

SPECIAL STUDY: ON CERTAIN MATTERS OF
BIBLICAL CRITICISM INCLUDING
THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

I

I trust I may be indulged at this point a few comments on pertinent matters in the field of Biblical Criticism, as follows:

1. First, I call attention to the fact that the dates which appear in the first few Lessons herein, dates especially of the birth and death of the various Church Fathers, are at best only approximate. There seems to be little or no uniformity about these dates on the part of the available sources that are regarded as authoritative. However, the dates are truly approximate in the sense that they vary only a few years at most in either direction, that is, with respect to the birth or death of the person mentioned.

2. I have not entered into critical theories of the authorship and dating of the books of the New Testament canon. Neither Higher nor Lower Criticism is included in the design of this Course. As a matter of fact, reckless speculation and conjecture, so characteristic of much of modern Criticism have failed to produce any great measure of evidence that would discredit the genuineness of these books. Perhaps the two which have suffered the most from irresponsible theories are the Gospel of John and the Second Epistle of Peter. I do not consider the critical attacks on these two books as particularly convincing, however. Besides, the *subject-matter* which we find in all the books of the New Testament is hardly affected by critical theories of authorship and "sources." Hence, we accept and follow the New Testament as it is, that is, *as it reads*, in this Course.

3. It has been my lot to live through the heyday of that phase of German Kultur known as the Higher and Lower Criticism of ancient documents. This took the

trend of an utterly reckless dissection of the ancient manuscripts, in the form of hypotheses (and "hypothesis" is largely an academic term for a guess), allegedly based on "internal" evidence, but destitute of support by any external evidence whatever. The Homeric epics, the dialogues of Plato, the treatises of Aristotle, and especially the books of the Bible, were all made butts of this irresponsible methodology. The amazing fact about it all was that many of these theories were accepted in spite of the fact that the critics seldom if ever agreed among themselves. For example, one might compare the theories of the Platonic canon put forward by such German critics as Tenneman, Schleiermacher, Ast, Socher, K. F. Hermann, Munk, Teuchmueller, Ueberweg, et al; of those of the Homeric epics, advanced by Wolf, Lachmann, G. Hermann, Kirchhoff, Wilamowitz, Seeck, Bechtel, and others; or those of the Old Testament Pentateuch (in Hebrew, the Torah) advocated by Eichorn, Vater, DeWette, Hupfeld, Reuss, Graf, Kuenen, Wellhausen, and many lesser lights: each of these groups succeeded in producing only what someone has rightly called a "labyrinth of disagreement."

For a specific example, we might consider the Graf-Wellhausen theory of the Pentateuch, or, rather of the "Hexateuch," for one of the critical vagaries of this school was the contention that the book of Joshua should be included with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, in any critical study of the Old Testament. This hypothesis, which rejected Mosaic authorship *in toto*, and insisted upon treating Deuteronomy as a kind of "pious fraud," flourished like a green bay tree for several decades, and is still parroted in academic circles as the concensus of scholarship, when, as a matter of fact, this is only partly true. The fact is that contemporary Jewish scholarship, including no less distinguished a name than that of Dr. Nelson Glueck, pretty generally rejects the theory. The suspicion exists today that the theory was

motivated to a considerable extent by anti-Semitism, that is, the desire to downgrade the Torah and in fact any and all other writings emanating from Jewish sources.

In this connection, it should be noted that the name of Jerusalem does not appear in the first five books of the Old Testament (unless, of course, the "Salem" of Melchizedek was the original site of Jerusalem, Gen. 14:18, cf. Josh. 15:63). It is inconceivable to me that these five books could have been written by Jewish writers, after the time of the Davidic reign, without containing even a mention of the city which has come to be known in Biblical history, both in a physical and in a spiritual sense, as the City of the Great King. Such a silence on the part of post-Davidic authorship is utterly inconsistent with the exclusivism of the ancient Children of Israel.

