thought he could straddle both sides of the Dead Sea Scrolls debate and get away with stealing Golb’s credit for emphasizing the diversity of ideas (including ones related with rabbinic Judaism) found among the scrolls, the Masada connection, and the influence of the apocalyptic ideas of some of the scrolls on the Jewish revolt.

3. “Their writings are thoughts stolen from us by anticipation.” — Alexis Piron

Well, Israeli journalist **Avi Katzman** appears to have had a different point of view and so, in an interview published in *Haaretz* (Jan. 29, 1993), he asked Schiffman why “in different articles you have published, you have not hesitated to take over portions of Golb’s theory without acknowledging as much, and without giving him appropriate credit?”

Given the circumstances, one might have expected Schiffman to give some kind of explanation. He could have said, for example, that the failure to credit Golb was unintended

and that he planned to correct it in his next book. Instead, this is what he said:

“This isn’t the issue. *There’s no innovation in Golb’s theory.* He can say what he wants. The idea that we’re not dealing with a sect is self-evident. Does he think that he wrote the Bible?”

Well, let’s take a closer look at this: “There’s no innovation in Golb’s theory.”

As is well known, Golb, starting with the above-linked 1980 article, published a series of works arguing that the Dead Sea Scrolls were the remains of Jerusalem libraries, containing the writings of multiple Jewish groups. At the very end of the 1980 article (see footnote 80 on p. 24), he carefully distinguished his theory from the “overly specific” view of Karl Rengstorf, who in the early 1960’s had argued that the scrolls were the **library of the Jerusalem Temple**. Golb wrote:

“While it is true that a number of the scrolls give prominence to the sons of Zadok and the priestly order, most of them do not, so that the assignment of all of the scrolls to the single library of the Temple becomes a matter of arbitrary choice ... narrowing down the conception of intellectual and spiritual life prevailing within Jerusalem before the war.”

Golb’s own, broader conclusion was that the scrolls were “remnants of a literature showing a wide variety of practices, beliefs and opinions which was removed from Jerusalem before and during the siege....”

Then, in 1985 (*Biblical Archaeologist*, p. 80), Golb wrote of “collections of literary scrolls — that is, **libraries** — removed far from their original home,” and concluded that the scrolls stemmed “not merely from sectarians but from **first-century Palestinian Jews in general**,” and that they were “removed from Jerusalem by inhabitants of the city before and during the siege on the city.”

Let’s look at that statement of Schiffman’s again: “*There’s no innovation in Golb’s theory.*” The statement is obviously untrue, because no one, until Golb came along, had argued that the scrolls were the remains of Jerusalem-area literary collections, containing the writings not just of a sect or of Temple priests, but of many different Jewish groups, both mainstream and heterodox.

Was Schiffman incapable of comprehending the articles which he himself had apparently chosen to make use of without crediting their author? Or was he attempting to confuse the

issue? I mean, what better response to someone who suggests that you have committed plagiarism, than to assert that the plagiarized ideas are themselves not original? After all, they're "**self-evident.**" They could have occurred to **anyone**, so why include a reference to the person who actually came up with them?

4. "**That's not a lie, it's a terminological inexactitude.**" — Alexander Haig

Whatever the answer to this question may be, Schiffman repeated his plagiarisms in his 1994 book *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (almost two years after the Katzman interview). See, e.g., pp. 49, 335, 403 and 447, discussing the "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice" text found at Masada and Qumran: "The common heritage of Qumran and Masada [is] typical of the literature read by the intellectual and religious elites of Second Temple Judaism"; "most of the apocryphal-type texts found in the Qumran caves were probably copied elsewhere"; "we reject this view [i.e., that the Masada texts came from Qumran]"; etc., all of this without any citation of Golb.

What's more, not content with appropriating Golb's ideas, Schiffman also began publishing **misinformation** about Golb's theory. In his above-cited *Bible Review* article, he stated: "I should perhaps comment briefly on the hypothesis recently put forward by Professor Norman Golb of the University of Chicago. According to him the Qumran scrolls are the **library of the Jerusalem Temple**, brought from Jerusalem and hidden at Qumran during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome." Schiffman then repeated this misleading assertion in his 1994 book, where we read (see p. 413) that "the hypothesis that the scrolls are the library of the Jerusalem Temple is **put forward by Golb...**"

Interestingly, while Schiffman apparently did not have the courage or good will to cite Golb when using his arguments, he did, at this single spot in his book, provide several sources that purportedly backed up his false characterization of Golb's theory. These included, for example, Golb's 1990 *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* article "Khirbet Qumran and the Manuscripts of the Judaean Wilderness: Observations on the Logic of Their Investigation." But in this as in his other articles, Golb (see p. 113, footnote 68) specifically described his view as being that "the various Qumran texts originated in **libraries in Jerusalem** that were hidden away for safekeeping before or during the siege of A.D. 70."

The other Golb articles that Schiffman cited were published in 1989 and 1987 (in *The*

American Scholar and *The Sciences*), but he omitted the important 1980 and 1985 articles, thereby leaving readers with the impression that Golb's work in the field dated not from *well before*, but from *around the same time or even after* Schiffman began publishing his own "multiple Judaism" articles on the scrolls, and directing them away from the specific evidence of his plagiarism (see the first and second sections above).

Neither the 1987 *Sciences* nor the 1989 *American Scholar* article are available on-line, but anyone can easily consult them at the library. The first states merely that the scrolls "originated not with an obscure sect but with Palestinian Jews... [and] depict ... the **surprising breadth of Jewish literary culture** during the centuries between the Old and New Testaments"; and the second argues at length that "the writings came from **libraries**; the great number of scroll remnants points to their origin in a center of learning and study ... such as only Jerusalem was before 70 A.D... Because of the loss of [Jerusalem's] archival records [in a fire of 66 A.D. described by Josephus], no documentary texts of the years immediately before 70 A.D., but only **remnants of the libraries that evidently abounded in the city**, have been found subsequently in the Judaeen wilderness."



Did Schiffman simply not read any of these articles which he cited in support of his deceptive attribution of Rengstorff's Temple-library theory to Golb? Was he incapable of comprehending the difference between the "library of the Jerusalem Temple" and "the libraries that evidently abounded in the city"? The multiple-libraries theory was, of course, set forth at great length in Golb's 1995 book *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?* and, to the best of my knowledge, Schiffman has remained curiously silent about the lack of "innovation" in Golb's work since then.

Steal and ye shall be promoted: During the fifteen years that have elapsed since he blurted out that "Golb can say what he wants," Schiffman has apparently been promoted to department chairman and popular Dead Sea Scrolls icon without the slightest investigation of his actions ever taking place at NYU. After all, who really cares about a little bit of hanky-panky here and there? We all know that rules are meant to be broken anyway.

As I recall this episode in light of the recent allegations about continuing misconduct in this field of studies, I'm obliged to ask which is worse, the act of plagiarism itself or the decision to **misrepresent** the theory of the scholar whose ideas one has decided to filch. Apparently, it has become normal procedure in academic circles to play vicious games with one's

scholarly adversaries, disseminating falsehoods about their views and appropriating them at the same time without proper attribution. Those who base their careers on such conduct cleverly illustrate Hugh Kingsmill's words, "A charlatan makes obscure what is clear; a thinker makes clear what is obscure."

And who, in the end, elevates such individuals to the status of popular authorities? To some of us the answer is quite clear: it's a sick system that glorifies an academic thief.

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 recommend

Add a comment



Charles Gadda flagged this story as **Good Stuff**
at 23:43 on August 4th, 2008

[reply](#)

Peter,

Thanks for signaling my articles.

I remember reading about Schiffman's peculiar conduct several years ago.

In his defense, allow me to point out that he appears to have been caught between a desire to follow the path defined by Golb, and the knowledge that if he did so he would be ostracized by the authority figures of the Qumran "establishment." The Freudian results are sad and also quite comical at the same time.

Charles Gadda



World_Groove flagged this story as **Good Stuff**
at 13:23 on August 7th, 2008

[reply](#)

I do not know the man or his works, I do not know of his innocence or guilt.

Plagiarism is a slippery slope.... Innumerable times in my life, I have come up with spontaneous theories and concepts which I thought original and new, but only to find later they already existed. Many times I have read in books complete concepts written and worded exactly how I would have.

What do you call it in those cases where your critics scream plagiarism, and your

associates applaud creativity ?

0



Peter Kaufman

at 17:29 on August 7th, 2008

reply

Charles Gadda and World Groove,

Interesting comments -- thanks.

The associates who applaud Schiffman's "creativity" are, of course, members of the Qumran-sectarian clique (or cartel, or monopoly, as it's variously called), who are generally motivated by a seething and quite unprofessional resentment against Golb. In Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship, one must always ask who is doing the applauding.

I believe it would be quite astonishing if Schiffman did not read Golb's 1980 and 1985 articles, given the enormous attention they received in the field and in the media, both here and in Israel.

Golb's arguments appeared on three consecutive pages of Schiffman's own article. And Schiffman actively misrepresented Golb's theory: even the articles that he did eventually cite (on page 413 of his book) do not argue that the scrolls came from the Temple. Did he not read these articles either?

Nor did Schiffman express any surprise when Katzman questioned him. Instead, he denied the originality of Golb's work.

Best,

Peter Kaufman

0



John Cowan (not verified)

at 16:43 on August 8th, 2008

reply

Without reference to this specific case, the Statement's definition of plagiarism is preposterous. There can be no such thing as unintentional fraud. If it's brought to your notice that someone else has made your argument before you, you amend your work to cite him properly; you don't go up on charges.

0



Peter Kaufman

at 19:17 on August 9th, 2008

reply

John,

Thanks for the interesting comment.

While fraud *per se* cannot be unintentional, plagiarism certainly can, as when (1) someone "forgets" having read something and "unconsciously" remembers it (cf. the famous George Harrison copyright case), or (2) a student "accidentally" plagiarizes "due to a lack of understanding of the conventions of citation and documentation," or (3) certain writers do not understand "the sanctity with which American academics endow the concept of idea ownership." Unintentional plagiarism is "also a breach of academic integrity and may be punished accordingly." (I'm quoting from the many websites that discuss this phenomenon).

I believe the NYU statement is meant to convey a high standard: that such excuses will not be tolerated. They could no doubt have worded it a bit better, but their basic point is clear enough for our purposes.

As for Schiffman, if we assume for argument's sake that he *never read* Golb's articles (in which case there would have been no plagiarism at all), it must be pointed out that after Katzman nailed him in the Haaretz interview, he had ample opportunity to do exactly what you suggest: to amend his work and cite Golb properly. Surely he would have been put on notice that there was a problem, and it would have been his duty to look into it.

Instead, he repeated his plagiarism in his 1994 book (almost two years after the Katzman interview).

See, e.g., pp. 49, 335 and 447, discussing the "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice" text found at Masada and Qumran: "Today ... we recognize that these texts were part of the general literature of the times and were shared by many communities"; "we reject this view [i.e., that the Masada texts came from Qumran]"; etc., without any citation of Golb.

See also his introduction (p. xxi), where he asserts that the scrolls "shed light on a **variety of trends in ancient Judaism**," and then immediately goes on to assert that "they are not the library of the Jerusalem Temple." His only mention of Golb in the entire book is in the note on p. 413 where he falsely attributes this Jerusalem Temple view to Golb, without even mentioning that Golb was the one who originally argued that the scrolls "shed light on a variety of trends in ancient Judaism."

By email to Dr. Schiffman, I have informed him of my above article. Perhaps he should

come forward with some kind of explanation of why he didn't give appropriate credit to Golb, and why he misrepresented Golb's theory? Silence in such circumstances is often construed as an admission of guilt.



Raphael Joel (not verified)
at 12:42 on August 9th, 2008

reply

Peter,

Does this same rule apply to Magen and Peleg? In their *Preliminary Report*, they accepted Golb's theory of a Jerusalem origin of the scrolls AND Dr. Golb's conclusion that Qumran was originally a fortress, but never once cited Dr. Golb. Did they plagiarize Dr. Golb? They have had "ample opportunity to amend their work and cite Golb properly." Should they come forward and apologize? Why are you criticizing Dr. Schiffman and not Magen and Peleg?

-Raphael



Peter Kaufman
at 13:50 on August 9th, 2008

reply

Raphael, thanks for your interesting comment.

I'm not aware that Magen and Peleg engaged in a sneaky and unethical attempt to **misrepresent** Golb's theory, or that they continued with such an effort after having been questioned about plagiarism by an Israeli journalist. But if, as you say, they failed to appropriately credit Golb in their *Preliminary Report*, then their failure should be exposed, and they should be given the opportunity to amend what they did by citing him properly in their final report which, rumor has it, is in the making.

I'm also not familiar with the Hebrew University's policy on plagiarism. New York University's policy is as stated in their Faculty Handbook, quoted above (see the top of this page).

If you have any similar cases, please bring them to my attention. Perhaps an article can be put together that would fully expose a pattern of endemic plagiarizing in this field.

Best,

Peter Kaufman



Raphael Joel (not verified)
at 13:52 on August 9th, 2008

reply

"Rumor has it?" Ah.

It's just hard to imagine that two skilled scholars that had spent 10 years at Qumran have not heard of Dr. Golb's theories, especially since they published the same conclusions as Dr. Golb. That is the equivalent of of Dr. Golb publishing his theory of the Jerusalem origin of the scrolls without acknowledging that Dr. Rengstorf had published it first. Dr. Golb states repeatedly in his book that he had no idea that Dr. Rengstorf had come up with and published the theory first. Likewise, Dr. Golb acknowledged that several scholars, including Masterman and Dalman, claimed that Qumran had originally been a fortress. So, while Golb cannot claim to have been the first to make either of these "discoveries," (i.e. the Jerusalem origin or that Qumran was a fortress) the least Magen and Peleg could do is credit Dr. Golb for *claiming* that he was the first to come up with those theories.

And if Dr. Golb wasn't the first to publish either of the theories, then what are you complaining about??

Is it because Dr. Schiffman disagrees with Dr. Golb that you attack and defame him? And is it because Magen and Peleg appear to support Dr. Golb that you give them a free pass for not crediting Dr. Golb?

-Raphael



Peter Kaufman
at 10:19 on August 12th, 2008

reply

Thanks again for helping to clarify the exact nature of the plagiarism in which Schiffman is alleged to have engaged. Incidentally, you say I'm "defaming" Schiffman. Have I said something that's not true? If so, please let me know, so I can correct it.

Masterman and Dalman may have asserted in passing that Qumran was a fortress (and as you point out, Golb appropriately credits them for this), but neither of them ever put together evidence and formulated an argument to that effect (unlike

Golb).

Golb discusses Rengstorf at length, crediting him for having created the Jerusalem *Temple* theory and specifically acknowledging him as a forerunner to the extent that he theorized the scrolls originated in Jerusalem. As Golb explains, Rengstorf did not have knowledge of, or take into account, the various elements (including, e.g., the Masada texts) on which Golb later based his multiple-Jerusalem-*libraries* theory.

Allow me to point out that your comment, by focusing solely on the "Jerusalem origin" of the scrolls, fails to take account of the basic difference between the Temple theory and the multiple-libraries theory. What Schiffman did, however, was far worse, because he actually went out of his way to attribute Rengstorf's Temple theory to Golb. The combination of misrepresentation and plagiarism is, of course, far worse than simple plagiarism, because it points towards an apparent intent to steal the other scholar's credit and harm his reputation (or *dis*-credit him) at the same time.

As for Magen and Peleg, I wouldn't want to give them a free pass, but (1) we're simply talking about a preliminary report; (2) they haven't been questioned about plagiarism by a journalist writing in a major Israeli newspaper; and (3) they haven't **misrepresented** Golb's theory. Perhaps you should take the matter up and write an article exposing their plagiarism here on Nowpublic? I'd be happy to comment on it to keep the discussion alive.

Peter Kaufman



Frank Lieberman (not verified)
at 20:05 on August 13th, 2008

[reply](#)

The guy had it coming to him, but no action will ever be taken against him.

The Skirball crew supports him -- big money, NYU would never do anything that would fray its ties with those people.





Peter Kaufman
at 17:42 on August 15th, 2008

[reply](#)

Frank, thanks for your interesting comment, although I'm not sure I agree with the implications of what you are saying.

My aim in writing this article was not to give Schiffman something he "had coming to him," but to provide full and complete information on this case to anyone who is concerned by the ongoing pattern of corruption in this field of studies.



As for the "Skirball crew," by which you are apparently referring to the Skirball Foundation, they are a prime funder of Jewish educational institutions, and one can only assume that they have never heard of Schiffman's apparent efforts to plagiarize and discredit a well-known Jewish historian, and that they will be disturbed to learn of them.

  **Yelena Katz** (not verified)
at 12:45 on September 2nd, 2008

[reply](#)

This 2006 New York Times article refers to "Rabbi Lawrence Schiffman, a professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University and an expert on early Christianity."



I hope Rabbi Schiffman's religious training had nothing to do with his rather unusual research policies!

  **Chad Ocho Cinco** (not verified)
at 17:57 on September 2nd, 2008

[reply](#)

Fishy fishy fishy. This whole article is fishy! The only plagiarism going on here is one of Charles Gadda's aliases copying another. You write with speculative questions, no evidence, and with the same vocabulary, motive, and litigious style as Charles Gadda to defame yet another Dead Sea Scrolls scholar. Do you really expect the world to believe that simply by changing the name of your alias, you can pretend to be a different person? That's as silly as, well...

NowPublic should be ashamed (and wary legally) for allowing Gadda, et. al. to use this site to defame Dr. Schiffman and everyone else Charles Gadda has defamed (and the list is very, very long...)

  **Peter Kaufman**
at 12:47 on September 4th, 2008

[reply](#)

Yelena, thanks for your comment. In my article, I did not discuss Dr. Schiffman's rabbinical status or career, because my focus was on the issue of academic ethics, and I'm not sure what his religious background has to do with that.

Chad Ocho Cinco, thanks very much for your interesting comment about me and Mr. Gadda. I could not help but notice that you, like another contributor above, believe I have actually defamed Schiffman because, according to you, he did not commit plagiarism. This leads me to wonder whether Avi Katzman, a highly respected Israeli journalist (and, incidentally, professor of journalism), defamed Schiffman when he asked him, in the pages of Israel's most important newspaper, why he had "not hesitated to take over portions of Golb's theory without acknowledging as much, and without giving him appropriate credit." And to take over portions of another's theory without giving him appropriate credit, does that not fall under the definition of plagiarism?

I think we need to ask, then, what would be the most accurate way of describing what Schiffman did, if the word "plagiarism" is not appropriate.

0



this is getting ridiculous (not verified)
at 09:54 on September 4th, 2008

reply

LOL. This is getting ridiculous! I'm beginning to think Charles Gadda and his aliases are getting a little carried away. For instance, read this blog on how Greensboro, NC Area churches are encouraging prostate examinations for black men. Yes, this is a perfect place for three of Gadda's aliases to attack a Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition. Looney alert! It seems that maybe the rumors of senility of a certain aging University of Chicago professor might be valid after all.

<http://www.news->

[record.com/content/2008/08/09/article/area_churches_encouraging_prostate_tests_for_black_men](http://www.news-record.com/content/2008/08/09/article/area_churches_encouraging_prostate_tests_for_black_men)

0



Peter Kaufman

at 19:23 on September 4th, 2008

reply

Thanks for your interesting comment on my article!

Although this is not my axe to grind, readers may wish to observe that the link in the comment above sends us not to a blog, but to a news item by Nancy McCloughlin (perhaps an alias for Mr. Gadda?) on the Greensboro News-Record site. Nancy concludes her article with this statement:

If you haven't been on *The Front Pew* lately, here's some of what you've missed: ...

and there follow several comments, one of which seems to disagree with the others, about a Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit. Well, it turns out that Nancy (or Gadda?)

also has a blog on the News-Record site called *The Front Pew*, specialized in religious topics, and she has reprinted, at the end of her news item, some comments from a heated debate on that blog, which she thinks might be of interest to readers who may not know about it.

It appears, then, that a religion reporter in Greensboro got carried away, and was *ridiculous* enough to think it would be a good idea, not only to encourage prostate examinations, but to point readers to a debate taking place on her blog about a museum exhibit going on down there in North Carolina. Again, thanks very much for pointing this out, I'm sure it will be of interest to Mr. Gadda and his multiple aliases!

0



Brad H. (not verified)
at 21:56 on September 16th, 2008

reply

I am reading the above story and I see no sign of plagiarism whatsoever. Lots of people have ideas, not only Dr. Golb. This just looks like a libel piece put out by a rival scholar.

1



NYU teaching fellow (not verified)
at 17:37 on September 17th, 2008

reply

A comment on Brad H.'s statement: "Lots of scholars have ideas."

I'm not sure that's an excuse for misrepresenting other people's theories, and for not referencing the scholars who first came up with the ideas being discussed. If Brad is right, plagiarism only exists when people copy each other verbatim.

I think in a situation like the one described here opinions will vary depending on who is looking at the facts... or on which side of the rivalry you're on.

For example, I sent this article to a religion professor who was involved in drafting the academic ethics policy of his university (not in New York), and he responded:

"no question he crossed the line (in my view). I'd heard about this but thanks for sharing."

But I'd be willing to wager that most people teaching in New York, or who dislike Dr. Golb and the views he represents, will tend to have a quite different reaction.

(I'm happy to pass the email exchange and contact information on to Mr. Kaufman if he ever needs it. I can be reached at ethics.policy.statement at g mail.)



Scrolls Fan (not verified)
at 21:37 on September 26th, 2008

[reply](#)

Peter,

How does this story affect the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibits in North Carolina and New York? Does it?



Scrolls Fan (not verified)
at 14:25 on September 27th, 2008

[reply](#)

Peter,

This is an excellent article. Keep up the good work. Are you aware of speculation that the Essenes had enormous hidden treasures that are still buried under the Temple Mount?



NYU grad student (not verified)
at 21:04 on October 30th, 2008

[reply](#)

Peter Kaufman has moved to Wordpress, where he has an interesting update on a lecture Dr. Schiffman's gave yesterday at the Jewish Museum.



NYU grad student (not verified)
at 21:06 on October 30th, 2008

[reply](#)

P.S. That should read Dr. Schiffman, not "Dr. Schiffman's."

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The Dead Sea Scrolls in Seattle and San Diego

This blog shows how the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, Washington, has presented a biased exhibit on the Dead Sea Scrolls by ignoring all developments in research made over the past decade. An expanded but equally biased version of the same exhibit is now moving to the San Diego Natural History Museum.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2007

Curator of San Diego Exhibit responds to criticism

Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn, the curator of the San Diego exhibit, has responded to a comment submitted by our East Coast colleague, Charles Gadda, to the San-Diego-based Jewish Sightseeing site.

The link is:
http://www.jewishsightseeing.com/letters_to_editor/2007-0-1-09-dead%20sea%20challenge.htm

The San Diego Natural History Museum's website states that Dr. Kohn is "the current president of the Society of Biblical Literature, Pacific Coast Region (SBL)...."

Perhaps Dr. Kohn could let us know if SBL has ever invited an opponent of the Qumran-Essene or Qumran-sectarian theory to lecture under its auspices?


Dr. Kohn's letter contains several **highly misleading statements** and, in certain fundamental respects, seems to be indicative of an alarming incapacity on the part of the Museum's award winning staff to understand the nature of this debate.

Ultimately, Dr. Kohn's letter puts a spotlight on the danger of entrusting an exhibit on a topic of this importance not to a specialist in history, archaeology or Hebrew manuscript investigation, but to a professor of religious studies who describes herself as a "Dead Sea Scrolls scholar" even though no publication by her on this subject appears in her bibliography posted at http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/lipinsky/faculty_pub.htm.

Below, we reprint this open exchange of letters, together with Mr. Gadda's reply to Dr Kohn, which was not published by Jewish Sightseeing but which clearly reveals the **evasive and misleading nature of Dr. Kohn's letter**:

Additional comments of our own (in bold throughout) will assist the

Chicago scholar attacks scrolls exhibit
Pacific Science Center misleads Seattle pu...



reader in evaluating these opposing claims.

We invite Dr. Kohn to respond to each of our comments. Hopefully, she will address our points in a direct manner, without deploying the evasive rhetoric of her response to Mr. Gadda.

MR. GADDA'S INITIAL COMMENT:

January 9, 2007

Editor, JewishSightseeing:

I've read your article on the upcoming Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit on your site.

Unfortunately, there has been mounting criticism of this exhibit during recent weeks, on ethical and scholarly grounds.

The San Diego Natural History Museum has published a detailed description of the planned exhibit on its website. Judging from this description, the exhibit will feature exactly the same omissions and distortions that spoiled the recent Seattle exhibit.

