

THE HISTORICAL JESUS: A CURRENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

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The existence of Jesus Christ has been questioned by some scholars in the last two centuries. Recently, the oriental scholar, John Allegro, has claimed Jesus was only a myth devised by a fertility cult. However, one must disregard a considerable amount of source material proving the existence of Jesus to make such a blatant statement.

Christology has become a whole new science since 1960. After examining the scholarly works on the historical Jesus in the past thirteen years, one finds a new breed of historian who is freeing himself from the biased tenets of nineteenth century criticism. He is reexamining source material that was once rejected by critics and reevaluating his perspective on the historical Jesus.

Though Roman historians almost completely ignored the Christian movement in their writings, there are a few references to Jesus and Christians. These serve as independent pagan testimonies, and though they are dated in the early second century, when coupled with other materials, they give the historian an extremely strong case for the historical Jesus. The Josephus "Testimonium" (93 or 94 A.D.), though interpolated, has been recently discovered in a manuscript which

some scholars feel is without interpolation. Josephus at least mentioned Jesus which is another proof that Jesus existed.

The Talmud is a backhanded compliment to Jesus because its vituperated outbursts against Jesus' magic and blasphemy actually give proof that Jesus existed and that he was a charismatic personality. Apocalyptic and apocryphal materials by their presence support other material proving Jesus' existence.

Furthermore, current scholarship is returning to the New Testament documents, especially the Gospels, for source material on Jesus. Archaeology has been partially responsible for the changing climate of opinion among scholars concerning the reliability of Scripture. Form Criticism is being rejected by the historian and, surprisingly, the Gospel of John is being considered as a source on the historical Jesus along with the Synoptics. The Dead Sea Scrolls have actually shown the four Gospels to be contemporary with the milieu of the first century. Background studies are providing valuable material on the environment of the first century.

In light of the overwhelming evidence proving the existence of Jesus, one is foolish to blatantly claim that he never existed. However, current scholarship is not only affirming that he existed in history, but that one can know details of his life. Research into the historical Jesus will no more destroy his life than astronomemers' studies will destroy the stars.

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Jesus; that Jesus Christ was not a man but a myth. In fact, present-day advocates of this view are endeavoring not only to impress the layman, but the historian as well. The most recent attempt in book form is The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross by John M. Allegro. In this book, Allegro presents the theory that Jesus Christ was the personification of a fertility cult based on the use of the psychedelic mushroom amanita muscaria. Using basically a philological approach, he places the origins of Christianity not in the historical personage of Jesus Christ, but rather in a mushroom cult which evolved "stories of Jesus."¹

John M. Allegro has the credentials of a scholar. For years he was a lecturer at the University of Manchester and was appointed the first British representative on the international editing team studying the Dead Sea Scrolls. Allegro's book, The Dead Sea Scrolls, has sold nearly 300,000 copies and has been translated into eight languages.² The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross is a best-seller as

¹John M. Allegro, The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).

²Ibid., p. 193. Also note pages xviii-xix.

³John M. Allegro, The Dead Sea Scrolls (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1956).

INTRODUCTION

To even consider evidence that Jesus Christ existed in history may seem to some research into the indubitable. However, in the last century some have claimed that there was no historical Jesus; that Jesus Christ was not a man but a myth. In fact, present-day advocates of this view are endeavoring not only to impress the layman, but the historian as well. The most recent attempt in book form is The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross by John M. Allegro.¹ In this book, Allegro presents the theory that Jesus Christ was the personification of a fertility cult based on the use of the psychedelic mushroom amanita muscaria. Using basically a philological approach, he places the origins of Christianity not in the historical personage of Jesus Christ, but rather in a mushroom cult which evolved "stories of Jesus."²

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well.⁴

Denying the existence of Jesus, however, requires a callous disregard of a considerable amount of source material proving his existence. It is the purpose of this thesis to present this source material, explain its value to the historian and thereby prove that there was a Jesus of history. This thesis will first of all consider the historiographical problems that face the historian in his study of Jesus Christ in order to give the reader a perspicaciousness of modern research. To gain a current perspective of recent research on the historical Jesus, the writer has concentrated on literature written in the last thirteen years. Christology has become a whole new science since 1960. Archaeological discoveries coupled with reinterpretation of known manuscripts has initiated a new breed of historian---one who has had to change his perspective and re-evaluate the historical Jesus. This thesis intends to portray to the reader the discussion and research being pursued today.

⁴It was first published in August, 1970 and has already been published in a second edition dated June, 1971.

school has always placed the emphasis on the word "historical" and has gone on to explain that Jesus can only be known by the scientific method. To them history is "the subject matter of historical science which seeks to divest itself of all presuppositions and prejudices and

Alexander S. Cook, *A Search for the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1971), p. 30.

James M. Robinson, *A Quest for the Historical Jesus* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1959), p. 35.

CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The Phrase: "The Historical Jesus"

It has taken centuries of methodical trial and error and thousands of publications to confirm in the modern historian's mind that the phrase, "the historical Jesus," is vague. The meaning of this ambiguous phrase depends on the setting in which it is used and on the person who is using it.⁵

Some may use the phrase to explain how Jesus actually lived his life in Palestine during the first century. To them, the adjective "historical" is a meaningless addition.⁶ The phrase becomes synonymous with "Jesus of Nazareth as he lived," and an immense problem occurs because it is almost impossible to even ascertain how a twentieth century personage "actually lived."

On the other end of the spectrum, the historical-scientific school has always placed the emphasis on the word "historical" and has gone on to explain that Jesus can only be known by the scientific method. To them history is "the subject matter of historical science which seeks to divest itself of all presuppositions and prejudices and

⁵Leander E. Keck, A Future for the Historical Jesus (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 20.

⁶James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, 1959), p. 26.

to establish objective facts."⁷ Unfortunately, their view of objectivity is absurdly overemphasized as will be shown in the next section.

A multitude of other views consider the phrase, "the historical Jesus," in light of interpretations made by certain scholars or religions.⁸ Numerous opinions arise---some closer to historical fact than others.

Modern historians are wrestling with the problem of semantics and the problem of the multiple portraits of Jesus. Increasingly, they are recognizing that the historical Jesus "is not really an uninterpreted Jesus but Jesus as the historian is able to recover and reconstruct him."⁹ The phrase, "the historical Jesus," does not refer to a particular historian and his interpretation of Jesus, but rather to what can be acquired and restored of Jesus' life using the accepted criteria of the historical method.

Of course, the existence of Jesus in a period of history is an essential building block in the study of the historical Jesus. Only until this fact can be ascertained can one delve further into what can be known about the life of Jesus.

The Fact: The Historian's Dilemma

The historian's dilemma about "the fact" revolves around the problem of objectivity and subjectivity. Ordinarily, to be called

⁷Herbert C. Wolf, Kierkegaard and Bultmann: The Quest of the Historical Jesus (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), p. 10.

⁸Keck, p. 20.

⁹Ibid. Note Robinson, pp. 26ff.

"objective" is a compliment while being termed "subjective" is an academic disgrace. Modern historians, however, have reached the conclusion that it is impossible for a historian to be impartial...not only in the historical study of Jesus, but in any realm of history.

A multitude of factors account for this phenomenon. First of all, the historian's sources are partial. Eyewitness accounts are affected by the bias and environment of the witnesses. Furthermore, the historians who gather together contemporary information usually cannot gather all of the material written on a past event. Certainly they cannot question all of the personalities involved. In the study of the historical Jesus, the historian is removed twenty centuries from his object. Much of the material he would seek for confirmation of certain events has been destroyed or is yet to be found. In the words of Herbert C. Wolf, "clatter and rumor...have infested the centuries in between."¹⁰

Today's historian must realize that he cannot put history into a test tube and conduct experiments like a scientist. In fact, historiography is notably different from natural science. James F. Peter in his book, Finding the Historical Jesus, notes three ways in which natural science differs from historiography:

(a) While natural science ideally has its object immediately present, it is of the very nature of historiography not to have its object immediately present.

(b) While natural science ideally is concerned with classes, it is of the very nature of historiography to be concerned with the unique.

¹⁰Wolf, p. 38.

(c) While natural science ideally does not pass judgments, it is of the very nature of historiography to pass judgments.¹¹

Eyewitness accounts, diaries, quotations and non-literary remains all bear the imprint of the convictions and values of those who provide them. Because of this, the historian never works with neutral, objective materials.

Secondly, the historian himself is not neutral. It is not possible for a human being to be "objective." One cannot consider history without becoming committed to a specific viewpoint. Even in the selection and arrangement of materials, the historian makes partial choices. The historian is conditioned by his environment and cannot detach himself from it in his choice of material or views on an event. Furthermore, he has a particular interpretation which he employs to give coherence to past events. Page Smith declares bluntly:

Objectivity does not correspond to any human experience, except perhaps utter disinterest. As we have seen, even the scientist who deals with dead matter is very far from being 'objective' in any strict sense of the word, and for the historian the word is quite irrelevant.¹²

The historian is not neutral and his bias can color an event, because he has a part in determining what is significant, what is possible and what are the facts.¹³ Thus, the dilemma of ascertaining a fact is complicated not only by the sources but by the individual historian.

¹¹James F. Peter, Finding the Historical Jesus: A Statement of the Principles Involved (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 86.

¹²Page Smith, The Historian and History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1960), pp. 154-155.

¹³Peter, pp. 94; 104-105.

In light of the impossibility of being completely objective, how can one become historically minded? This is the important, consideration for the serious historian. The key lies in the predilections of the historian. It should be the desire of every historian to achieve balance in his work and justice in his treatment of historical material. This state of mind is not achieved, however, by resolutions to become "objective." It is, rather, germinated by exploring one's preconceptions and determining in exactly what areas one's prejudices lie. A historian who searches into the depths of his being to determine who he is, is one who can write history that lets others make their own decisions. He does not deceive himself into thinking he is becoming impartial but, rather, openly admits where his partiality lies. By learning about his own biases, he can easily spot bias in his sources.

Honesty in historical reporting is a possible achievement. Gaetano Salvemini, the early twentieth century Italian historian, told his students: "Impartiality is a dream and honesty a duty. We cannot be impartial, but we can be intellectually honest."¹⁴ Because of this, the word "impartial" takes on a special significance for the historian. Warren B. Walsh redefines the word in this way:

To be impartial means to be fair, just, equitable in discovering and displaying all the facts, those which run counter to one's preferences as well as those which support them. It is improper to demand that the historian be or pretend to be indifferent to tyranny, corruption, slavery, and similar behaviors. But it is highly proper to demand that he recognize that what

¹⁴Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970), p. 181.

seems in his reality world to be slavery may in another's reality world appear as security.¹⁵

Perhaps no research in the past three centuries has been affected by the bias and blindness of historians more than the study of the historical Jesus. That is why many modern researchers are striving to tear off numerous nineteenth century assumptions that cling like fly-paper to the historical Jesus and yet are invalid. In the process of ridding itself of invalid assumptions, this new less-hampered study has produced fresh views concerning the reliability of the Josephus account (See Chapter II) and the Scriptures (See Chapter IV). Assumptions about the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1950's (See Chapter V) have given way to the innovative research conclusions of the 1960's. Great expectations in the field of the historical Jesus are projected for the 1970's and 1980's.

All of this has been made possible by the new historian who has faced his bias (whether intellectual or religious) and has begun to consider all of the information available regardless of whether it agrees with his basic philosophy or not. In this way he has gained better insight than those historians still bounded by the nineteenth century dictates.¹⁶

A dilemma about the facts concerning the historical Jesus also arises from the personality of Jesus and the immensity of his life. David Flusser, the noted Israeli scholar, explains in his book, Jesus, that any charismatic personality tempts the historian "to try

¹⁵Warren B. Walsh, Perspectives and Patterns (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962), pp. 99-100.

¹⁶E. H. Carr, What Is History? (London: Macmillan & Co., LTD, 1961), pp. 116-117.

to uncover the psychological background leading up to this religious phenomenon."¹⁷ Most of these psychological analyses are totally unsatisfactory. Flusser continues:

That is the way it is: even if objective documentation is plentiful, the most genuine sources concerning a charismatic personality are his own utterances, and the accounts of the faithful---read critically, of course. Thereafter the testimony of outsiders serves as a control...there is the case of the African, Simon Kimbangu, who performed miracles of healing in the Belgian Congo from March 18 to September 14, 1921. He died in exile in 1950. Following the Christian model, his followers believed him to be the Son of God; but the documents do not make it clear what he thought of himself. Because of the brevity of his public activity, no unequivocal answer can be given to the question of his own self-assessment; and the testimony of the Belgian authorities in the Congo are as helpful in his case as are the archives of the governor Pilate, or the records in the chancellery of the high priest in the case of Jesus.¹⁸

In Flusser's words: "The present age seems specially well disposed to understand him [Jesus] and his interests."¹⁹ Nevertheless, the historian's dilemma over what he considers as fact is directly influenced by his degree of subjectivity. When the statement is made that a historian is "subjective," it is simply a statement that he is a human being. This humanness can be partially overcome but never completely conquered. It helps formulate the historian's criteria which directly affects his judgments.