It is interesting to note, also, that the distinguished Orientalist, Dr. W. F. Albright, in an article appearing some time ago in the *New York Times Book Review* states that the findings of recent archaeology seem no longer to support the characteristically late dating of the books of the New Testament canon; that, on the contrary, contemporary accumulating evidence indicates that these books had been written by the seventies or eighties of the first century.

This line of thought prompts another conclusion by the present writer, as follows: Undoubtedly, the most tragic event in the entire history of the Jewish people was the Siege and Fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 68-70, before the onslaught of the Roman legions under Vespasian and Titus. Yet the only references to this event in the entire New Testament are the statements of Jesus forecasting the fall of the city, the destruction of the temple, and the dispersion of the nation (Matt. 21:42-45, 23:35-39, 24:1-2; Mark 12:10-11, 13:1-2; Luke 19:41-44, 23:28-31, 20:17-18, 11:48-51, 13:34-35, 21:5-6). Now there is no more universally accepted fact than that all the books of the New Testament (with the sole exception of those written by

good Dr. Luke, namely, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts) were written by Jews. Again, it is utterly inconceivable (1) that *all* these Jewish writers could have completely ignored this terrible national tragedy, or (2) that they would have failed to seize this opportunity to cite the event as a positive fulfilment of the Messiah's predictions, had the event already occurred when they were writing the Christian documents. *Such a conspiracy of silence would have been utterly contrary to the character and design of the apostolic witness.* Surely the evidence thus is convincing that the books of the New Testament, as we have them, were written prior to A.D. 70. Indeed, I am inclined to think this is equally true of the Fourth Gospel, and even of the Apocalypse, as of the other New Testament writings.

Looking back over the rash of undisciplined criticism of the first half of our century, I can only conclude that the Teutonic mentality (often aped by the British) seems to have been afflicted with certain biases, such as the following: 1. *The inability to see the forest for the trees.* Their search invariably was for differences, discrepancies, irrelevancies, etc.; the notion that harmonies might exist was hardly ever entertained, much less was any effort ever made to ascertain whether harmonies did or did not exist. 2. The pre-supposition that no one ever proposed, taught, or invented anything *new*: hence, the never-failing quest for "sources"; whether such "sources" were found to exist or not, they were conjured up by the fertile seminarian mentality. 3. The utter disregard of the claim put forth by the Bible itself, by all the writers of the sacred text (1 Pet. 1:10-12, 2 Pet. 1:21, 1 Cor. 2:6-16, etc.), of inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Recognition of the Spirit's activity in the area of divine revelation was not accorded even a passing thought by these critics. Indeed, like the Ephesian disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus, they seemed not to know even that there is the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). 4. The elevation of *a priori* assumptions to the status of

criteria of knowledge. For example, it was presupposed that any such event as a "miracle" would lie outside the pale of history altogether. Hence, all Biblical miracles, including the miracles of Jesus, were "explained away" on "naturalistic" grounds. This procedure resulted in the fictions of the critical imagination as far-fetched in some cases as the "tall tales" of Baron Munchausen (as, for example, in Strauss' *Life of Jesus*). The detailed study of these critical "hypotheses," and of the arguments put forward to support them, reminds one of G. K. Chesterton's punch line: "what ruins mankind is the ignorance of the experts" (Chesterton, *William Blake*, p. 58).

One thing is certain, namely that any or all Biblical criticism which takes off from wilful rejection of the Holy Spirit and His work in giving us the Bible, forfeits a large part of its validity at the very outset, by this arbitrary approach. From the second verse of Genesis, in which the Spirit of God is pictured as "brooding" over the empty and unorganized "deep," and so bringing into being an ordered cosmos, to the last chapter of Revelation, in which He is portrayed, in association with the Bride of Christ, the Church, as yearning for our Lord's return, the imprimatur of the Holy Spirit is to be found on every book of Scripture. This is the one doctrine of the Bible with which critics must deal first of all, and this, of course, enlarges into the problem of accounting for the obvious internal unity of the entire Book as the Book of Redemption.