People who feel that this type of exhibit should be balanced and informative, rather than biased towards a small clique of scholars whose conduct has previously led to controversy and scandal, may wish to contact the Museum with questions such as the following:

The Cambridge History of Judaism -- probably the most prestigious existing reference work on this topic -- features articles on the two salient theories of Scroll origins, namely (1) the old Qumran-Essene theory and (2) the Jerusalem-libraries theory which has come to be increasingly supported by the newer generation of scholars. Why is the Museum planning to conceal the evidence that supports the Jerusalem theory from the public? Why is the Museum's announced roster of lecturers stacked with scholars who support the old Qumran-Essene theory of Scroll origins, without including a single opponent of it?

Why aren't they planning a public debate on the Scrolls controversy, between proponents and opponents of the old theory? Why doesn't their website material include an accurate description of the newer theory that has played a prominent role in research over the past decade? In a word, is the Museum planning to adhere to the principle of scientific neutrality prescribed by the American Association of Museums?

Thank you for your attention.

Charles Gadda

DR. KOHN'S RESPONSE, with our commentary in bold:

Editor, JewishSightseeing:

A couple of points in response to your reader's critique:

The "mounting" criticism to which your reader refers amounts to one critique of the Seattle Pacific Science Center's Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibition by Norman Golb, a long-standing proponent of the view that completely disconnects the Dead Sea Scrolls from the site of Qumran. Your reader's letter has taken Golb's criticism of the Seattle show and applied it to what he incorrectly believes will be coming to San Diego. **[Dr. Kohn appears to have been unaware of our blog, which existed already several months before Golb's critique appeared on the University of Chicago website.]**

The Exhibition at the San Diego Natural History Museum (SDNHM) is not in any part related or similar to the Seattle exhibition, other than it being sponsored in part by the Israel Antiquities Authority, the government body in Israel responsible for all national treasures. The SDNHM exhibition is being created by and exclusively for this museum and as such will not duplicate any previous Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibition to date. **[This appears to be a fundamental admission of responsibility on the part of SDNHM.]**

The materials available on the SDNHM web site do not provide anything more than a brief introduction to the scrolls in general. On that basis, it is quite premature to draw the conclusion that the exhibition is either "biased" or "unbalanced." Noteworthy is the fact that the SDNHM web site text does not refer to the potential authors of the Scrolls as Essenes, a problematic association based on historical sources but not found in the Scrolls themselves. Similarly, the site points to the fact that "many," but not all scholars, associate the Scrolls with the site of Qumran. **["Many" scholars now believe, on the basis of the sole historical document found "in the Scrolls themselves" as well as other historical sources, that the Scrolls were not the product of a sect, but are the remnants of the libraries of Jerusalem. A common variation on the Qumran-Essene theory holds that the "sect of Qumran" was actually a different sect. By contrast, the proponents of the Jerusalem-libraries theory argue, on the basis of solid empirical evidence rather than speculation, that no sect whatsoever inhabited Qumran or authored "the Scrolls". Dr Kohn is simply evading the fact that instead of fulfilling its mission to educate the public by providing it with information on this fundamental opposition between two contrasting views, SDNHM has chosen to present one of the views as being supported by "many**

scholars", and to hide or distort the evidence that has led an increasing number of scholars to support the other one.]

The curators, developers and designers of the DSS exhibition are well versed in the variety of theories and hypotheses concerning the interpretation with respect to the relationship of the site of Qumran to the provenance of the Scrolls and have sought in their presentation of the material to present facts based on current scholarly consensus as well as considered analysis of the evidence, including the variety of theories posited by Golb and others. [This statement evades the fact that, according to many news reports and the Cambridge History of Judaism, there is no "current scholarly consensus" on the origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but rather a polarization of Scrolls research into two opposing schools.] SDNHM is the only Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) venue in North America to have a full time biblical scholar on its staff and oversee all aspects of this particular exhibition.

A collection of twenty-two world renowned lecturers from different institutions, backgrounds and even nationalities can hardly be referred to as a "small clique" of scholars. Your reader is also clearly not familiar with the work of the archaeologist Dr. Jean Baptiste Humbert who will be presenting his views on the site of Qumran as part of our series in July 2007 and whose archaeological analysis of Qumran is far from mainstream. [On this absurd claim that Dr. Humbert has "non-mainstream" views, see below. Here we point out merely that Dr. Kohn is in essence acknowledging that not a single one of the 22 invited lecturers is a proponent of the Jerusalem theory -- thereby flatly contradicting her earlier assertion that the exhibit is neither "biased" nor "unbalanced." Is the purpose of Dr. Kohn's statement to convince us that traditional Qumranologists form a "big" clique rather than an increasingly "small" one? Why did she choose to invite Dr. Humbert to "present his views", but not Drs. Magen and Peleg, the Israel Antiquities Authority team leaders who after ten years of excavations at Qumran have concluded that the site was a pottery factory and that the Scrolls came from Jerusalem? Is this a balanced, unbiased curatorial decision? Doesn't the San Diego public deserve better than that?]

In short your reader has made several premature assumptions based apparently on Golb's critique of an unrelated exhibition at a different venue entirely. He will likely be pleasantly surprised come June 2007.

Some unique points regarding the SDNHM DSS Exhibition:

This is an original exhibition to the SDNHM, not a "traveling" exhibition. It is designed by our own, award-winning staff, and will not go to any other Museum after it closes here.

[Several statements follow which describe various aspects of the San Diego exhibit. We omit a few of them that appear to be advertising the exhibit rather than contributing any useful information to this debate; the full text of Dr. Kohn's letter may be found at the above-linked site.]

* Of the museums hosting the scrolls, SDNHM is the only museum that has its own curator for the exhibition. As a Dead Sea Scrolls scholar and professor of religious studies at SDSU, I am fortunate to have been selected for that position. [Again, (1) this appears to be a fundamental admission of responsibility on the part of Dr. Kohn and SDNHM -- this time, the Israel Antiquities Authority is not being blamed for the content of the exhibit; (2) we would be grateful if Dr. Kohn could refer us to any published work of hers that qualifies her as a "Dead Sea Scrolls scholar", so that we can set to rest any doubts our readers might otherwise entertain on her credentials in this area, since her on-line bibliography includes no such works.]

* Our team of Dead Sea Scrolls scholars selected the scrolls SDNHM is displaying. 100% of the scrolls she requested were granted to SDNHM. These scrolls are different than the scrolls that have been displayed at other museums; ten of them are being displayed for the first time. [We assume that by "she" in the second sentence of this paragraph, Dr. Kohn meant to say "we" or "they".]

* Some of the scrolls SDNHM is featuring are the very same scrolls that are being studied by the lecturers who are speaking in our Distinguished Lecturer Series.

* SDNHM is the first museum to have the actual Copper Scroll from Jordan. Until now, this scroll was not permitted to be displayed outside of Jordan or with the Dead Sea Scrolls. [Will the Museum frankly acknowledge that this scroll is now widely regarded as the sole historical document (as opposed to scribal copies of literary texts) contained among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and that it lists objects known in part, from rabbinical sources, to be identical with treasures of the Temple of Jerusalem? Or will it offer an evasive description of it such as that employed in the Seattle exhibit, so as to allow it to be reconciled with the Qumran-Essene or Qumran-sectarian theory?]

[...]

* A fine-art landscape photography exhibition will feature photos by Israeli photographers; this exhibition will foster a sense of place for Israel and its deep cultural history. Additional photos will highlight the similarities in terrain, habitat, and Mediterranean climate between Israel and San Diego County. [The reference to Israel's "deep cultural

history" rings hollow in the context of an attempt to justify a series of curatorial actions that include the decisions (1) to invite a Dominican priest, rather than Israel's finest archaeologists, to present his "views on Qumran", and (2) to prevent any proponents of the Jerusalem theory from presenting and explaining the empirical reasons that have led a new generation of scholars to reach dramatic historical conclusions concerning cultural life in the ancient Jewish capital.]

*In our giant screen theater we will feature a virtual reality "walk" through the Qumran community settlement; this tour is being developed by a doctoral candidate from UCLA. [Will this "virtual reality" tour of the "community settlement" be designed to lead the public into giving credence to Father De Vaux's sectarian identifications of rooms and other areas in Qumran, such as the so-called "scriptorium" and "ritual baths", or will it point out that these identifications have been rejected by an entire series of archaeologists over the past decade, including the Donceels, Dr. Hirschfeld and the Israel Antiquities Authority team led by Dr. Magen?]

Dr. Risa Levitt-Kohn

Curator, Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibition, San Diego Natural History Museum

At this point, the Jewish Sightseeing moderator saw fit to end the exchange, but we publish Mr. Gadda's Reply:

Editor, JewishSightseeing:

I have read Dr. Kohn's response -- many thanks for obtaining this from her.

My immediate reaction is that the response is both encouraging and evasive -- it engages a dialogue, but it speaks merely of "the variety of theories posited by Golb and others", and does not address the problem of two salient views, one of which is not represented at all in the Museum's recommended reading list or in the announced lecture series.

Let us be very clear about this. Matti Friedman's recent Associated Press article (Jan. 2, 2007) states that "the nature of the settlement at Qumran is the subject of a lively academic debate. The traditional view... is that the settlement was inhabited by Essene monks who observed strict rules of ritual purity and celibacy and who wrote many of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The second school says the people living at Qumran were farmers, potters or soldiers, and had nothing to do with the Essenes. The scrolls, according to this view, were written in

Jerusalem and stashed in caves at Qumran by Jewish refugees fleeing the Roman conquest of the city in the first century." This statement coincides perfectly with the fact that two theories (and not a "variety of theories") are presented in the Cambridge History of Judaism.

In her statement about 22 lecturers not being a clique, Dr. Kohn implicitly concedes that only traditional Qumranologists have been invited to participate in the lecture series, but she cites the participation of Jean-Baptiste Humbert to refute this point. I am not an expert on Dr. Humbert's view, but I read the following on the web:

"Dr. Jean-Baptiste Humbert of the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem, successor to Father de Vaux at the school, now deceased, generally defended the traditional interpretation. But he conceded, 'Today, no one can prove that Qumran is an Essene site, though the hypothesis remains the most likely one.'"

http://www.ufoarea.com/aas_deadseascrolls.html

In other words, while Dr. Humbert is perhaps not a strict adherent of the Essene theory, he does, like many traditional Qumranologists, follow a modified form of it according to which Qumran was inhabited by a sect that wrote most of the scrolls, although "some" of the scrolls may have come from Jerusalem.

So the question remains, why is the second salient theory, the one developed at length in the Cambridge History of Judaism and cited in news accounts over and over again, not represented by even a single proponent of that theory in the lecture series, let alone the recommended reading list?

If the Museum is responding to my critique in good faith, then, since we are six months away from the exhibit they should be willing to address this question head-on and make additions and/or changes accordingly. In a spirit of openness, would the Museum be willing to invite a scholar like Golb, Magen, Donceel, Wise, Eilior, etc., to evaluate the planned exhibit and recommend modifications?

Charles Gadda

We add a clarification to Mr. Gadda's statement on Dr. Humbert. This scholar, of the Dominican Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, has responded to the Magen and Peleg findings by arguing that the Essenes (who, according to him, authored many, most or all of the Scrolls) might have lived not *inside* Qumran, but *around* the site.

Dr. Humbert's latest, question-begging statement of his view is as

follows: "We refuse to limit the 'Community of Qumran' to a single, 'unique' site and instead emphasize that the sectarians preferred living in the surroundings of the Dead Sea.... If our interpretation is acceptable, Qumran served as a religious center for a Jewish sect living around the Dead Sea". *The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates*, ed. Galor, Humbert and Zangenberg (Brill, 2006), pp. 36, 38.

It is astounding that Dr. Kohn blandly characterizes this "view" as "far from mainstream". Unlike Magen and Peleg's findings which result from ten years of digs, Dr. Humbert's proposal is based not any empirical evidence but only on a series of conjectures; nonetheless, it is an obvious attempt to defend the traditional Qumran-Essene theory against the findings made over the past decade, which have led the official Israel Antiquities Authority team to conclude that the Scrolls were not written by a sect living in the desert but must have come from Jerusalem.

By evading this point, as well as the Museum's failure to invite Dr. Magen and Dr. Peleg to present their findings to the San Diego public, Dr. Kohn obliges us to ask once again: has she chosen to violate the ethically fundamental transparency standard of the American Association of Museums by using this exhibit to defend a distorted, one-sided view of current Scrolls scholarship?

posted by We Demand A Neutral Scientific Exhibit @ 8:06 AM

1

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Dead Sea Scrolls Controversy in San Diego

This blog gathers information on claims being made that the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit taking place at the San Diego Natural History Museum intentionally misinforms the public as to the current state of research in this field. Any supplementary information is welcome; comments will be reviewed on a weekly basis.

FRIDAY, JUNE 29, 2007

Chronology of Dead Sea Scrolls controversy in San Diego

The following is a chronology of events connected with the current controversy surrounding the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the San Diego Natural History Museum. This information will be updated, corrected or revised periodically.

Background

1995: Following in the wake of the Scrolls monopoly scandal, University of Chicago historian Norman Golb publishes *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Golb argues that the scrolls are the remnants of Jerusalem libraries and not the writings of any specific group in ancient Judaism, but rather contain a wide range of conflicting doctrines. Evidence supporting the argument includes the Copper Scroll, the presence of over 500 scribal hands among the scrolls and the wide variety of doctrines they contain, and the lack of any demonstrable organic link between the scrolls and Khirbet Qumran.

2002: New York Times article "[Debate Erupts Over Authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls](#)" reports on wide disagreement of scholars at Brown University conference. Several Israeli archaeologists announce that they have concluded there was no link between Qumran and the scrolls, that no sect ever inhabited Qumran, and that they accept the Jerusalem libraries theory.

2004: Israeli Archaeologist Yizhar Hirschfeld publishes *Qumran in Context: Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence*. Hirschfeld endorses the Jerusalem theory of scroll origins and argues that no sect ever lived at Qumran. Rachel Eilior, the head of the department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, publishes *The Three Temples*, in which she also rejects the Qumran-sectarian theory and focuses on links between the Dead Sea Scrolls and priests in Jerusalem.

Blog Archive

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2006: Israeli archaeologists Yizhak Magen and Yuval Peleg, leaders of the official Israel Antiquities Authority Qumran excavation team, publish the results of ten seasons of digs at Qumran. In their articles (the first of which appeared in *The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates: Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 57*), they reject the identification of Qumran as a sectarian site and conclude that the scrolls are the remnants of Jerusalem libraries.

August 2006: John Noble Wilford reports on the Magen and Peleg conclusions in *The New York Times* and *The International Herald Tribune*. The article is picked up by other newspapers including the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#), and quickly spreads over dozens of internet blogs. Scrolls exhibit opens at Seattle's Pacific Science Center.

December 2006: The Seattle scrolls exhibit winds down and is packed for its move to Kansas City, while San Diego Natural History Museum publishes website description of its own exhibit to open on June 29, 2007, billed as the "largest Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit ever to take place in America."

2007 events

January 9, 2007: San Diego Jewish Sightseeing website publishes an [exchange of letters](#) between Charles Gadda (New York) and Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn, curator of the San Diego exhibit. Gadda notes that *The Cambridge History of Judaism* features two separate articles on the "two salient theories of Scroll origins, namely (1) the old Qumran-Essene theory and (2) the Jerusalem-libraries theory which has come to be increasingly supported by the newer generation of scholars," and asks why the museum's "announced roster of lecturers is stacked with scholars who support the old Qumran-Essene theory of Scroll origins, without including a single opponent of it." In her response, Dr. Kohn does not address the question of lectures, but asserts that the San Diego curators "are well versed in the variety of theories and hypotheses concerning ... the Scrolls and have sought ... to present facts based on current scholarly consensus as well as considered analysis of the evidence, including the variety of theories posited by Golb and others."

January 11, 2007: Anonymous bloggers republish the Jewish Sightseeing exchange with [detailed commentary](#) on Dr. Kohn's letter. The bloggers point to a *New York Times* article quoting Qumran archaeology specialist Katarina Galor's statement that there is no longer any scholarly "consensus" on Scroll origins. The bloggers suggest that Dr. Kohn might have a conflict of interest stemming from her

position as president of the West Coast chapter of the Society of Biblical Literature, and conclude that her letter "puts a spotlight on the danger of entrusting an exhibit on a topic of this importance not to a specialist in history, archaeology or Hebrew manuscript investigation, but to a professor of religious studies who describes herself as a 'Dead Sea Scrolls scholar' even though no publication by her on this subject appears in her bibliography."

February-May 2007: Scrolls exhibit takes place in Kansas City.

April 13, 2007: The Forward publishes editorial by Golb entitled "Take Claims About Dead Sea Scrolls With a Grain of Salt." Golb attacks the scientific credibility of the scrolls exhibits: "A sophisticated media campaign has accompanied all the current exhibits, aimed at convincing the public of the truth of an old, and now increasingly disputed, theory of the Scrolls' origins." Golb denounces "scholarly disregard for ancient Judaic culture" evidenced in exhibits: "Like the recently propagated claim that ossuary coffins found in a Jerusalem crypt contain the remains of the family of Jesus of Nazareth and of Jesus himself," the claims made in the exhibits are "based not on scientific research per se, but rather on conjecture and a tendentious presentation of evidence – techniques feeding on a largely faith-based fascination with Christian origins."

April 26, 2007: Golb lectures at Scrolls exhibit in Kansas City. Report on event in Kansas City Jewish Chronicle quotes Raymond Shubinski, the science director who invited Golb to be part of the series, as stating: "This kind of heated scholarly dispute happens in every scientific field... [Golb's] ideas need to be discussed..."

June 6, 2007: Golb publishes detailed article "Fact and Fiction in Current Exhibitions of Dead Sea Scrolls: A Critical Notebook for Viewers." The article is immediately cited on various biblical studies blogs. An appendix critiques the San Diego exhibit, concluding that statements made on the museum's website "raise basic questions regarding the scientific conduct of the San Diego museum in respect to its forthcoming exhibit of the Scrolls."

During the several weeks that follow, San Diego area newspapers repeatedly publish articles announcing the opening of the exhibit and making no mention of Golb's criticisms. On **June 11**, the Jewish Observer and on **June 26**, the Jewish Journal publish letters by Mr. Gadda attacking the exhibit. Gadda asserts that the "Museum is being accused ... of taking sides in a bitter and widening academic dispute. The Museum's motives for hosting such a biased exhibit are unclear; thus, its conduct manifestly violates the ethical-transparency

standard promulgated by the American Association of Museums."

June 26, 2007: Los Angeles Times publishes article by Mike Boehm entitled "A lively debate over the Dead Sea Scrolls." Boehm quotes Golb's article: "The museum, instead of guiding viewers toward an understanding of the controversy over the origin and significance of the scrolls, manifestly undertakes to manipulate the layman's comprehension of them," and Kohn's reply: "You don't want to confuse people with so many competing theories, so they walk away, saying, 'Well, nobody really knows anything!'"

June 27-28, 2007: Comments appear on various websites accusing Dr. Kohn of insulting the public's intelligence with her statement "you don't want to confuse people," and pointing to the contradiction between this statement and her earlier claim of January 9, 2007 (see above) to the effect that the exhibit would not be slanted towards one particular view but would include "the variety of theories posited by Golb and others." Commentators argue that the exhibit violates the San Diego museum's declared mission to "educate the public."

June 29, 2007: San Diego scrolls exhibit opens.

July, 2007: UCLA press campaign publicizes "findings" of Dr. William Schniedewind, presented at the museum in a "virtual reality" film produced by his graduate student Robert Cargill. Mr. Cargill announces that the film was funded by \$100,000 provided jointly by the San Diego museum and Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation. Writing on the Nowpublic site, Charles Gadda questions the originality of Schniedewind's "findings" and suggests that the film and accompanying press campaign are designed to mislead the public as to the grounds for the research conclusions of several Israeli archaeologists.

August 2, 2007: Article by Mr. Gadda entitled Christian Fundamentalism and the Dead Sea Scrolls in San Diego appears on Nowpublic site. Gadda exposes apparent evangelical affiliations of several individuals involved in creating and setting the agenda of the exhibit. Among other revelations, the article indicates that Dr. Schniedewind serves on the Board of Advisors and adjunct faculty of the University of the Holy Land, a Christian educational institution, and that before enrolling at UCLA, Dr. Schniedewind's student Robert Cargill received a Master of Science degree in Christian Ministry and a Master of Divinity degree from Pepperdine University, affiliated with the Churches of Christ.

August 18 (?), 2007: British humanist View from Number 80 blog

attacks San Diego exhibit, asserting that "in the USA, a country half-choked by its own religiosity, a Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit has been doing the rounds, oddly promoting an old and largely discredited theory about the origin of the scrolls and their authors..." Referring to Gadda's Nowpublic articles, the blog further asserts that "celebrities, including Steven Spielberg, have contributed considerable sums of money to fund the exhibit and its associated 'scholars', most likely unaware that they were aiding in the dissemination of pseudo-archaeology and an unjustified and partisan interpretation of the evidence both textual and archaeological."

September, 2007: Updates to Mr. Gadda's "Christian Fundamentalism" article provide information to the effect that David Noel Freedman (a well-known professor of Biblical studies and one of the organizers of the exhibit) has been a Presbyterian minister since 1944, and that he was a member of the original Dead Sea Scrolls monopoly team. Gadda further reveals that Dr. Russell Fuller (who teaches in the department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Diego, a Roman Catholic institution) is a consultant of the San Diego Natural History Museum with respect to its Scrolls exhibit. On July 23, Fuller gave a lecture at the museum entitled "Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?" which is the title of the well-known book by Golb (who was excluded from the lecture series). Fuller's lecture was sponsored by Point Loma Nazarene University, an institution affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene. Point Loma's on-line mission statement asserts that it aims to become a "nationally prominent Christian university."


September 24-25, 2007: In a comment submitted to the Nowpublic page featuring Gadda's article, Dr. Pam Fox Kuhlken, who is the co-author with David Noel Freedman of a popular book on the Scrolls, responds to criticisms, defending Dr. Freedman and suggesting that Gadda is establishing "guilt by association." Gadda replies, pointing to Dr. Kuhlken's own associations with Christian educational institutions (she is in fact the founder of a Christian on-line "college") and to her role as a "Christian writer." We have reproduced [excerpts from this public exchange](#) on a separate page.

October 6, 2007: A [new article](#) by Gadda, again on the Nowpublic site, reveals that Martin Abegg, co-director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute at Trinity Western University, was involved in the creation of the San Diego exhibit. The Dead Sea Scrolls Institute's program states: "We believe that Evangelical Christian scholars should play a significant role in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls." In addition, Gadda reveals that in an interview of June 2, 2007, Dr. Kohn denied that the Dead Sea Scrolls were "Jewish" texts. Gadda concludes that

the museum's conduct has resulted in an "appearance of impropriety," and suggests that "we appear to be dealing, at the very least, with an exhibition tainted by intellectual antisemitism, with an obscurantist, seemingly irrational fear of debate, and with biased conduct that is abhorrent to our basic social sentiments and to the principle of freedom of inquiry which lies at the core of our system of values."

October 22, 2007: Golb launches wide-ranging critique of San Diego exhibit in 24-page article entitled The Dead Sea Scrolls as Treated in a Recently Published Catalogue. The article examines the translations and descriptions of the various scrolls contained in the exhibit's catalogue (authored by the curator, Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn), arguing that they are repeatedly erroneous, misleading and mendacious. Golb offers 23 examples of "factual errors and unprovable assertions presented as truths." He concludes that "every conceivable effort appears to have been made to convince readers of the truth or verisimilitude of the Qumran-sectarian theory," and that evidence to the contrary is "thoroughly suppressed from the catalogue." In the lack of "scientific evidence to justify this course of conduct," he questions whether the museum was motivated by "financial gain ... regardless of the truth or falsehood of the curatorial claims."

November 16, 2007: Golb publishes review of "Virtual Qumran" film funded by Steven Spielberg and being shown at exhibit: The So-Called "Virtual Reality Tour" at the 2007 San Diego Scrolls Exhibit. The article offers further examples of false assertions made throughout the film. A passage towards the end focuses on marginal comments in the film script that apparently were not intended for publication, and in which the author of the film (Robert Cargill) appears to be referring to secret deliberations over the contents of the film (Cargill's exact words are "there is a third reason, but I never write it down." Golb concludes: "The effort here expressed cannot but raise troubling issues regarding the genesis and purpose of this show."