¹⁷David Flusser, Jesus, trans. Ronald Walls (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1969), p. 7.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 12.

The Judgment: The Historian's Criteria

In the past two decades, historians have once again reassessed their views about historical criteria. Recent historians have come to the conclusion that standards cannot be applied to historical events in a mechanical fashion, but rather serve as general guides. Furthermore, they have realized that it is much easier to draw up a list of criteria than to expertly use it. The novice lacks experience while the "expert" may have only inflated his ego and his bias. Therefore, competent scholars may disagree in their application of criteria and each generation reviews and tests the criteria of the former generation.²⁰

These considerations have given the study of the historical Jesus new impetus and direction. The original sources are being carefully scrutinized with the realization that a former generation lacked the modern discoveries now available and may have passed down invalid assumptions.

This is clearly seen in the recent approach to the Gospels. The criteria of skepticism toward a source until its trustworthiness was proven had turned to sheer hostility on the part of past generations of historians in Gospel research. A set of a priori judgments was placed on the documents before they were allowed to speak.²¹ A number of recent historians have noticed this bias and have sought to return to the material without hostile presuppositions.

²⁰Harvey K. McArthur (ed.), In Search of the Historical Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 139.

²¹Keck, p. 21.

Another criteria that has been applied in recent years is that of explaining why the sources say what they do and taking them, at first, as a whole. Source Criticism, Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism have sifted biblical sources in the past for facts, tossed out the unwanted material and drawn general conclusions on the handpicked portions. Recent historians have cried out that such practices constitute "circular scholarship" and have superimposed the critic's own a priori judgments.²² Leander E. Keck explains that "one of the major gains since World War II has been a clearer understanding of the Evangelists as theological interpreters of Jesus."²³

The third criteria being reasserted is the historian's obligation to answer historical questions with facts---not merely logical assumptions. What appears logical to an Eastern university professor may not be consistent with the logic of a first century, Aramaic-speaking population! Blatant examples of "reasonable assumptions" occur on a regular schedule even in modern scholarship. For example, William E. Phipps "reasons" in his latest book, Was Jesus Married?, that since one knows nothing about Jesus' life between the ages of twelve and thirty and since that was the period when most Jews were married, Jesus was certainly married.²⁴ The book is filled with half-truths and assumptions of a man who is highly opinionated and seldom logical. His only basis for the theory is that he "thinks" Jesus was

²²J. Arthur Baird, Audience Criticism and the Historical Jesus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 22-23.

²³Keck, p. 22.

²⁴William E. Phipps, Was Jesus Married? (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970).

married. Sensational arguments from silence, such as this illustration, may sell books but lack the scholarly historiography to be taken seriously.

A major problem in the search for the historical Jesus is that much of the source material is outside the realm of the historian.

Joachim Jeremias states in his book, The Problem of the Historical Jesus:

If with utmost discipline and conscientiousness we apply the critical resources at our disposal to the study of the historical Jesus, the final result is always the same: we find ourselves confronted with God himself. That is the fact to which the sources bear witness: a man appeared, and those who received his message were certain that they had heard the word of God.²⁵

Jeremias goes on in his book to study the word abba which Jesus used to address God in Gethsemane and which most historians hold as a valid utterance. He explains that the problem is complicated further because this word clearly shows that Jesus claimed to be equal with God.²⁶

This theological realm surrounding Jesus poses a distinct problem for the historian. Historical facts cannot validate theological claims. For example, if the Virgin Birth were proven to be a historical fact, this fact would not of itself establish the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ. Even if the physical resurrection of Jesus was proven a fact by the historian, this fact would not necessarily prove to the historian that Jesus was God. There is an element of "faith" here that limits the historians craft. Jesus' claims and those of his

²⁵Joachim Jeremias, The Problem of the Historical Jesus, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 21.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 129-130.

followers are often outside the realm of historical investigation.²⁷

However, the historian has a problem with "faith" even in the historical realm. If an eyewitness writes that a historical personage once lived on earth, he had to at one time make a clear decision that his eyes were not deceiving him. The historian must take the eyewitness account and determine whether the eyewitness was correct or incorrect. His decision will ultimately be based on his "faith" in the account. His criteria, and faith in his criteria, form his judgments.

Events in history can never be known in their entirety; can never be immediately present to the historian; and are always unique. The conclusions a historian formulates about the facts concerning an event and its significance are judgments by the individual historian. Though these judgments should be defensible, only the individual historian can determine the judgment.²⁸ The study of the historical Jesus is thus not only complicated by its dual realm (the theological and the historical), but also by the fact that it is a historical event. The historian cannot become immediately contemporaneous with the historical Jesus.²⁹

It is recorded in the Scriptures that Jesus on one occasion asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"³⁰

²⁷McArthur, pp. 18-19.

²⁸Peter, pp. 118-120.

²⁹Wolf, p. 41.

³⁰Matthew 16:13. New American Standard Bible (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1960).

He received several different responses. Today, the same diversity of opinion continually envelops the historical Jesus because of the historiographical problems previously mentioned and because men are essentially different in background, environment and opinions. Though the consensus of historians suggests that there can be no finality to a permanent reconstruction of the historical Jesus, many historians agree that the study of the historical Jesus can be pursued today and some results can be obtained.³¹ As James McLeman states: "...we are obliged to continue the quest as a matter of intellectual and theological honesty."³²

It was important to consider the historiographical problems involved in the study of the historical Jesus because the same currents of opinion are working in recent examination of the source material. Though this thesis concentrates mainly on the source material in order to prove the existence of Jesus in history, the historiographical foundation now laid will illuminate to the reader the cause of the diverse opinions in the last thirteen years as to what actually is source material on the historical Jesus and what quantity of it may be taken as valid. Before entering the discussion on source material, however, it is necessary to give a brief background of the last few centuries of research on the historical Jesus.

³¹Keck, p. 35.

³²James McLeman, Jesus In Our Time (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1967), preface.

The Precursors: The Historian's Heritage

Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) was the first historian to seriously begin to investigate the question of the historical Jesus. Albert Schweitzer explains: "Before Reimarus, no one had attempted to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus."³³ Little is known of the life of Reimarus except that he spent his life in Hamburg as a professor of Oriental Languages. He was not well known during his lifetime and his writings, which laid an attack on the historicity of Biblical sources, shocked the world only when portions of them were published by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1774.³⁴

Reimarus' idea was that Jesus thought of himself as a political Messiah. Planning to set up an earthly kingdom in which he would reign, Jesus sought to deliver the Jews from the Roman yoke. When his plans went awry and he was killed, his disciples stole his body, invented the resurrection and created the myth about the returning Messiah.³⁵

Though his portrayal of the historical Jesus was in the words of Joachim Jeremias "clearly absurd and amateurish,"³⁶ his writings produced an avalanche of literature against Biblical sources and historic faith. By the nineteenth century, "Lives of Jesus" were being

³³Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955 [1910]), p. 13.

³⁴Ibid., p. 14.

³⁵Hermann Samuel Reimarus, The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples ed. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (Brunswick: Privately printed, 1778).

³⁶Jeremias, p. 5.

printed at an alarming rate. The question was being asked, "Is the Jesus of Church dogma actually the same Jesus who taught in Palestine?" The writers who asked this question had complete confidence that the answer was negative. The first attempts were filled with hate.³⁷ Churchmen themselves began to turn to the instrument of historical criticism that in James McLeman's words was "a kind of Trojan horse that would militate against the church's own deepest convictions, a kind of fifth-column within the citadel of theological scholarship."³⁸

David Strauss (1808-1874) printed his book, Life of Jesus, in 1835. He asserted that the Gospels were not historical works because they were filled with too many discrepancies. He had a special dis-

³⁷Some of the early "Lives of Jesus" were fictitious and extremely critical of the Gospel narratives. Karl Friedrich Bahrdt's An Explanation of the Plans and Aims of Jesus (Berlin: August Mylius, 1784) concocted imaginary characters to add depth to his stories about Jesus. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were Essenes, and Essenism (according to Bahrdt) was the popular clique to join even among Sanhedrin members. The Essenes convinced Jesus that it was his duty to pretend to be a Messiah and so he learned magic to fool the populace. Karl Heinrich Venturini's A Non-supernatural History of the Great Prophet of Nazareth (Copenhagen: Privately printed, 1800) also poses Jesus as an Essene, but describes him as forcing the Order to name him the Messiah. He in turn uses every trick he can to impress to populace with his greatness. By the end of the century, fantasy had free reign. Alexander Smyth wrote The Occult Life of Jesus of Nazareth (Chicago: The Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1899) and pictured Jesus as the lover of a group of women followers (among whom were Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene). A book entitled, As Others Saw Him A.D. 54 (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895), was passed off as though it were written by a scribe in the year A.D. 54---a scribe entirely familiar with Jesus' life.

These are only a few illustrations of the multitude of negative and fictitious works that flooded the book market during the nineteenth century. Men who had rebelled against the bias and authoritarian manner of the Church suddenly became unexcusably biased themselves.

³⁸McLeman, p. 23.

dain for the Gospel of John. He believed the legend-creating faith of the Christians had developed the Gospels.³⁹ Christian Weisse (1801-1882), who was Professor Extraordinary of Philosophy at Leipzig University, hailed Strauss as the great conciliator of philosophy and religion. He began where Strauss left off declaring that Strauss had saved him the trouble of wasting his time on polemics. Weisse, however, was the first to argue for the priority of the Gospel of Mark. He was persuaded that Mark was the common plan for the writing of Matthew and Luke, though he shared Strauss' negative views on the Gospel of John.⁴⁰

In the first half of the nineteenth century, great quantities of critical literature were leveled at the Synoptics and the Gospel of John. Bruno Bauer (1809-1882) was involved in the midst of this intellectual crisis in the Prussian Universities and was expelled for his heretical beliefs. He reacted to his dismissal with extreme hate and showed his indignation in a work entitled "Christianity Exposed." This work was canceled before the publishing date in 1843. However, Bauer's sceptical beliefs continued their influence through his previous writings in the 1840's.⁴¹ He was the first advocate of the view

³⁹David Friedrich Strauss, The Life of Jesus, trans. Marian Evans (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1860).

⁴⁰Christian Hermann Weisse, A Critical and Philosophical Study of the Gospel History (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Hartel, 1938).

⁴¹Schweitzer, pp. 121-125. Bauer had voiced his critical views on John and the Synoptics. He wrote Criticism of the Gospel History of John (Bremen: Privately printed, 1840) and Criticism of the Gospel History of the Synoptics (Leipzig: Privately printed, 1841). He had been teaching at Bonn University for less than two years and in 1841 the Minister of the University, Eichhorn, sent a note to the faculty members of all the Prussian Universities request-

that the historical Jesus never existed and that Christianity was an evolution developed from Greek and Roman influences.⁴²

It is important to note that there is "nothing new under the sun" concerning twentieth century "shock best-sellers" on the life of Jesus. The fictional Lives of the nineteenth century covered every facet imaginable: from portraying Jesus as an Essene to marrying him off to Mary Magdalene. Even John Allegro's theme that Jesus never existed was depicted over one hundred years ago by Bauer and dozens of other authors. Joachim Jeremias summarizes this period by explaining:

These lives of Jesus are mere products of wishful thinking. The final outcome was that every epoch and every theology found in the personality of Jesus the reflection of its own ideals, and every author the reflection of his views. What had gone wrong? It was that, unconsciously, dogma had been replaced by psychology and fantasy.⁴³

Nevertheless, the nineteenth century produced an intense preoccupation with historiographical problems and evaluation of source material on the historical Jesus. By the turn of the century, the general concensus of historians preoccupied with the historicity of Jesus believed Mark to be the earliest of the Gospels and John to be of little value because of its theological overtones. The theory had also arisen that there was a lost source upon which Matthew and Luke

ing their views on whether or not Bauer should be allowed to continue teaching. Most of the replies were very evasive. However, the faculty at Konigsberg said yes, and Bonn said no. In March, 1842, Bauer was required to resign. Other works include Criticism of the Gospels (Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1850) and The Origin of Christianity from Graeco-Roman Civilisation (Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1877).

⁴²Charles C. Anderson, Critical Quests of Jesus (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 22-23.

⁴³Jeremias, pp. 5-6.

based the information they did not take from Mark. The hypothetical source was called "Q" from the German "Quelle" meaning "Source." "Q" was dated about 50 A.D. while Mark was thought to have been composed around 70 A.D.⁴⁴

William Wrede (1859-1907) set the tone early in the twentieth century by publishing his book, The Messianic Secret in the Gospels (1901). He explained that Mark was still impregnated with the theological interpretation of the early Christian community. His treatise laid down the foundation for the kerygma (the oral message) movement of the Form Critics.⁴⁵

Form Criticism gained extreme popularity after World War I. The method had been applied to Old Testament studies and now was applied to the Gospels. The German scholars, Rudolf Bultmann, Martin Dibelius and K. L. Schmidt, published extensively on the method.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁴McArthur, pp. 4-5. Besides Weisse's influence on nineteenth century scholarship as to the priority of the Gospel of Mark, Christian Gottlob Wilke also confirmed the view in The Earliest Evangelist (Leipzig: Privately published, 1838). Weisse published another work, The Present Position of the Problem of the Gospels (Leipzig: Privately published, 1856), and other scholars were amiable to the theory. Some other books holding this theory are Heinrich Julius Holzmann's The Synoptic Gospels: Their Origin and Historical Character (Leipzig: Privately published, 1863); Sir Richard Hanson's The Jesus of History (London: J. P. Trevelyan, 1869); and Bernhard Weiss's The Life of Jesus (Berlin: Privately published, 1882).

⁴⁵Schweitzer, pp. 330-334.

⁴⁶A few of the works written by Rudolf Karl Bultmann are: The Gospel of John, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971); The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1921); and Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Scribner and Sons, Publishers, 1958). Martin Dibelius' famous work is From Tradition to Gospel (New York: Scribner and Sons, Publishers, 1919), and K. L. Schmidt's book, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesus (Berlin: I. Tubingen, 1919) is typical of Form Criticism.

basic tenets of Form Criticism are outlined by Harvey K. McArthur:

a) that during the first Christian generation the stories about Jesus circulated in oral form, b) that during this period there was no continuous narrative but instead single, isolated stories (the Passion Narrative was the earliest portion of the tradition to acquire consecutive form), c) that the stories were repeated in response to the various needs of the community, e.g. preaching, teaching, controversy, ethical guidance, d) that as the stories were told they tended to fall into certain stereotyped patterns, or forms, characteristic of oral tradition.⁴⁷

This view allowed for modification of actual facts concerning the life of Jesus. Biblical sources were downgraded further as primary materials on Jesus' ministry.

Form Criticism has come under critical attack in the last decade. Redaction Criticism with its editing and compressing features has been in vogue recently, but its results, like those of Form Criticism, have been contradictory and very subjective. There has been a renewed interest in research of the historical Jesus on a scholarly level. The type of Aramaic Jesus spoke is being analyzed and a renewed interest in historiographical errors of past historians is occurring. A rich future with many turns and twists seems to be in store for the historical Jesus in the future.⁴⁸

Because the present research is the heir of past research, for better or worse, it is important to note the precursors of the present quest for the historical Jesus. One must appreciate the awesome obstacles the modern historian is facing because of a different attitude toward historiographical problems and the task of sorting out the erroneous dead wood upon which previous generations have built. With

⁴⁷McArthur, p. 6.

⁴⁸Baird, p. 5.

this background, it is possible to go on to the study of the source material concerning the historical Jesus and the problem of his existence in history. This study will concentrate on scholarly literature written in the past thirteen years to glean the modern researcher's views.

The References: The Roman Historians

The Roman historians almost completely ignored the Christian movement in their writings. However, there are a few references to Jesus which Harvey K. McArthur summarizes as "...useful in the discussion with those eccentrics who deny even the existence of Jesus...."⁴⁹

Tacitus in his Annals (Book IV; Chapter III) expounds the attempt made by Nero to blame the Christians for the burning of Rome in the year 64 A.D. His report explains that the name Christian "comes from Christ, who was condemned to death during the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate."⁵⁰ The date of the Annals is approximately 112-113 A.D. (which is quite removed from the generation in which Jesus lived) and the account offers little information about his life.⁵¹

The Roman historian, Suetonius, who lived approximately 65 A.D. to 135 A.D., mentions in his biography of Claudius in Lives of the Twelve Caesars (Book V; Chapter XIV) that Caesar drove out of Rome the

⁴⁹McArthur, p. 11.

⁵⁰p. Cornelius Tacitus, The Annals and the Histories, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodrick (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 168.

⁵¹Otto Betz, What Do We Know About Jesus? (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 10.

CHAPTER II

JOSEPHUS, THE ROMAN HISTORIANS AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

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⁵¹Otto Betz, What Do We Know About Jesus? (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 10.

Jews "who constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus."⁵² The account is dated 121 A.D. and is also too far removed to be considered a primary source.⁵³

Pliny the Younger, governor of Asia Minor, made a report to Emperor Trajan during the year 110 A.D. which gives valuable details about the Christian faith. It mentions that the Christians sang hymns to Christ as a god.⁵⁴ However, though it gives evidence that the Christian movement was quite prevalent during this period, the late date again eliminates it from the realm of primary source material.

There is a debate as to the value of these reports and various authors propose what sources they believe "presuppose" the Christian proclamation. Ferdinand Hahn, for instance, believes Tacitus' account is the "sole valuable report which we find" in the references.⁵⁵ The true value of these references, however, is that they are independent pagan testimonies, which coupled to other source materials give the historian an extremely strong case for the existence of Jesus.

⁵²Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, The Lives of the Twelve Caesars (New York: The Modern Library, 1931), p. 226.

⁵³Betz, p. 10.

⁵⁴C. Plinius Secundus, "Letter to Emperor Trajan," Westcott's Pliny's Letters, ed. and trans. J. H. Westcott (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1898), p. 126.

⁵⁵Ferdinand Hahn, What Can We Know About Jesus?, trans. Grover Foley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 21.

The Testimony: The Josephus Account

For nearly sixteen centuries, the works of Flavius Josephus were extremely popular among Christians. Christians preserved his writings especially for his laudatory mention of Jesus in The Antiquities of the Jews (Book XVIII; Chapter III, 3) also called "The Testimonium Flavianum." However, Josephus fell to the negative end of the spectrum when critical studies cast doubt that he had actually written the Testimonium. Until recently it has been claimed that the account was forged by Church leaders in the third and fourth centuries to bolster the historical basis of their faith.⁵⁶ Josephus still suf-

⁵⁶There is an Old Slavonic version of The Jewish War by Josephus which differs significantly from the Greek manuscripts. Few would venture to regard its reference to Jesus as authentic. The passage supposedly mentioning Jesus is found in Book II; Chapter IX, 3. The following text is quoted from The Great Roman-Jewish War: A.D. 66-70, ed. William Reuben Farmer and trans. William Whiston (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 310. The brackets and parentheses have been included as they were found in that volume. The words in brackets are thought by the translator to be Christian interpolations. The words in parentheses represent the translators additions for the sake of a clarified translation. The portion reads:

At that time there appeared a man, if it is permissible to call him a man. His nature [and form] were human, but his appearance (was something) more than (that) of a man; [notwithstanding his works were divine]. He worked miracles wonderful and mighty. [Therefore it is impossible for me to call him a man]; but again, if I look at the nature which he shared with all, I will not call him an angel. And everything whatsoever he wrought through an invisible power, he wrought by word and command. Some said of him, "Our first lawgiver is risen from the dead and hath performed many healings and arts," while others thought that he was sent from God. Howbeit in many things he disobeyed the Law and kept not the Sabbath according to (our) fathers' customs. Yet, on the other hand, he did nothing shameful; nor (did he do anything) with aid of hands but by word alone did he provide everything.

And many of the multitude followed after him and hearkened to his teachings; and many souls were in commotion, thinking that

fers from the stigma placed on him by nineteenth century critics.⁵⁷

The importance of the Testimonium lies in the fact that if it were true it would be a confirmation of a contemporary non-Christian source as to the existence and work of Jesus. Since Josephus lived

thereby the Jewish tribes might free themselves from Roman hands. Now it was his custom in general to sojourn over against the city upon the Mount of Olives; and there, too, he bestowed his healings upon the people.

And there assembled unto him of ministers one hundred and fifty, and a multitude of the people. Now when they saw his power, that he accomplished whatsoever he would by (a) word, and when they had made known to him their will, that he should enter into the city and cut down the Roman troops and Pilate and rule over us, he disdained us not.

And when thereafter knowledge of it came to the Jewish leaders, they assembled together with the high-priest and spake: "We are powerless and (too) weak to withstand the Romans. Seeing, moreover, that the bow is bent, we will go and communicate to Pilate what we have heard, and we shall be clear of trouble, lest he hear (it) from others, and we be robbed of our substance and ourselves slaughtered and our children scattered." And they went and communicated (it) to Pilate. And he sent and had many of the multitude slain. And he had that Wonder-worker brought up, and after instituting an inquiry concerning him, he pronounced judgment: "He is [a benefactor, not] a malefactor, [nor] a revel, [nor] covetous of kingship." [And he let him go; for he had healed his dying wife].

[And he went to his wonted place and did his wonted works. And when more people again assembled round him, he glorified himself through his actions more than all. The teachers of the Law were overcome with envy, and gave thirty talents to Pilate, in order that he should put him to death. And he took (it) and gave them liberty to execute their will themselves.] And they laid hands on him and crucified him contrary to the law of (their) fathers.

Other interpolated passages are just as significantly corrupted by the addition of fraudulent material. These passages refer to John the Baptist. One presents him in his conflict with the doctors of the Law (XX; VII,1), and the other with Herod and Herodias (XX; IX, 1).

⁵⁷William Reuber Farmer, Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 4-5.

from approximately 37 A.D. to 100 A.D. and The Antiquities of the Jews was first published in 93 or 94 A.D., the account is significant because it was written when those who knew Jesus were still alive.⁵⁸

Scholars have almost unanimously agreed that the Testimonium is "too Christian" in the Greek texts and even more suspect in the ancient Slavonic translation. Quite a few modern scholars have recently suggested that the entire passage is not an interpolation, but that Josephus' words about Jesus were merely expanded. Extremely negative reactions, however, are still being registered. Samuel Sandmel, professor at Hebrew Union College, exclaims in his book, We Jews and Jesus:

Most scholars believe the passage is entirely an interpolation; a few believe that it is a replacement, or rewriting of an authentic paragraph now beyond recovery; only an infinitesimal number of scholars attribute authenticity to the passage.⁵⁹

Sandmel is wrong in his assumption that "most scholars" are entirely negative. Rather, from reading scholarly works on source material dating the last thirteen years, one gains the impression that "most" scholars believe Josephus at least mentioned Jesus. The latest detailed scholarly work on Josephus (R. J. H. Shutt's Studies In Josephus) confirms this impression and concludes that "...the Testimonium, as Josephus probably wrote it, was long enough to arouse suspicion, and not long enough or bitter enough to win commendation from Jews."⁶⁰

⁵⁸R. J. H. Shutt, Studies In Josephus (London: S. P. C. K., 1961), p. 15.

⁵⁹Samuel Sandmel, We Jews and Jesus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 18.

⁶⁰Shutt, p. 121.

Much of the answer to the intrigue of Josephus lies in his life itself. Although he was a priest and a member of the tribe of Levi, he was compromising, worldly and never extremely nationalistic. He was married three times and when his personal interests were at stake, he was unscrupulous. The Zealots hated him because they felt he had betrayed them to the Romans when he was a general during the Jewish War. This hatred forced him to live out the rest of his life in Rome.⁶¹

He was not a great man. However, he was important as a historian. His first work, The Jewish War, was published in 75 A.D. in Greek. Vespasian and Titus received copies, and Titus gave his signature to orders for its publication. The title refers to the war as the Roman's would have referred to it. His work was intended for a non-Jewish public, and he is guilty to a degree of suppressing the truth.⁶² He is cautious, but aims at accuracy (though his numerals, like those of other ancient historians, are frequently exaggerated). A reflection of his desire for personal gain is seen in his flattering treatment of Agrippa II before the ruler's death (Agrippa in turn bought quite a few copies) and his subsequent, realistic treatment after Agrippa's death.⁶³

The Antiquities of the Jews was first published in 93 or 94 A.D. As he had partially suppressed the truth in the Jewish War, he

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 118-119.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 122-126.

similarly suppresses the truth concerning Jesus and only mentions him twice in the entire work. Shutt remarks:

Inasmuch as the Jewish War only gives a part of the truth he was guilty to a degree, but it was convenient for Josephus and adequate for the non-Jewish public for whom his Jewish War was intended. So too with the Testimonium. It seems certain that Josephus knew more about the Christians than his short notice tells us, and that he, with most Jews, despised them. He maintained what has been termed a 'stolid silence about Christianity' and gives only a short account, suppressing some of the truth about them. He exhibited an equally stolid silence about the Synagogue, for the word is only used once by Josephus....⁶⁴

Josephus endeavored to atone for his past writing and tried to show pride for the Jewish race in the Contra Apionem published in 94 or 95 A.D. However, he failed in this respect to win the Jews' favor, and the Christian emphasis on the Testimonium in latter centuries was a further hinderance.⁶⁵ This is substantiated by the fact that in Rome there is a statue erected to his memory---in Jerusalem there is none.⁶⁶

The Antiquities of the Jews has three passages of particular interest to this study. The first is a passage on John the Baptist which portrays the Roman version of his execution by Herod. Josephus says in the Antiquities, XVIII, 5, 2:

Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by spar-

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 124-125.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 121.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 7.

ing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late.⁶⁷

Josephus treats John's ministry in a very brief passage much like the Testimonium may originally have been formulated. The fact that he mentions John the Baptist also adds weight to the argument that he mentioned Jesus as well.

In the Antiquities, XX; 9, 1, Josephus mentions Jesus in connection with a short discussion on his brother, James. He states:

When, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]..assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned....⁶⁸

This passage occurs later than the Testimonium and led to the just criticism that if Josephus had written the Testimonium in its entirety, he would have followed his usual procedure of stating "this is the same Jesus..." etc.⁶⁹ It emphasizes the interpolation. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that if this whole passage was interpolated, the Church leaders would have inserted the Biblical account rather than the Roman account. Furthermore, the fact that James is mentioned by Josephus adds weight to the premise that Jesus was mentioned in passing also.

⁶⁷Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews in The Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. William Whiston (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, [no date], p. 540.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 598.

⁶⁹Note the discussion in Solomon Zeitlin's Josephus On Jesus (Philadelphia: The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1931), p. 62.

However, the discovery of a tenth century Arabic manuscript entitled "Kitab al-Unwan al-Mukallal bi-Fadail al-Hikma al-Mutawwaj bi-Anwa al-Falsafa al-Manduh bi-Haqaq al-Marifa" (which approximately is interpreted "Book of History Guided by All the Virtues of Wisdom Crowned with Various Philosophies and Blessed by the Truth of Knowledge") by two Israeli scholars, Shlomo Pines and David Flusser, has further proven that Josephus did mention Jesus in his original work. The manuscript was written by an obscure bishop of the Eastern Church, Bishop Agapius, and contains what appears to be the Josephus' Testimonium minus Christian interpolation.⁷⁰

The manuscript is not new to scholars, but it has never been fully examined in this context. Professor Pines noticed a section beginning with the words: "We have found in many books of the philosophers that they refer to the day of the crucifixion of Christ." The manuscript then lists and quotes ancient works on Jesus. The scholars were familiar with some of these works, but others were unknown passages.⁷¹

The passage quoting the Testimonium begins: "Similarly Josephus the Hebrew. For he says in the treatise that he has written on the governances of the Jews...."⁷² Professor Pines writes of the following Arabic version:

⁷⁰Peter Grose, "New Evidence on Jesus' Life Reported," The New York Times, Feb. 12, 1972, p. 24.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

It is so different from the Vulgate [Greek] version that hardly any of the arguments (or, perhaps, none) disproving the authenticity of the latter have any validity with regard to it. In the main, this authenticity has been questioned because of the pronounced Christian traits of the testimonium; in Agapius's version these traits are conspicuous by their absence, a noncommittal attitude being taken up.⁷³

The two versions are reproduced below in English from an insert of The New York Times' article:

Interpolated Greek Text of the Testimonium of Josephus

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love [him] did not cease. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life. For the prophets of God had prophesied these and myriads of other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still up to now not disappeared.⁷⁴

Earlier and More Authentic Arabic Text of the Testimonium

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.⁷⁵

Notice that the interpolated Greek passage describes as fact the Resurrection and that Jesus was the Messiah. The Arabic version

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

declares only that his disciples "reported" the Resurrection. In the Arabic version there is no mention of Jewish guilt for Jesus' death.

Professor Flusser maintains that this last point is crucial in authenticating the Arabic version as a primary source of Josephus' account. Flusser explains:

It is unthinkable that the accusation of the leading Jewish personalities would be omitted by someone writing in the Christian milieu, while it is easy to explain that this accusation [the Greek version: "upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us"] was interpolated in the original text of Josephus by a Christian hand.⁷⁶

Flusser maintains that Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (263 A.D. to approximately 339 A.D.) quoted the Josephus passage in his book, The History of the Christian Church (Book I; Section 11). This book was at least one of the sources Bishop Agapius drew upon. Eusebius, according to Flusser, quoted Josephus accurately in his first edition but was pressured by other church leaders to interpolate a more devout testimony for the general public. Flusser dates the first edition to 311 A.D. and explains that in the following decade Eusebius is known to have compromised a number of times to insure church unity at the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.). In Flusser's own words:

The first edition of the ecclesiastical history was written before the Council of Nicaea and the definitive edition was edited after the council. There is a possibility that if Eusebius quoted Josephus' words about Jesus in his earlier edition (or editions) in its original form, that later, because of heavy suspicions about his Christian faith, Eusebius rejected the original text of the passage and began to quote the more orthodox version by way of precaution.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

The argument is plausible in that Caesarea possessed the most extensive collection of Christian and relevant manuscripts in the world. Eusebius was a Palestinian, and it is probable that he had access to the original Josephus canon. The interpolated version is believed by these scholars to have survived while the more accurate version was only available in an obscure version circulating among the Eastern churchmen. Professor Pines explains that a version of the Josephus testimony preserved in the Arabic text was more likely to escape the church censorship through the centuries.⁷⁸

This new discovery strengthens considerably the arguments posed by many scholars who believe that it is important not to throw away the whole Josephus testimony. The account at least must have mentioned Jesus, and thus is a non-Christian testimonial to his existence in history. The discovery of these two Israeli scholars may change the negative attitude toward Josephus which has permeated the scholarly circles. Modern historians, such as William Reuben Farmer, have been preparing the academic world for such a discovery in the past two decades. Farmer wrote about Josephus in 1956: "The very neglect of the works of this great historian in our day is a silent witness to the fact that his works still suffer from the unjustified stigma placed upon them by nineteenth-century critics."⁷⁹

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Farmer, p. 5.

CHAPTER III

TALMUD, OTHER LITERATURE AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The Talmud: A Backhanded Compliment

Jesus, according to the Gospels, spent his life in the Jewish culture of the early first century under the teaching of the Synagogue. Luke 4:16 explains: "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read."⁸⁰ R. Travers Herford remarks that Jesus never broke that "custom."⁸¹ Hebrew sources are therefore important to the study of Jesus whenever they mention his life.

The great Hebrew doctrinal work is the Talmud. It is the embodiment of the civil and canonical laws, plus the commentary by rabbis, dating from approximately 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. In it one finds a large quantity of anti-Christian polemic and scattered passages condemning Jesus.⁸²

It is these scathing passages that the Jewish researcher, Joseph Klausner, verified in 1929 to be independent of Christian tradi-

⁸⁰New American Standard Bible.

⁸¹R. Travers Herford, Talmud and Apocrypha (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1971), p. 293.

⁸²The Babylonian Talmud, ed. I. Epstein (London: The Soncino Press, 1935). Some tractate references concerning Jesus are: Sanhedrin 43a; 46b; 56a; 61b; and 107b. Some tractate references concerning Christians are: Sanhedrin 37a; 38b; and 90b. Many of the references in the English versions have been censored as a result of manuscript tampering by the Medieval Church.

tion. However, he explained that the passages were very few and that their unobjective hatred relegated them to minimal historical value.⁸³ They seemingly were intended to degrade the events the Gospels proclaim. The Gospels proclaim the Virgin Birth of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Talmud explains that Jesus was the result of irregular union between Mary and another man.⁸⁴ The Gospels proclaim that Jesus taught true religion and worked miracles of God. The Talmud exclaims: "He has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy!"⁸⁵

These statements are a backhanded compliment to Jesus because they first of all ascertain his existence in history and secondly, confirm that he performed signs and wonders to authenticate his teaching (to the chagrin of many Scribes and Pharisees). Even Klausner came to the conclusion:

It is unreasonable to question either the existence of Jesus... or his general character as it is depicted in these Synoptic Gospels. This is the single historical value which we can attribute to the early Talmudical accounts of Jesus.⁸⁶

In recent years, scholars have likewise drawn similar conclusions from the Talmudic texts. Though they vary as to the amount of

⁸³Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching, trans. Herbert Danby (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 18-19.

⁸⁴Sukkah, 56b.

⁸⁵Sanhedrin, 43a.

⁸⁶Klausner, p. 20.

enthusiasm they express for the value of the texts,⁸⁷ nearly all believe the texts establish the existence of Jesus as a historical fact. The majority hold that the general life-style proclaimed about Jesus in the Gospels and the circumstances of his death are also confirmed by the Talmudic texts. Ferdinand Hahn, who appears to be close to the middle of the spectrum of modern scholars who have evaluated the texts, says after discussing them:

Thus it must be said of the non-Christian sources as a whole that their yield is small in content; we hear nothing apart from the fact that Jesus performed his ministry in an obviously special way, was executed and attracted disciples even after his death. On the other hand, however, it is significant that these historical facts are mentioned independent of Christian testimonies. The reality of the life and ministry of Jesus is here confirmed.⁸⁸

Even the very negative Samuel Sandmel begrudgingly expresses that the Talmudic texts prove the existence of Jesus. On page 17 of his book, We Jews and Jesus, he hurriedly asserts:

What knowledge we have about Jesus comes only from the New Testament. He went unmentioned in the surviving Jewish and pagan literature of his time.⁸⁹

However, hidden in a footnote on page 28, he clarifies his previous

⁸⁷The spectrum of scholarly enthusiasm is diverse. G. Bornkamm in Jesus of Nazareth, trans. I. and F. McLusky (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 28, asserts flatly that the Talmud "betrays no independent knowledge whatever and is nothing but a polemical and tendentious misrepresentation of the Christian tradition." It must be noted, however, that Bornkamm is one of the dying race of Form Critics who are bound by the tenets of their method. Ethelbert Stauffer in Jesus and His Story, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1960), is exuberant over the Talmud texts and uses them quite extensively along with other non-Biblical sources in his chronology of Jesus' life.

⁸⁸Hahn, pp. 24-25.

⁸⁹Sandmel, p. 17.

statement with these words:

There are a few direct mentions of Jesus in the Talmud... [it] is so little material as to make it useless, except for one purpose. It can serve as one more tool to refute those who deny there ever was a Jesus. I do not think this particular tool is needed.⁹⁰

The Talmudic texts are indeed a backhanded compliment---a proof in themselves that Jesus existed.

The Writings: Apocalyptic and Apocryphal

From 200 B.C. to the middle of the second century, the apocalyptic movement was widespread. Fragments of the writings of this period have been preserved and because part of the period coincides with the life of Jesus, some scholars have been looking at this literature with renewed interest. Apocalyptic writings are Jewish or Christian literature that use symbolism and often bear the name of fictitious authors. Usually the imagery declares that God is going to destroy the powers of evil and raise the righteous to life in a messianic kingdom.

A few scholars have found sayings recorded in Jewish apocalyptic writings which they feel demonstrate the uniqueness of Jesus' message.⁹¹ Such studies, however, have only thus far produced background material and are not conclusive as to Jesus' existence.

Another area of research is that of apocryphal (or fictional) literature. The most recent discovery was made by the Israeli scholar,

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 28

⁹¹One such scholar is Ethelbert Stauffer. Charles C. Anderson in Critical Quests of Jesus (pp. 123-124) cites Stauffer as one of the new generation of historians who are searching out this realm of apocalyptic material. Klaus Koch, professor at the University of Hamburg, also has an intense interest in this field.

Shlomo Pines. He delivered a lecture in 1966 about an apocryphal writing he recently had discovered. It was an Arabic manuscript entitled Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwwat Sayyidina Muhammad ("The Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Mohammad") written by 'Abd al-Jabbar. Pines pointed out that the Moslem theologian had adapted writings and traditions of an early Jewish-Christian community.⁹²

His study of the document is interesting because he believes that it adds historical emphasis to the existence of Jesus and suggests that Jesus had the rank of a prophet. The well-known, tenth century Mu'tazilite author, 'Abd al-Jabbar, appears to use primary materials of the Jewish-Christian community. Pines explains, "In an attempt to sum up the mission of Jesus, our texts state: (70a) 'Christ came in order to vivify and establish the Torah.' Hereupon a saying of Jesus is cited which is very similar to, but not quite identical with, Matthew v:17-19:

He said: I come to you. For this reason I shall act in accordance with the Torah and the precepts of the prophets who were before me. I did not come to diminish, but, on the contrary, to complete (or fulfil: mutammiman). In truth, as far as God is concerned, it is more easy for the heaven to fall upon the earth than to take away anything from the Law of Moses. Whoever diminishes anything in it shall be called diminished.

The text adds that Jesus and his disciples acted in this manner until he departed from this world. This passage clearly has bearing on

⁹²Shlomo Pines, The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source. Lecture delivered June 14, 1966. Published in the Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Vol. II, No. 13, p. 1.

Christology...as conceived in these texts. For it seems to imply that Jesus' rank was that of a prophet."⁹³

Apocryphal narratives are recently being added to studies on Jesus. David Flusser refers to Pine's research in evaluating the relations of Jesus with his family.⁹⁴ James F. Peter frequently mentions the terms "apocryphal Gospels" and "heretical writings" in his book, Finding the Historical Jesus.⁹⁵ Though apocryphal writings give little more than fragmental background material, many scholars believe that this literature is further proof for the case of the historical Jesus.

The scholarly world should be cautious in the implications that it draws from apocalyptic and apocryphal writings in future decades. The very nature of these writings dictates caution. However, the fact that much of this literature exists is another supporting beam in the evidence for the existence of Jesus.

⁹³Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁹⁴Flusser, p. 20.

⁹⁵Peter, p. 26.

⁹⁶ibid., p. 11.

⁹⁷James M. Robinson as early as 1959 noted in his book, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus (p. 65), that current discussion was turning to positive statements as to the historical reliability of the factual material in the Gospels. He cited, among others, Vincent Fay-

CHAPTER IV

SCRIPTURE AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The Reliability: Recent Historical Investigation of Scripture

One product of recent historiography has been a gradual return to the New Testament for source material---especially the Gospels. Whereas Jesus is mentioned only in passing or in vituperated outbursts in non-Christian documents, he is the sole subject of the Gospels. To the Evangelists he is not a heretic or revolutionary, but rather the Messiah who proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God, died on a cross to fulfill his message and was resurrected by God.⁹⁶

Because the concepts of Messiah and Son of God are outside the realm of what history can prove about a historical figure, the presuppositions of the Evangelists were replaced in the nineteenth century by critical presuppositions that were just as unobjective. This "scientific" criticism has planted its tentacles deep into scholarly research during the twentieth century. Current research on the historical Jesus, however, has produced a sharp increase in the number of historians who are detaching themselves from the old tenets and are observing Scripture in a fresh approach.⁹⁷ One of these historians is Edwin M. Yamau-

⁹⁶Betz, p. 11.

⁹⁷James M. Robinson as early as 1959 noted in his book, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus (p. 65), that current discussion was turning to positive statements as to the historical reliability of the factual material in the Gospels. He cited, among others, Vincent Tay-

chi, who teaches ancient history at Miami University. He explains in his book, The Stones and the Scriptures, how the effect of nineteenth century criticism eroded faith in the reliability of the Gospels. He states:

It is well-known that the so-called "scientific" criticism of the Bible which arose in Germany in the nineteenth century and which eventually flooded British and American universities and seminaries has had precisely this effect. We can see that such criticism is far from objective. Its sources are to be found, inter alia, in the presuppositions of Hegelian philosophy and in evolutionary theories as to how Judaism and Christianity "must have developed."⁹⁸

Though modern scholars may disagree as to how much "method" must be used to glean historical facts about Jesus' life from the Gospels, the majority of historians believe that the Gospels prove Jesus' existence in history. Otto Betz begins his book, What Do We Know About Jesus, with these poignant sentences:

This book...rejects the view that the Gospels are not intended to stand up to historical investigation. It is true that they are designed to be read as a testimony of faith, not as historical sources. But each of the four Gospels paints a picture of Jesus as a historical figure.⁹⁹

lor's The Life and Ministry of Jesus; Joachim Jeremias' The Problem of the Historical Jesus; and even Form Critic, G. Bornkamm's, Jesus of Nazareth. In the past decade the ranks have considerably swollen. These scholars have been extremely frank about the bias which permeates much of the academic sphere. Trained in the tenets of nineteenth century criticism, some scholars have a difficult time facing their bias and taking a fresh look at the mass of evidence that has recently come to light concerning the reliability of Scripture. However, it is extremely heartening that a new breed of historian is striving to shed the shackles imposed by nineteenth century critics.

⁹⁸Edwin M. Yamauchi, The Stones and the Scriptures (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972), p. 22.

⁹⁹Betz, forward.

Israeli scholar, David Flusser, adds in his book Jesus:

The early Christian accounts about Jesus are not as untrustworthy as people today often think. The first three gospels not only present a reasonably faithful picture of Jesus as a Jew of his own time, but consistently maintain his style of speaking of the Savior in the third person.¹⁰⁰

One critical claim of the past had been that the Gospel documents were religious documents, written by men who held strong beliefs, and therefore, were useless because they were only myths or legends. Current scholarship, however, is not only questioning this hypothesis but also pointing out that even "myths" are currently being used for their historical value. C. H. Dodd, Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge, after pointing out the reliability of Scripture explains that even if the Scriptures were myth, they would have value for the historian. He asserts:

For he [the historian] is familiar with documents of equally unpromising character, which nevertheless can be made, by suitable critical treatment, to yield results of solid historical value. The Homeric poems were once regarded (much as some moderns would have us regard the biblical narratives) as a corpus of sacred allegory, to be interpreted by experts in such matters. In my schooldays their main contents were confidently classed as myth. Nowadays they are accepted as valuable sources, when critically treated, for the history of the dark age lying between the fall of Knossos and the Dorian invasions. That is already an old story. More recently, and indeed at this very time, historians are having a surprising measure of success in distilling trustworthy historical information from the popular traditions of various societies, full as they are of legend and myth. It is largely a matter of employing suitable methods of criticism for the study of material of this kind.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, modern historians have realized that no historical account is unprejudiced. No one is totally objective. The principles

¹⁰⁰Flusser, p. 8.

¹⁰¹C. H. Dodd, Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 2.

that would disallow the Evangelists' testimony because of their strong religious beliefs are the same principles that would annihilate all testimonies used by the historian. Even modern reporting cannot be objective. The recent documentary films have proved that bias is never totally destroyed. Editing can establish many different viewpoints from the same film coverage. This is the reason historians are not in agreement as to how much "editing" should be done to the Gospels. They will never agree. However, the important fact remains that modern scholarship is turning to the Gospels for facts on Jesus' life. These scholars are agreeing that Jesus existed in history and that the Gospels prove his existence.

If there were only religious documents to confirm Jesus' existence, he would share that fate with (among others) Mohammed, Buddha and Moses. With the exception of Flavius Josephus, and possibly St. Paul, the historian knows more about Jesus than any other post Old Testament Jew.¹⁰² Professor N. A. Dahl of Yale University concludes:

Whoever thinks that the disciples completely misunderstood their Master or even consciously falsified his picture may give his phantasy free reign. From a purely historico-scientific point of view, however, it is more logical to assume that the Master is to be recognized from the circle of his disciples and its historical influence.¹⁰³

Archaeology has been partially responsible for the changing climate of opinion among scholars concerning the reliability of Scripture. It is imperative to this study to examine the support archaeology lends to Scripture research and the problems involved.

¹⁰²Flusser, p. 7.

¹⁰³N. A. Dahl, "Kerygma and History," In Search of the Historical Jesus, ed. Harvey K. McArthur, p. 133.

The Evidence: Archaeology and Scripture

In recent years historians have turned to the Biblical narratives with newly acquired respect for their historicity. Archaeology has been responsible for much of this change in attitude. It is an ironic fact that while New Testament scholars are many times guided by the axioms of nineteenth century literary criticism to reject the Gospels, ancient historians find these documents to be extremely accurate. This phenomenon has occurred because the axioms of New Testament literary criticism were conceived in a pre-archaeological era. Even Form Criticism was conceived before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered and has neglected the archaeological discoveries since that time.¹⁰⁴ W. F. Albright concludes his discussion of the critical schools with the statement: "In other words, all radical schools in New Testament criticism which have existed in the past or which exist today are pre-archaeological, and are, therefore, since they were built in der Luft ("in the air"), quite antiquated today."¹⁰⁵

Many of the supposed "errors" in the Biblical documents have increasingly been found to be errors of interpretation made by the critics themselves. The "errors" in the accounts are often formulated by the philosophy and theory of the critic and are not based on substantial fact. D. J. Wiseman, ancient historian at the University of London, explains that there is an "increasing number of supposed errors

¹⁰⁴Yamauchi, pp. 95-97.

¹⁰⁵W. F. Albright, "Retrospect and Prospect in New Testament Archaeology," The Teacher's Yoke, ed. E. Jerry Vardaman (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1964), p. 29.

which have been subsequently eliminated by the discovery of archaeological evidence."¹⁰⁶ He asserts that "the majority of errors can be ascribed to errors of interpretation by modern scholars and not to substantiated 'errors' of fact."¹⁰⁷

For example, Luke's reference that "Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene"¹⁰⁸ when John the Baptist began preaching in A.D. 27 had been thought an error on Luke's part. The only ruler historians knew with that name was King Lysanias who was executed in 36 B.C. However, current archaeological evidence (two Greek inscriptions from Abila) has proven that there was a "Lysanias the tetrarch" in the period 14 A.D. to 29 A.D.¹⁰⁹

Because of recent archaeological discoveries such as this one at Abila, there is a positive attitude among modern scholars toward historical data in the Bible. G. Ernest Wright of Harvard writes:

It is indeed true that archaeology has revolutionized our attitude toward biblical historical traditions. A previous generation of scholars was inclined to make skepticism, an important element in historical method, an almost primary ingredient in the conclusions drawn from use of the method. Today most of us take a far more positive line, and are inclined to give a tradition the benefit of the doubt unless there is evidence to the contrary; this is a basic and all-important scholarly shift in viewpoint, and archaeology is its cause.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶D. J. Wiseman, "Archaeology and Scripture," Westminster Theological Journal, XXXIII (1971), p. 151.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁰⁸Luke 3:1, New American Standard Bible.

¹⁰⁹Yamauchi, p. 99.

¹¹⁰G. Ernest Wright, "Biblical Archaeology Today," New Directions in Biblical Archaeology, ed. David N. Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield, p. 151.

Evidence to contradict the Biblical accounts is scarce. Archaeological evidence is often fragmentary, and sometimes the Bible is needed to interpret and correlate the archaeological discoveries. The great archaeologist of Asia Minor, William Ramsay, was one of the first to understand that archaeological fact confirmed the New Testament writings.¹¹¹ This discovery has helped the modern scholar because archaeology, like historiography, has a particular set of problems.

Throughout history, each era has produced a massive volume of artifacts and literature. To the archaeologist's dismay, however, only a small fraction survives. An example of this annoyance is the synagogue of the New Testament period. In Palestine during this time, there were hundreds of synagogues. The only synagogue that has been found dating from before 70 A.D. is the one discovered at Masada. The inscriptions that hung on the walls of these synagogues listing the twenty-four courses of priesthood are almost as scarce. One fragment was found at Askalon in the 1920's and another was found in Caesarea in the 1960's.¹¹²

To the archaeologist's chagrin, only a fraction of the sites that survive are surveyed and only a fraction of these have been excavated.¹¹³ An exceedingly optimistic estimate is that only two per cent of the promising sites have been excavated in Palestine and that per-

¹¹¹William M. Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), pp. 150 ff.

¹¹²E. Jerry Vardaman (ed.), The Teacher's Yoke, p. 48.

¹¹³Yamauchi, pp. 148-149.

centage is decreasing because of new finds.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, only a small portion of any excavated site is examined. The archaeologist knows that he may be missing important finds, but he lacks the financial assistance to carry out a total excavation. Only a few small sites, such as Qumran and Masada, have received thorough investigation.¹¹⁵

Because of this dilemma, Paul Lapp has issued a warning. He cautions:

With such limited and uncontrolled sampling, negative conclusions are always dangerous. At one site, for example, we excavated two squares to bedrock, but only subsequently did we find evidence of occupation in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze periods. Even after excavating a fairly large quarter of the town, we have no clear evidence of what is known, from literary sources, to be one of the town's flourishing periods. Statements like, "There was no Bronze age occupation at this site," "This area was not occupied in the Iron age," and "There was no sedentary occupation in Palestine in Middle Bronze I," must always be accepted with considerable reservation because of the limited sample of evidence upon which they are based.¹¹⁶

Added to the fragmental nature of the research, one is appalled by the fragmental nature of the publication of documents and inscriptions that have been discovered. W. F. Albright has estimated that it will be at least "fifty years before the material already accessible has been adequately published."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 151.

¹¹⁶Paul W. Lapp, Biblical Archaeology and History (New York: World Publishing Company, 1969), p. 84.

¹¹⁷Albright, p. 30.

The sporadic investigation of discoveries gives ancient history an insecure foundation. Too many times an opinion about a discovery has been published as fact by one man, and the materials have been sent to be stored in a museum. Often, this can turn to embarrassment as a later generation examines the storage areas in the basement of the museum. Erle Leichty, for example, found some forged cuneiform tablets in one museum and exclaimed, "As a matter of fact, it is doubtful that anyone had looked at them since Dr. Holt in 1911."¹¹⁸

Edwin Yamauchi sums up the archaeological dilemma with mathematical calculation. He theorizes:

Now if one could by an optimistic estimate reckon that one-tenth of our materials and inscriptions has survived, that six-tenths of the available sites have been surveyed, that one-fiftieth of these sites have been excavated, that one tenth of the excavated sites have been examined, and that one-half of the materials and inscriptions excavated have been published, one would have $(1/10 \times 6/10 \times 1/50 \times 1/10 \times 1/2)$ at hand but six, one hundred-thousandths of all possible evidence.¹¹⁹

This exposition of the archaeological dilemma should illustrate why facts in Biblical documents can not always be substantiated by inscrip-tional evidence. Those who argue that certain statements in literary sources are not yet confirmed by archaeological witness and, therefore, should be doubted (the argument from silence) are blinded to reality. The historicity of Pontius Pilate was confirmed only by literary sources until 1961.¹²⁰ Inscriptional evidence of Herod the Great was only

¹¹⁸Erle Leichty, "A Remarkable Forger," Expedition, XIII (Spring 1970), p. 17.

¹¹⁹Yamauchi, p. 156.

¹²⁰Jerry Vardaman, "A New Inscription which Mentions Pilate as 'Prefect,'" Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXI (1962), pp. 70-71.

discovered in the 1963-1965 expedition to Masada,¹²¹ and Felix the procurator was confirmed by inscriptional evidence in 1966.¹²²

It must also be noted that secular inscriptions which contradict the Scripture can not automatically be taken as authentic. One blatant illustration of this is Sargon II's claim to have captured Samaria. The Biblical account explains in II Kings 17:6 and 18:10 that the conqueror was not Sargon, but rather his predecessor, Shalmaneser. The Biblical account is correct. Sargon's claim was induced and inscribed because of his vanity. The city of Samaria fell in August/September 722 B.C.---before Shalmaneser died and before Sargon took the throne.¹²³

Another current hindrance to archaeological research is the plundering and actual destroying of sites for monetary gain. The "Antiquities Racket" has encouraged a sizeable bootlegging operation throughout the world. Such looting may gain a few artifacts that museums and collectors ultimately may buy, but the untrained thieves destroy much priceless information. Stela are broken, centuries of cultures are overturned and mixed, and priceless artifacts which appear to be worthless are cast away and broken for a piece of gold. Fortunately, there is a cry to clamp down on these plunderings which some-

¹²¹Yigael Yadin, Masada (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 189.

¹²²M. Avi-Yonah, "The Epitaph of T. Mucius Clemens," Israel Exploration Journal, XVI (1966), pp. 258-264.

¹²³Yamauchi, p. 160.

times endanger the lives of archaeologists and often ruin expeditions. Some museums have begun policies to refuse stolen merchandise.¹²⁴

In spite of the problems, archaeology moves forward at its slow pace discovering and confirming historical data. Its contribution to Biblical research has been rewarding and positive. Because of the light it has shown on the Gospels and other Scriptural documents, a new generation of scholars has turned to these documents for factual information. The words of Edwin Yamauchi sum up this section adequately and give the proclamation of a new generation of historians. He summarizes:

In light of past discoveries one may expect that future archaeological finds will continue to support the biblical traditions against radical reconstructions. Such finds will no doubt further illuminate the background of both the Old Testament and the New, making clear what has been obscure.

Those who a priori restrict the Scriptures to the human plane will find them interesting historical documents. Those who believe that God has spoken through His prophets and in His Son will find that the Bible is God's Living Word ministering to their needs today. The latter will be encouraged to know that the biblical traditions are not a patchwork of legends but are reliable records of men and women who have responded to the revelation of God in history.¹²⁵

The Problems: The Synoptic Problem and Form Criticism

Before the eighteenth century Biblical criticism emerged, theologians busied themselves by explaining the differences in the Gospel accounts. During the eighteenth century, however, the problem changed to one of similarity. Scholars wanted to know why the first three Gos-

¹²⁴"Hot from the Tomb: The Antiquities Racket," Time (March 26, 1973), pp. 93-94.

¹²⁵Yamauchi, pp. 164-165.

pels were so much alike. Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812) coined the word "synoptic" from the Greek word interpreted "a seeing together." From this time forward, the Synoptic question would directly involve itself with the first three Gospels and their resemblances.¹²⁶

Griesbach maintained that Mark was pieced together from Matthew and Luke. His theory was known as the "dependence theory."¹²⁷ During the next two centuries this theory was modified and remodified. The Gospel of Mark gained priority as the earliest Gospel. Matthew and Luke were said to have copied from Mark. Later, it was proposed that an earlier account named "Q" (from the word "Quelle" meaning "Source") had been lost. In recent years, the discussion has been as heated as the views are diverse. J. Arthur Baird lamented in 1969 that "Synoptic studies in many ways have reached an impasse."¹²⁸

The subjectivity involved in synoptic research is partially to blame for the "impasse." The theories seem innumerable and the proofs are far from conclusive. The dependence theory itself has six possible combinations concerning which Gospel copied from the other and, ironically, there are scholars today which support each view. Support for "lost" documents such as "Q" and "ancient precursors" of Matthew, Mark and Luke add to the number of combinations plausible for a theory. A

¹²⁶Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 136-137.

¹²⁷Schweitzer, p. 89.

¹²⁸Baird, p. 5.

theory that the "Sayings" of Jesus were collected and used by Gospel writers has also been championed the last several decades.¹²⁹

The slow process of obtaining documenting proof has also hindered synoptic research. A few breakthroughs occur from time to time and whet the scholar's appetite for answers hidden in the Judean wilderness. For example, the Roman Catholic scholar and papyrologist, José O'Callaghan, has studied a fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls and has concluded that it is an early fragment of the Gospel of Mark. The discovery is significant because the script in which it is written is the Zierstil Greek script, and paleographers have ascertained that this script was used between 50 B.C. and 50 A.D. This would confirm Mark as an eyewitness account and date the Gospel earlier than most scholars dreamed possible. O'Callaghan is adamant that the fragment is in Mark-an style and not part of the theorized "Q."¹³⁰

Modern scholarship has been able to break away from some of the nineteenth century presuppositions and has focused the synoptic problem in a clearer perspective. The general consensus in the earlier centuries was that the documents were extremely suspect because they seemed to depend on each other for information. This "copying" annoyed earli-

¹²⁹Note the discussion in Harrison's Introduction to the New Testament, pages 138-144. The complexity of the Synoptic theories is demonstrated by the current popular view being discussed. Proposed by R. L. Lindsey, it was first published in Novum Testamentum, VI (1963), pages 239-263 and is entitled: "A Modified Two-Document Theory of the Synoptic Dependence and Interdependence." In this article, Lindsey explains his belief that Matthew and Luke drew directly from the Sayings and an older source. The editor of Mark supposedly used Luke for his basic text, and Matthew also drew from Mark.

¹³⁰"Eyewitness Mark," Time (May 1, 1972), p. 54. The numerous untranslated Dead Sea Scroll fragments have the potential of providing additional evidence and perhaps other exciting discoveries.

er scholars because they felt that God would certainly not allow copying to occur in divine manuscripts. Today's scholar, however, has noted the differences in the texts (omissions, additions and freedom of expression) which make any synoptic theory so complicated. Furthermore, he has ascertained that even if copying did occur it is not an intrinsically serious problem. Nearly one-fifth of the Old Testament is composed of identical or similar accounts. The Jews, nevertheless, regarded the accounts as Scripture and Jesus, according to the Gospels, also accepted the Jewish canon. Modern scholars compose their theories for solving the synoptic resemblances, not to disprove Scriptural authority, but rather to ascertain to the best of their knowledge why the first three Gospels are in this fashion. As Everett F. Harrison has stated: "Originality is not a necessary qualification for Scripture."¹³¹

Form Criticism, with its emphasis on oral history as a basis for the Gospels, gained adherents because of the diverse views concerning the synoptic problem. By relegating the Gospels to myth, the Form Critics bypassed the synoptic problem and any other problem that the Gospels as historical documents might impose.¹³² However, this "easy way out" has grown quite complicated in recent years, and modern scholarship (as discussed in Chapter I) has increasingly turned away from Form Criticism.¹³³

¹³¹Harrison, p. 145.

¹³²Anderson, pp. 118-119.

¹³³Note the discussion in the article by Alfred Wikenhauser, "Assessment of Form Criticism," In Search of the Historical Jesus, pp. 69-74. He asserts that free creation of myth and legend by the early

As Heinz Zahrnt points out, "The basic difference between the the Gospels and the cult legends which we find elsewhere in antiquity is their interest in history."¹³⁴ This is the reason why many scholars have not only held the view that the Gospels prove Jesus' existence, but have maintained that the Form Critics are wrong in their assertion that one can know nothing about the life of Jesus.¹³⁵

Christian community cannot be believed by any thinking scholar today.

¹³⁴Heinz Zahrnt, The Historical Jesus, trans. J. S. Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 62.

¹³⁵Vincent Taylor in "The Historical Value of the Gospel Tradition," In Search of the Historical Jesus, pp. 75-76, has outlined some of the reasons why modern scholarship has left the tenets of Form Criticism. In discussing skepticism toward the Gospels he asserts:

This skepticism seems to me excessive; it arises from too docile an acceptance of the more radical views of form critics. Several considerations support this claim. (1) The primary sources sometimes overlap, and so provide double or even triple attestation for important sayings and narratives. (2) The study of Mark reveals earlier group forms which, apparently, the evangelist has reproduced with little change, thus enabling us to use some of the advantages of Ur-Markus hypothesis without their embarrassments. (3) The early existence of a primitive and continuous passion narrative is widely acknowledged by form critics and others. (4) The increasing degree with which the Gospel sources are held to contain material derived from Aramaic originals carries their tradition to a point much higher up the stream. (5) The Fourth Gospel, along with the interpretive element in it, supplies independent tradition of great value to the historian. (6) The various influences, apologetic, catechetical, liturgical, and doctrinal, which in various ways have modified the original tradition, can be observed and appraised, with results which show that they have by no means always obscured its meaning, but in important respects have elucidated and interpreted its significance.

For these reasons, it may be claimed, within their limitations, the Gospels, while always subject to literary and historical criticism, are a reliable guide to the study of the mind and purpose of Jesus and to the turning points of his ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem. They do not tell us all we should wish to know, and many problems remain unsolved, but we are not left in darkness with no resort but to consider how the primitive Christian communities interpreted his person and mission.

Modern literature has confirmed that most scholars believe the tenets of Form Criticism to have been a stab in the dark---a plunge that missed the target. Furthermore, the Synoptic Problem is no longer a problem of credibility. An added dimension has occurred in recent scholarship. The Gospel of John is being studied with renewed vigor.

The Departure: The Gospel of John as a Source

The Gospel of John was ignored as a source on Jesus' life for more than a century after Strauss. Early scholars believed it was too radically different from the Synoptics and that it reflected the Hellenistic world.¹³⁶ They dated it in the second century, which excluded it from being a primary source, and claimed that the theological interpretation in the text prevented it from being a historical document. Joseph Klausner reflects the view of his peers when he states in 1929:

The Fourth Gospel is not a religio-historical but a religio-philosophical book. It was not composed until about the middle of the second Christian century, at a time when Christians were already distinct from Jews (at least as a special party) with no dealings with official Judaism, and after many pagans had been converted....It may well include a few historical fragments handed down to the author (who was certainly not John the disciple) by tradition; but, speaking generally, its value is theological rather than historical or biographical.¹³⁷

In the past generation, this alleged gulf between the Gospel of John and the historian has narrowed. Scholars, such as C. H. Dodd and Reginald H. Fuller, are convinced that the Gospel of John is predominantly Jewish in tone and not Hellenistic. The discoveries at Qumran

¹³⁶McArthur, p. 9.

¹³⁷Klausner, p. 125.

have been partially responsible for such assertions as has Palestinian archaeology in general. Fuller explains:

In other ways the connections between the fourth gospel and Palestine are becoming increasingly clear. Some of the topography, which in the past has puzzled critics and thrown doubt on the author's (or his tradition's) knowledge of Palestine, has been substantiated by archaeological discovery. One such puzzle was the location of Aenon near Salim (John 3:23). There is a place called Ainun near Salim by the headwaters of Wadi Far'ah: this substantiates John's statement that "there were many waters there." Joachim Jeremias has given an account of excavations in Jerusalem which resulted in the discovery of the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2 ff.). According to Hunter, this has also been confirmed by the copper scroll from Qumran. The excavations at Shechem have made it reasonably certain that Sychar in John 4:5 should be identified with that place. In fact Shechem is the reading of the Old Syriac version at this point, and it is probably correct. Finally, mention should be made of an article by John A. T. Robinson, who studies other aspects of the evangelist's presentation, notably his attitude toward the 'Jews,' resulting in the conclusion that "The Heimat" of Johannine tradition, and the milieu in which it took shape, was the heart of southern Palestine.¹³⁸

Current scholarship has also dated the Gospel of John earlier than the previous generation of critics. C. H. Dodd notes that "the discovery of Rylands Papyrus Gk. 457 and Egerton Papyrus 2 has persuaded most critics that a date later than 120 for the Fourth Gospel is virtually impossible, and that a date not far from 100, rather before than after, is reasonable."¹³⁹ Gardner-Smith argues that the Gospel of John does not depend on the Synoptists and thus makes it possible to date the Gospel around 80 A.D. or earlier.¹⁴⁰ There is not unanimous

¹³⁸Reginald H. Fuller, "The New Testament in Current Study," In Search of the Historical Jesus, pp. 100-101.

¹³⁹Dodd, p. 424. He bases this argument on orthography and syntax.

¹⁴⁰Fuller, p. 101. This change in attitude is striking compared to the rationalistic cry that John was based in second century Gnosticism. Today, dating around 90 A. D. is not unreasonable.

agreement among modern scholars who are currently researching the Gospel of John. However, most are agreed that the evidence points toward a first century date.

Modern scholarship has considered the Synoptics and concluded that they also have their own theological interpretations mixed in the text. It has been suggested that John is abundant with historical fact---some which may clarify the Synoptics.¹⁴¹ For example, C. H. Dodd points out:

The Marcan story of Peter's confession begins with the abrupt question....No motive, or special occasion, for such a question is indicated. In the Johannine account of the confession widespread desertions lead naturally to the question....To which Peter's profession of loyalty is an equally natural reply.¹⁴²

Though widespread debate will continue for quite some time, the current perspective of the Gospel of John (as with the other Gospels) is that it is not only a source for the existence of Jesus in history, but that it can in addition contribute historical facts about his ministry.

The purpose of this thesis is to prove the existence of Jesus in history. Current scholarship not only recognizes the Gospels as sources that prove Jesus' existence, but also considers them historical

¹⁴¹The research on the Gospel of John, that has concluded that the Gospel is a valid historical document, is abundant in the last thirteen years. C. H. Dodd ironically proves in Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel that the Form Critics by their own principles have to accept John because it contains primitive forms as much as the Synoptics do. He also clearly illustrates that an ancient tradition underlies John independent of the other Gospels. He is not alone in his assertions, though his book is the definitive work to date. Cf. A. J. B. Higgins, The Historicity of the Fourth Gospel (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960, and T. E. Pollard, "St. John's Contribution to the Picture of the Historical Jesus." The Inaugural Lecture at Knox College, Dunedin, New Zealand (1963).

¹⁴²Dodd, p. 428. Cf. Mark 8:29 and John 6:66-69.

documents that give additional facts about his life and ministry. Discussions cover a wide spectrum, and many nineteenth century critical hypotheses are currently under attack. So that the reader may comprehend the changing climate of opinion in relation the hypotheses projected by previous generations, a sampling of two early hypotheses (the "Q" hypothesis and the "radical Jesus" hypothesis) currently being discussed will be viewed in the next section.

The Discussion: A Current Sampling

One of the main discussions in the past two decades which has received considerable support of late is that concerning the elimination of "Q." As mentioned in a previous section, "Q" was the unknown Source that for many decades was believed to have been the predecessor of the Gospel accounts. At first it was a catchall for material not common between Gospels that were thought to have "copied" from one another. As literary study increased, many other catchalls had to be devised to accommodate various theories.

In the early 1950's an increasing number of scholars arrived at the conclusion that is perhaps best voiced in the words of Austin Farrer: "Try as I may, I cannot believe the Q hypothesis."¹⁴³ By the end of that decade, articles such as C. Stewart Petrie's "'Q' Is Only What You Make It"¹⁴⁴ were appearing in many journals. In the 1960's,

¹⁴³Austin Farrer, St. Matthew and St. Mark (London: Dacre Press, 1954), p. viii.

¹⁴⁴C. Stewart Petrie, "'Q' Is Only What You Make It," Novum Testamentum 3 (1959), pp. 52-69.

the gentle questioning turned to full scale rebuttal. Petrie himself vehemently stated in 1967: "'Q,' which might well stand for 'quirk,' should be wholly forgotten and promptly dispatched (hand and hand with 'John the Elder') to the limb of forlorn hypothesis."¹⁴⁵ With modern discoveries concerning the dating of the Gospels and the recent tone of scholars in general, one may well expect the dissipation of the "Q" hypothesis among the consensus of historians in the next few decades.

Another theory which may finally be laid to rest by the end of this century is the eighteenth century hypothesis, formulated by Reimarus, that implied that Jesus thought of himself as a political messiah and later was mythicized by his disciples as a spiritual savior.

The latest reproduction of this theory was published in 1962 by Joel Carmichael in his book, The Death of Jesus. He states:

The thesis of the book is at variance with traditional views. It undertakes to prove that Jesus thought of himself as no more than the herald of an imminent material transformation of the world (the Kingdom of God), that his message was addressed to the Jews of his own time and to no one else, and that upon the failure of the Kingdom of God to appear he embarked on an altogether different course of action, which led to his violent death.¹⁴⁶

Though many scholars respect Carmichael, they realize that his book is undocumented and his theory is antiquated. David Flusser gives Carmichael an honor by citing The Death of Jesus a few times in his book, Jesus, but dismisses Carmichael's theory with the affirmation: "It is hard to concur with those who affirm that Jesus was executed by

¹⁴⁵C. Stewart Petrie, "The Authorship of the 'Gospel According to St. Matthew: A Reconsideration of the External Evidence," New Testament Studies 14 (1967), p. 32.

¹⁴⁶Joel Carmichael, The Death of Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. v.

Pilate, not without some reason, as a political agitator, or even that he was the leader of a gang in the Jewish war of liberation against Rome."¹⁴⁷ He then explains that the fact that Jesus preached the kingdom of heaven does not indict him as a political agitator for the Zealot party. Actually, Jesus' concept of the kingdom of heaven and the rabbinic concept are similar. The phrase had, rather, become anti-Zealot in its connotation.¹⁴⁸

Carmichael's philosophy is in error partially because he is encumbered with Form Criticism and his belief in the Gospel's patch-work origin. Joseph Vogt, Professor of Ancient History at the University of Tübingen, stresses that Carmichael has twisted Gospel references to fit his theory and has tried to absolve the Jewish leaders from all guilt in the execution of Jesus. He states:

In his book...the American writer Joel Carmichael interprets Jesus as a rebel against Rome, and his band of disciples as a group of resistance fighters. This is a profound misunderstanding even though the author does refer to the methods of modern scholarship. It is quite clear that questions of the power of the state are given only incidental attention in Jesus' preaching. Even the saying about taxes paid to Caesar and about the tribute money subordinates the political question to the expectation of the kingdom of God. But the entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple do represent an open attack on the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people. It is the Jewish authorities who are responsible for Jesus' arrest, and their supreme council which interrogates the accused and sentences him to death on the charge of blasphemy. Jesus has to be handed over to the governor for the sentence to be ratified and executed. At the proceedings before Pontius Pilate the charge is one of political sedition....Pilate pronounces the death sentence from the judgment-seat and has it carried out by Roman soldiers.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷Flusser, p. 84.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 84-85.

¹⁴⁹Joseph Vogt, "Augustus and Tiberius," Jesus In His Time, ed. Hans Jurgen Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 8.

The "Q" hypothesis and the radical Jesus theory are only two of the early hypotheses being refuted into extinction today. As increased confidence is placed in the Biblical documents, the sensational theories that once cluttered the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (reviving again in our own generation) should decrease. In fact, there are signs that those who seriously pursue the information available today are likely to be surprised at the historicity and cohesion of the Gospel documents. One also finds that in current research most of the historians are confident that Jesus existed and that their confidence could stand (if it had to) on Biblical sources alone.

The importance of these discoveries to research of the historical Jesus lies in the fact that the majority of these texts belong to a pre-Christian era and all originated in Palestine. Some scholars were at first skeptical about the early date of the texts, but today only Solomon Zeitlin of the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning in Philadelphia continues to doubt it. Palaeography has dated the texts from 150 B.C. to 70 A.D. The palaeographical evidence also suggests that the Qoran community was founded approximately 150 to 100 B.C. The radio-carbon analysis of the cloth with the manuscripts has been given the date 20 B.C. (plus or minus two hundred years). Meanwhile, the ruins at Khirbet Qoran have yielded pottery and coins that limit the main occupation of this area by the wilderness sect from 135 B.C. to 68 A.D.

CHAPTER V

DEAD SEA SCROLLS, BACKGROUND STUDIES AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The Discovery: The Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls are by far the most important archaeological discoveries in the twentieth century. The first scrolls were discovered in a cave near Khirbet Qumran, eight miles south of Jericho, in 1947. In subsequent years, excavations have produced many additional discoveries from the Judaeian wilderness.

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¹⁵⁰Yamauchi, p. 129.

Though there is disagreement as to how boldly the Dead Sea Scrolls should be used in pursuing the Gospel narratives, it is generally conceded that the texts are important as tools for discerning that the Gospels are contemporaneous with the first-century milieu.¹⁵¹ Ethelbert Stauffer notes:

The misconception that the Palestinian Jews of the New Testament era were an unilliterate people who possessed, beyond the Old Testament, almost nothing but "oral tradition" has now been once and for all demolished, thanks to the discovery of the library in the caves at the Dead Sea.¹⁵²

The widening knowledge of the contemporaries of Jesus also helps one gain an appreciation of the context in which he lived.

However, one must beware of drawing parallels between the wilderness community at Qumran and Jesus. Since Ernest Renan in 1863 declared that Christianity was only Essenism on a large scale, scholars have endeavored to prove that Jesus (or at least John the Baptist) was an Essene.¹⁵³ German scholarship continues to insist on the intimate connection of Jesus with the Qumran community because of his "radical ethics," but most recent scholarship has endeavored to show the sharp contrasts between Jesus and Qumran.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹McArthur, p. 12. Some scholars, such as Ethelbert Stauffer, use the Dead Sea Scrolls as strong authenticating evidence to discern the Gospel narratives while others, such as Joachim Jeremias, maintain that one must be cautious in using non-canonical material to demonstrate Gospel statements.

¹⁵²Ethelbert Stauffer, Jesus and the Wilderness Community at Qumran, trans. Hans Spalteholz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 4-5.

¹⁵³Charles F. Pfeiffer, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), p. 97.

¹⁵⁴Stauffer, pp. 9-10.

The current scholarship has reacted to the talks given by the young orientalist, John M. Allegro, over the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the "shock" literature which was subsequently published. Allegro (the same man who has written The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross) in 1956 foolishly broke the confidence of his colleagues on the Dead Sea Scrolls editing team. He interpreted debatable fragments as stating that the Teacher of Righteousness, mentioned as an important figure in the early life of the Qumran community, was crucified. He then impressed the listening audience that the parallel was certainly linked with the life of Jesus. His colleagues were outraged, and the laymen were disillusioned. Ethelbert Stauffer says of this broadcast:

He focused particularly on a number of texts, passages, or fragments which are extremely difficult to read and have been much debated ever since the work of Dupont-Sommer. These passages may suggest that the Teacher of Righteousness, a key figure in the early life of the Wilderness movement, was crucified. This, of course, created a tremendous stir among the laymen who do not know that at least two thousand people were crucified in the vicinity of Jerusalem during the life-span of Jesus alone. The Qumran movement was a martyr movement. Even if the Teacher of Righteousness actually died on the cross, he was just one martyr figure among many who were thus executed at this time....¹⁵⁵

The resulting literature was nearly as disillusioning. Hugh J. Schonfield wrote in 1957: "The fact that the organization of the early Christian community exhibits many points of resemblance to that of the Essenes...lends colour to the view that they were reckoned as being at least on the fringe of Christianity and numbered among the Saints, the Elect, and the Poor inheritors of the Kingdom."¹⁵⁶ His book,

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Hugh J. Schonfield, Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1957), p. 164.

Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls, gave its readers the direct impression that Jesus not only spent time with the Essene cult but that he also copied and then modified their doctrine. Charles Francis Potter also supported this theory in 1958 when he published The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed. He proclaimed:

Enough of the rolled leather and copper cylinders, and the tens of thousands of fragments of hundreds of manuscripts, have been deciphered and translated for the scholars and theologians to know, even if the American lay public does not, that the proven Mother of Christianity was the splinter Jewish sect sometimes called Essenes.¹⁵⁷

Such blatant statements propelled the book into a second publication, but did not correspond to the actual historical investigation. Instead of "knowing" that the "proven Mother of Christianity was the splinter Jewish sect...called Essenes,"¹⁵⁸ scholars were realizing the parallels were not striking and the differences were quite significant.

¹⁵⁷Charles Francis Potter, The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1958), p. 12. It is interesting that the covers of these "shock" publications lure and ultimately mislead the public and some lecturers. They cast doubt and try to pass off unproven hypotheses as scholarly research. The cover of this book reads:

For centuries Christian students of the Bible have wondered where Jesus was and what he did during the so-called "eighteen silent years" between the ages twelve and thirty.

The amazing and dramatic scrolls of the great Essene library found in cave after cave near the Dead Sea have given us the answer at last.

That during those "lost years" Jesus was a student at this Essene school is becoming increasingly apparent. Scholars are gradually admitting the parallels between his doctrines and vocabulary and those of the Essenes and their "Teacher of Righteousness," who was evidently executed nearly a century before the birth of Jesus. It is to his title and authority that Jesus probably succeeded.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

G. R. Driver in his book, The Judaean Scrolls, is typical of the scholar of the last decade in his conclusion. He asserts:

If the Scrolls are regarded as approximately contemporary with the New Testament, the probability that the authors of these two collections of Jewish works influenced one another is necessarily great; in fact, that two religious groups should live for a considerable time within a few miles of each other without affecting one another would be a cause for surprise; but that two groups, whose doctrines diverged so widely as did those of the Covenanters and Christians, should have had a common origin or should have borrowed anything essential from one another would be equally surprising.¹⁵⁹

Similarities between the wilderness community and Jesus' teaching, such as godliness and humility, can be accounted for by their common heritage from the Old Testament Scriptures.¹⁶⁰ Agreement in word forms previously not attested by secular documents has testified to the fact that New Testament documents are at home in the milieu of the first century. Expressions, such as "poor in spirit" and "men with whom God is well pleased" are found in documents of both groups.¹⁶¹

There are many differences, however, that scholars are pointing out with increasing enthusiasm. The main difference that researchers are apt to first point out is the attitude toward the Mosaic Law. Herbert Braun, Professor of New Testament at the University of Mainz, explains:

Many more differences of detail could be mentioned. But the essential difference is this: the Qumran community did practice the Old Testament law in all its rigour, but they did not see that

¹⁵⁹G. R. Driver, The Judaean Scrolls (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1965), p. 583.

¹⁶⁰Pfeiffer, p. 100.

¹⁶¹Herbert Braun, "The Qumran Community," Jesus In His Time, p. 73.

in this way man is inevitably lost again in self-glory. The God of Qumran helps the lost but then puts them on the path of the law where the pious man may be assured of salvation through meticulous obedience. The New Testament believes that a demand of this sort does not help the utterly lost. He can be helped only by the experience of love: this is how men are led to do what is right. In the Qumran documents there is nothing of the expansive outlook of Jesus, the unconditional friend of tax-gatherers and sinners, with whom you learn joyful and free obedience.¹⁶²

Recently, it has been ascertained that the Qumran community sometimes assumed the responsibility to go beyond the Law. "The Temple Scroll" acquired by Israel in 1967 gives evidence of this. Edwin Yamauchi explains that this scroll is the longest from Qumran to date (twenty-eight feet in length) and adds:

The scroll which is yet to be published, deals with four subjects: 1) religious rules concerning ritual cleanness; 2) sacrifices and offerings; 3) statutes of the king and the army; and 4) a detailed description of the temple. One of the unique features is that, according to Yadin [Yigael Yadin is the man who made the announcement of the acquisition and has studied the scroll], the author seems to pass off the scroll as a divine decree from God. In matters of cleanness and uncleanness the new scroll takes a more stringent position than the Pharisaic Mishnah. The scroll gives detailed instructions as to the building of the temple, even including directions for the building of public toilets north of the temple area. As the details of the projected temple do not accord with those of Herod's temple, this is further evidence that the Sect had rejected the Jerusalem sanctuary.¹⁶³

The Qumran Sect continually criticized the Jerusalem priesthood and the Temple in its documents. One of the main reasons was that the Qumran Sect believed a Zadokite high priest had to reign in Jerusalem, and none had done so since 175 B.C. Because of this oversight, they believed the city of Jerusalem, the priesthood and the Temple to be hopelessly defiled. They swore that they would not enter the sanctuary at

¹⁶²Ibid., pp. 73-74.

¹⁶³Yamauchi, p. 133.

Jerusalem or sacrificed there in their Covenant Oath. This attitude is extremely different from Jesus' attitude. He customarily entered the Temple and participated in the festivals (an example is his participation in the festival of dedication in John 10:22-23).¹⁶⁴

Jesus was compassionate toward the needy, while the Qumran sect excluded the sick and deformed from their community.¹⁶⁵ The Qumran sect vowed hatred toward its enemies, while Jesus called for love toward enemies and prayer for persecutors (Matthew 5:44).¹⁶⁶ Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness was a confessed sinner, suffered in order to be purified from his sin and was not considered a messiah or a redeemer. Jesus was the exact opposite.¹⁶⁷ The Qumran Sect expected two messiahs (a priestly and a kingly messiah) while Jesus claimed to be the only messiah from God.¹⁶⁸ The Qumran Sect was militaristic while Jesus was not.¹⁶⁹ These differences and others are stressed by the

¹⁶⁴Stauffer, pp. 18-19.

¹⁶⁵A. Dupont-Sommer, The Essene Writings from Qumran (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 107-108.

¹⁶⁶New American Standard Bible, Matthew 5:44. It is an interesting note that some scholars believe that Jesus was referring to the Qumran Sect when he prefaced his statement in Matthew 5:44 with the words in Matthew 5:43: "You have heard [*italics inserted for emphasis*] that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

¹⁶⁷William H. Brownlee, The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 143-151.

¹⁶⁸Yamauchi, pp. 141-142.

¹⁶⁹Stauffer, pp. 14-15. The militaristic teachings of the Qumran Sect are totally incompatible with the teachings of Jesus. Jesus does not even defend himself when he is taken by the soldiers of the chief priests and elders. In contrast to the Qumran Sect he tells his disciple to put away his sword (Matthew 26:47ff.)

modern scholar to overcome the sensationalism engendered by the rash claims connecting Jesus and Essenism.

It is also enlightening that current scholarship is debating whether the Qumran Sect is actually an Essene community. Stauffer notes:

The Qumran texts are, quite evidently, very close in spirit to the thought world of the Essenes. However, to designate the inhabitants of Qumran simply as Essenes strikes me, and many others, as quite unwarranted. There is a relation, but, in our opinion, not exactly an identity. Rather the Essenes are most likely a late offshoot of the group at Qumran.¹⁷⁰

The Dead Sea Scrolls cannot tell the historian if Jesus existed or not. Neither do they give any "secret" information about Jesus' life, nor do they demonstrate dramatic parallels between Christianity and the wilderness community at Qumran. They do reflect the era in which Jesus lived and can help the historian delineate the original milieu. G. R. Driver portrays accurately the current perspective on the relationship between Christianity and the wilderness sect. He explains that "they were but two of the numerous religious and political groups which grew up in the small state of Palestine in the 1st century A.D., the most important period in human history, and the discovery of a collection of contemporary documents has suddenly thrown a flood of light on one such group whose very existence had not even been suspected."¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷¹Driver, pp. 583-584.

The Framework: The Background Studies

Current study of the historical Jesus has been enhanced by a clearer understanding of the period in which Jesus lived. Scholars are presently researching many facets of first century Palestine.

It has been proposed that Jesus spoke Galilean Aramaic. A study is currently progressing to discover the original Aramaic utterances of Jesus that underlie the Greek translation.¹⁷² Galilee and Judea have been scrutinized themselves in recent scholarship to discern the particular problems Rome had in administrating these areas and the various political and religious groups that had prospered there. For example, William Reuben Farmer has pioneered significant research into a few of these groups in his book, Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus, and has built a foundation for recent innovative scholarship to build upon. His emphasis on the Jewish nationalism of the first century period helps interpret the environment in which Jesus lived.¹⁷³

Dieter Nörr, Professor of Roman Law at the University of Münster, has currently been researching the legal background of the Gospels and relating his findings to their historicity. He concludes in his article, "Problems of Legal History in the Gospels:"

We arrive then at the following conclusion. Essentially it is Jewish law which provides the background to the Gospels. From this in turn we can conclude that, in the Palestinian world from which the material of the Gospels may ultimately have originated, Jewish law was basically the law of the land despite Hellenistic influen-

¹⁷²Jeremias, pp. 16-21.

¹⁷³Farmer, pp. 203-204. He proposes that the Maccabees were actually the closest group to be accurately termed the historical counterparts of the Jewish nationalists of the Roman period.

ces and Roman occupation. This plainly has implications for the historicity of the Gospels as well as for the cultural background to the ministry of Jesus.¹⁷⁴

These implications, along with others raised by various background studies, must be correlated and considered by the historian in his attempt to reconstruct the environment of the historical Jesus. The modern historian is gathering data from divergent fields in order to gain a well-rounded insight into the historical Jesus. His task is awesome---demanding his complete devotion. The benefits, however, that he is reaping are noticeable in the scholarship of the last few years.

Though background studies cannot prove the existence of the historical Jesus, they nevertheless serve as controls on subjectivity and have enhanced interpretation of Scripture as well as the era in which Jesus lived. The historian will continue to find well-researched data on numerous ramifications of first century Palestine in the years to come.

¹⁷⁴Dieter Nörr, "Problems of Legal History in the Gospels," Jesus In His Time, p. 123.

CONCLUSION

Current research into the historical Jesus is both complex and diverse; perplexing and rewarding. Critics who believed that they had arrived at "scientific" truth concerning Jesus are conspicuously insecure today. Source material they had tossed aside as irrelevant is once again at the forefront of scholarly investigation. Furthermore, the indecision and tension within the academic sphere has accentuated the remarkable resilience of the historical Jesus. The biblical scholar realizes that his research will no more destroy Jesus Christ than the astronomer's studies will destroy the stars.

Psalm 53 begins: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." According to the current perspective on source material, the historian may justly affirm: "The fool hath said in his lecture, There was no Jesus Christ!"

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