It is fortunate—and refreshing—to note that a return to sanity in this particular field apparently has taken place in recent years.

II

Among the more recent archaeological finds that are of great significance are the following:

1. The material uncovered toward the end of the last

century (1897) when the *geniza* (the room adjoining a synagogue used as a storehouse for dilapidated copies of sacred writings, awaiting ceremonial burial) of the Old Cairo (Egypt) synagogue. Among the most important of these discoveries were: (1) a considerable portion of the Hebrew text of the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus; (2) fragments of the long lost translation of the Septuagint, about A.D. 150, by Aquila, a onetime Christian who had apostatized from the faith; and (3) a fragment of the six columns of the Hexapla (of Origen) of Psalm 22. These were pre-Massoretic by some seven or eight centuries; the Massorettes completed their work in the tenth century. These discoveries have turned out to be especially valuable in the light they throw on the development of the signs ("points") by which vowels were indicated in the later Hebrew. (The "vowel points" in their final form were invented by the Massorettes.) According to the most reliable information, some 100,000 of these fragments were deposited in the University of Cambridge library, and probably an equal number have been distributed among other libraries.

2. Twelve manuscripts were discovered in 1930-1931, found stowed away in jars in a Coptic graveyard. Eight of these contain fragments of books of the Old Testament, three contain fragments of New Testament books, and one contains part of the Apocryphal book of Enoch plus a Christian homily. From the Old Testament, there are substantial fragments from Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and some leaves of a codex containing the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Esther. Of the New Testament fragments, three are leaves from what was originally a papyrus codex of the four Gospels and the book of Acts: of an original one hundred and ten leaves, thirty remain. A second manuscript contained some 86 leaves of an almost complete codex of the Pauline Epistles (in which the Pastoral Epistles were missing, and Hebrews appeared immediately following Romans): this

may date, we are told, from as early as A.D. 200. A third New Testament manuscript contains about a third of the book of Revelation dating probably from the second half of the third century. Many of these fragments were purchased by A. Chester Beatty, an American living in England, and hence are known as the Chester Beatty Papyri; some were acquired by Princeton University and some by the University of Michigan.

3. The John Rylands Library in Manchester, England, has assembled a large collection of these papyri. In 1936 this Library published a tiny scrap of Deuteronomy, which is believed to date from the second century B.C., and hence is probably the oldest portion of the Greek Old Testament now known to scholars. In this library there is also a small fragment, acquired in Egypt by Grenfell in 1920, of some verses from the Gospel according to John: these are verses 31 to 33, and verses 37 and 38 of chapter 18. There is little doubt that this is the oldest known fragment of the New Testament in the world. "It is of interest," writes Herklots (*How Our Bible Came to Us*, p. 108), "that this earliest fragment of the New Testament comes from one of its later books. . . . Thus the evidence of this papyrus scrap helps to substantiate the belief, reached on quite other grounds, that the Fourth Gospel was written, not later than A.D. 100, and probably earlier. This little fragment is the nearest we possess to the actual handwriting of the authors of the New Testament. The gap here may be only thirty or forty years."

III

Perhaps the most important archaeological discovery of recent years is that of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This has turned out to be a series of finds, beginning in the spring of 1947, when a Bedouin goatherd, grazing his herd in the rocky region immediately northwest of the Dead Sea, and some fifteen miles south of Jericho, by sheer chance—

whetted by his own natural curiosity—came upon a cave near the Wadi Qumran which turned out to be a repository of long-forgotten Hebrew and Aramaic documents. These documents were in the form of leather rolls containing writing, wrapped in black cloth, and enclosed in jars of various sizes (cf. Jer. 32:14). This was only the beginning: other caves have been explored, and other documents brought to light: indeed, it seems that not even half the story has yet been told.