Posted by Museum Ethics Controversy at 11:42 AM 

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Dead Sea Scrolls Controversy in San Diego

This blog discusses the conduct of the San Diego Natural History Museum with respect to the Museum's upcoming Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit. It raises the possibility that the exhibit's curator has a conflict of interest, with the result that the public will be egregiously misinformed as to the current state of Scrolls scholarship, in violation of ethical standards promulgated by the American Association of Museums.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2007

Not one of 22 opponents of old theory invited to Museum lecture series

Scroll down for a list of 22 opponents and/or critics of the old, "Qumran-sectarian" theory of Scroll origins, none of whom have been invited to participate in the lecture series accompanying the Natural History Museum's upcoming Scrolls exhibit. Instead, the Museum has announced lectures by 22 proponents of the old theory.

San Diego's Jewish Sightseeing blog has published a letter from Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn, curator of the exhibit, attempting to defend the exhibit against allegations of misconduct. For details and links, see Curator-Responds-to-Allegations-of-Misconduct.blogspot.com.

In her letter, Dr. Kohn denies that the exhibit is "biased" and "unbalanced". In essence, she admits that not a single opponent of the traditional theory has been invited to participate in the Museum's lecture series (featuring, as we said, 22 speakers), but she attempts to justify this decision by referring to the "scholarly consensus" on Scroll origins.

This assertion flatly contradicts recent new accounts, as well as John Noble Wilford's 2002 New York Times article describing what he calls a "crumbling consensus" on Scroll origins. Wilford quotes Brown University archaeologist Dr. Katharina M. Galor (co-editor of Qumran, The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls : Archaeological Interpretations And Debates, Brill 2006) as saying "There is no new consensus, or the new consensus is that the old consensus is dead." See [Text of Wilford's article](#).

What gives Dr. Kohn (whose on-line bibliography doesn't include a single piece of writing on the topic despite her claim to be a "Dead Sea Scrolls scholar"), rather than Dr. Galor (who is a recognized expert in the field), the right to decide whether or not there is a "consensus"?

In response to Dr. Kohn's claim of consensus, we have compiled a list of 22 scholars who are known to have opposed or been critical of the

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traditional Qumran-sectarian theory in published books or articles. Not a single one of these scholars (let alone the most prominent of them: Donceel, Elior, Golb, Magen or Peleg) has been invited to participate in the Museum's lecture series.

We believe that a great number of additional scholars doubt the traditional theory but maintain a facade of "neutrality" in their writings because of feared professional consequences. By way of illustration, any scholar who wishes to participate in the Museum's lecture series, must adhere to the traditional theory; if he declares his opposition to the theory, he will be excluded. Thus, the Museum's policy (undeclared, but manifest in its conduct) will have a "chilling effect" on progress in Scrolls research and poses a fundamental ethical problem.

The Museum website states that Dr. Kohn is "the current president of the Society of Biblical Literature, Pacific Coast Region". We ask the Museum: has a single one of the below-listed scholars ever been invited to lecture at the Society of Biblical Literature? We are obliged to ask this question, because we are concerned that Dr. Kohn may have a conflict of interest stemming from her position at the Society - a conflict that would flagrantly violate the ethical standards of the American Association of Museums.

List of 22 opponents and/or critics of Qumran-sectarian theory:

Rachel Bar-Nathan (Israel Antiquities Authority)
 Steven Bowman (University of Cincinnati)
 Lena Cansdale (University of Sydney)
 Alan Crown (University of Sydney)
 Phillip Davies (Sheffield University)
 Robert Donceel (Catholic University of Louvain)
 Pauline Donceel-Voute (Catholic University of Louvain)
 Rachel Elior (Hebrew University)
 Katharina Galor (Brown University)
 Norman Golb (University of Chicago)
 Menashe Harel (University of Tel Aviv)
 Yizhar Hirschfeld (Hebrew University)
 Matthias Klinghardt (Technische Universität Dresden)
 Yitzhak Magen (Israel Antiquities Authority)
 Steve Mason (York University)
 Yuval Peleg (Israel Antiquities Authority)
 K.H. Rengstorf (University of Munster)
 David Rothstein (UCLA)
 Yaakov Shavit (University of Tel Aviv)
 Michael Wise (Northwestern College)
 David Washburn (author of A Catalog of Biblical Passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Brill 2004)
 Jurgen Zangenberg (University of Leiden)

40014

Dead Sea Scrolls in New York

July 28, 2008

New York's Jewish Museum announces Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, sees lack of consensus on scrolls' origins

Filed under: Uncategorized — biblicalnewyork @ 7:39 pm

Tags: Archaeology, bart ehrman, Bible, biblical studies, christianity, Church, dead sea scrolls, History, judiasm, new york, raleigh, Religion, risa levitt kohn, San Diego, Susan Braunstein

New York's famous Jewish Museum has announced its upcoming Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, produced by the Israel Antiquities Authority and entitled "*The Dead Sea Scrolls: Mysteries of the Ancient World.*"

In a marked departure from previous Dead Sea Scrolls exhibits, the announcement describes the "Qumran-Essene" theory of scroll origins as merely one among several possibilities, and we read that the question of who wrote the scrolls is

still being debated by historians and archaeologists, particularly now that the last of the scrolls have been published and new archaeological studies have been undertaken on material from sites in the Dead Sea region. Just as it took sixty years to study and publish the individual scrolls, **it may be many years before scholars can come to a consensus** on who wrote and used the Dead Sea Scrolls, where they lived, and how this impacts on our interpretation of their meaning for our lives today.

In a separate press release, the Museum explains that during recent years,

scholars have once again pored over these texts and over the archaeological remains from Qumran, seeking to unravel their mysteries: Who wrote and used them? What can they tell us about the development of early Judaism, the text-oriented and synagogue-based form of worship that evolved alongside the sacrificial rituals at the Temple? And can they shed light on the beginnings of Christianity in the first century CE?

Finding the answers to these questions is an ongoing process, one that has already produced lively scholarly debates. The scrolls have opened up a **complex world of Jewish diversity** and inquiry from which Christianity eventually emerged.

Scholars have **two basic theories** about who used the scrolls. The first posits that the scrolls all belonged to a single religious sect [living] at the settlement of Qumran. Most scholars identify this group as the Essenes ... although other groups such as the Sadducees and even proto-Christians have been proposed.

The second theory proposes that the scrolls were a random collection of texts reflecting the beliefs of **many Jewish groups** of the period. They represented either a single priestly repository or public library or the sacred texts of various Jewish communities from Jerusalem and elsewhere in the land of Israel. During the Jewish revolt against Rome beginning in 68 CE, refugees from further north hid their precious texts in the Dead Sea caves. This hypothesis holds that there is **no connection between the scrolls and the**

settlement at Qumran, and that the site was a fortress, a villa, a farm, an industrial site, or a commercial center.

The press release further states that in an exhibition gallery, "visitors will learn that **scholars still do not agree** about the origins and meaning of the scrolls decades after their discovery," and that "in assembling the exhibition... Susan Braunstein, Curator of Archaeology and Judaica... selected texts that illustrate the **diversity and transformations in Judaism** during the Second Temple Period."

Those who have been following the Dead Sea Scrolls controversy over the past few years can hardly fail to read these statements as a sharp rebuke to various individuals involved in the controversy (including Risa Levitt Kohn, the curator of the 2007 San Diego exhibit) who have been arguing that scrolls exhibits should reflect a claimed Qumran-Essene "consensus." [See also Bart Ehrman's attempt to justify the biased scrolls exhibit that has been traveling around the country.]

Indeed, the New York museum's frank and neutral recognition that no such consensus even exists cannot but call further attention to the stance of various "science" museums around the country, where exhibitors have used their displays and lecture series to inculcate belief in the disputed sectarian theory, their stated aim being to avoid "confusing people with so many competing theories" (Dr. Kohn as quoted in the Los Angeles Times).

This is the attitude adopted, for example, by the creators of the exhibit currently taking place in Raleigh, North Carolina, who hired Dr. Kohn as their "scientific consultant" despite her biased handling of the San Diego exhibit (reflected in her statement that the scrolls are not really "Jewish" texts).

The Raleigh exhibit – showing in, of all locations, a "natural sciences" museum operated by the North Carolina Department of the Environment, which is a government agency — will be running through December, and will thus overlap with the Jewish Museum exhibit. There is, however, a quite astonishing contradiction between the stances taken by the North Carolina institution and the museum in New York. Doesn't the public deserve some kind of explanation as to how this came about and what it means?

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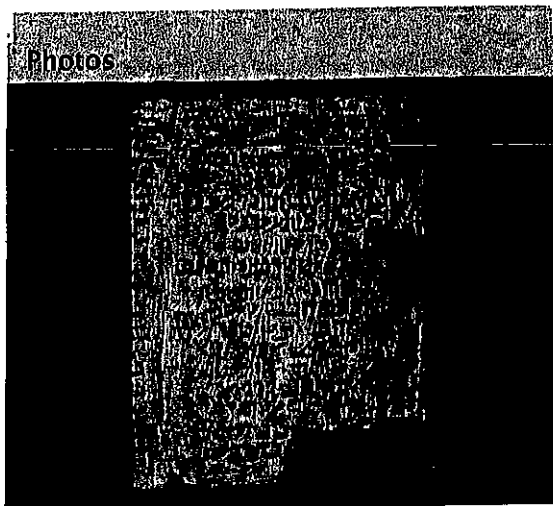
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Antisemitism and the Dead Sea Scrolls

by Charles Gadda | February 26, 2009 at 03:30 pm

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While details of a terrible struggle concerning the rigging of Dead Sea Scrolls exhibits have been trickling out (see, for example, here), there is perhaps not enough general awareness of the role played by antisemitism in fifty years of scrolls research. Therefore, it will be useful to present some basic information on the topic, so readers can place the current exhibit controversy in context.

The elements of this scandal have been documented in many venues, including, most recently, in an article by Edward Rothstein of the *New York Times*.

Rothstein explains that in the aftermath of the 1948 war, virtually all of the thousands of text fragments found in the caves near Qumran were kept in the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem, and the Jordanian government appointed a team of "editors" to publish them, led by Roland de Vaux, a Dominican priest affiliated with the *École Biblique* (also in East Jerusalem).

Now the crucial fact, as Rothstein indicates, is that "Jewish scholars were deliberately excluded from de Vaux's original eight-member team, which was dominated by Roman Catholic priests and scholars."

According to Rothstein, De Vaux "rejected offers by Israelis to help his team and persisted in referring to Israel as Palestine." Other members of the team also had a "scorn of political [and] religious aspects of Judaism."

Rothstein explains that while the theory that the scrolls were produced by a sect of ascetic Essenes was first proposed by a Jewish scholar teaching at the Hebrew University, "that

vision was filled out by de Vaux and his colleagues," who argued that Qumran housed a "monastic celibate group living in the desert, isolated from other Judaic movements," and espousing messianic views that "embodied almost proto-Christian sensibilities."

Referring to what is commonly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls monopoly, Rothstein reminds us that "the scrolls were passed among generations of scholars like esoteric possessions," and that the Qumran-sectarian theory "became orthodoxy, made immutable because until the 1990s the texts were largely inaccessible to outsiders."

Rothstein observes that "the scholarly cult devoted to these scrolls was as tightly knit, self-regarding and monastic as the cult those scholars imagined produced the scrolls." (Substance is given to Rothstein's account in an editorial by University of Chicago historian Norman Golb, where we read that the "complex history of the Palestinian Jews on the eve of the First Revolt [was] pushed aside in favor of a bizarre, Christologically colored thesis.")

This situation continued until recent times, because when Israel conquered the West Bank in 1967, it failed, according to Rothstein, to "assert any real authority over the project."

John Strugnell, an early appointee of de Vaux, became head of the team in the 1980s, and in 1990 gave an interview in which he described Judaism as a "horrible religion" that "should have disappeared." (For more on Strugnell, see his New York Times obituary by John Noble Wilford, where we learn, for example, that he never received a Ph.D.)

At least one member of the original monopoly, David Noel Freedman, was a convert to Christianity who served as a Presbyterian minister; his student, Risa Levitt Kohn, curated the San Diego exhibit and is "guest-curating" the Toronto exhibit; in a published interview, she has declared that the scrolls are not really "Jewish texts."

Another monopoly member, John Allegro, issued an antisemitic book, *The Chosen People* (1971), which is regularly cited on "maverick" websites. I've posted a few extracts from this work here, and see, e.g., this page, where we learn that the work is "the best study ... for the general anti-Semite to read," because it "details just how blood-thirsty, organized and generally genocidal the Jews were." The author of this fascinating statement explains that Allegro was a "theologian who focused on 'macro-theology' and the Essene connection to Christianity."

I don't recall ever reading that the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect a "blood-thirsty and genocidal" world-view. Clearly, then, Dr. Kohn was right to say that they are not really "Jewish texts," despite the standard term intertestamental Judaism, commonly used to describe the period and culture to which they belong.

To be sure, Allegro left the editorial "team" before he published his quasi-scholarly diatribe; Strugnell himself was dismissed after making his antisemitic statements; and in the 1990s the group was gradually opened to a number of Jews, after Oxford scholar Geza Vermes -- another convert to Christianity and an adamant defender of the Qumran-sectarian theory -- admitted that the monopoly was "the academic scandal par excellence of the 20th century," but entered into a controversial deal to obtain copies of the unpublished scrolls for Oxford under the condition that only individuals selected by the "official" editors could see them.

Despite the grudging expansion of the "team," today it remains a fact that no one who fundamentally disagrees with the old Qumran-sectarian theory has ever been included in it. Moreover, while a variety of Jewish scholars have been invited to give lectures at the current museum exhibits, the views of the key opponents of the sectarian theory -- in particular, of the prominent scholars in Israel and elsewhere who have argued for a specifically *Jewish*, as opposed to sectarian, theory of scroll origins -- have been largely downplayed and excluded from these venues (with, it would seem, the single exception of the Jewish Museum's recent exhibit in New York).

Finally, is it insignificant that an antisemitic insinuation has appeared in a press release announcing at least one of the exhibits, and that a concerted effort to prevent the public from finding out about opposition to the exhibits appears to have been engaged in by interested parties, some of whose work histories include, for example, employment in companies with names like "Christianity.com"?

Clearly these are difficult questions. Nor can antisemitism alone be held responsible for the current crisis in scrolls research: personal enmities, financial interests, the ordinary, paltry desire for power are surely all partly to blame. This being said, the question of how much influence the shadow of the original monopoly continues to exercise over public perception of the scrolls remains a pressing issue to this day, and one is entitled to wonder whether inviting a few Jewish people to participate in the exhibits isn't a bit like that old story: "Oh, but I have many Jewish friends..."

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tikun

at 15:37 on February 26th, 2009

reply

Thanks so much. I read about the controversy but only in passing.

2



Esta

at 15:39 on February 26th, 2009

reply

As a person who had the honor of studying the scrolls, with a man who was there when they were dug up and who helped to translate them, I understand them quite well. (the teacher had to get a special dispensation to teach the class, as he was nearly 90 at the time) In any case, he left the team of translators, due to the fact they did and one assumes still are sitting on them and denying others the right to view, other than a select few.

0



René

at 17:13 on February 26th, 2009

reply

I knew there was a reason I never looked into them much. The Nag Hammadi scrolls are much more interesting. and controversial.

0



Roy C

at 21:17 on February 26th, 2009

reply

Actually, the Catholics translating the scrolls tried to control the whole thing to insure the interpretation that they wanted, but, after a while, they had to let others photograph them and translate them. Orthodoxy will not rule in the end.

0



Esta

at 14:59 on February 27th, 2009

reply

Which is why my good teacher, left the group, in protest.

2



oldleftie (not verified)

at 18:08 on March 2nd, 2009

reply

As an observant Jew who has for many years been forced to confront antisemitism, I cannot however deny that many of the events described in *Tanach* can give modern readers the impression that Jews of the Biblical period were "blood-thirsty, organized and generally genocidal". The problem with those who promote this view is that, while one cannot deny the ethnic cleansing that the Israelites promoted in their conquest of the land, one cannot know the nature of the culture, and whether those whom the Israelites were so bent on eliminating were any less determined to eliminate them. Jesus' appearance so many centuries later and his rejection by the Jews of his time cannot properly be connected to the Jews of the time of Saul who were commanded by Samuel to destroy Amalek. A fair reading of the works of Hillel and other respected theologians of the period immediately preceding Jesus' time on earth shows that most of that which Jesus is credited with proclaiming were in fact being taught in the generation before his birth; and, given the structure of Hebrew theological education which requires anything propounded be substantiated with reference to a prior authority (much like citing precedent in legal briefs) it is almost certain that Jesus would have been familiar with the new humanism that was permeating the Judaism of the decade immediately preceding the Common Era. That, centuries earlier, Jews were willing to portray themselves as warlike and intolerant does not mean that by the time that Christianity was born the religion and culture of Judaism had not already become one promoting peace and justice.



Charles Gadda

at 11:46 on March 3rd, 2009

[reply](#)

Obviously I agree. There are, of course, unpalatable things about many ancient cultures, and to take, some twenty-five years after the Holocaust, certain aspects of the biblical narrative and make them into central characteristics of ancient Palestinian Judaism was plainly abusive and misleading, particularly in view of the fact that Judaism had profoundly transformed itself by the Talmudic period.

The point I'd like to insist on is that according to one perspective, many of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves document that transformation in ancient Judaism, and the insistence of exhibitors on presenting them to millions of people as the product of a "separate" group from which early Christianity developed, arguably reflects deeply entrenched attitudes -- ones quite handily expressed in this antisemitic "cult classic," *The Chosen People*, produced by a Dead Sea Scrolls scholar who participated in the original scrolls monopoly team and supported the Qumran-Essene theory.

Unfortunately, even many Jews who attend the lectures at the current exhibits can

<http://www.nowpublic.com/health/antisemitism-and-dead-sea-scrolls>

hardly come away without being influenced by some of these attitudes. It is distressing to see, upon doing a simple google search, an antisemitic statement appearing on the website of a Raleigh-area synagogue in connection with a publicity campaign for a Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit.

All I can do is express the hope that eventually people will begin to realize what has been going on for the past ten years, in museums and on the internet (including the vicious chat-room attacks coming from the Duke University library and elsewhere against scholars who have rejected the Qumran-sectarian theory), and that they will take whatever measures need to be taken to put a stop to it.



Toto Katt (not verified)
at 14:39 on March 3rd, 2009

[reply](#)

Why must you libel John Allegro? His book is not anti-semitic, not a "cult classic." His views are compatible with what most Jews and others already believe, and only upset religious fundamentalists. There is more on the FRDB thread you started:
<http://www.freeratio.org/showthread.php?t=263326>



another old leftie (not verified)
at 17:32 on March 3rd, 2009

[reply](#)

This is hardly the first time someone has suggested John Allegro was an anti-Semite. A google search brings up various sources. The regular citation of Allegro by neo-Nazis is in line with the same interpretation.



Charles Gadda
at 17:02 on March 4th, 2009

[reply](#)

I've posted a few extracts from the book here, so readers can judge for themselves whether it's "compatible with what most Jews and others already believe." I certainly don't wish to libel John Allegro or assert that he, as a person, was an "antisemite," but I don't think respect for his memory should prevent us from seeing *The Chosen People* for what it was -- a quasi-scholarly diatribe, containing a series of disingenuous arguments similar to ones cataloged in Leon Poliakov's *History of Antisemitism*. When I call it a "cult classic," I am of course referring to the point of view of the "mavericks" who cite it as a source.

As pointed out in the discussion linked by Toto, Allegro's daughter, Judith Anne Brown, attempted to justify the book by saying that her father was merely "trying to establish the historical reasons why the Jews *felt themselves special*, aside from the emotional ones that *fostered their pride*." As I said in that discussion as well,

this doesn't quite do it for me; in fact, it reminds me of De Gaulle's famous statement that the Jews are an "elite people, sure of themselves and domineering."

Ms. Brown also wrote that scholars avoided "interviews and debates" dealing with her father's book because "they may have been afraid of stirring up anti-Semitism." While there is no doubt a good deal of truth to that, I think it is also quite clear that people were simply saddened by the tragic path this Dead Sea Scrolls scholar's life had taken, and decided it would be in poor taste to entertain the matter further. Arguably, it is only in retrospect, i.e., now that the Qumran-Essene theory has been rejected by an entire series of major Jewish researchers, that the significance of this episode has become clear.



Jews are Anti-Semitic? (not verified)
at 20:30 on March 3rd, 2009

reply

Charles,

Are you suggesting that Jews that disagree with Dr. Golb are anti-Semitic? Are Christians that disagree with Dr. Golb anti-Semitic too? Are Christians and Jews that conclude that Essenes wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls anti-Semitic? Are Jews and Christians that agree that the Essenes were not proto-Christians anti-Semitic? Are Christian and Jewish scholars that agree that the Essenes have nothing to do with Christianity anti-Semitic?

The only scholars I know of that think the Essenes have anything to do with Christianity are Robert Eisenman and Barbara Thiering. Are they the ones you believe are anti-Semitic?



Charles Gadda
at 22:38 on March 3rd, 2009

reply

Good day to you. I certainly didn't mean to suggest anything of the sort :)

Rather, I have pointed to a well-documented phenomenon connected with the elaboration of a major historical theory over the course of some 50 years, and raised the question of its continuing influence on public perception of the scrolls today (see the last paragraph of my article above).


As for speculation about connections between the hypothesized "sect of Qumran" and early Christianity, there has been an unabated flood of literature since the

1950s. See *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Rev. James Charlesworth (a Methodist minister), *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* by Rev. Joseph Fitzmyer (a Jesuit priest), and many other works with similar titles. (Readers can simply google "Jesus Dead Sea Scrolls" to see the type of speculation on this topic that keeps pouring out, and where, in many instances, it leads).

This being said, and setting aside the topic dealt with in my article (and in Rothstein's), the problem of "Jewish antisemitism," and the perversity involved in it, is of course a hotly debated one. I don't have the time to chase down sources, but you may wish to start here.



Cheers,

Charles Gadda

 Cal BerkelEy Alum (not verified)
at 22:53 on March 4th, 2009


[reply](#)

How does one spell **Berkeley**, anyway? dumbass.

  **Charles Gadda**
at 23:34 on March 4th, 2009



[reply](#)

I'm not sure I see the connection (?) but I'm glad to hear you went to Berkeley!
Thanks for your comment and have a good day.

 Explanation Please (not verified)
at 23:56 on March 4th, 2009

[reply](#)

So let me get this straight. Scholars that think the Essenes wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls are anti-Semitic?

  **Charles Gadda**
at 00:11 on March 5th, 2009

[reply](#)

As I said earlier, I certainly didn't mean to suggest anything of the kind (see my comment above). It is of course interesting to reflect on the vicious, systematic and total exclusion of Jewish researchers from the monopoly, and to ask whether, as Rothstein suggests, the theory elaborated by the monopolists reflected their own "cult-like" religious orientation. But I don't see how one could reasonably derive a general statement from any of this of the sort you have proposed here. That at least is my opinion. Thanks for your comment!

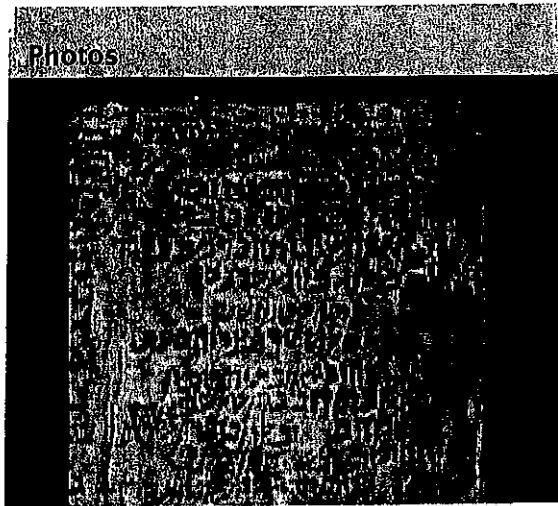
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Did Christian agenda lead to biased Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit?

by Charles Gadda | October 5, 2007 at 10:45 pm

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February 27, 2009 update: the Dead Sea Scrolls controversy is now moving to Toronto. See this article from the National Post; and see historian Norman Golb's scathing review of the San Diego exhibit catalog, which was prepared by the same person who will be curating the upcoming Royal Ontario Museum exhibit. See also the letter by Michael Hager, director of the San Diego museum, attacking Golb, and Golb's response to Hager. For background on antisemitism in Dead Sea

Scrolls research, see my new item.

"The truth is, I wouldn't classify these as Jewish texts...."

Curator of Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, San Diego Natural History Museum, speaking on June 2, 2007

Was it appropriate for a scientific institution to allow a group of Christian academics to impose their agenda on an exhibit of ancient documents taking place under its auspices? Given what happened with the **Dead Sea Scrolls** exhibit that took place in 2007 at the San Diego Natural History Museum, this question confronts those of us who are concerned with issues of science, religion and ethics in American society.

