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THE SCRIPTURAL METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY

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THERE are certain things essential to the truly scriptural study of the Bible which need to be emphasized today in view of the insistent claims which are so often made by the advocates of the so-called "modern" or "critical" method of Bible study.

The first of these is the *unity* and *harmony* of the Bible. This characteristic has impressed believing scholars in all ages as a signal proof of its divine origin. The fact that so many different writers, so widely separated in time, wrote a collection of many books which are in the truest sense one book, the Bible, is a strong evidence of its unique inspiration. Yet one of the outstanding characteristics of the "modern" method is the way in which it exhibits, and the importance which it attaches to, the alleged disharmonies of the Bible. We cannot read beyond the first chapter of Genesis without being confronted with this cardinal doctrine of the critics; for the "second" account of creation (Gen. ii) contradicts, we are told, the "first." And this is but a sample. We have, they tell us, two accounts of the Creation and the Flood; three accounts of the Plagues and of the Crossing of the Red Sea; four of the Crossing of the Jordan. Furthermore, these accounts disagree and contradict one another. The theoretical Jehovist differs from the hypothetical Elohist; and the alleged Priestly writer contradicts them both. Judges discredits the account of the Conquest given in Joshua; Chronicles is proved unreliable by Samuel-Kings. The "great" prophets are represented as the opponents of the priests and as the more or less uncompromising foes of the ritual sacrifice. Micah and Zechariah are divided between at least two authors, Isaiah is given to three; and many of these documents are declared to be composite and to have been edited, or revised, by a later compiler or "redactor." All this partitioning and analyzing is made necessary, it is argued, by *differences* in language, style, ideas and manner of presentation, differences which not seldom amount to contradictions. The result is that for the "modern" student the Bible, especially the O.T., is characterized not by harmony and unity, but by discord and contradiction. How disastrous this is should be apparent to everyone, for nothing is more certain to discredit a book and destroy its influence with thinking people than to find that it does not con-

- 27 relate to God as *My Father*;
- 25 relate to His *second coming*;
- 19 relate to His *ascension* and final *return* in glory as *Judge*;
- 18 relate to His claim as *the supreme motive*;
- 16 relate to His *death as redemptive* and by the will of God;
- 9 relate to the peculiar *unity* of Himself with God;
- 8 relate to His moral and religious *authority*;
- 8 relate to commending *faith* in Himself;
- 6 relate to His prediction of His *resurrection*;
- 6 relate to His promise to be *supernaturally present* with His followers during His bodily absence;
- 5 relate to His acceptance of the title *Son of God*;
- 5 relate to His final *authority as Judge*;
- 5 relate to His *authority over nature*;
- 2 relate to His claim as Master.

The contrast between Jesus' self-consciousness expressed in these claims and the self-effacement expressed by those outstanding men, the Jewish prophets, is startling: the prophets were overawed by the awful majesty of Jehovah; Jesus manifests at once the humility and the familiarity of his stupendous Sonship.

The contrasts in the historic Christ, however, are unified into a consistent character by His supernatural nature. Everywhere, both in deeds and in consciousness, He is supernatural: supernatural in His stainless life, in His ethical intuitions, in His power over nature and in the use of that mastery, in His triumph over death, in His spiritual elevation. This is the Jesus of history, the mystery of whose unique character no *a priori* naturalistic theory can solve.

V.D.

VIRGIN MEANS VIRGIN

Summary of an article by Professor Robert Dick Wilson in "The Princeton Theological Review" for April, 1926.

RECENTLY it has been asserted that the word "virgin" in Isaiah vii. 14—cited in Matthew i. 23—may mean a young married woman. Probably the foremost authority on such a question—a Semitic scholar internationally known, said to possess a working knowledge of forty-five different languages and dialects—has made his usual careful and exhaustive study of this matter. Naturally, his findings are detailed and technical—involving studies in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Samaritan, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Coptic, Assyrio-Babylonian, and kindred languages.

He first takes up the various version renderings of the original Hebrew word there used for "virgin," and finds no evidence to show that 'alma

(the Hebrew word) ever meant or was so translated that it might mean "a young married woman."

Next, he investigates the *root* meaning of this word in the Semitic languages, and finds its derivatives applied, for example, to the child Miriam when she came to watch the boy Moses in the ark among the bulrushes; to the unmarried Rebecca; to Esther before she was married to Xerxes, and to the seven maidens who waited on her.

Then, this scholar examines the meaning and use of two other related words used in Hebrew and in the Semitic languages, and finds that in both the masculine and feminine forms the reference is uniformly to unmarried persons, "chaste ones," including also boys and girls.

The scientific conclusions are expressed in twelve statements. Abbreviated, we may note that (a) 'alma never has the meaning of "young married woman" elsewhere in the Old Testament, so that it is entirely illogical to assume that its meaning is different in Isaiah vii. 14; (b) in the Syriac version of the Old Testament, made by Jews—and *that* in the first century after Christ—'alma is rendered by a word which is the unqualified and specific word for "virgin"; (c) both the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament) made 200 B.C., and over, and the Vulgate (Latin version) made about A.D. 400, both render the Hebrew word by the unquestioned equivalents for "virgin"; (d) the word used in Isaiah vii. 14 by the Jewish "Targum" is used as the equivalent of *four* different words (including 'alma), none of which ever means "young married woman"; further, the same word is used of Rebecca, when she came to the well and met Eliezar, of Miriam when set to watch the infant Moses, of the four hundred virgins of Jabesh-Gilead, etc.

Without following further the evidential conclusions, we quote finally: "None of the ancient languages or versions give any evidence to show that 'alma ever meant 'young married woman'." "The language itself is not the difficulty. The great and only difficulty lies in disbelief in predictive prophecy and in the almighty power of God; or in the desire to throw discredit upon the divine Sonship of Jesus." Even in the Koran the angel is represented as replying to Mary's incredulity—"Thus God creates what he pleaseth. When He decrees a matter He only says BE, and it is."

V.D.

NOTES AND NOTICES

BRANCHES AND CHAPTERS

JUST a word of explanation. When an entire student body or association, as of a thoroughly evangelical seminary or accredited Bible school, votes approval and adoption of the aim and platform of the League, applies for membership and is accepted by it, such body of students con-