We have not the space here to devote to the details of this archaeological "romance," but must be content with pointing up some of the essential facts.

As is usually the case, book after book about the Dead Sea Scrolls has appeared, since the original discovery in 1947, setting forth theories of different "scholars"; some of these offer fairly sane conclusions, others little but conjecture and conjecture spiced frequently by absurdities. Especially has this been true *in re* the particular aspect of the subject with which we are primarily interested here, namely, the possible connections between the life and literature of this Qumran Community and the historical beginnings of Christianity. However, the tendency at present is toward a general uniformity of views as regards the significant essentials of these discoveries.

(Parenthetically, I should like to recommend the little book by F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1956; and especially the book by the distinguished Hebrew scholar, Theodore Gaster, entitled *The Dead Sea Scriptures in English Translation*, with an illuminating Introduction and copious Notes. This excellent book was published by Doubleday and Company, Garden City, New York, in 1956).

It is generally agreed, I think, that this literature was that of a monastic community which occupied this particular region from approximately 125 B.C. to A.D. 68. It seems evident that these people were members of the

ascetic brotherhood of Essenes, mentioned by Philo, by Josephus, and by the Roman writer, Pliny the Elder. Evidently they believed themselves to be the remnant who had remained faithful to the traditional Covenant and hence to constitute the true Congregation of Israel; therefore, to have been divinely chosen, in the midst of the chaos which was overtaking Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman legions at this time, to re-affirm the true Covenant in their generation. It was a commonplace in Jewish circles in those days that the Old Covenant was of necessity periodically re-affirmed, because of the tendency of the people to drift from their traditional moorings from time to time, "that the Pact concluded at Sinai was itself but a re-articulation of that which God had previously made, in their several generations, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Gaster, *op. cit.*, p. 4). Apparently the Qumran Community believed itself to have been "elected" to achieve that restoration in its own day, when the world around, one might well say, was—from the Jewish point of view—literally going to pieces.

A considerable portion of the Dead Sea fragments had to do exclusively with the life, worship, and discipline of the Qumran Order. These included the *Manual of Discipline*, the *Zadokite Document*, the *Book of Hymns* (Psalms) *of Thanksgiving*, the apocalyptic *War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness*, a *Formulary of Blessings*, and miscellaneous small fragments of different kinds of subject-matter.

Ten caves thus far have been explored. "From all the Qumran caves," writes Bruce (*op. cit.*, p. 31), "over 400 separate books have been identified, a few of them being almost intact, but the great majority surviving only in fragments."

The following is a brief resumé of the information presented (in the books by Bruce and Gaster, especially) concerning the Dead Sea "Scriptures" which have to do with the books of the Old Testament canon and accom-

panying non-canonical and apocryphal writings:

From the first cave to be explored, in addition to those dealing specifically with the Qumran Order and Cult, fragments of Biblical books in Hebrew were recovered, namely, portions of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Judges, Isaiah "B" (of which the text from ch. 41 onward was fairly complete), Ezekiel, and Psalms. From Cave 4 (so designated by Professor Bruce) tens of thousands of fragments were brought to light which had once constituted some 330 separate books. Ninety of these books were parts of the Bible, and among these every Old Testament book except Esther is represented.

Fragments of non-Biblical works were also recovered from these caves, in the form of commentaries on parts of Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Psalms. In addition to these fragments, the discoveries included Hebrew and Aramaic fragments of the Apocryphal *Book of Tobit*, and such non-canonical works as the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Book of Enoch*, and the *Testament of Levi*. Another interesting find was an expanded Aramaic paraphrase of chapters 5 to 15 of the book of Genesis, in which each of the patriarchs is made to tell his part of the story personally.