Take a look at the program of the "Dead Sea Scrolls Institute" at Trinity Western University (which, as its name and website description indicate, is a Christian establishment). The program states: "We believe that Evangelical Christian scholars should play a **significant role** in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls." Well, the Institute's co-director, **Martin Abegg**,

did indeed play a “significant role” in creating the exhibit of the scrolls that took place in 2006 at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, even to the point of acting as Governor Christine Gregoire’s “personal guide” on her tour of the exhibit; and there can be little doubt that he was involved in the creation of the San Diego exhibit too – as indicated, for example, in his role as a “featured commentator” on the exhibit’s audio tour.

It is thus not surprising to learn that, in an interview of June 2, 2007, the **curator** of the San Diego exhibit, Dr. **Risa Levitt Kohn**, stated:

“The truth is, I wouldn’t classify these as Jewish texts... Because I would say Judaism, the way we tend to think about it, even early Judaism, is not yet fully crystallized in this period....”

While flowing naturally from the views of Abegg and a number of other individuals whose names are listed below, Kohn’s statement was, unfortunately, tendentious; and it was particularly inappropriate coming from the curator of a supposedly scientific Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit. After all, the scrolls are mostly Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts dating from a time when the civilization commonly known as “intertestamental Judaism” flourished in Palestine. What is more, an important group of historians and archaeologists have argued, both from the actual contents of the texts and from the results of the excavations of the past decade, that the scrolls are specifically the remains of *Jewish* libraries in Jerusalem, removed to multiple locations in the desert for safekeeping shortly before or during the Roman siege and sacking of the city in 70 A.D.

The evidence supporting this *Jewish* view (treated as one of the two salient theories of scroll origins in the Cambridge History of *Judaism*, and in the press release announcing the New York *Jewish* Museum’s remarkably unbiased 2008 scrolls exhibit) was simply **concealed** in the San Diego exhibit, which favored the so-called “Qumran-Essene” theory according to which the scrolls were written, not by multiple groups of Jews living in a major urban center, but by a radical sect (or “community”) imagined, without any supporting archaeological proof, to have been living in a military fortress and commercial entrepot in the desert. What is more, all of the Jerusalem theory’s proponents were **excluded from participating** in the lecture series accompanying the exhibit. Thus, none of the proponents of the *Jewish* view had

the opportunity to publicly challenge Dr. Kohn's assertion concerning the *non*-Jewish character of the scrolls.

We must note, moreover, that in the same interview, Dr. Kohn asserted that she studied the scrolls only in a "tangential" way, thereby contradicting her earlier written statement of January 9, 2007, to the effect that she is a "Dead Sea Scrolls scholar."

Bearing these assertions of Dr. Kohn's in mind, let us now turn to the religious background, training and affiliations of the five key individuals who – in addition, of course, to the above-cited Martin Abegg – are known to have been involved in the creation of the San Diego exhibit (for full details and links, see my article on Christian fundamentalism and the Dead Sea Scrolls in San Diego):

- **David Noel Freedman:** Presbyterian minister from 1944 until his death in 2008, biblical scholar and member of the original team that monopolized the Dead Sea Scrolls for many years; Risa Levitt Kohn's professor at UCSD; co-author, with Pam Fox Kuhlken (who, since this piece first came out, has been hired to teach in the same "Department of Religious Studies" as Risa Levitt Kohn at San Diego State University), of a popular book on the scrolls whose publication was timed to coincide with the exhibit (I will have a word to say about this book below).

- **Weston Fields:** Th.D. from "Grace Theological Seminary," Ph.D. in biblical studies from Hebrew University; affiliated with Christian fundamentalist "University of the Holy Land" network; connected with Freedman and other members of the old monopoly team, through the "Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation" of which he is the director; sells Dead Sea Scrolls ties.

- **Russell Fuller:** professor in the Theology department at the University of San Diego, which (despite its name) is a "Roman Catholic institution" with a declared religious mission. His lecture at the museum was sponsored by "Point Loma Nazarene University," which aims to become a "nationally prominent Christian university."

- **William Schniedewind:** B.A. and M.A. from two Christian educational institutions ("George Fox University" and "Jerusalem University College," which was the predecessor of

the “Institute of Holy Land Studies”); Ph.D. from Brandeis; biblical scholar at UCLA; described in one news item as a “practicing Christian with a deep appreciation of Judaism”; listed, until September 2007, as adjunct professor and member of board of advisors on personnel page of the “University of the Holy Land”; apparently no longer affiliated with that institution.

· **Robert Cargill**: Schniedewind’s graduate student at UCLA; received his Ph.D. in 2008; holds Christian Ministry and Divinity degrees from Pepperdine University, an institution affiliated with the Churches of Christ; his employment history includes a year-long stint at a company called Christianity.com. An article that appeared on a Jewish website two weeks before the San Diego exhibit opened, and for which he was interviewed, states merely that while at Pepperdine he majored in “biblical studies” -- a very interesting way of describing his program there -- and quotes him as stating that he “realized that to understand Christianity I had to first understand Judaism.”

These five individuals, both separately and in tandem, (1) taught Risa Levitt Kohn at UCSD and recommended her as curator to the museum; (2) arranged for the scrolls to come to San Diego; (3) served as consultant(s) to the museum’s exhibit; (4) have defended the old Qumran-Essene theory of Dead Sea Scroll origins in a variety of articles that ignore the major archaeological research developments of the past decade and feature titles like “Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage”; and (5) created a misleading “virtual reality” film that carefully distorts current research on Qumran and was shown at the exhibit. They also (6) snatched the title of a book by one of the excluded scholars for a lecture at the museum attacking the excluded scholars’ views; and (7) used the exhibit to promote their own books; engaged in sensationalist media campaigns designed to promote their own ideas as well as the exhibit; and have remained utterly silent in the face of criticism.

With respect to the above-mentioned popular book by **David Noel Freedman** and Pam Fox Kuhlken: timed, as I said, to coincide with the San Diego exhibit, and entitled *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?*, it presents the Qumran-Essene theory in the manner of a dogma, without even informing readers of the existence of historical and archaeological research to the contrary. One passage, narrated in an earnest tone, suggests that the “secrecy” of the famous scrolls monopoly was wrong -- but keeps it a secret from

readers that Freedman himself was part of the monopoly. I am no expert, of course, on the ethical standards applicable to Presbyterian ministers, but shouldn't the ordinary standards of common human decency lead us to have slightly higher expectations from someone who received a Ph.D. and who presented himself to the public as a serious scholar? Then again, I seem to recall that telling the truth never earned anyone a fortune.

In the case of Mr. **Cargill**, it must be emphasized that his work on the misleading "virtual reality" film shown at the museum was inappropriately funded with \$100,000 that the museum obtained from Stephen Spielberg's Holocaust fund. Why was a project of such importance entrusted to a graduate student with a ministerial degree from an institution affiliated with the Churches of Christ, rather than the group of seasoned Israeli archaeologists who, in 2006, published their detailed account of ten years spent re-examining Qumran? Is it because their on-site work led them to conclude that Qumran was a military fortress and commercial entrepot, that no sect ever lived there, and that the scrolls came from Jerusalem?

Was it fair to deny the San Diego public the opportunity to hear from those archaeologists, and instead expose 450,000 people to the speculative reasonings of a young man who hadn't even completed a doctoral dissertation? Was Stephen Spielberg fully aware of the manner in which the exhibitors intended to use his money? Did he know the information would eventually come out that the film's author, in providing a list of "reasons" to mention a particular Israeli scholar in connection with the "theory" that Qumran was a fortress, would implicitly attribute the creation of that "theory" to the wrong scholar in a manner that is arguably defamatory; would indicate that mentioning the name "will shield us from criticism"; and would assert in writing: "There's a third reason, **but I never write it down**"? Are we to conclude that the museum suggested to the film's author that he **not keep a written record of certain reasons**? A fine comment on academic ethics and museum exhibits today!

Mention should also be made of the elaborate network of evangelical "Bible blogs" that in essence advertised the San Diego exhibit free of charge. Take, for example, the case of Jim West (Th.D. from Andersonville Theological Seminary in Georgia; currently a pastor in Petros, Tennessee). West went to considerable lengths to promote the above-mentioned "virtual reality" film, even using images from it (including the imaginary reconstruction of a

“scriptorium” at Qumran which archaeologists now believe never existed) for his blog header.

Interestingly, West also rose to the defense of Nadia Abu el-Haj, the Palestinian “sociologist” who received tenure from Columbia University despite (or indeed because of) her fashionably post-modernist claims to the effect that the abundant material evidence of a Jewish kingdom in ancient Palestine has simply been manufactured by Israeli archaeologists for political purposes. West (who has made his own “anti-Zionist” views clear in numerous postings) condemned Abu el-Haj’s detractors on the basis that they have not attempted to “engage” with her. Yet he had not a word to say about the San Diego museum’s refusal to “engage” the prominent scholars who have rejected the theory of scroll origins defended in the exhibit. Which is worse, various individuals failing to “engage” with Abu el-Haj on internet blogs, or a scientific institution violating the principle of free debate by excluding an entire group of major researchers from a six-million-dollar exhibit?

In addition to the individuals specifically responsible for creating and promoting the exhibit, we may add others who, in one way or another, appear to have been involved in other recent exhibits and/or in various sensationalist attempts to defend the traditional Qumran-Essene theory against the objections raised by the archaeologists of the past decade:

- **James Tabor** (“Lost Tomb of Jesus” and “Essene toilet” claims; professor in religion department in Charlotte, N.C.; former Worldwide Church of God member; listed as “resource” on [i.e., apologist for] “new religions” by Church of Scientology)
- **Joe Zias** (M.A. from Wayne State University; no Ph.D., but presents himself as “anthropologist”; Tabor’s collaborator on “Essene toilet” claim; affiliated with “Jerusalem Institute for Biblical Exploration,” a Christian fundamentalist outfit based in Tennessee; gives lectures on topics that include “crucifixion and the Dead Sea Scrolls” and “the monasteries of the Judean Desert and their role in preventing and containing infectious disease during the Early Christian period”)
- **Randall Price** (World of Bible Ministries; adamant defender of Qumran-Essene theory)

Finally, with respect to David Noel Freedman, we must also mention some of his principal associates, past and present:

- **Father Roland de Vaux** (Dominican priest, now deceased; chief promoter of Qumran-Essene theory, member of original monopoly team)
- **Frank Cross** (Bachelor of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary, professor at Harvard Divinity School, member of original monopoly team; “co-wrote” Freedman’s Ph.D. dissertation)
- **Pam Fox Kuhlken** (co-author with Freedman of the popular book on the scrolls mentioned above; ministerial degree from Bethel Seminary, founder of an on-line Christian “college,” and now employed, why am I not surprised, alongside Risa Levitt Kohn in the Department of Religious Studies at San Diego State University)

This, of course, is only a partial list (among many others, one could add, e.g., the Dominicans of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem (one of whom also lectured at the San Diego museum), or people like **Stephen Pfann**, **David Bivin** and **Todd Bolen** of the “Holy Land” network; for details, see my “Christian Fundamentalism” article and the additional comments appended to it).

Many of these people appear to share a conviction (whether it is based on *scientific* or *religious* grounds is subject to debate) that the “beliefs, literature and men of the Essene community” were a “vital part of the fabric of Jesus’ world.” In addition, given the programs of the institutions with which they are affiliated, it appears likely that at least some of them believe that on account of “disobedience ... Israel was temporarily set aside ... but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing.” Such “repentance,” of course, is Christian evangelical lingo for conversion of the Jews to Christianity. (See, again, the additional comments appended to my “Christian Fundamentalism” article for details).

At the same time, as indicated above, the evidence supporting the views of a group of important Jewish and Israeli historians and archaeologists who disagree with Freedman and his Christian colleagues has been belittled and excluded, the only explanation offered being that “you don’t want to confuse people with so many competing theories.” The excluded

scholars, who include University of Chicago historian **Norman Golb** along with **Rachel Elior** of the Hebrew University, **Yitzhak Magen**, **Yuval Peleg**, **Yizhar Hirschfeld** and others, believe that no Essenes lived at Qumran, that the Scrolls came from the Jewish capital and, as Golb phrased it in a Forward editorial, that the “complex history of the Palestinian Jews on the eve of the First Revolt is being pushed aside in favor of a bizarre, Christologically colored thesis.”

Incidentally, it appears that the San Diego chapter of the University of Chicago alumni association, no doubt curious to hear an alternative point of view, arranged to have Golb give a presentation on the scrolls and a guided tour of the exhibit. I recall seeing this mentioned on Dr. Jim Davila’s “Palaeojudaica” blog, but of course the museum, as well as the local newspapers, carefully hushed it up, presumably because they didn’t want any “criticism” of the exhibit. The local media also covered up Golb’s review of the museum’s catalogue, in which he makes a mockery of this exhibit’s claim to have any scientific validity whatsoever, as well as his review of the “virtual reality” film funded by Spielberg and prepared by UCLA grad student Robert Cargill. These articles expose an entire host of erroneous and mendacious statements in the museum’s presentation.

Returning to Risa Levitt Kohn, the curator of the exhibit [and author of the above-mentioned catalogue], one must bear in mind that she had only recently completed her Ph.D., could well have had difficult career choices to make and was probably (I’m happy to be corrected by her or others if I’m wrong) following orders or advice dished out by her mentor Dr. Freedman and the others. How could it be otherwise, given that she had only a “tangential” knowledge of the topic? One can certainly empathize with her on account of the difficulty she was in, but I don’t see how that can excuse her conduct, which contributed to the current situation, in which the two theories of scroll origins oddly continue to subsist side by side, in parallel universes, without any of the direct public exchanges that alone would allow people to judge for themselves whose arguments are more convincing.

I believe these facts speak for themselves. While there is certainly no easy answer to the question of why any of this “matters,” what is now known surely gives rise to an **appearance of impropriety**. In sum, we appear to be dealing, at the very least, with an exhibition that was tainted by intellectual antisemitism; with an obscurantist, seemingly

irrational fear of debate; and with biased conduct that is abhorrent to our basic social sentiments and to the principle of freedom of inquiry which lies at the core of our system of values.

What is more, the view defended in the exhibit may well distort the true picture of the historical relationship between Judaism of the intertestamental period and early Christianity – a topic that is of immense significance to many people. And the exhibitors were clearly worried that the possibility of such distortion might become known. Why else could they have been afraid to invite the opponents of the view in question to explain their objections to the San Diego public?

So much for the exhibit itself. As was to be expected, a small number of rational, humanistically minded people have signaled my pieces in a favorable way, especially in England (I am truly grateful to the author of the View from Number 80 blog); but several individuals, apparently associated in one way or another with the exhibit or with the theory defended in it, have attacked me here and there, both privately and publicly, accusing me of “playing the religion card,” of being a “bigot,” and (as it was put by Freedman’s co-author Pam Fox Kuhlken in her dramatic intervention in the comments to my “Christian Fundamentalism” article) of establishing “guilt by association.” (These accusations are repeated by the individual who has posted a series of lengthy attempts to defend the museum, replete with ad hominem attacks against me, in the comments below.)

Well, who are the bigots here? If a shop owner keeps saying “we’re closed” when atheists, agnostics, or people of one religion or another show up, does a concerned observer “play the religion card” if he complains about this? Did I condemn the San Diego team members because of their affiliations, or did I not rather condemn their *conduct*? Did I ever say that proponents of the old Qumran-Essene theory should be *silenced in a six-million-dollar museum exhibit*? Did I blame David Noel Freedman for being a Presbyterian minister, or did I blame him rather for playing along with -- and profiting from -- an exhibition that stifled debate, excluded a group of major Jewish scholars, and misled the public by presenting a fabricated Qumran-Essene “consensus” that no longer exists?

The San Diego exhibit, it must be said, was only one of a series of similarly vulgar and

biased displays, all of them in “science” museums of one sort or another. It thus appears that the same **unscientific pattern of conduct** that we have seen here has been going on for at least several years in a variety of venues. Yet, for a variety of reasons – ranging, one can only presume, from general distaste to fear for one’s career – everyone has always delicately passed the matter over in silence.

As for me, I am glad to have set forth the basic facts for anyone to see, and will continue to hope that serious-minded people will think about the situation and draw whichever conclusions are the right ones.

*

Update: in the comments below, an individual calling himself B. Ralph, who clearly knows a good deal about the Dead Sea Scrolls research milieu and is a supporter of the museum, has submitted a lengthy set of lurid accusations, virtually all of them evasive of the basic issues I have raised. The one point where he actually tries to offer a rationale for the museum’s conduct is when he asks why the proponents of the Jerusalem theory should “get primacy” and suggests that if the exhibit were to be inclusive, it would have had to “show ... every other of the dozens of ideas out there.”

That, of course, is precisely the explanation offered by Risa Levitt Kohn, when she said that the museum didn’t want to “confuse people with so many competing theories.” As I have explained in several articles, this show of good will towards the public actually *mised* the public in an embarrassingly obscurantist manner, because it hid the fact that the Jerusalem theory is treated as one of the **two salient** theories of scroll origins in major reference works such as the Cambridge History of Judaism, in articles published by major news sources such as the New York Times and the Associated Press (one AP article speaks of a “polarization” of scrolls studies between the two theories) and, later, in the important exhibition of the scrolls that took place in the fall of 2008 at the Jewish Museum in New York. By belittling, distorting, and excluding the evidence that supports one of those two salient theories, the San Diego museum inappropriately took sides in a bitter and widening academic dispute – and, indeed, implicitly defamed an entire group of important scholars, by suggesting that they are on the same level as minor figures on the margins of scrolls research.

Is it just a coincidence that B. Ralph also uses his comments to tout an annual meeting of the

Society of Biblical Literature, an organization (incidentally of mostly Christian membership) whose West Coast chapter "president" is none other than... Risa Levitt Kohn? (That Dr. Kohn, who only recently completed her Ph.D. and has very few publications to her credit, would be appointed to such a high-ranked position, says more than a little about how people like David Noel Freedman use their influence in the game of getting-ahead-in-academics.)

According to B. Ralph's bluster, I am (among other things) a "bigoted liar" who has "maliciously maligned" the creators and promoters of the San Diego exhibit. Revealing an unusual degree of fascination with internet chatter critical of the museum, and stabbing me in the abdomen with the terrible revelation that I once posted a few comments using my nickname Carlo, B. Ralph also repeatedly suggests that I have used "pseudonyms" to perpetrate my abominable "lies."

This is of course ridiculous and irrelevant to the substance of the dispute, but even if it were significant, readers may wish to observe that diatribes similar to those appearing below were published on wikipedia on July 1, 2007 (the day the exhibit opened), by someone identifying himself as "Thesultan." This blogger, right before touting the Society of Biblical Literature meeting, blamed opposition to the museum's exhibit on a single individual who, according to him, "travels around the internet" furthering a "campaign" conducted by "**Norm Golb**" (surely a rather odd way of referring to this scholar). Then, only four days later, on July 5, an article in the San Diego Reader quoted Ms. Delle Willett, the San Diego museum's able marketing director, as saying that "a guy named **Norm Golb** just loves to follow these Dead Sea Scrolls around the country and talk about how we've got it all wrong."



More important than the ad hominem accusation that I am a coward hiding behind "pseudonyms" is the question whether I actually *have* maligned anyone, or if I have not rather simply sought to shed light on an important, and (sadly) very real, institutional problem. Hoping to clarify this matter, in one response to B. Ralph I have sought to answer all of his more "substantive" objections one by one, reproducing his statements in italics and giving my responses in regular typeface after each statement. I encourage readers to examine this exchange, since I believe it gives a good deal of insight into the mentality of the San Diego exhibit's creators and of the "community" they represented. Ultimately, after B. Ralph came back with a further set of accusatory tirades, a moderator stepped in and blocked the thread, thereby sparing me from having to deal with this particular interlocutor on a

permanent basis. Hopefully this gave B. Ralph some time to sit back and contemplate what he had achieved on behalf of the museum.

The author of the View from Number 80 blog has published a clear-sighted comment on B. Ralph's invective (see his paragraph entitled "Objective: Obfuscate"); I am extremely grateful for his statement, which to my mind goes straight to the core of the situation.

I have not been able, of course, to draft a full response to each and every one of the accusations, which are in essence a somewhat paranoid, if no doubt titillating, smokescreen whose real effect is to distract readers from the issues. Naturally I take offense to being called a bigot, but I'm happy to be called a liar by such an opponent, since what I am accused of is but a drop in the bucket compared with the implicit smearing of the excluded scholars (and indeed of the public at large, which needed to be protected from "confusion") that lay at the core of the San Diego exhibit. If the exhibit's creators feel they have to lash out at me instead of speaking to the issues, this merely exposes their astounding inability to defend what they did. One thing I will say, however, is that contrary to the slightly deranged accusation that B. Ralph announces in an authoritative tone in his introduction (see his paragraphs in bold typeface, below), I did not remove a single, specific name tag from this article; cf. the multiple name tags in my Christian Fundamentalism article. The fact that I didn't bother entering the name tags in this article means one thing in B. Ralph's mind: I removed the "Norman Golb" name tag. I congratulate the museum on having an ally of this mental caliber.

As it stands, this episode gives rise to a basic question: can we still hope that logic, reason and civility will prevail in (and in discussions surrounding) public exhibits concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls? Or are we doomed to continuing displays of exclusion, grandstanding and denial? Only the future will tell, but the foolish, uncritical enthusiasm with which the media promoted the San Diego exhibit is certainly not a good sign.

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dwayneflagged this story as Good Stuff
at 13:08 on October 6th, 2007

Interesting article--well written and informative. When defending religion and the status quo means covering up disagreement, the system has failed. It's embarrassing to see them coming up with nonsense like "You don't want to confuse people."



Mountaineerflagged this story as Good Stuff
at 11:08 on October 8th, 2007

Charles Gadda, I like this story. It's good stuff.



B. Ralph

at 08:42 on October 17th, 2007

Please note: Gadda has modified his bigoted essay by removing the "Norman Golb" tag and by adding some false conjecture about me as well as a complaint about ad hominem attacks. When Gadda complains about ad hominem attacks, readers who have seen him viciously maul people and institutions for months know there is only one guilty party and it is the person who calls himself Charles or Carlo Gadda (his internet name evolved). I encourage you to do a google search for any of the people named in this essay and see how they have been molested for months. I then encourage you to do a similar search for "norman Golb" or even "Charles Gadda," "Carlo Gadda" or any of the supporting cast Gadda has created for Golb and see how they have remained entirely unmolested.

Like Gadda, I encourage you to read our discussion so that you can understand the mindset of an individual who has spent 14 months maliciously attacking, without having visited either one, two exhibitions, the people he can identify as involved and people who are not involved but are perceived to be opponents of Golb or his theories. The one exhibition that remains unmolested is the Kansas City exhibition, which happens to be the only one of the three where Norman Golb was invited to lecture.

In the last couple of months I have watched horrified as Gadda maligned my community, an excellent exhibition, and people who seem to have done nothing wrong except participate in some way in an exhibition he dislikes, as he uses vicious, bigoted attacks, laced with activity promoting Norman Golb (like the alumni lecture advertisement in this essay or the endless links to Norman Golb articles). Hundreds of other scholars also were not invited to speak in Seattle or San Diego, but apparently none of them have dedicated supporters (or associates, although Gadda will deny it) running vicious, bigoted campaigns. Read on to watch the bigoted liar exposed.

I am confused about something.

On the first version of this essay, you publicized the talk Golb will be giving to the University of Chicago alumni without mentioning how you learned of it. This struck me because, as you pointed out, the talk has not been publicized but you knew about it. A couple of days later, on October 8, you revised this essay and added that you recall learning about the talk from "Paleojudaica." An odd little detail for you to add in a revision to a long essay about a different topic.

I looked it up. The problem is that according to both google and the "Paleojudaica" search function, that blog never listed that Golb giving a University of Chicago alumni lecture. The Paleojudaica entry from July, and it is the only one about Golb going to San Diego, actually speaks of Golb *leading a group* from the University of Chicago through the Natural History museum (the museum must be really aggressive about stifling debate). Here is the link for the \$500 per person trip, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/events/travel/dss.html>, as a quick search revealed. What the same Google search, "Golb San Diego" *did not reveal* was anything about an alumni lecture, although it did show Gadda and his characters' lengthy history of attacks on the San Diego exhibit...and promotion of Golb.

In fact, I never found any Google link to the alumni lecture and learned about it only by going deep into the alumni part of the University of Chicago's site.

