

Review-The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered, by Robert Eisenman & Michael Wise, Penguin Books, 1992.

Book review by Kersey H. Antia¹

Uncovering the dead sea scrolls

Scrolls withheld. As claimed by the authors, this is the first complete translation and interpretation of 50 key documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls, withheld for over 35 years. The first discovery of the scrolls along the shores of the Dead Sea was made by accident, in 1947 in the Qumran cave, with subsequent findings in other caves.

The most important cave for the authors' purpose was Cave 4 discovered in 1954 after the partition of Palestine. After the 1967 war, research was facilitated under the jurisdiction of the Israeli government. Yet nothing was done to speed up their translation.

The authors describe their heroic efforts to make an overall study of *all* the Qumran scrolls. Even philological efforts, at times, they claim, are inaccurate if one does not compare the relationship of one scroll with another.

The authors claim their research has now brought into focus certain theological constructs which St. Paul makes with regard to 'cursing' and the meaning of the crucifixion of Christ.

Dawn of Christianity. In these scrolls there is nothing less than a picture of the movement from which Christianity sprang. The reader however, will not be able to recognize it because it will seem virtually the opposite of the Christianity with which one is familiar today.

The authors describe the scrolls as describing the "Messianic movement" in Palestine. Because of religious differences, the Messianic elite chose to retreat in the wilderness where they were

¹ First published in *FEZANA JOURNAL* - FALL 2004, p. 87.

preparing for the final apocalyptic war against all evil on this earth.

Echoes of Zarathushti origin. The author makes no mention of the ‘Prince of Light’ and the ‘Prince of Darkness,’ which, along with the idea of the Messiah to come, and the final battle against evil, betray echoes of Zarathushti origin.

However, everything else seems so un-Zoroastrian about this sect – they believed in extreme austerity and the ascetic life. One fails to discern any significant similarity between this sect and the ever-optimistic, world-affirming, life-loving Zarathushtis. Even the concept in common, as cited above, must have come down from the time of Kings Cyrus and Darius. ■