However, by far the most important discoveries reported thus far were (1) a complete scroll of Isaiah (Isaiah "A"), in Hebrew, and (2) a copy of the first two chapters, with what appears to be a verse-by-verse commentary on them, of the prophetic book of Habakkuk. These were among the very first discoveries, and proved to be amazing in their critical implications. The consensus is that in these writings we have Hebrew Scriptures approximately from eight hundred to one thousand years earlier than any of those hitherto known. Of this scroll of Isaiah, Professor Bleddyn Roberts affirms that "its similarity to the Massoretic text is astounding" (quoted by Herklots, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137).

As was to be expected, the finding of the Dead Sea

Scrolls precipitated a rash of conjectures and claims of alleged correspondences between their content and the historical origins of Christianity. History repeated itself in the avid quest—apparently amounting to pre-determination—to find in the Scrolls the “sources” of the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, and of that of John the Baptizer in particular. After several intervening years, however, sanity seems to be coming into its own, and certain uniformities have come to characterize the current critical consensus, as follows:

1. It is recognized that there are several terms and phrases in the Qumran Brotherhood literature which are found in the earliest Christian documents. But, writes Gaster (*op. cit.*, Intro., pp. 2, 20, 21), “it should be observed that just as many things in the Dead Sea Scrolls as can be paralleled from the New Testament can be paralleled equally well from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament . . . and from the earlier strata of the Talmud.” He goes on to say that many of these matters are to be found also in the ancient writings of such sects as the Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran and the Samaritans, “so that even if they have not come down to us through Jewish channels, we can still recognize in them part of the common Palestinian thought and folklore of the time,” and hence “to draw from the New Testament parallels any inference of special relationship is misleading.” In a word, writes Gaster, the Scrolls “recover for us what may best be described as the backdrop of the stage on which the first act of the Christian drama was performed.”

2. Dr. Albright finds several characteristically Johannine terms turning up in the literature of the Qumran Community. He concedes that John, and probably other New Testament writers, may have drawn “from a common reservoir of terminology and ideas which were well known to the Essenes and presumably familiar also to other Jewish sects of the period.” However, he emphasizes the

fact of the "wide gulf" existing between the Essenic doctrines and the fundamentals of Johannine teaching. To point up this "gulf," he lists four basic teachings characteristic of John (and of the Synoptic and Pauline teaching as well), namely, those relating to the specific mission of Messiah, the salvation of sinners, the ministry of healing, and the gospel of love (See Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134). These matters are not treated in the Dead Sea documents.

3. Much has been written about the term, Teacher of Righteousness, which appears frequently in the Scrolls. The idea has been strenuously labored by some that this designation pointed to a single historical personage, a kind of Messianic prototype of Jesus. However, Gaster points out the fact (*ibid.*, Intro., p. 5) that the Hebrew word for "teacher" derives from the same verbal root as the word "Torah." ("Right-teacher," he says, is the correct rendering, *not* "Teacher of Righteousness.") He then explains: "The 'right-teacher' is therefore, in this context, 'the man who expounds the Torah aright.'" Indeed, a plausible argument can be made that the so-called "Teacher of Righteousness" was the Torah itself.

4. In short, there is nothing in the Scrolls having to do, either prophetically or historically, with the basic doctrines of Christianity, namely, quoting Gaster again (*ibid.*, Intro., p. 19), "the Christian belief that the crucified Master was God incarnate Who by His passion removed a sinfulness inherent in man through a pristine fall from grace." "Of this basic doctrine of Christianity," he concludes, "there is not a shred or trace in the Dead Sea Scrolls."