In other words, Gadda couldn't and didn't learn about the talk he is publicizing from Paleojudaica. Instead, after posting the essay and reluctant to lose the promotional value of mentioning it, he became nervous that someone would question how he knew and tried to provide a false source. The possibility that Gadda simply made a mistake is almost entirely impossible because this information came in a revision, which means he had time to consider what he would write and probably decided to misrepresent facts intentionally. He has also had a week to correct the revision if it was an error.

Why would having others know how he learned about an alumni talk cause nervousness to a degree that Gadda revised and posted an apparent falsification? There are only two possibilities that I can imagine: 1. he is on the University of Chicago alumni mailing list and would be linked to his alma mater; 2. somebody whose connection to him has to be hidden provided this information.

Well, we know Gadda is from New York. We know from one of the characters with which he posted on Wikipedia that he has a connection to New York University and he gave away that he lives in Brooklyn. We know then that even if he was an alumni member the University of Chicago alumni would not contact him because he is not in their San Diego chapter. In other words, option one is highly unlikely.

We remain with the second option, of Gadda knowing someone whose connection to him is important to hide who provided this information about the alumni talk. Obviously, the first source that comes to mind is Norman Golb.

Did Golb provide this information to you, Gadda?



Charles Gadda

at 10:22 on October 15th, 2007

First of all, I want to thank B. Ralph for providing the link to the Oriental Institute announcement of Norman Golb's alumni talk in San Diego.

As anyone can see, the announcement describes not only a guided tour, but a "presentation on Dead Sea Scroll research and theory by Professor Golb," to take place in the museum's Boardroom. Nowhere, however, have I been able to find any announcement by the museum of this talk, which is apparently not open to the public and not part of the museum's exhibit or accompanying lecture series. One can only assume that the Chicago alumni association, like several others which have announced similar packages (see here and here for examples), has reached some sort of a private arrangement with the museum.

My description of this event as a "lecture" was based on my amalgamation of several distinct memories: this announcement which, frankly, I recalled having seen around a month ago but could no longer locate; the statement on Jim Davila's blog, which I had seen around the same time; and a conversation I had at the time with a contact at The Jewish Museum in New York.

Observe, however, the way B. Ralph, without addressing any of the substantive issues raised in my article, focuses in on my inclusion of the information about Golb's alumni talk, and derives from it a series of conclusions about how I am "promoting Golb" and even receiving information from him -- as if there would be something improper about obtaining information from one of the scholars whose views have been downplayed and distorted in the San Diego exhibit. Golb is indeed a major figure in Scrolls research, but I certainly would not think of myself as "promoting" him or any other individual scholar. Rather, as anyone can plainly see, my aim is to promote scientific neutrality, public debate, inclusion as opposed to exclusion, and ethical awareness pertaining to this and related issues.

Regrettably, B. Ralph's take on the matter is typical of supporters of the old Qumran-Essene dogma, who tend to be resentful of the manner in which their theory (and hence what they feel to be their deserved preeminence in the academic world) has been challenged and rejected by a growing number of researchers over the past decade. Even if I *were* promoting the views of historians and archaeologists who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory, which would be worse, my doing that, or the patently biased conduct of the San Diego museum, which has led to the public's being denied the opportunity to hear both sides of the story?

At any rate, as some readers will no doubt have observed, I have been occasionally revising this article, because I want it to be as clear and accurate as possible. Sometimes I do locate information which is new or which I had previously seen but misplaced, and insert it at the appropriate spot to tighten my argument as much as possible (see, e.g., the

information on Martin Abegg's role last year in Seattle, inserted in the newest version). I am sorry if this has led to any confusion. I am, of course, sensitive to criticism, whether coming from B. Ralph, Pam Kuhlken or anyone else; in this instance, I will correct the statement on Golb's "lecture" accordingly.

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B. Ralph

at 08:26 on October 15th, 2007

Gadda, try to do better in the future. You publicized an alumni lecture without attribution to any source. Two days later, you provided a source that was false. This is called a "fabrication." I returned to those sites to check again. There is the group tour and there is the alumni lecture, two different activities held on different days at different times at apparently different venues as the websites clearly describe. A person such as you who has gone to the extensive trouble of researching this exhibit at length, while promoting Norman Golb, must have looked at the different websites before you posted. You must have looked after you posted and when you revised. Even if you did not, you would have looked after I stated my confusion and question.

You also didn't answer the question. Did Dr. Golb tell you directly about the alumni lecture? Of course, since your response to me about the "confusion" was disappointing and appears to be the equivalent of a response from a guilty person who is tongue-tied after being caught off-guard, it may not be prudent to trust any response you give at this point.

In reviewing your essay once more, I am confused again. Maybe you can enlighten me on this new issue.

You claim in your article that Jim West "in essence advertised the San Diego exhibit free of charge" and you brought up a Palestinian scholar to indicate West's support of a purported denier of a "Jewish kingdom." You speak of West's anti-Zionist views and correlate his politics with your accusation that he supports the San Diego museum's exhibit. All believable information.

The confusing part for me, Gadda, is that West has a history of promoting Golb.

<http://drjimwest.wordpress.com/2006/10/22/is-norman-golb-right-after-all/> and <http://orion.huji.ac.il/orion/archives/1998a/msg00214.html> and the best of all: <http://drjimwest.wordpress.com/2007/06/08/norman-golbs-guide-for-dead-sea-scrolls-exhibit-attendees/> where West thanks CHARLES GADDA for providing a link to a...Norman Golb article.

Gadda, did you prostitute yourself and Golb at the altar of Golb promotion on an anti-Zionist's website? Some things apparently trump bad political views.

So Gadda, please respond to the old question about Golb and you, and here are new ones: why would you post on Jim West's blog if he is so evil? Are you accusing the San Diego museum of "advertising free of charge" when it is actually you who did so on that blog?

PS, for anybody who wants some more detail, this may get a little boring but I would feel like my research is wasted if I didn't post some of the other information I have uncovered. Read at your own peril.

The problem is that I am an infrequent reader of Jim West's blog, but I recalled seeing Gadda's name prominently listed on his blog. I went back to search for Golb or San Diego and was surprised to discover that there were no more Charles Gadda comments anywhere on the site. Was my memory deceiving? No, I'm afraid not. <http://drjimwest.wordpress.com/2007/04/15/norman-golb-on-the-dead-sea-scrolls/>

In discussing a Golb article, it appears that a disjointed discussion follows where a certain Dierk van der Berg is seemingly conversing with two people but we can only see one, Max E. That is because of the 21 original comments, only 13 remain after West removed Gadda's 8 comments after Gadda called him names. Gadda called him names after West let Cargill (the UCLA student whose career Gadda appears to be trying to destroy) post on his site and added a link to Cargill's website. You can still see Harold Libowich and Max E. in that discussion, both of whom appear to be Gadda creations. You can see Max E. praising Golb, "Since Golb's original article appeared way back when in the American Philosophical Society proceedings...the gig is up on the Essene-thesis of scroll origins." Max E. then gives us a Gadda-esque "mass-marketed 'scientific' museum exhibitions of a patently fraudulent/mendacious nature is basically a way to avoid sticking up for crucial principles that have been with Western societies since the Enlightenment."

Ignore the hot air and look at the key word, "mendacious." Look up "mendacious dead sea scrolls" on Google, and the first hit is...a NORMAN GOLB article. The fifth hit is a

CHARLES GADDA comment attacking Schniedewind and Cargill. "This is an adaptation of the mendacious and sensationalist news release put out by UCLA-- including the misleading statement that U of Chicago professor Norman Golb published an 'article,' and not a major book entitled Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, in 1996."

A "major book!" It's a good thing Gadda isn't promoting Golb too much.

Back to West and Gadda's prostitution of Golb on the "anti-Zionist" West's site before he turned on him. In that discussion with Max E., "Harold Libowich" appears, insults the Gadda/Max E. opponent, and praises the...Golb article. Max E. then reappears with a handy link to another Golb article. To be clear, West is using blog software that allows him to read every IP address. This indicates that he was aware of the similarities or sameness of Gadda and the others' IP addresses but did nothing about it.

We have seen Harold Libowich before as Harold Liebovich. It's hard for "Charles" to keep track, I guess. Harold appeared previously commenting on an article about Golb's visit to the Kansas City Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, where, diplomatic as ever, Golb called the show "brainwashing" (Golb also accused the San Diego exhibit of trying to "brainwash the public" before the show opened). Here is a link:

<http://www.kcjc.com/articles/2007/04/27/news/a.kcjc.news.golb.dead.sea.scrolls.txt>. And there is Harold "Gadda" Liebovich in the comments. Look at how he defends Golb, knowing his intimate personal history and reframing some answers Golb gave so that Golb's unclear comments are reworked. How would Gadda/Max/Harold know what Golb means or speak with such intimate familiarity about him?

Such a mystery.



Charles Gadda

at 19:57 on October 15th, 2007

B. Ralph, I have no time to respond in full to this long rant of yours, which amply reveals the mentality of the San Diego exhibitors.

I cannot even make heads or tails of your point about the alumni "lecture." Apparently it is not even a lecture, but rather a "presentation," combined with a guided tour on a separate day. I did not "source" or provide a link to Jim Davila's blog, I merely said I

recalled having seen the lecture mentioned there. You seize on this terrible failure of mine to suggest that I "fabricated" something.

Perhaps you would like to point out some other "fabrication" in my article, dealing with the substantive issues I raise?

Six months ago I took part in a discussion on Jim West's site about Golb's Forward editorial, which of course in your mind becomes a further act of "promotion" and an additional proof of "guilt" on my part. From what you say, it appears that West has removed my comments--an interesting procedure for someone who condemns people for failing to "engage" with Nadia Abu el-Haj. Incidentally, at the time I knew nothing about West's "anti-zionist" ideology and I hadn't even begun to reflect on the web of Christian evangelical associations behind this museum exhibit. Readers can judge which is worse, this additional failure on my part or the museum's conduct.

Again, perhaps you would actually like to discuss some of the issues raised in my article, or do you prefer to continue defending the museum by suggesting that there is something dishonest about me?



Anon-SD

at 16:23 on October 16th, 2007

B. Ralph:

The point is: the history of the scrolls is being distorted. The care and effort which was expended, at the risk and loss of human lives, to insure that these books would be handed down intact to future generations and civilizations needs to be known. History tells us this has happened more than once.



B. Ralph

at 08:36 on October 16th, 2007

Be careful, Anon-SD, if you are a figment of Gadda's imagination, Gadda dumped his own pseudonym "Suzanne Shapiro" in a heartbeat and if you are a real person, he turned on one, Jim West, in a flash. Next time try posting from a different city.

Here is what Gadda said to West in his (as far as I know) last post before turning on him.

Charles Gadda, on September 11th, 2007 at 2:04 pm Said:

Jim,

[Faded, illegible text]

I am dismayed that a **man of your integrity** would defend the "ethics" of someone whose purported scholarship conveys a transparently antisemitic ideology and, along the way, makes a mockery of scientific methodology. This has all been examined at considerable length in the **Journal of Near Eastern Studies** and many other serious venues. **How could you stoop to such a level?**

Charles Gadda

<http://drjimwest.wordpress.com/2007/07/27/the-witch-hunt-against-nadia-abu-el-haj-continues/>

As you can see, Anon, Gadda is wailing at someone he knows well and who knows him well. He calls West a man of integrity. In fact, he is calling West a "man of integrity" several weeks after West published Cargill's comment asserting the views of his Qumran movie. In other words, Gadda thought of this Cargill comment as a rare event, and had already launched his attack on Christians on Now Public without losing confidence in or pointing out West (apparently his old chum). But the "man of integrity" supports el-Haj and this is a problem because even the Journal of Near Eastern Studies critiqued her work. Do you know who publishes the Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Anon? It's the University of Chicago.

Also, Anon, good friend, never follow the guy with the conspiracy theory. Here is what Gadda said about an entirely different subject recently. Do you think the programmers of some jazz concert are also "Christians with an agenda?"

(<http://home.nestor.minsk.by/jazz/forum/2007/02/140100.html>;
<http://home.nestor.minsk.by/jazz/news/2007/01/3005.html>).

discussion

Cecil Taylor and John Zorn at the Rose Theater

Charles Gadda 14.02.07 20:30

After censoring Cecil Taylor for nearly two decades, the Jazz at Lincoln Center programmers now insult this giant of modern music by pairing him with John Zorn, rather than, say, Jean Michel Pilc or another Monk-influenced pianist, which would help the audience to understand where Mr. Taylor's music comes from. At least they could do us the favor of telling us approximately what time Taylor will be playing, so we can arrange our schedules accordingly.



B. Ralph

at 08:50 on October 16th, 2007

Gadda, I understand your desire to discuss "substance" and that is what I'm doing by pointing to your prevarications. Your deceitful and vicious campaign is the substance here. West was of the same faith six months ago as 6 weeks ago as now. You apparently contacted that evangelist directly and offered the material for a post. You saw him as a man of integrity. Max E. praises him for his courage. In other words, *you* had no problem using West to promote your agenda regardless of his faith or views. By the way, other than your lies here, there is nothing wrong with trusting a devout Christian and attacking him for being an "evangelist" is beneath contempt. .

Regarding the museum. I am sorry to disappoint you but I am not in a position to explain anything to anybody since I don't know much (except what I've learned following you online) and I am not connected to it (based on what I've seen, they have not responded to you at all). I'm just the guy who gets really ticked off at lying bullies. However, since you asked me for a discussion of your "substance," and since I have been reading you for a while, I'll offer it.

You have no credibility because:

~~http://www.nowpublic.com/culture/did-christian-agenda-lead-biased-dead-sea-scrolls-exhibit~~

- You haven't seen the exhibit. This is incredible, after 10 months of daily attacks you haven't seen the exhibit.
- You don't know a single one of the principals, by your own admission.
- You haven't had a substantive discussion with even one of them according to your own admission.
- You hide behind pseudonyms.
- You present only partial information to make your case.
- You often misrepresent facts.
- You make false and bigoted accusations and insinuations.
- You then move on to other essays where you present your original accusations and falsehoods as facts.
- To my mind you have an agenda of promoting a particular scholar.

You want to discuss the two theories you've created about the exhibit without having seen it. Good.

Which theory would you like to discuss first, the one where the big, evil cabal of Christian male zealots has caused the pliant, weak-minded, female Jewish curator to be led by the nose to do their bidding? Or would you rather begin with the other theory you've created where a big, evil cabal of Christian male zealots who are incompetent "scholars," in conjunction with deceitful, self-hating but capable Jewish scholars, has established an anti-Semitic academic paradigm that has been supported by the San Diego museum, its exhibit makers and the Seattle museum?

In other words, did you wish to discuss your theory where bigotry and sexism, and possibly misogyny, intersect with inexcusable accusations of anti-Semitism? Or did you

want to discuss your bigoted theory where the big bad Christian "scholars" (your quotation marks) who don't buy Golb's theory are apparently anti-Semitic, and those Jews who subscribe to similar views, are apparently self-loathing Jews?

There, now we have discussed your "substance."

There is no substance to anything you say, although there is quite a bit of hate. The questions that crop up are:

Do you really believe this? Unlikely because you often misrepresent facts.

If you do not believe it, are your bigoted and sexist ideas bait to draw attention? I don't know whether that is more vile than actually believing the bigotry you publish.

What is your motive? No matter how I try to view it, it always comes up support for Golb who wasn't invited to the lecture series. Since your campaign attacks Seattle and San Diego while avoiding attacks on Kansas City, which invited Golb, it is hard to believe any other scenario exists.



B. Ralph

at 09:04 on October 16th, 2007

Now that we've discussed your "substance," let us move on to real questions of substance. You are the one who claims to seek facts and truth, so let's explore the "truth."

You claim to have researched all of these Christian scholars and you imply strongly that they were "inculcated" or "indoctrinated" with certain beliefs as a result of their partial education in Christian educational institutions. You make this claim in support of an assertion that a museum exhibit appears to be tainted by intellectual anti-Semitism. Putting aside issues of defamation and bigotry, some serious questions about the integrity of your statements, and consequently about your entire months-long campaign, do arise from this.

You omit mention of Weston Fields' Ph.D. from Hebrew University where he studied with the Israeli scholar Talmon. Please do not say that you couldn't find it because when

I entered "Weston Fields" on Google, I found that information in the 4th link on the first page.

You omitted mention of the easily found information about Schniedewind's Ph.D. at Brandeis, a prominent secular Jewish institution, until you were forced to acknowledge it. Why have you minimized his status at UCLA – a secular and respected school - where he is the Chair of his department?

You write about Freedman's Ph.D. with Cross, something that must have happened 60 years ago, with anger and sarcasm. Do you realize than only somebody of their age group or who cares about somebody from their age group would have any emotion invested in this?

You you ignore the decades of dedicated work on the Anchor Bible and other projects that require a scientific viewpoint and approach in Freedman's decades of work.

You ignore the decades of highly respected work by Cross.

You omit mention of the fact that the co-founder of the Oriental Institute's Dead Sea Scroll project, along with Norman Golb, is a graduate of an evangelical school. Wouldn't that be part of your vast conspiracy of institutions and scholars getting funded by Christians?

You accuse Geza Vermes of "effectively purchasing" his way into the Scrolls publication project when he has been well regarded as a scholar for decades.

You keep discussing Yizhar Hirschfeld as if he's alive and should be invited to the lecture series at San Diego.

You ignore the known fact that Eilior's theories are part of a broader theory of which the scrolls play only a part and that she disagrees with significant parts of Golb's theory.

You ignore the 1998 BAR interview with Hirschfeld where he dismisses Golb's fortress idea.

You do not mention that Zias worked for the IAA for 25 years and praise Magen and Peleg for their IAA connection.

As for institutions, you omit mention of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation's primary purpose to enable the necessary support for the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project.

That's a lot of information to omit or distort, Gadda. If you had included it, your essays would look quite different and its premise would fail. In fact, the information you omit is all readily available, often in the same places where you discovered it (and, thanks to you, where I discovered it). It follows that you knew and omitted on purpose..

For somebody who wants to lay out the facts for people to decide, you have an odd idea of which information to present..



Charles Gadda

at 01:00 on October 17th, 2007

B. Ralph,

(1) To begin with, readers can judge whether my reference to Jim West's "integrity" was a sign of my great esteem for Dr. West, or if it was an instance of sarcasm and irony on my part. But perhaps this is too subtle for you. Do I have esteem for Risa Levitt Kohn because I rose to her defense when she suggested that the public consists of infantile idiots who are incapable of judging for themselves and need to be protected from "confusion"?

(2) Turning to your two massive diatribes, the first consists of a smokescreen of lurid rhetorical accusations -- "cabal of misogynists," "self-loathing Jews," etc. -- that have the (apparently intended) effect of obscuring the fundamental issues. Why don't you just come out and say that you don't believe there ought to be a free debate in San Diego among scholars of radically opposing views? Why don't you just say that you don't believe the open exchange of scholarly ideas ought to be encouraged in a democratic society?

Why don't you address the mendacity of Dr. Kohn's documented statement that she is a

"Dead Sea Scrolls scholar"? Why don't you address her statement that the Dead Sea Scrolls are not really "Jewish" texts, and her peculiar philosophy of avoiding public confusion? Why don't you address Martin Abegg's position that "Evangelical Christian scholars should play a **significant role** in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls," and his connection with this and other similar exhibits, in which the Jewish view of scroll origins is **not** given a significant role?

(3) As for the claims you make in your second diatribe, I will respond to them one by one. Your statements are in italics, my responses follow.

You claim to have researched all of these Christian scholars and you imply strongly that they were "inculcated" or "indoctrinated" with certain beliefs as a result of their partial education in Christian educational institutions. You make this claim in support of an assertion that a museum exhibit appears to be tainted by intellectual anti-Semitism. Putting aside issues of defamation and bigotry, some serious questions about the integrity of your statements, and consequently about your entire months-long campaign, do arise from this.

My general point is quite simply that a group of scholars all of whom either have Christian educational backgrounds, are associated with the old Dead Sea Scrolls monopoly, or both, and who share an apparently dogmatic belief in the Qumran-Essene theory, have created a museum exhibit in which the evidence for the opposing, Jewish view is downplayed, distorted and concealed, with all of the scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory being excluded from participating in the lecture series accompanying the exhibit. Further, I argue that in light of the statements quoted in my article (the scrolls are not "Jewish" texts, Evangelical Christians "should play a significant role," etc.) there is an appearance of impropriety and indeed, of intellectual antisemitism. You try and twist this against me by questioning the "integrity" of my own assertions. Well, if I *falsely* asserted, for example, that one or another of these individuals has a Christian educational background, or if I *falsely* asserted that Dr. Kohn said what she said, then I would have done something outrageous, and would gladly retract everything I've written on this topic (but not on Cecil Taylor). But since the information I've gathered happens to be *true*, I'm entitled to set forth my opinion as to what appearances this all gives rise to. I understand your resentment, but the basic problem you and the museum confront is that the exhibit *was* organized by these people with this background and belief, that the statements *were* made, and that the evidence for the Jewish view *was* downplayed, distorted and concealed. And that, of course, is why the museum has failed to respond to me, apart from Dr. Kohn's published

letter of January 9, 2007, in which she mendaciously referred to herself as a "Dead Sea Scrolls scholar."

You omit mention of Weston Fields' Ph.D. from Hebrew University where he studied with the Israeli scholar Talmon. Please do not say that you couldn't find it because when I entered "Weston Fields" on Google, I found that information in the 4th link on the first page.

First of all, the fourth link I find for "Weston Fields" on Google is the personnel page of the University of the Holy Land, but I don't see Weston Fields on that page. If you would like to provide the exact link to this information, I will gladly look at it. However, if what you say is true (and I see no reason to doubt that it is), it should be pointed out that Shemariah Talmon is one of the most doctrinaire defenders of the Qumran-Essene theory ever to have played a role in scrolls research. This simply underscores my point, that "even Oxford University professors and Jewish researchers like Emmanuel Tov [a close associate of Talmon] will work together with Christian fundamentalists like Fields to achieve common goals." If Fields got a Ph.D. at the Hebrew University, good for him and I will add it to my articles. He would then belong to the category (and I never called this a "cabal" or a "conspiracy") that includes a number of other individuals who have studied at the Hebrew University while founding and promoting Christian fundamentalist "educational institutions." Incidentally, perhaps you also know where he got his "Th.D.," I'd be grateful for the link to that information too.

You omitted mention of the easily found information about Schniedewind's Ph.D. at Brandeis, a prominent secular Jewish institution, until you were forced to acknowledge it. Why have you minimized his status at UCLA – a secular and respected school - where he is the Chair of his department?

In fact, I emphasized Schniedewind's Ph.D. from the outset, giving its title ("Prophets, Prophecy and Inspiration in the Book of Chronicles") in my article on the sensationalist Schniedewind-Cargill press campaign and carefully including a link to the wikipedia page on him, where anyone can read the info about where he received his degree. My focus in the "Christian Fundamentalism" piece (where, incidentally, I also provided the wikipedia link) was specifically on the Christian component of Schniedewind's education, and with the apparent continuity of his involvement in Christian educational enterprises, as seen in his recent affiliation with the University of the Holy Land, i.e., after he received his Ph.D. from Brandeis. I have been trying to understand Dr.

Schniedewind's actions myself and make no claim to have all the answers. But none of this excuses his conduct in participating in a campaign to mislead the public and in snitching the credit for other people's research. I have not minimized his status at UCLA. Quite to the contrary. Secular institutions often grant degrees to religious students, but they don't normally give department chairs to people who are affiliated with places like the "University of the Holy Land." Is this why Schniedewind's name recently disappeared from the personnel page of that Christian educational institution, after I signaled his being listed there in my "Christian Fundamentalism" article?

You write about Freedman's Ph.D. with Cross, something that must have happened 60 years ago, with anger and sarcasm. Do you realize than only somebody of their age group or who cares about somebody from their age group would have any emotion invested in this?

Sarcasm, no doubt; perhaps even a touch of scorn; but I'm not aware of any anger in my description of this ethical irregularity -- only one of many in the field of biblical scholarship. As for my age, that's none of your business--but I'm old enough to know a fraud when I see one. My sources are of various ages, and I use my own judgment too. But since you've raised the topic, allow me to say that I've seen at least one die-hard defender of the old Qumran-Essene theory described as a "dinosaur" who is incapable of facing up to advances in research.

You ignore the decades of dedicated work on the Anchor Bible and other projects that require a scientific viewpoint and approach in Freedman's decades of work.

I'm not aware that I ignored this. In response to Pam Fox Kuhlken, I indicated that I'm not seeking to suggest that Freedman is not a competent biblical scholar, but rather that I'm taking issue with the unethical role he has played in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship. I make the same response to you.

You ignore the decades of highly respected work by Cross.

I'm not aware that I ignored this either. It is lamentable that Dr. Cross, who was once a scholar of repute, has descended to participating in at least two separate campaigns of intentional disinformation (the "Lost Tomb of Jesus" scam and the "yahad" ostracon claim). Here as elsewhere, you seem to be sniveling at the fact that I don't sing the praises of your heroes in my articles. I happen to be a bit more critical than you. Where have you said a single critical word about the scrolls monopoly, or the refusal of the

monopolists to engage with scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory? At least Freedman had the courage to recognize that "secrecy" was wrong, even though he lacked the courage to frankly admit his own role in the monopoly. You seem to take it a step further, altogether ignoring the ethical issues I've signaled.

You omit mention of the fact that the co-founder of the Oriental Institute's Dead Sea Scroll project, along with Norman Golb, is a graduate of an evangelical school. Wouldn't that be part of your vast conspiracy of institutions and scholars getting funded by Christians?

I don't know anything about this, but my point was obviously not that everyone who graduates from an evangelical school is part of a conspiracy. My point was simply that a group of people who graduated from such institutions have played an unfortunate role in putting together (and in promoting) a biased exhibit in which the Jewish view of scroll origins is clearly belittled, distorted and excluded.

You accuse Geza Vermes of "effectively purchasing" his way into the Scrolls publication project when he has been well regarded as a scholar for decades.

What does Vermes' purchasing his way into becoming a member of the monopoly (which you consistently refer to in a respectful tone as the "Scrolls publication project") have to do with his having been well regarded as a scholar? Some people, especially defenders of the Qumran-Essene theory like yourself, regard him well; others have found his conduct to be unethical. He appears to have used the resources of the Wolfson foundation (which granted \$350,000 to the Qumran Center at Oxford University for this purpose) to effectively purchase his way into the monopoly. What is more, to the best of my knowledge he, like most other Qumran-Essene ideologues, has failed to say a single word in response to the criticism of scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory. Does he even inform readers of the existence of such criticism in his popular translation of the scrolls? Cf. my remarks (in my article above) on Freedman's dogmatic presentation of the Qumran-Essene theory in *his* popular book. Yet Freedman has also been "well regarded."

You keep discussing Yizhar Hirschfeld as if he's alive and should be invited to the lecture series at San Diego.

The roster of participants in the lecture series was put together well before Dr. Hirschfeld had a heart attack and died. The fact that he is deceased has nothing to do with the

museum's decision to exclude him along with all the other known opponents of the Qumran-Essene theory. The public was cheated of the opportunity to hear this important scholar speak at each of the other scrolls exhibits of the past few years as well, to the shame of the institutions hosting these exhibits.

You ignore the known fact that Elijor's theories are part of a broader theory of which the scrolls play only a part and that she disagrees with significant parts of Golb's theory.

I do not "ignore" these facts. Unlike you, I attended Rachel Elijor's lecture on the scrolls at the Jewish Museum a couple of years ago, during which she recommended a single book -- *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Golb. She is an important scholar in the field. Like Golb, she believes the scrolls came from Jerusalem. Unlike Golb, she puts more emphasis on scrolls written by Temple priests. Shouldn't the San Diego public have the right to know about these significant developments in research? With six million dollars in funding, couldn't the museum have put together a good panel discussion on these interesting questions? Here as elsewhere, you seem strangely intent on distracting people from the basic issue, which you never address. (Readers will note that the *Jewish Museum* in New York invited Dr. Elijor to speak on the scrolls even without holding an exhibit on the topic, but with a six million dollar budget the San Diego exhibitors carefully kept her off their list. I'll move on to the next point, lest I be accused of *promoting* Dr. Elijor.)

You ignore the 1998 BAR interview with Hirschfeld where he dismisses Golb's fortress idea.

First of all, I would not trust a popular (and quite trashy) publication like BAR on any scholarly issue of importance. Hirschfeld's book, published in 2004, *six years* after the interview you refer to, specifically explains that Qumran was originally built as a fortress. Unlike Golb, he believed that the site was then used for other purposes (and in your mind this becomes a "dismissal"). But like Golb, and like Magen and Peleg, he concluded that the site had a secular purpose, was never inhabited by a sect and that the Dead Sea Scrolls came from Jerusalem. Clearly, all of these scholars are part of a single group who reject the Qumran-Essene theory -- and thus have been excluded from the exhibit you so much appear to admire. You, on the other hand, are trying to suggest that since there are differences between the scholars who reject the Qumran-Essene theory, therefore they should not be seen as a group holding one of the two salient views on scroll origins -- even though there are also differences between scholars who support the Qumran-Essene theory and they *are* seen as a group. Why am I not surprised that a

defender of this museum exhibit would go to such lengths (even quoting an interview in a trashy magazine that took place *six years* before Hirschfeld's book was published) to mislead people?

You do not mention that Zias worked for the IAA for 25 years and praise Magen and Peleg for their IAA connection.

I do not care if Zias "worked" for the IAA, and I did not "praise" Magen and Peleg for their "IAA connection." Magen is the specific Israeli government archaeologist who is responsible for the Judaea and Samaria region, which includes Qumran. In that capacity, he, together with Peleg, led the officially appointed team that conducted ten seasons of digs at Qumran and concluded that the place was never inhabited by a sect and that the scrolls came from Jerusalem. Yet Magen and Peleg have been excluded from participating in the museum's lecture series, and the grounds supporting their research conclusions are concealed in the exhibit. Readers can judge whether Joe Zias' having worked for the IAA is of any relevance to this basic point.

As for institutions, you omit mention of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation's primary purpose to enable the necessary support for the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project.

I did not omit this, I specifically included it in my description of this entity in my "Christian Fundamentalism" piece (see the 17th paragraph of that article). Since you seem to have been reading my articles quite closely in search of points to disagree with, I'm surprised that a man of your *integrity* would say such a dishonest thing about what I do or don't mention. As for your use of the term "necessary," everyone knows that publication of the scrolls under the auspices of the "Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project" (i.e., the famous scrolls monopoly) was virtually completed several years ago. What does this have to do with the Dead Sea Scroll Foundation's current purpose, which appears to be to defend the Qumran-Essene theory through museum exhibits that hoodwink the public by presenting the evidence in a biased and misleading manner? Why don't you address this important ethical issue anywhere in your diatribe?

That's a lot of information to omit or distort, Gadda. If you had included it, your essays would look quite different and its premise would fail. In fact, the information you omit is all readily available, often in the same places where you discovered it (and, thanks to you, where I discovered it). It follows that you knew and omitted on purpose. For somebody who wants to lay out the facts for people to decide, you have an odd idea of which information to present.

Readers can judge whether I have distorted anything, or whether you -- clearly a supporter or even an associate of the museum and hypocritically taking advantage of the very liberty of debate that was denied to the excluded scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory -- are trying to distort things, distract attention from the basic issue, and defend a biased and misleading exhibit with your various statements.



B. Ralph

at 09:29 on October 17th, 2007

First, a brief reminder to Gadda.

You have no credibility because:

- You haven't seen the exhibit. This is incredible, after 10 months of daily attacks you haven't seen the exhibit.
- You don't know a single one of the principals, by your own admission.
- You haven't had a substantive discussion with even one of them according to your own admission.
- You hide behind pseudonyms.
- You present only partial information to make your case.
- You often misrepresent facts.
- You make false and bigoted accusations and insinuations.
- You then move on to other essays where you present your original accusations and

falsehoods as facts.

To my mind you have an agenda of promoting a particular scholar.

You have not responded to any of these remarks for an obvious reason.

“Gadda,”

Of course readers can judge for themselves. I’m helping them out. Sorry to disappoint you that after all these months, but you still haven’t had a response from the museum. I have no affiliation with them, although I deserve some free tickets for all the time I’ve spent on this.

I have to also say that I loved the show and encourage all Christians, Jews, atheists, agnostics and all members of humanity to attend because they will love it but also because bigots should not be allowed to win the day. Gadda now has every reason to minimize his bigoted intentions because he has been advocating for one scholar in particular but the meaning of what he has written is clear: scholars with any identifiable Christian connection in their schooling or teaching institutions have their education, research, teaching or any combination of these tainted by their faith. “Mendacity” is the word that comes to me after considering this.

(1) To begin with, readers can judge whether my expression of dismay at a man of Jim West's "integrity" supporting Nadia Abu El-Haj was a sign of my great esteem for Dr. West, or if it was an instance of sarcasm and irony on my part.

First you claim that you were being sarcastic and then you claim you didn’t post the statement. Please decide. So you have had private communications with West about “the museum.” That’s an interesting admission which confirms my earlier conjecture.

To reiterate and close the chapter on your lies about the relationship with West, which you have attempted to twist into some sort of religious malfeasance by others:

1. you wrote to West using a familiar tone, calling him a man of integrity – which echoes

Max's comment that he is brave – and whining that he should know better because a vaunted University of Chicago publication said so (Golb is at the University of Chicago).

2. You acknowledge communicating with West, which you denied before, and presumably that is when you gave him the Golb article link that you claim you didn't give him.

3. You were the one seeking free advertising on an "evangelical" blog and now you attack "Christians."

She [Levitt Kohn] suggested that the public consists of infantile idiots who are incapable of judging for themselves and need to be protected from "confusion"

If you had seen the exhibition, you would know how respectfully the public is treated.

(2) Turning to your two massive diatribes, the first consists of a smokescreen of lurid rhetorical accusations -- "cabal of misogynists and self-loathing Jews," etc. -- that have the (apparently intended) effect of obscuring the fundamental issues.

Obscuring? I simply provide a synopsis of your theories. You know your theories are bigoted against Christians and you don't even try to hide it. When you were asked (you were pretending to be another character) why you attack Christians, you answered that you actually meant "devout evangelicals who have a deep concern with returning to Christian roots."

Singling out any group of faith is bigotry. Accusing them of being "scholars" as opposed to scholars because of their faith is also bigotry. Finally, you don't know even one of them, by your own admission. As a consequence, you have no idea what they believe and therefore your attacks are overly broad. This is bigotry. This is the very definition of bigotry.

Since you have no knowledge of the museum, the exhibit, the principals involved, or the people who you name in your fantasy essays, we can break these essays down into the base and vulgar ideas you express. Namely, that an evil cabal of Christian male zealots

either manipulated a hapless Jewish woman or that they worked in slimy conjunction with a self-hating Jewish woman. At other times, you list other Jewish scholars in the same fashion, including Tov and Vermes.

Either way, what you wrote is terrible and deserves to be labeled for what it is.

(3) Why don't you just come out and say that you don't believe there should be a free debate in San Diego among scholars of radically opposing views? Why don't you just say that you don't believe the open exchange of scholarly ideas should be encouraged in a democratic society?

What I or you believe is not important. Facts matter. In November of this year, while the Scrolls exhibit is still on, the Society of Biblical Literature is having its annual conference. Thousands of scholars in this field will come to San Diego and listen to and present papers in peer reviewed forums where they will be challenged, prodded, pushed, insulted and praised by their colleagues and peers. That, Gadda, is a free exchange of ideas!

Since both the SBL and this exhibit have been in the planning for years, it appears that this was a planned, happy coincidence. I wonder if the "mendacious" curator thought this one up. Maybe a Christian zealot did. She or whoever dreamed this up must have thought the museum could "pull the wool over the eyes" of several thousand bible scholars.

Is Dr. Golb presenting a section or paper at the SBL? Will Rachel Eilior attend and give a paper? How about a "series of major Israeli archaeologists" including a deceased one? NO? How many sections do they have this year on Qumran and the Scrolls? Ten, twenty? I looked at their schedule and it's a huge number, each with 3 to 6 scholars presenting and many in the audience participating. Sounds to me like some people LOVE the exchange of scholarly ideas and others prefer media and internet campaigns.

(4) Why don't you address the mendacity of Dr. Kohn's documented statement that she is a "Dead Sea Scrolls scholar"? Why don't you address her statement that the Dead Sea Scrolls are not really "Jewish" texts, and her peculiar philosophy of avoiding public confusion?

“Mendacity” is not a word to be used in the context of a terrific exhibit like this. My questions to the curator would be different than yours but I have seen the exhibit, unlike you, and respect it deeply. Also, I am not promoting a scholar who wasn’t invited to the lecture series, unlike you.

(4) Why don't you address Martin Abegg's position that "Evangelical Christian scholars should play a significant role in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls," and his connection with this and other similar exhibits, in which the Jewish view of scroll origins is not given a significant role?

Why should any group be excluded from study of the Scrolls as long as it does not interfere with the scientific quality of their research. If you have such complaints about Abegg’s work, perhaps you can take them up at the SBL.

Your statement about the “Jewish view” will be ignored since you have not seen the exhibit.

(5) As for the claims you make in your second diatribe, I will respond to them one by one. Your statements are in italics, my responses follow.

First, let’s review:

You lied about West and his site as well as your relationship with him. Twice.

You still have not answered whether Dr. Golb told you about the alumni talk.

You have tried to obfuscate regarding your stumble with Golb’s unadvertised alumni talk and the Paleojudaica reference, so far quite unconvincingly.

You have written bigoted essays about Christian scholars.

You have written maliciously about Jewish scholars.

You have written at least one interpretation which can be viewed as sexist.

You have attacked scholars, their work and their motives on the basis of their faith.

You have misrepresented the notion that a free exchange of ideas has been desired by the museum in light of the presence of the SBL during the exhibit.

If you had really cared, you would have visited this exhibit instead of sitting in your Brooklyn apartment or NYU attacking people and exhibitions. This leaves the impression that you are more interested in making noise than in finding truth or facts.

You have no valid response to my reasons as to why you have no credibility regarding this exhibit.



B. Ralph

at 09:58 on October 17th, 2007

Now for the actual responses:

Gadda's comments are in italics:

(1) First of all, the fourth link I find for "Weston Fields" on Google is the personnel page of the University of the Holy Land, but I don't see Weston Fields on that page.

<http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/default.aspx?tabid=32&authorid=11>

You should stop pretending. Today it was #6 on Google. Since you have already listed "Jerusalem Perspective" in a previous essay (01:39 | September 17th, 2007 in the Fundamentalist essay comments section), it is clear you knew about this but still omitted the pertinent mention of his Ph.D. from Hebrew University with Talmon. Whether you approve of Talmon's views or not, he is a noted scholar and you are a pseudonym.

You attacked Fields on the basis of his faith and listed his schools as evidence, but you omitted Hebrew University and Talmon. Since your research goes deep and you knew Jerusalem Perspective, not only is your interpretation of Fields' faith not material, but what is material is that you knowingly omitted information which you must have come across.

(2) In fact, I emphasized Schniedewind's Brandeis Ph.D. from the outset, in my article on the sensationalist Schniedewind-Cargill press campaign (which you have perhaps not read). I also included a link to the wikipedia page on him, where anyone can read the info about his Ph.D. True, I did not initially feel there was any need to mention the Brandeis Ph.D. in the "Christian Fundamentalism" piece (where the focus was obviously quite different), but then it occurred to me that many people were reading that piece without having read the earlier article on Schniedewind's press campaign, and so I decided to mention it.

Sorry, since we now know that you knowingly omitted the part about Fields' education that contradicted your thesis, it is not believable that you mistakenly neglected to mention Schniedewind's doctoral school in an essay on "fundamentalists" since that would also negate your thesis. Since you have gone around posting links specifically and solely to the Fundamentalist essay – without linking to your "article" about the "sensationalist" press campaign, it holds that you were intent on obscuring available information about a person while attempting to defame him (stating that Christian schools inculcate their students is defamation when you are discussing one of their graduates who is a scholar).

Your dozens of logged and recorded desperate attempts to skew the Wikipedia entry about Schniedewind to make him look like a devout Christian, make your statement about linking to that entry self-serving but also deceptive.

(3) None of this excuses Schniedewind's conduct in participating in a campaign to mislead the public and in snitching the credit for other people's research. I have not minimized his status at UCLA. Quite to the contrary. Secular institutions often grant degrees to religious students, but they don't normally give department chairs to people who are affiliated with places like the "University of the Holy Land." Is this why Schniedewind's name recently disappeared from the personnel page of that Christian

educational institution, after I signaled his being listed there in my "Christian Fundamentalism" article?

You haven't seen the film. You have no credibility on this topic. Why don't you go to your local multiplex, don't watch a movie but pick out the name of one from the marquee and write a bitter and defamatory review of the film while defaming its makers. Make sure to write that you haven't seen it. Oh no, you keep forgetting to mention that part, of not having watched the film, in your vicious libel about the Qumran movie and its makers!

(4) B. Ralph: You write about Freedman's Ph.D. with Cross, something that must have happened 60 years ago, with anger and sarcasm. Do you realize than only somebody of their age group or who cares about somebody from their age group would have any emotion invested in this?

Gadda: Sarcasm, no doubt; perhaps even a touch of scorn; but I'm not aware of any anger in my description of this episode. I'm glad to have pointed out this ethical irregularity, only one of many in the field of biblical scholarship.

The point is that you care. You must have some pretty darn good degrees and career success to have scorn for two graduates of Albright with the careers these two have had. But why would you even care?

(5) Readers can judge the merit of your attempt to demonstrate that I'm of the same age group as Cross and Freedman. But since you've raised the topic, allow me to say that I've seen at least one die-hard defender of the Qumran-Essene theory described as a "dinosaur" who is incapable of facing up to advances in research.

I don't know what the readers can judge. I didn't mean that you were elderly. My guess about who you are places you in your late 40s. My point was that you may have been communicating with somebody of that generation who knew about this sharing business of 60 years ago and had expressed sarcasm or anger regarding the subject. Is this connected to Norman Golb? He graduated from Johns Hopkins and at least one person who purports to be a historian on Orion claimed that Albright was Golb's teacher. I can't verify this information but it seems plausible. Since you have been linking to Golb

articles all over the internet for 14 months while praising him frequently (not to mention that you haven't answered whether he told you about the alumni talk), I guessed it might have been him who told you about their joint dissertation. I have no way of knowing but it's a tantalizing guess.

(6) B. Ralph: *You ignore the decades of dedicated work on the Anchor Bible and other projects that require a scientific viewpoint and approach in Freedman's decades of work.*

Gadda: I'm not aware that I ignored this. In response to Pam Fox Kuhlken, I indicated that I'm not seeking to suggest that Freedman is not a competent biblical scholar, but rather that I'm taking issue with the unethical role he has played in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship. I make the same response to you.

That isn't a satisfactory answer when the entire premise of your essay is an attack on supposedly devout Christians who somehow manipulated a field of study as well as museum exhibits away from scientific research and toward a religiously colored thesis.

That also isn't a satisfactory answer when you point out Freedman as an example of this supposedly unethical set of circumstances. The omission of such an important fact about Freedman while you make the effort to include (several times) the irrelevant but scornful comment about his joint dissertation, from which we are supposed to conclude something negative about his academic qualifications, seems to be blatantly defamatory. You didn't include this information even though you knew it because you wanted to mock him, undermine his stature and prevent the disintegration of your thesis. Your thesis, to remind you, is that Christian-identified scholars are not serious scholars. They are, according to you, "scholars." Your October 14 title for this essay put scholars in quotes. If Pam Fox Kuhlken had not responded to you, your comment to her would never have appeared on these pages.

(7) B. Ralph: *You ignore the decades of highly respected work by Cross.*

Gadda: I'm not aware that I ignored this either. It is lamentable that Dr. Cross, who was once a scholar of repute, has descended to participating in at least two separate campaigns of intentional disinformation (the "Lost Tomb of Jesus" scam and the "yahad"

ostrakon claim). Here as elsewhere, you seem to be sniveling at the fact that I don't sing the praises of your heroes in my articles. I happen to be a bit more critical than you. Where have you said a single critical word about the monopoly or the refusal to engage with scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory? At least Freedman had the courage to recognize that "secrecy" was wrong, even though he lacked the courage to frankly admit his own role in the monopoly. You seem to take it a step further, altogether ignoring the ethical issues I've signaled.

You did ignore his work.

We are speaking about your dishonesty so my ideas about the "monopoly" or the Tomb of Jesus have no bearing on this discussion. Nobody cares what I think just as nobody would care what you think if you didn't go around brutally defaming museums, scholars and anybody else you consider fair game.

If you had the courage of convictions and were interested in a debate, you would not behave as you do. If your interest was in truth and scientific exploration, you wouldn't engage in lies, distortions, obfuscations and omissions. You also wouldn't hide behind 15-20 pseudonyms and 6 or 7 (I've lost count) anonymous blogs. Your stand on ethical issues is to denounce scholars because of their faith.

(8) *B. Ralph: You omit mention of the fact that the co-founder of the Oriental Institute's Dead Sea Scroll project, along with Norman Golb, is a graduate of an evangelical school. Wouldn't that be part of your vast conspiracy of institutions and scholars getting funded by Christians?*

Gadda: I don't know anything about this, but my point was obviously not that everyone who graduates from an evangelical school is part of a conspiracy. My point was simply that a group of people who graduated from such institutions have played an unfortunate role in putting together (and in promoting) a biased exhibit in which the Jewish view of scroll origins is clearly belittled, distorted and excluded.

No, Gadda, that has to be a lie. You have been promoting Norman Golb's Oriental Institute articles for more than a year, probably daily sometimes. There is no way that you are not familiar with the history of the Oriental Institute Dead Sea Scrolls Project or

the article by Norman Golb about it. I came across it the first time I saw one of your links to OI. That's assuming you don't know Golb personally, which is highly doubtful.

Your denial on this point proves everything I have said. You are seeking to protect this other scholar because he is connected to Golb and because you know that his educational history is precisely the same as many of the people you have disparaged here. He is supposed to be a good scholar but in your essay, if he was on the wrong side of Golb, he'd be mincemeat.

As to your second point, you have no credibility. You have not seen the exhibit.

(9) What does Vermes' purchasing his way into becoming a member of the monopoly (which you consistently refer to in a respectful tone as the "Scrolls publication project") have to do with his having been well regarded as a scholar? Some people, especially defenders of the Qumran-Essene theory like yourself, regard him well; others have found his conduct to be unethical. He appears to have used the resources of the Wolfson foundation (which granted \$350,000 to the Qumran Center at Oxford University for this purpose) to effectively purchase his way into the monopoly. What is more, to the best of my knowledge he, like most other Qumran-Essene ideologues, has failed to say a single word in response to the criticism of scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory. Does he even inform readers of the existence of such criticism in his popular translation of the scrolls? Cf. my remarks (in my article above) on Freedman's dogmatic presentation of the Qumran-Essene theory in his popular book. Yet Freedman has also been "well regarded."

You expand on this unbelievable, brutal libel. No wonder nobody debates you, with your bullying and anonymity. You do seem to have a wealth of knowledge about events that happened a long time ago.

(10) B. Ralph: You keep discussing Yizhar Hirschfeld as if he's alive and should be invited to the lecture series at San Diego.

Gadda: The roster of participants in the lecture series was put together well before Dr. Hirschfeld had a heart attack and died. The fact that he is deceased has nothing to do with the museum's decision to exclude him along with all the other known opponents of

the Qumran-Essene theory.

In other words, you don't know when or how the list was composed or completed but you are resurrecting the deceased into your list of "excluded" scholars because it is convenient to have a "series" instead of just "two" archaeologists.

(11) The public was also cheated of the opportunity to hear this important scholar speak at any of the other scrolls exhibits of the past few years, to the shame of the institutions hosting these exhibits.

Oh, I'm sure that if this exhibition was held before 2002, you would be railing that they invited Hirshfeld, a "traditional Qumranologist" who supports the "old Qumran-Essene" theory, but excluded Golb.

(12) B. Ralph: You ignore the known fact that Elior's theories are part of a broader theory of which the scrolls play only a part and that she disagrees with significant parts of Golb's theory.

Gadda: I do not "ignore" these facts. Unlike you, I attended Rachel Elior's lecture on the scrolls at the Jewish Museum a couple of years ago, during which she recommended a single book -- Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls by Golb.

End of discussion. You have proven my point. What is your connection to Golb?

That is very funny, that you feel that the recommendation of a book by a scholar in a public talk makes a museum guilty of exclusion. Maybe they didn't hear her recommendation of Golb, seeing as they were in San Diego.

(12 continued) She is an important scholar in the field. Like Golb, she believes the scrolls came from Jerusalem. Unlike Golb, she puts more emphasis on scrolls written by Temple priests. Shouldn't the San Diego public have the right to know about these significant developments in research?

Sure, and they should know about all of the developments in the field. But why stop at Elior? Why should she get primacy? The exhibit should also show Mason's ideas,

Eisenman's ideas, Davies' ideas and every other of the dozens of ideas out there. After all, any one of these scholars will tell you their theory is the right one. People will love it, and maybe a few die-hards like you will actually attend. You should curate that show, Gadda, since you have it all figured out. Until then, however, they have this other show where some theories are given a respectful hearing even if the promoters of some of these theorists have run a vile and hostile campaign.

In what I saw, and as others have told you, the exhibit treats the Jerusalem theory and pottery factory ideas respectfully. This is what makes your campaign to promote Golb and attack the show so ugly. Please don't give the speech about how there need to be two panels at every juncture where your pet theory separates from whatever the museum has up.

(13) With six million dollars in funding, couldn't the museum have put together a good panel discussion on these interesting questions? Here as elsewhere, you seem strangely intent on distracting people from the basic issue, which you never address.

The basic issue is your hateful, defamatory campaign. Since you have not seen the exhibit, you have no credibility about the show at all. If you had run a normal, decent campaign, you would have the right to ask questions or challenge decisions. It looks like a great lecture series, though, even without your desired panel.

(14) B. Ralph: You ignore the 1998 BAR interview with Hirschfeld where he dismisses Golb's fortress idea.

Gadda: First of all, I would not trust a popular (and quite trashy) publication like BAR on any scholarly issue of importance.

But Magen and Peleg's big article was in BAR. Can we now remove them from your list of excluded "major archaeologists?"

(14 continued) But your real point here, of course, is to suggest that since there are differences between the scholars who reject the Qumran-Essene theory, therefore they should not be seen as a group holding one of the two salient views on scroll origins.

There are also differences, however, between scholars who support the Qumran-Essene

theory, yet they are seen as a group. Hirschfeld's book specifically explains that Qumran was originally built as a fortress. Unlike Golb, he believes that the site was then used for other purposes. But like Golb, and like Magen and Peleg, he believes that the site had a secular purpose, was never inhabited by a sect and that the Dead Sea Scrolls came from Jerusalem. Clearly, all of these scholars are part of a single group who reject the Qumran-Essene theory -- and thus have not been invited to the exhibit you so much appear to admire.

I do admire the exhibit and I have seen it. I'm afraid my point was different. It is that you ignore that prior to having to prove that Essenes lived in Ein Gedi, Hirschfeld completely rejected Golb's ideas. He walked all over Golb in public, and from what I've read, this would have been his position until around 2000-2002. The additional problem is that the Ein Gedi theory has not been accepted by others, and a museum is not the place to build consensus. You have neglected to mention this in months of campaigning and it's dishonest.

This is the same pattern of deception as ignoring Golb's differences with Elior - which I learned about after somebody forced your "Critical Reader" to admit it on Wikipedia. The same deception as declaring that there is an "old" theory and a "new" theory, not giving Rengsdorff his due, or claiming that that there is a "controversy," or that scholars are incompetent, blinded by their faith, lie to save careers and all of the other lies you've thrown out over many months. You have a self-serving framework for the question, nothing more.

(15) I do not care if Zias "worked" for the IAA, and I did not "praise" Magen and Peleg for their "IAA connection."

Yes you have. You attack the IAA sometimes, but you harp on the fact that they work for the IAA, "the official authority" because you perceive that it gives them credibility. Maybe they are credible, but then so is Zias, unless the difference is their faith. Or is it that the ones you support agree with Golb and the one you attack does not. In other words this is either religious bigotry or cynical religious bigotry. There is no third choice.

(15 continued) Magen is the specific Israeli government archaeologist who is responsible for the Judaea and Samaria region, which includes Qumran. In that

capacity, he, together with Peleg, led the officially appointed team that conducted ten seasons of digs at Qumran and concluded that the place was never inhabited by a sect and that the scrolls came from Jerusalem. Yet Magen and Peleg have been excluded from participating in the museum's lecture series, and the grounds supporting their research conclusions are concealed in the exhibit. Readers can judge whether Joe Zias' having worked for the IAA is of any relevance to this basic point.

If Joe Zias has no relationship to this post or the IAA, why did you list him in this post? You brought him up, just as you bring up Magen's official position. How does Zias' official position not matter? You listed him as a Christian "scholar" who is part of your Grand Manipulation. Ironically, Magen and Peleg's ideas were mentioned in the exhibit, however, and I don't know if Joe Zias' ideas were.

(16) B. Ralph: *As for institutions, you omit mention of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation's primary purpose to enable the necessary support for the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project.*

Gadda: *I did not omit this, I specifically included it in my description of this entity in my "Christian Fundamentalism" piece (see the 17th paragraph of that article).*

Good for you, you got me. My mistake.

(16 continued) *Since you seem to have been reading my articles quite closely in search of points to disagree with, I'm surprised that a man of your integrity would say such a dishonest thing about what I do or don't mention. As for your use of the term "necessary," everyone knows that publication of the scrolls under the auspices of the "Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project" (i.e., the famous scrolls monopoly) was virtually completed several years ago. What does this have to do with the Dead Sea Scroll Foundation's current purpose, which appears to be to defend the Qumran-Essene theory through museum exhibits that hoodwink the public by presenting the evidence in a biased and misleading manner? Why don't you address this important ethical issue anywhere in your diatribe?*

My "diatribe" is directed at a bigot who defames people by using lies and distortions and who promotes a scholar by attacking institutions who don't invite the scholar while not

attacking an institution that did. I don't care what the Foundation does but it makes sense that after publishing the scrolls, they would want to help show them around. I thought you wanted the public to learn...

(17) Readers can judge whether I have distorted anything, or whether you -- clearly a supporter or even an associate of the museum and hypocritically taking advantage of the very liberty of debate that was denied to the excluded scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory -- are trying to distort things, distract attention from the basic issue, and defend a biased and misleading exhibit with your various statements.

Gadda, you bet I support this exhibit, It is so terrific that I hope every person in California reads your attacks and attends just to spite your bigoted, hateful rantings.

Funny how language can be used by an intelligent deceiver. I am certainly not an associate of the museum, but I am a "supporter" of the exhibit the same way that every single bible or scrolls scholar in the world except for the invited ones was "carefully excluded" from participating in the lecture series.

To remind us all of the conclusions so far:

You have never attended the exhibit.

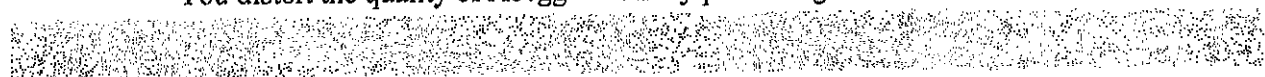
You have never met or talked to any of the principals.

You have invented scenarios which you have published as fact.

You have defamed people, in some cases the case can be made that you did it knowingly.

You lie about the unavailability of scholarly debate in San Diego since the SBL is coming to town.

You distort the quality of Abegg's work by promoting the value statement of his team.



You almost certainly lied about not knowing Weston Fields' schooling.

You distort your reasons for not mentioning Schniedewind's title or Ph.D. schooling.

You attack a movie you have not seen.

You obscure how you know about Cross and Freedman's work as students.

You mislead how you represent Freedman and your attacks on him.

You lie (I'm going to say apparently because I can't prove it) about not knowing how your essay reflects on the co-founder of the Oriental Institute's Dead Sea Scrolls Project.

You libel Vermes. You complain about a discussion of Vermes even though you brought him up.

You have included a deceased person for months in your list of "excluded" archaeologists, without noting so.

You rail against the exclusion of a scholar because she praised a Golb book in public. Sure, you cover up by calling her a good scholar, but the cat's out of the bag.

You trash BAR, even though two of your "excluded major archaeologists" published their big essay about their findings there.

You dish dirt on a scholar and then complain when I bring up that same scholar.

And, from before:



You still have not answered whether Dr. Golb told you about the alumni talk.

You have tried to obfuscate regarding your stumble with Golb's unadvertised alumni talk and the Paleojudaea reference, so far quite unconvincingly.

You have written bigoted essays about Christian scholars.

You have written at least one interpretation which can be viewed as sexist.

You have attacked scholars, their work and their motives on the basis of their faith.

You have misrepresented the notion that a free exchange of ideas has been desired by the museum in light of the presence of the SBL during the exhibit.

You clearly have no clue about this exhibit which leaves the impression that you are more interested in making noise than in truth or facts.

You have no valid response to my reasons as to why you have no credibility regarding this exhibit.

You have been promoting Norman Golb for months linking almost exclusively solely to his articles.



Charles Gadda

at 14:17 on October 17th, 2007

B. Ralph,

Again, I will not bother answering everything you say; readers can judge whether you are doing more good or harm to the museum with your profound attacks on me. Readers can also judge whether by engaging in a debate on someone's website and then submitting a sarcastic comment to the same website a few months later I demonstrated my friendship for the website's owner. And they can judge whether I denied having

submitted a comment to Jim West's site, or whether I simply did not recall that he had briefly posted the comment in question before blocking it (a fact I verified by checking the cached version of his site after I didn't find the comment on the current version). Finally, they can judge what all of this suggests about your effort to defend the museum.

That said, I will selectively respond to a few of yours statements. First of all, thank you for pointing me towards the info on Weston Fields (I had originally discovered the "Jerusalem Perspective" site while researching Todd Bolen, and had not noticed their statement about Fields). I have now added this information (along with a clear and direct mention of Schniedewind's Brandeis Ph.D.) to my Christian Fundamentalism article, and readers can judge whether the article is any less convincing in its new form.

It is interesting, by the way, to see that Fields got his Th.D. at the famous... **Grace Theological Seminary**, and that he wrote his doctoral dissertation (under the direction of Qumran-Essene ideologue Shemaryahu Talmon) on "Sodom and Gomorrah: Tradition, Motifs and Meaning in Genesis 18, 19" -- hardly a qualification for presenting oneself as an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls. It would be interesting to know on what topic he wrote his Th.D. dissertation -- hopefully not "Sodom and Gomorrah..."

How compelling that you bring the "presence of the SBL" into this conversation. I seem to recall that the topic of my articles was the biased exhibit taking place at the Natural History Museum, not a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. Is this the best you can do? But since you raise the topic, anyone who knows anything about this field knows that the SBL is in the hands of so-called "traditional" scroll scholars, and that its directors are *deeply resentful* of any criticism of people like Freedman and Cross. And who is the "president" of the SBL's West Coast chapter? Last I heard, it was Dr. *Risa Levitt Kohn*, curator of the San Diego scrolls exhibit! This, of course, in light of the museum's biased treatment of the scrolls, raises the question of whether Dr. Kohn has a conflict of interest stemming from her position at the SBL -- a conflict, of course, that would directly violate the "ethical transparency" standard promulgated by the American Association of Museums. But I almost forgot -- the question of a museum's responsibility towards the public is not the topic here, because you prefer to change the topic.

You keep proclaiming that I haven't seen the exhibit, as if (1) the massive press campaign surrounding the exhibit's opening (much of which was written directly by the museum's publicity department), (2) the museum's own website presentation and (3) their list of featured lecturers did not amply document what is going on here.

Incidentally, although you try to adopt the tone of a disinterested amateur and present

yourself as someone who is not associated with the museum, but who simply saw the exhibit, it is quite clear from everything you say that you have training in this field -- how else would you know so much about things like "Mason's ideas" (which I haven't even heard of) and why else would you be so embittered by my criticisms, which various reasonable people have found to be interesting rather than "bigotted"? But since you know so much, perhaps you could refer me to some article of yours on the scrolls that I might read for greater enlightenment.

Since we're on the topic of scholarship, allow me to reiterate that I would never produce a popular magazine like BAR as a source on any scholarly issue; and the "big article," i.e. the scholarly one, by Magen and Peleg was not in BAR, but rather in the book entitled *The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, vol. 57, 2006). That you would hide this fact from readers and instead try and smear Magen and Peleg for having agreed to allow the editor of BAR (who is a lawyer and an amateur archaeology fan rather than a trained scholar of any type) to summarize their findings in an article, shows a good deal about your own methods of scholarship.

Readers can judge whether I have, as you say, "proven your point" about promoting Golb by citing Rachel Eilior's recommendation of his book at her Jewish Museum lecture. Oh, but of course Rachel Eilior herself "promoted" Golb by recommending his book, and therefore by pointing out that she belongs to the group of scholars who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory, I am engaged in the same promotion. That a fine scholar like yourself would stoop to this level, is also quite revelatory. Incidentally, I didn't "libel" Vermes, I simply pointed out well-known facts that are documented... on pages 217-247 of Golb's book, which I have right here on my shelf among a dozen other books on the scrolls. I would certainly rather "promote" the scholar who exposed the monopoly outrage and all the unethical conduct it produced, than the creators of the biased museum exhibit taking place in San Diego.

I will let readers judge whether your other comments have any merit, and what this says about the museum's ability to actually justify its conduct.



Kaitlin

at 14:20 on October 17th, 2007

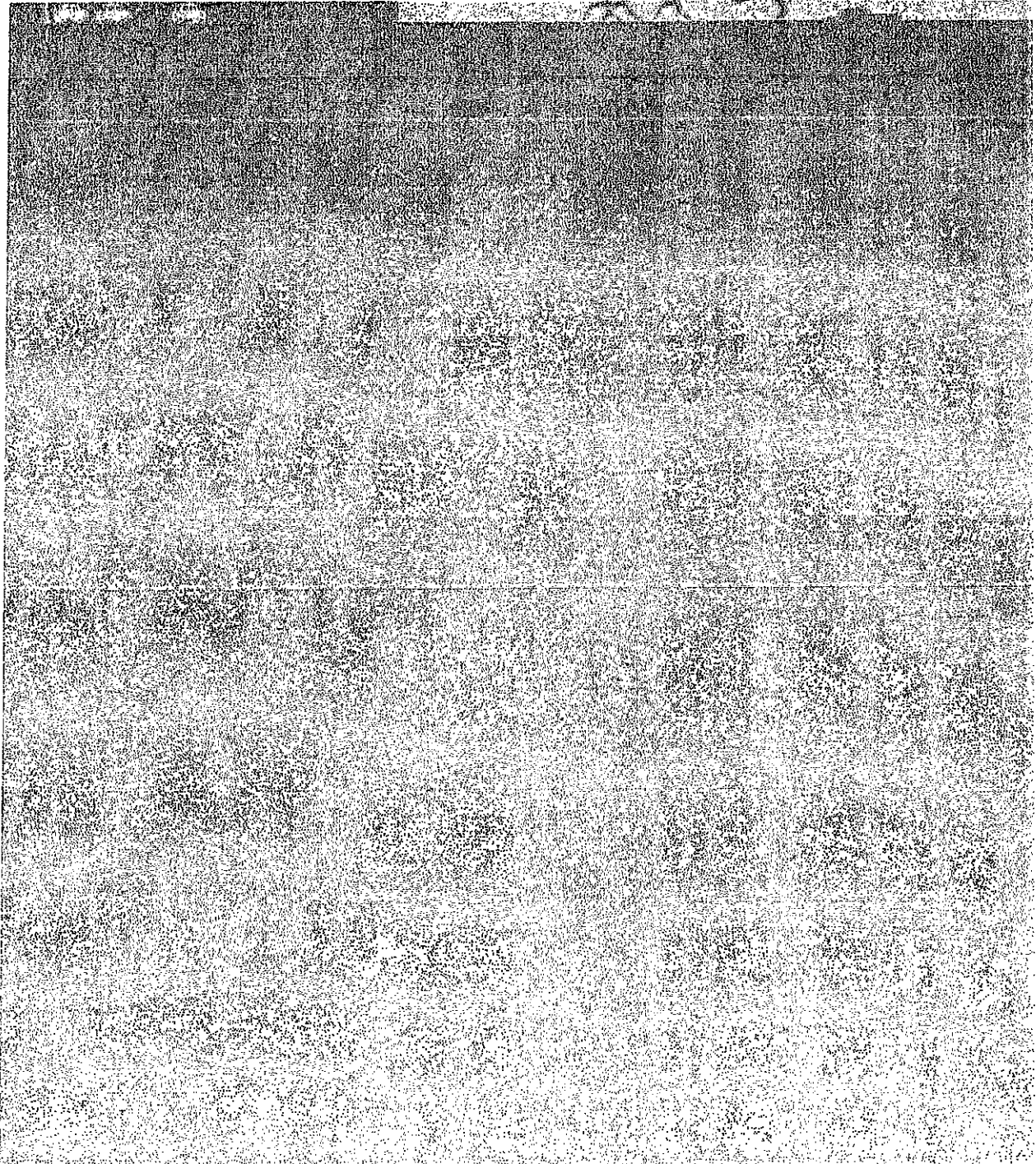
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Thank you.

in Culture, Religion, San Diego, history, ethics, scandal, Christianity, archaeology, Judaism, Dead Sea Scrolls



40C12

Robertdworkin's Weblog

July 12, 2008

The Ethics of Exhibition: Romancing the Scrolls

Filed under: [Archaeology](#), [Christianity](#), [Dead Sea Scrolls](#), [History](#), [Judaism](#), [Religion](#), [Science](#), [Uncategorized](#) — robertdworkin @ 2:54 am

Tags: [Archaeology](#), [Christianity](#), [Dead Sea Scrolls](#), [Ethics](#), [Judaism](#), [Liberalism](#), [Museums](#), [Religion](#), [Science](#)

by Robert Dworkin

The following article was originally published on the [Spinoza's Lens](#) site, which has since been taken down.

In recent years, history, science, and religion have had a series of increasingly embarrassing encounters. An especially significant, if rarely analyzed, example of this phenomenon is the inaccurate treatment of the current state of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship in traveling exhibitions being presented all over the United States and elsewhere. As of this date, one such exhibit is at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Almyra, New York. Another, entitled "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of Christianity," is at the National War Monument in Seoul, Korea. Others were recently presented at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle and at the San Diego Natural History Museum (the latter at a cost of six million dollars), and one will be opening on June 28 at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh — a division of the North Carolina Department of the Environment and Natural Resources. Judging from the descriptions of these exhibits available on the websites of the exhibiting institutions, each of them fails to give the public a balanced view of a deepening academic struggle that has divided the world of Scrolls research for the past decade.

The theory of Scroll origins favored in the exhibits is the "traditional" one, first proposed sixty years ago — at a time when scholars had read only seven of the 900 scrolls ultimately found in the caves to the north of the famous Khirbet Qumran site. Academics who defend this theory (for the most part biblical scholars rather than historians or professional archaeologists) hold that Qumran — whose fortified ruins are located on a desert cliff overlooking the Dead Sea — was home to a small, celibate sect usually said to be Essenes. They argue that the Dead Sea Scrolls were composed and copied by monks living at this site. Speculation that the claimed Essenes of Qumran were forerunners of early Christianity (reflected in the title of the Korean exhibit) quickly made the Dead Sea Scrolls the most popular archaeological discovery of the 20th century.

Over the past decade, however, an increasing number of researchers, including Hebrew University archaeologist Yizhar Hirschfeld (who died following a heart attack in 2006) and a top archaeological team led by Yitzhak Magen and Yuval Peleg of the Israel Antiquities Authority, have come to favor a fundamentally different view. Responding to anomalies in the traditional theory (e.g., the presence of over 500 scribal hands among the scrolls, the wide variety of doctrines they contain, and the failure to find evidence of scribal activity at Qumran or any organic link between the scrolls and the site), they have concluded that Qumran was a secular site well integrated into the economy of the region, inhabited by soldiers and pottery makers — but never by any religious sect — and that the Scrolls are the remnants of libraries from the Jerusalem area, the writings of many different Jewish groups taken down to the desert for safe-keeping shortly before the siege and sacking of the city by the Romans in 70 A.D.

These conclusions echo and amplify those forcefully argued for by University of Chicago historian Norman Golb since the late 1970s. One reviewer of Golb's 1995 book (suitably entitled *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?*) summarized some of the stakes involved in the ongoing controversy as follows: Many traditional scholars "held or were influenced by the 'entrenched belief that the culture of the Jews mattered relatively little, and that urban civilization was a force inimical to it.' These scholars could not accept or possibly even conceive the extent of the literature associated with Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans" (G. Armstrong, in *Church History*, vol. 64, no. 4 [1995], p. 636).

The opposition to the sectarian theory is, by any normal academic standards, both serious and concerted. The rift was clearly visible by 1998, when the pertinent volume of the *Cambridge History of Judaism* appeared: it contained two lengthy articles on Scroll origins, one representing the Essene theory, the other the Jerusalem theory. Four years later, a major New York Times article reported on a wide disagreement of scholars at a Brown University scrolls conference. The article quoted Dr. Katarina Galor, the conference organizer, to the effect that there was no longer any "consensus" on the topic. By 2006, the same newspaper (in an article focused on Dr. Magen's excavations) described opposition to the sectarian theory as "a rising tide of revisionist thinking."

Yet, museums across the country have chosen to ignore this situation and, what is worse, have systematically failed to inform the public of any of the reasons that have led to it. While the exhibits occasionally pay lip service to "some scholars" who "believe" the scrolls came from Jerusalem, the exhibiting institutions appear to have gone to considerable length to convince the public that the "consensus," and even the recent findings of archaeologists in Israel, still favor, or at any rate do not threaten, the Essene theory. Evidence supporting the Jerusalem theory is simply omitted or, as in the case of the famous Copper Scroll (whose contents, according to most current specialists, point to the Temple in Jerusalem as the source of the hidden treasures and artifacts that it lists) is treated as "mysterious." The descriptions of the other texts on display tend to read as if the sectarian theory were a presupposed fact.

Nor can the exhibitors plead ignorance. Golb himself, in a series of articles published on the University of Chicago website, has presented several lengthy lists of what, according to him, are egregiously false and misleading claims made in the exhibits. Surprisingly, however, not one of the institutions in question has even attempted to respond to any of Golb's criticisms. If the exhibits, according to a respected scholar in the field, consist largely of propaganda that fools the public, then wouldn't one normally expect the directors of the prestigious museums where they are being held to investigate these claims?

As indicated, some of the exhibits have been held in religious (particularly Mormon) institutions. Leaving aside the question of whether such institutions may reasonably be expected to meet the standards applicable to science museums, another more basic question is whether the large numbers of people who pay to see these exhibits are not entitled to the simple truth. For example, the website description of the exhibit taking place at the church in Almyra, NY states that "scholars do not agree on the origin of the scrolls," but then pointedly adds that the exhibit "includes artifacts ... found in the Qumran area, home to the scribes of the Dead Sea Scrolls." The reader is left with the impression that the scholarly disagreement referred to has no impact whatsoever on the veracity of the assertion pronounced, as a fact, a few sentences later.

Over and beyond the question of scientific accuracy, other disturbing problems must also be confronted. Even the exhibits taking place in science museums have been created largely by Christian scholars, some of them affiliated with educational institutions with names like "University of the Holy Land." Some of the exhibitors are members of the team that strictly controlled the Scrolls (refusing access to

those who disagreed with the Essene interpretation) until the famous "Scrolls monopoly" collapsed in 1992. With one rare exception, the Jewish, secular-minded scholars who have rejected the Qumran-sectarian theory have been excluded from the lecture series accompanying the exhibits. The exception occurred at Kansas City's Union Station, where Dr. Golb — i.e., a single opponent of the sectarian theory in a field of over twenty lecturers — was invited to speak. The Kansas City museum director explained his decision by invoking his own "scientific background," indicating that "if you are trying to decide on a theory, you need as many data points as possible." This opinion, however, has apparently been rejected by the directors of exhibiting scientific institutions all across the country. Interviewed by the Los Angeles Times, the curator of the San Diego Natural History Museum's exhibit justified that institution's stance with the statement: "You don't want to confuse people with so many different theories."

As for the North Carolina exhibit, it quite clearly has been designed to cater to a particular religious audience, thus once again raising the question of the proper role of scientific institutions — and now for the first time one run by an American governmental branch — with respect to issues having a religious dimension. The museum's website explains that the scrolls' purportedly sectarian authors saw themselves as the "true Israel." What large numbers of visitors may not know is that the expression "true Israel" was a polemical phrase used by figures in the early Christian church who believed that the Christians, not the Jews, were the True Israel. In the lack of any evidence that such an expression is found anywhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the museum's website statement must be either an arbitrary piece of misinformation or something offered with specific religious intent. (In this respect, it is worth noting that since at least the late Renaissance, some Christian writers have argued that the purity-loving Essenes, rather than wicked, "priestly" Jews from Jerusalem, were the "true," direct link with Christianity; Jesus himself has sometimes been popularly understood to have been an Essene — a tradition not grounded in any historical evidence, but which certainly forms part of the backdrop to this unfolding scholarly controversy over Scroll origins.)

The "true Israel" statement — and others included on the museum's website are equally dubious — cannot help but raise the question of whether the North Carolina exhibit violates the United States Constitution by, in effect, taking a Jewish cultural treasure (as many now consider the scrolls to be) and presenting it with a Christian slant under state auspices. Surely a strong argument exists that state institutions, should they choose to exhibit the Scrolls, are legally bound to present both salient theories of scroll origins in a neutral manner, without imposing an unverifiable (and possibly fabricated) "consensus" on the public. Unfortunately, the warm reception generally accorded to these exhibits wherever they have previously showed does not encourage one to hope that the local media in Raleigh will directly address this issue and help set a standard for future exhibits.

Writing on the "View from Number 80" blog, British skeptic Ross Sargent comments on the controversy as follows: "Far from all this being a storm in an inkwell important principles are at stake. Archaeology, in the atmosphere of aggressive religiosity that now pervades society is becoming a football kicked around merely to further sectarian, and associated political, interests." Surely we are dealing here with a pressing cultural problem. Yet the very nature of the problem invites reticence and discretion on the part of precisely those individuals to whom one would naturally look for action. Understandably, few people wish to become involved in a potential scandal, or to be sucked into a complicated academic dispute that does not directly concern them; above all, people do not wish to lay themselves open to charges of anti-Christian bigotry. Our natural reaction, then, is to shrug it off: what does it really matter if these exhibits cater to a Christian audience? After all, museum exhibits are often inaccurate, and the progress of science, along with "peer review," can be expected to gradually work their effects.

Such an outcome, however, should not be taken for granted — particularly if, as appears to have

occurred here, millions of dollars are being pumped into a propaganda effort designed to defend the interests of one group of scholars at the expense of another. In this regard, it is disconcerting to read, in an account of a lecture given by a defender of the Qumran-sectarian theory at the 2007 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, that the lecturer repeatedly attacked the highly regarded Israeli archaeologists who have rejected that theory following ten seasons of excavations at Qumran, and that an audience of biblical scholars greeted these attacks with encouraging laughter — but that the archaeologists in question, unlike the lecturer, were not invited to attend the SBL annual meeting. Sadly, as North Carolina prepares to host a Scrolls exhibit that is bound to excite immense popular interest, one is left to wonder whether financial and religious concerns have, in this domain, been allowed to trump the basic principle of free and open debate.

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The Dead Sea Scrolls controversy in San Diego

How a major museum scammed the public, and got away with it too

Jesus, Judas, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: peddling religious sensationalism in America (December 10, 2007)

Background: the "public square"

A few days ago, American presidential candidate **Mitt Romney** gave what was billed as a major address on the "religion" question. Apparently, one of his principal goals was to put Evangelical Christians at ease with his candidacy, and to that end, he took it upon himself to repudiate a key argument made by **John F. Kennedy** in a famous speech delivered during the 1960 presidential campaign.

Kennedy asserted that a candidate's "views on religion are his own, private affair," which should not be "imposed by him upon the nation." By contrast, Romney declared that religion is not merely "a private affair," and that "no movement of conscience can succeed in America that cannot speak to the convictions of religious people."

In the course of his mock-Kennedy speech, Romney rehashed the tendentious claim of fundamentalists to the effect that America was founded as a "Christian" nation. Still worse, he sought, as the *New York Times* put it in an insightful **editorial**, to reduce the debate over religion to a childish rigid quarrel between people who believe religion has a place in public life and others who advocate "the elimination of religion from the public square." (And for a look ahead at where this is going, allow me to put the question from the outset: what is a massive, six-million-dollar museum exhibit, promoted in dozens of newspapers and viewed by 450,000 visitors, if not a "public square"?)

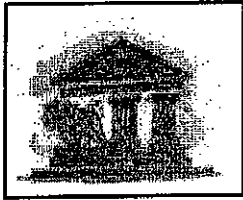
The *NY Times* editorial sharply exposes the dangers facing our constitutional system of separation of Church and State at a time when Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister, has made the religious test "the cornerstone" of his own presidential campaign and when yet another candidate, John McCain, has also declared that America is a "Christian nation."

What is less commonly perceived, however, is the fact that this threat of a breakdown in our political culture has been accompanied by other, related manifestations. These can be illustrated by examples from three domains: (1) fallacious theoretical discourse about a claimed nexus between science and religion; (2) religiously motivated sensationalism involving two hoaxes initially perpetrated on the *National Geographic* and *Discovery* channels, and widely publicized through dozens of other media outlets; and (3) the ongoing scandal involving the cooperation between a major "non-profit" science museum and a "scholarly" monopoly aimed at exploiting the public's fascination with Christian origins.

"The greatest scientists of the West..."

The **science/religion** claim was recently illustrated by an article by Dinesh D'Souza, entitled **A Christian Foundation** and prominently featured as an editorial in *USA Today*. The article begins by stating that "popular efforts to tuck Christianity neatly aside as a footnote to this country's history and to deliver a secular society will fail. Why? Because the faith is inextricably tied to our values, our

institutions and *even modern science*." D'Souza condemns the "aggressive" actions of atheists (represented in a cartoon accompanying the article), and argues that Christianity "has shaped the core institutions and values of the USA and the West," including even "secular institutions such as democracy and science."



Without mentioning, e.g., the brutality of the Spanish Inquisition, the **Wars of Religion** or the extermination of the American Indians, he adds that Christianity "has fostered in our civilization values such as respect for human dignity, human rights and human equality that *even secular people cherish*" (my italics). He then focuses in on science, boldly asserting that "Christians were the first ones who envisioned the universe as following laws that reflected the rationality of God the creator." As if to lend an air of dignity to this offensive argument, he offers us a list of "the greatest scientists of the West." Here is the complete list as printed in USA Today: Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Boyle, Newton, Leibniz, Gassendi, Pascal, Mersenne, Cuvier, Harvey, Dalton, Faraday, Joule, Lyell, Lavoisier, Priestley, Kelvin, Ampere, Steno, Pasteur, Maxwell, Planck, Mendel, and Lemaître.

As I read this powerful accumulation of names, I was tempted to add D'Souza to his own list, and to thank him (1) for scientifically informing me that "Gassendi, Mersenne and Lemaître [sic] were priests," and (2) for sparing me from having to confront such boring details as the fact that Galileo was arrested by the Catholic Church, charged with heresy, forced to retract his scientific claims under threat of torture and burning at the stake, and then ultimately banished from Florence. At least they let Galileo live, unlike his predecessor Giordano Bruno, another scientist who just happens not to be on D'Souza's list.

But wait a second. Isn't there another name missing from the list? What about **Albert Einstein**? Could it be that he's not included on the list because he wasn't Christian? And while we're at it, what about **Darwin** and **Huxley**, is there perhaps a particular reason they're not on the list? And what about **Benjamin Franklin**, who said he found Christian dogma "unintelligible," or **Thomas Edison**, who said "religion is all bunk"? What about **Marie Curie** and all the other atheist Nobel laureate scientists listed here?

And moving back to our "core institutions," what about someone named **Abraham Lincoln**, and all the other figures listed here? I guess they played only a minor role in the formation of our system of values, because they stood apart from the dogmas of organized Christianity? Here, for example, is one of Lincoln's statements: "The Bible is not my book nor Christianity my profession. I could never give assent to the long, complicated statements of Christian dogma." And here is another one: "My earlier views of the unsoundness of the Christian scheme of salvation and the human origin of the scriptures have become clearer and stronger with advancing years, and I see no reason for thinking I shall ever change them."

Well, who cares about these little details. After all, America is a Christian nation, and USA Today is a newspaper written for Americans, right? D'Souza concludes with the important statement that we must "not hesitate to acknowledge, **not only privately but also publicly**, the central role that Christianity has played and still plays in the **things that matter most to us**." This led me to wonder whether Governor Romney has been reading USA Today.

Bones of Jesus found; Judas goes to heaven

But since we're on the topic of the public acknowledgment of religion, let's move on to the **religiously motivated sensationalism** of several recent **media campaigns**. Here I will limit myself to two examples. First, the "Lost Tomb of Jesus" scam, massively marketed in televised presentations and dozens of "news" items in the Spring of 2007. The claim being made by hack "archaeologists" was that they had identified the tomb of Jesus and his family (including his wife) in Jerusalem. The only problem with the claim was that it was fraudulent, based on the doubly false assertion that the name "Jesus" (Hebrew "Yehoshua") had indeed been found scrawled on an ossuary (the name was in fact illegible), and that this would have had some kind of significance if it had been true, even though the common name "Yehoshua" has been found on dozens of ossuaries from that time.

Ultimately, the claim was **rejected by numerous scholars**, but not before the "documentary" on this "discovery" had earned its makers millions of dollars. More important than the wrongful profit, however, is the manner in which the media presented the scholarly quarrel occasioned by the fraudulent claim: namely, as a dispute between "secularists" who believe that Jesus was an ordinary person, and devoutly "religious" people who believe that his bones could never have been found because he was resurrected. No one paused to reflect that the entire claim might have been based on an unscrupulous effort to profit from a prurient, popular, religiously motivated fascination with Jesus.

My second example is the gnostic "Gospel of Judas." This third-century text had been found in an Egyptian tomb during the 1970's, and since then had been passed around for years until National Geographic finally got its hands on it and decided to sensationalize it. They hired a bunch of "bible scholars" who prepared a translation, and then came the shocking revelation: according to this text, Judas didn't betray Jesus; rather, Jesus asked Judas, his most beloved disciple, to hand him over to be killed, and Judas was rewarded with a place in heaven and exaltation above the other disciples.

This stunning revelation earned National Geographic millions of dollars, but then came the equally stunning revelation, in a New York Times **opinion piece** by April DeConick (another, but more serious biblical scholar), that the entire thing was a hoax, based on the egregious mistranslation of basic words in the text. For example, the text uses the Greek word "daimon" to refer to Judas. In third-century gnostic circles, this word always meant "demon." The translators, however, cleverly assigned it the innocuous meaning "spirit" that it has in ancient philosophical texts of Plato and Aristotle.

Interestingly, Dr. DeConick observes that "when National Geographic published its transcription, the facsimiles of the original manuscript it made public were reduced by 56 percent, making them fairly useless for academic work. Without life-size copies, we are the blind leading the blind. The situation reminds me of the deadlock that held scholarship back on the **Dead Sea Scrolls** decades ago. When manuscripts are hoarded by a few, it results in **errors and monopoly interpretations that are very hard to overturn even after they are proved wrong.**"

Scholar undone by slur, but "natural history" museum takes pride in Christian-oriented exhibit

Dr. DeConick's statement about the Dead Sea Scrolls leads me to the third domain in which religiously motivated individuals are violating our basic cultural practices for their own profit. First, we saw the boundary between science and religion questioned; next we saw the mediatized abuse of popular fascination with religion; now we turn to unethical monopolization of ideas in the field of the most widely publicized discovery of ancient manuscripts ever made, here again the aim being to profit (no doubt both financially and otherwise) from popular religious beliefs.

Indeed, what is the San Diego Natural History Museum's exhibit of the Dead Sea Scrolls, if not the resurrection, in a somewhat different form, of the same monopoly that collapsed in the midst of scandal around fifteen years ago? Clearly, one group of (mainly Christian) scholars has manipulated this exhibit to pull the wool over the public's eyes and keep people from learning why an entire series of other researchers have rejected the "Qumran-Essene" theory of scroll origins slavishly followed by the museum. Clearly, as I explained in an **earlier item** of mine, the museum's distorted presentation of the evidence gives rise to an **appearance of impropriety** involving "intellectual antisemitism, an obscurantist, seemingly irrational fear of debate, and biased conduct that is abhorrent to our basic social sentiments and to the principle of freedom of inquiry which lies at the core of our system of values."

Tragically, the concluding weeks of this biased exhibition have coincided with the death of one of the great icons of traditional scrolls research, Harvard Divinity School professor John Strugnell. Here again, a New York Times article, in the form of an **obituary** on Strugnell, reminds us of things we like to avoid thinking of. Strugnell, we read, never received a Ph.D., but

was appointed to the faculty of the Harvard Divinity School in 1966, becoming a professor of Christian origins. He was made editor in chief of the scrolls project in 1984. Six years later, at a time when the scrolls team was coming under sharp criticism for its exclusive control over access to the documents and its sluggish pace of publication, he was in Jerusalem and gave an interview to the Tel Aviv newspaper Ha'aretz. As quoted by the newspaper, he said of Judaism: "It's a horrible religion. It's Christian heresy, and we deal with our heretics in different ways." Mr. Strugnell later denied accusations of anti-Semitism, noting that he was the first editor to have included Jewish scholars in the project, which had been **dominated by Christians**... But the damage was irreparable. He was replaced as the scrolls editor and forced to retire from Harvard.

The Times obituary also carefully states that "scholars consider the Dead Sea Scrolls a reflection of the **thinking of Jews** during the turbulent period of the beginnings of Rabbinic Judaism and the emergence of Christianity." This is quite different from the view expressed by the curator of the San Diego exhibit, who announced in an interview of her own (see my above-linked piece for details) that she "**wouldn't classify these as Jewish texts**," because "Judaism, the way we tend to think about it, even early Judaism, is not yet fully crystallized in this period...."

How ironical, that a biased, misleading exhibit put together by a group obviously *dominated by Christians*, and from which a series of "dissenting" (or shall I say: heretical?) Jewish researchers have been excluded, has nonetheless seen a massive outpouring of enthusiastic media reports, precisely during the final months of Mr. Strugnell's life. In the case of the San Diego exhibit, charges of antisemitism have not even been broached in the press, let alone addressed by the museum's directors. Apparently, nothing has been learned over the years. Tempted by profit, yet another scientific institution has ceded to the call of religion, and calmly ignored the problem posed by its own aiding and abetting, in the "public square," of an outrageous monopoly perpetrated in the name of "biblical scholarship."

Perhaps Governor Romney can take a little trip to San Diego and give a speech on the steps of the museum on the last day of the exhibit, a week after Christmas. Then the circle will close, and the nexus between politics, religiously motivated sensationalism and the abuse of trust will be clear for all to see.

One Response to "Jesus, Judas, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: peddling religious sensationalism in America (December 10, 2007)"

1. *Peddling religious sensationalism in America « The Dead Sea Scrolls controversy in San Diego*

Says:

December 12, 2007 at 3:11 am

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Bart Ehrman and the Essenes in Raleigh

July 17, 2008

UNC professor admits he's "not a scrolls expert," defends museum exhibit's bias as legitimate; Jewish Museum in New York disagrees

Filed under: Uncategorized — biblicalraleigh @ 2:07 am

Tags: Archaeology, Bart Ehrman, Bible, Biblical Studies, Christianity, Dead Sea Scrolls, Essenes, Judaism, Qumran, Raleigh

Background

In putting together its series of eight "distinguished lectures" to accompany the current Raleigh exhibit on the Dead Sea scrolls, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences decided to invite Professor Bart Ehrman to deliver the concluding talk of the series, entitled "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Early Christianity." Dr. Ehrman, who chairs the religious studies department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is well known as a scholar of New Testament and "Jesus" studies and, in that capacity, has appeared on various televised "documentary" features.

The announcement of Ehrman's lecture on the museum's website reads as follows:

"Like the Essenes, who were probably responsible for producing the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jesus and his followers were Jewish apocalypticists. Even though Jesus and his disciples are not mentioned in the Scrolls, understanding the message of the community at Qumran can still contribute to our understanding of the Jewish milieu in which Jesus lived and out of which early Christianity emerged."

The problem

There is, yes, a problem with this announcement: While Dr. Ehrman himself has never published any substantive work on Qumran or the Dead Sea scrolls, a series of major historians and archaeologists specialized in the field, including top Israeli archaeologists Yizhar Hirschfeld and Yitzhak Magen, have, over the past decade, rejected the theory that any type of "community at Qumran," let alone Essenes, were "responsible for producing the the Dead Sea Scrolls," and have concluded that the scrolls must have come from the Jerusalem area. These specialists, however, have been excluded from participating in the museum's lecture series.

Two questions thus arise: (1) why did the museum invite a non-specialist to give such a lecture, while excluding from its series all of the historians and archaeologists who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory? (2) What are the museum's grounds for asserting, in its announcement of Dr. Ehrman's talk, that the "Essenes were probably responsible for producing the Dead Sea Scrolls"? One

can only assume that Dr. Ehrman approved (or even wrote) this statement.

The exchange

In the hope of clarifying these matters, Mr. Jerome Cooper emailed Dr. Ehrman, and received a lengthy response, which he has been good enough to forward to me. In his statement, Dr. Ehrman admits that he is not a Dead Sea scrolls scholar, but attempts to justify the exhibit and lecture series on the grounds that the Essene theory is a "common opinion" shared by many of his colleagues.

In putting forth this argument, however, Dr. Ehrman neglects to mention the names of the many highly respected researchers who have rejected that "common opinion." And he fails to mention that The Jewish Museum of New York, in its announcements [here](#) and [here](#) of its upcoming scrolls exhibit (produced by the Israel Antiquities Authority), specifically states that scroll origins are "still being debated"; that there are "two basic theories" about the scrolls, and that "it may be many years before scholars can come to a consensus on who wrote and used the Dead Sea Scrolls, where they lived, and how this impacts on our interpretation of their meaning for our lives today."

Dr. Ehrman suggests that the "vast majority" of scholars support the Essene theory and regard the views of their adversaries as "inadequate, speculative and, probably, dead wrong," but he fails to point out that this accusation is precisely what many current researchers (i.e., the ones whose names he fails to mention) believe about the Essene theory.

Given (1) the popularity of the Dead Sea scrolls; (2) criticism that has been leveled against the Raleigh, N.C. exhibit; and (3) the North Carolina Department of the Environment's involvement in creating the exhibit and lecture series (presumably at taxpayers' expense), we are clearly dealing here with a matter of genuine public interest. Therefore, since Dr. Ehrman's statements appear to shed considerable light on the attitudes and considerations that went into the creation of the Raleigh exhibit, I am reprinting the statements below, along with Mr. Cooper's replies and a few additional comments of my own (in brackets) that will allow readers to judge for themselves whether Dr. Ehrman's arguments are convincing.

Dr. Ehrman: I'm participating in the DSS exhibit by giving a lecture simply because I was asked to do so. I was asked because I'm an expert on the historical Jesus and the early Christian movement, and I will be talking about how the apocalyptic character of the scrolls allow us to see the Jewish apocalyptic milieu out of which Christianity emerged.

Mr. Cooper: I can certainly understand why you would accept an invitation to give a talk, but you have apparently not given any serious thought to the rigged quality of the lecture series in which you will be participating; to the obvious exclusion of a series of prominent historians and archaeologists who, over the past decade, have rejected the Qumran sectarian theory; and to the appearance of impropriety

that, as a consequence, surrounds the lecture series as well as the exhibit as a whole. This is a museum of natural sciences run by a N.C. government agency, not a propaganda organ for a disputed theory.

[Mr. Cooper might have added that only a small portion of the Dead Sea scrolls have the "apocalyptic character" Dr. Ehrman apparently attributes to the scrolls as a whole.]

Dr. Ehrman: Are you familiar with scholarship generally? What views of ancient Judaism or Christianity do you consider *not* to be disputed? It's not an issue of there being "another" side to the story. There are tons of different sides. Do you expect all of them to be represented? And you think that would be helpful? Maybe you don't know just how many other views are floating around out there?

Yes, I think the Essenes probably did produce the scrolls. That's not as controversial claim as you seem to think. There are always loud minority views, but that doesn't keep them from being very much in the minority. I personally know some of the top experts in the study of the scrolls, and some of the top archaeologists of Palestine in the world. So far as I know they all, to a person, think the Essenes wrote the scrolls. This would include my colleague Jodi Magness, who has written what many have touted as the authoritative book on the archaeology of Qumran (whose office is next to mine, and whom I hired at UNC when I was chair), my Duke colleague Eric Meyers, with whom I have served on dissertation and PhD exam committees at both Duke and UNC for twenty years, and who is one of the two senior Palestinian archaeologists in the country, as well as the other senior archaeologist, James Strange, as well as editors of the scrolls, such as Armin Lange, one of the leading experts on the scrolls in Western Europe, who was my colleague for a number of years, and on and on and on. I am not an archaeologist or scrolls expert myself, but I have read the scholarship for over twenty years. And everyone whom I know who is personally committed to doing research on the scrolls thinks that the Essenes probably wrote them. I could list names for a very long time.

So it doesn't seem so strange or exorbitant to me, at least, for a public display of the scrolls to present the *opinio communis* of scholarship, and let the experts wrangle over it, rather than giving equal air time to views that the vast majority of scholars have considered to be inadequate, speculative, and, probably, dead wrong.

Mr. Cooper: Forgive me for speaking frankly, but it's almost embarrassing to read these obscurantist arguments of yours.

As anyone can see from reading major news sources like the New York Times, or authoritative reference works like the Cambridge History of Judaism, there are today two salient theories of DSS origins; indeed, the museum implicitly recognized as much by inviting Rachel Elior to speak. To invoke a plurality of marginal views obscures this basic reality.

To voice your approval of "senior" archaeologist James Strange and speak of Jodi Magness' popular book as "authoritative" is arbitrary and absurd in light of [the refutation of her claims in] Yizhar Hirschfeld's book and the official Israel Antiquities Authority report of Yitzhak Magen and Yuval Peleg (to say nothing of the Donceels, Bar Nathan and many other professional archaeologists who have rejected Magness' views). What archaeological training do you even have that allows you to erect Dr. Magness ... as an authority? [I have omitted a parenthetical remark critical of Magness' conduct with respect to lectures she gave at ASOR/SBL.]

You cite your friend Armin Lange [a member of Emmanuel Tov's Dead Sea scrolls editorial team, sometimes referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls monopoly group], but have any opponents of the Qumran-sectarian view been invited to participate in "editing" the scrolls? This itself is a serious problem, of which you don't even seem to be aware.

You also cite Eric Meyers who, like you — but unlike the excluded researchers —, has never published any substantive work on Qumran or the DSS. What kind of an authority is that?

You speak of an "opinio communis." It is true that many scholars who based their academic careers on the Qumran-sectarian theory have sought to fabricate a "consensus" by refusing to admit they erred, and by excluding their opponents from conferences and lecture series; but the fact remains that virtually all the professional archaeologists who have specifically reexamined the issue over the past fifteen years (including the Donceels, appointed by the Ecole Biblique, and the Magen and Peleg team, appointed by the IAA) have rejected that "opinio communis." We are not speaking of light-weight "minority" figures here. Science is not decided by taking votes, but by analysis of the evidence and open debate of opposing interpretations. Do you think the public benefits from being denied the opportunity to weigh such an exchange?

It is sad to see the prevailing ethos of smug camaraderie and exclusion expressed in your remarks. Have none of you and your colleagues any sense of decency, at long last?

[Mr. Cooper might have added that "in questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual." This, at least, is what Galileo famously said. In his remarks, Dr. Ehrman vigorously touts what he claims is the "vast majority" opinion of his colleagues, but does he give any sign of critical thinking on the debate over Qumran and the DSS?]

Dr. Ehrman: Who the hell are you and what kind of bee is in your bonnet? Whatever it is, I hope you get it removed.

Mr. Cooper: Who are you to participate in a transparently unethical scheme and implicitly present yourself as an expert on the "probable" Essenes? Shame on you.

A few afterthoughts

Thus concludes the debate between Dr. Ehrman and Mr. Cooper. I will allow readers to draw their own conclusions on whether Dr. Ehrman has successfully rebutted criticism of the Raleigh exhibit, or whether he has simply illustrated an attitude of scorn for those who disagree with him, and of non-critical acceptance of outdated views which, over the past decade, have been rejected by a series of respected historians and archaeologists.

Especially noteworthy, however, is Dr. Ehrman's assertion that "it doesn't seem so strange or exorbitant to me ... for a public display of the scrolls to present the *opinio communis* of scholarship, and let the experts wrangle over it." In view of Dr. Ehrman's apparent belief that the "wrangling" of scholars should be a private affair, it would be interesting to know whether he also agrees with the ongoing policy of excluding researchers who have rejected the Qumran-Essene theory from participating in "international conferences" such as the one that recently took place in Jerusalem, and which are generally not open to the public.

Furthermore, by acknowledging, as he apparently does, that the Raleigh exhibit is biased toward the Qumran-sectarian theory, Dr. Ehrman directly contradicts the statement of Hava Katz, one of the exhibit's curators, denying any such bias: "We say there is a debate, and we leave it open. The visitor can decide."

Is Dr. Ehrman simply unaware of the exhibit's contents? Or was curator Katz being less than candid when she made her statement? Many mysteries remain, particularly in light of The Jewish Museum's explicit denial that a "consensus" exists in this field of studies.

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