

BULLETIN SEMINARY EXTENSION DEPARTMENT

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BIBLE CRITICISM AND YOU

What are Bible critics trying to do, and where will they stop? These questions disturb not a few honest Christian leaders. Before we take them up, let us state in a few words an obvious truth: One may become a successful pastor, denominational leader and soul winner without the knowledge of biblical criticism. Again one who has much knowledge about biblical criticism could do incalculable harm by stating some basic facts in criticism from the pulpit; for preaching is not designed to confuse, upset, and disturb one's faith. To misuse even basic biblical criticism would have this effect. And indeed this study does not expect to become an integral part of preaching.

In general, criticism is a process of asking questions about the Bible and exploring possible answers. When these questions seek to invade the area of date, author, and sources it is called higher criticism. There are many questions relative to these areas that a close study of the Bible would provoke. Here one does not accept what he has always heard as the final answer. For example, why would one question Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch? There are a number of questions. How did Moses relate his own death if he wrote it? Anyone who seeks these answers will be dealing with higher criticism.

There are over 8,000 manuscripts of the New Testament or some portion of it. Which one shall we follow? Those who scoff at any such problem would probably say it doesn't matter. But

one omits Mark 16:9-25 and another doesn't; still another has a separate ending. Does it matter? There are some with a strange reading about Joseph begetting Jesus of Mary the virgin. Shall we seek to discover whether it is an older reading than the one that speaks of "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus"? Still another omits John 7:53-8:11; and another places it in Luke 21:38. If we ask which is the oldest manuscript we will seek the answer through textual criticism.

The tools and the time, with which to deal with these questions, are not given to all, although there are many capable. Therefore, would it not be a manifestation of Christian patience and kindness to be fair with those who take the time to learn how to search for answers? Unfortunately, a few critics are irreverent men, but most are reverent and devout men of faith. No spirit is so blatantly unfair as when directed toward a good man who is seeking to find solutions for many of these problems.

There is no secret to the methods and the techniques by which a Bible critic works. The books are available to all. Why not become an astute student of criticism? Then you could evaluate both the critic and his work. Meanwhile, nothing would be lost, and much gained, if we should be tolerant of those who are dealing with problems unfamiliar to the average Christian. This is honest and fair.

STATISTICAL REPORT

Correspondence students	1,710
Extension students	3,192

SOMETHING NEW

The Seminary Extension Department will have a workshop on Extension Education in Carbondale, Illinois beginning Monday noon, April 9 and continuing through noon, April 10. This is our first attempt. The college extension directors have promoted several.

Dr. Gaines S. Dobbins, Dean School of Religious Education, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will speak four times to the group dealing with "Aims in Adult Education," "Adult Learning," "Adult Teaching," and "Opportunities in Adult Education."

Dr. Noel M. Taylor, Dr. Lee Gallman, Rev. W. A. Whitten, and Rev. Ray K. Hodge will lead conferences on publicity, teaching, records, and enlistment. Directors, teachers, registrars, treasurers, and advisory committees are invited to attend.

WHAT IS HAPPENING

Most of us read the headlines in our daily newspapers and listen, even if briefly, to a favorite news commentator. In this manner we convince ourselves that we are "keeping abreast of the times." This is well and good. How about what is happening in our world of religion and church life? Would we consent to read only those articles in our dailies that deal with local interests? Would we be content to read only those editorials that relate to the rise in local sales and property taxes? What about the larger circle of our world? Not only do we take notice of events of significant interest, but also in people who are outstanding.

We Baptists read our own papers and periodicals so much that we often do not know what is going on beyond our constructed interest centers. In a world community such as ours is becoming this should not continue. We must lift our horizons so that those events that touch the lives of other Christians impress us also.

The goals set up by other Christian bodies naturally affect us. Their hopes and aspirations should be understood by us. I would commend the reading of a number of periodicals from other

church groups to any who would become informed on church life outside our circle.

SOME LIMITATIONS

What can be done in and through the Seminary Extension Department, we want to do. The need among Southern Baptists is great and varied. We cannot hope to meet every situation and every need with one type of education. We can develop many patterns within certain limitations, but we cannot revolutionize theological education and keep it standard.

Our greatest handicap is that of meeting the desire for credit. Some have suggested the seminaries might be jealous for their personal touch with students and thereby refuse to grant credits. But this is not the case at all. The whole field of theological education is involved. Our seminaries must be accredited, or Baptist colleges could not use seminary graduates as Bible teachers.

Our college students would be taught by graduates of the divinity schools if the seminaries did not send out Bible teachers that could be accepted. Of course, many of the divinity schools are acceptable, but others are not, insofar as Baptists are concerned.

Standard seminaries must therefore, do standard work. Degree credits from an agency of the seminary which had no standing would not be worthy of our position as a thinking people. Although we cannot offer degree credit, we can help any pastor or interested student as far as he is willing to go, and as deep into various fields as he is capable of delving.

DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATE IN REVIVALS

Dr. Lee Gallman, director and Rev. Ray Hodge, associate will be in revivals in April. The director will be in Trenton, Missouri at the First Baptist Church with Dr. Wayne Rosecrans. Brother Hodge will be at the First Baptist Church, Gibsonville, North Carolina, April 16-22.