5. To what extent was John the Baptizer influenced by the Essene Cult? Or was he influenced by it at all? Some speculative minds, on the basis of what is said of John in Luke's account (cf. the angel's words to his father Zacharias, "he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's

womb," Luke 1:15; the statement that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel," Luke 1:80; see also the account of John's raiment and diet, in Matt. 3:4 and Mark 1:6), have conjectured that John's parents died while he was yet very young and that he was adopted and reared by the Qumran Essenes. This is fantastic, of course, and has not a shred of genuine evidence to support it. "In the present state of our knowledge," writes Professor Bruce (*ibid.*, p. 130), "such a reconstruction belongs more to the realm of historical fiction than to that of real history." "It was a new impulse," Bruce goes on to say, "which sent John forth 'to make ready for the Lord a people prepared' (Luke 1:17)." The fact is that John preached no esoteric doctrine, no Essenic cult. If anything is practical, it was John's message. "Repent," said he, "and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). And what were those fruits, John? "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." What must publicans do? "Extort no more than that which is appointed you." And soldiers? "Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse anyone wrongfully; and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:7-14). Nothing ascetic or monastic about this kind of preaching! John's ministry, says Bruce rightly, "was distinctively and essentially a prophetic ministry" (*ibid.*, p. 130); and it was recognized to be such by all the people (Mark 11:32).

6. If it is true—and surely it is—that there was no particular flavor of Qumran in John's mission and message, it is incontrovertibly true of the ministry and teaching of Jesus. At least John was, in some measure, an ascetic. Jesus, however, went to particular pains to show that He was not. One of the oft-repeated charges brought against Him by His critics was that He ate with publicans and sinners. To those who were critical alike of John's ministry and His own, He said: "For John came neither eat-

ing nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" (Matt. 11:19, Luke 7:34). The fact is that Jesus mingled freely with the people of His day, sharing their joys and sorrows as One should who loves both God and man. The temptations which He experienced, in the wilderness and in Gethsemane, were temptations to achieve His Messianic destiny in other ways than by the way of the Cross, but of course He "set His face stedfastly toward Jerusalem." And when He and His disciples retired into a mountain apart for a few hours of meditation and prayer in solitude, it was not to escape the responsibilities of life, but to gain inner strength for loving service to the people down in the valley. How unlike Oriental cults! In these cults (Brahmanism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.), life is regarded as illusion (*maya*), and salvation is envisioned as deliverance from this illusion (after a round of reincarnations) by the destruction of every vestige of individuality (*Nirvana*). *Withdrawal, and ultimate escape from life* is the characteristic goal of Oriental mysticisms. But in the Christian faith, *life is man's greatest good*, and the supreme virtue is *service*, service that flows out of love for God and man, resulting in the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). There is no escapism in the Christianity of Christ and the Apostles.

There is no doubt, of course, that Jesus performed His incarnate mission in the Jewish Dispensation and under the Mosaic Law. This Dispensation terminated when the Old Covenant was abrogated and the New Covenant ratified by the same divine act—the shedding of His precious blood on the Cross, as the Lamb of God who "taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7). (Cf. Col. 2:13-15, 2 Cor. 3:12-17, Heb. 9:11-28, Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8:1-13, etc.) The environmental background of His earthly ministry was Palestinian, that is, Jewish. We need look

no further for the milieu in which Christianity originated historically. The Qumran literature is part and parcel, no doubt, of this background, but it contributes little or nothing that is new to the understanding of it, and hence to the understanding of the historical origins of the Christian faith. As a matter of fact, this literature is as silent as the grave with respect to the body of doctrine which makes Christianity what it is: namely, the doctrine that comprises the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Miracles, and the Resurrection.

Lesson Sixty-seven

**PAUL'S TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS
OF NAZARETH**

Scripture Reading: Acts 9: 1-19, 22: 3-21, 26: 1-23.

Scriptures to Memorize: "Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23). "Am I not free, am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor. 9: 1).

10. Q. Who was Paul?

A. He was the man known originally as Saul of Tarsus, whom Christ specially called and qualified to be His Apostle to the Gentiles.

See Acts 9:15-16, and 26:16-18. Cf. Isa. 35:5-6, 42:6-7; Eph. 2:11-22, 5:8; Col. 1:12-23; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; 2 Pet. 3:15-16.

11. Q. Of what nationality was Paul?

A. Paul was a Jew.

Acts 22:3—"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers,