

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

"SCRIPTURE SAYS"

by ERIC F. F. BISHOP

BY this time Mr. Bishop's short studies in Bible words and phrases need no introduction in THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY. He has always something fresh and thought-provoking to say, arising from his long practice of using the Land as a commentary on the Book. We note, by the way, the excellent precedent Dr. Graham has for his repeated "The Bible says"!

"It is generally observed that Jesus, who answered all three temptations with quotations from the *Deuteronomium*, seems to have devoted his time especially to the study of this work during his stay in the desert."¹ So writes the Danish scholar B. Hjerl-Hansen in the *Revue de Qumran* for July, 1959.

"*Scripture says.*" Such is the translation of γέγραπται in the New English Bible, in the narrative of the Temptation in Matthew and Luke. What does it mean in the context of the traditional site of the great scene? One of the latest of the "Guides to the Holy Land" refers to the "small hill called Khirbet Qumrān, which today is a household word the world over on account of the manuscripts of the Bible discovered in the caves nearby".² One of the most prolific, known as Cave IV, yielded, among other treasures, the fragments of 14 copies of the book of Deuteronomy. Dr. F. M. Cross remarks that Deuteronomy was one of the most popular books amongst the sectarians.³ May we not go further and suggest that these "popular books" were transcribed not just for the edification of the Qumrāni residents but for a wider public whom they wished to influence over the coming of the prophet like Moses?⁴ In addition the provision of the copies of the Scriptures would be one source of community income.

It is interesting, if not significant, that in the Gospel accounts of our Lord's Temptation, He obviously had in His mind words from Deuteronomy, applicable to the various temptations, no matter the slight differences in Matthew and Luke. Moreover, Jebel

¹ B. Hjerl-Hansen, "Did Christ Know the Qumran Sect?" *Revue de Qumran* i. 4 (July, 1959), p. 500.

² Eugene Hoade, O.F.M., *Guide to the Holy Land*, 453 ff.

³ F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 34.

⁴ Deuteronomy 18: 15.

Quruntul⁵—Quarantāna—is only some ten miles as the crow flies from Qumrān and not much further on foot. Whether or not the Lord had any scrolls with Him in the traditional cave or wherever He was in the “wilderness” we may never be able to prove; but for the period of forty days it is reasonable to think that He would (naturally) have taken with Him some Old Testament Scripture—and the implication in the narrative is that it would most likely have been Deuteronomy.

The quotations are from the earlier chapters—material connected with the *Shema'a*—two comparatively close together.⁶ Might it be that on the way from Bethany-beyond-Jordan to Quarantāna He “passed through Jericho” and availed Himself of the procuring a copy, in all probability transcribed in the Qumrāni settlement? Having a copy by Him, as He thought on the ministry ahead, there flashed time and again across His memory relevant passages of the Deuteronomy He had been conning. This would at least give more point to the thrice-repeated “it is written”—“Scripture says”. After all, in the narrative as it stands the phrase adds but little. Contained in the word may lie the significance of something predestined, but that meaning is hardly in the context here.⁷ There was the quotation He wanted before His eyes, even if He had been familiar with it from Nazareth days. The same “Scripture says” is true of the quotation from the Psalter,⁸ another book popular with the sectarians (Cave IV has given the archaeologists ten copies).

There can be no proof either that the Lord was ever in Qumrān; but there is little doubt about His knowing of the settlement. He may even have met some of the Qumrānis and known about their industry and thought of them too when He availed Himself of their labour of love when facing the momentous issues before Him.

For facing these issues He might just as well have called to mind passages in the Psalms which come to much the same thing, or the great notes of Semitic monotheism that echo through Isaiah, quite

⁵ Quruntul being the Arabic corruption. The traditional “cave” of the Temptation is only part way up, and the summit is another half hour’s walk.

⁶ Deuteronomy 8: 3; 6: 16; 6: 13.

⁷ The Arabic *maktūb* is certainly capable of this implication besides meaning an ordinary letter. Cf. the perfect passive participle in Matthew 26: 24.

⁸ Psalm 91: 11, 12.

as didactic and prophetic as Deuteronomy. The Matthaean use of γέγραπται may be allowed to support this suggestion in some of the other occurrences. "Scripture says, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer' ".⁹ And for the verse beloved of the Qumrānis and the Baptist, "Scripture says:

Here is my herald, whom I send on ahead of you,

And he will prepare your way before you",¹⁰

Jesus was familiar with the books the Qumrānis helped to popularize.

Redhill, Surrey.

⁹ Isaiah 56: 7, quoted in Matthew 21: 13.

¹⁰ Malachi 3: 1, quoted in Matthew 11: 10; cf. Mark 1: 2, where it is taken along with Isaiah 40: 3 as "written in Isaiah the prophet".