

Messenger and Visitor

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The Polychrome Bible.

For several years past a number of eminent Biblical scholars in Europe and America have been engaged in preparing a revised Hebrew text of the Old Testament, arranged in colors so as to represent the theories of modern critical scholarship respecting the composite character of the several books. It is, however, a fact of more popular interest that the enterprise in which these scholars are engaged embraces an English translation of these Scriptures, which is now being issued in parts, the Books of Judges, Psalms and Isaiah having already appeared.

The originator of this enterprise and the supervisor of the work is Dr. Paul Haupt, of Johns Hopkins University, who is assisted by Dr. H. H. Furness, of Philadelphia. Among the Biblical scholars who are associated with them in the work are Drs. Driver and Cheyne, of Oxford, George Adam Smith, of Glasgow, C. H. Cornill, of Königsberg, J. Wellhausen, of Göttingen, George F. Moore, of Andover, W. H. Ward, of the N. Y. "Independent," C. H. Toy, of Harvard University, E. L. Curtis, of Yale and W. R. Harper, of Chicago University, besides many other men of distinction in the world of scholarship.

The translation, it should be said, is not a revision of the authorized or other extant translations, but a new translation of the Hebrew text into modern English, the aim being not so much to give a literal rendering as to convey the full meaning of the original and to preserve its form and character as prose or poetical composition. A system of critical marks are printed in connection with the text to indicate to the reader the reasons for omissions and other departures from the ordinary text. One peculiarity of the translation is that the name for God, which in our authorized version and the Canterbury revision is generally translated THE LORD and sometimes Jehovah, is left untranslated, the name being indicated by the letters JHVH, the English equivalents of the Hebrew consonants in the word.

A remarkable feature of the work is that which gives it its name—The Polychrome Bible. The word polychrome means many-colored and the peculiarity of the book in this respect is very striking to the eye. The colors of the spectrum have been pretty well exhausted by the translators and editors in the endeavor to represent to the reader at a glance the results, or rather the theories, of the higher criticism as applied to the Old Testament Scriptures. It is found necessary to distinguish seven or eight different writers in the Book of Judges, and nearly as many in the Book of Isaiah. The various supposed sources of this composite authorship are indicated by the different colors of the background upon which the text is printed. To take the Book of Judges as an illustration,—the higher critics are accustomed to indicate six of the writers whose work they suppose they distinguish by the symbols J, E, E2, JE, RJE, and D. In the Polychrome Bible these sources are indicated as follows: J by a white ground, E by dark blue, E2 by light blue, JE by dark purple, RJE by light purple and D by green. Then, as there are supposed to be still two (post-exilic) redactors or editors, the contributions of one of these are indicated by a yellow ground and those of other by italics.

It is a very natural question to ask what will be the value of this remarkable attempt to place in the hands of English readers generally what is claimed to be the latest results of the most advanced modern scholarship as applied to the writings of the Old

Testament, for the publishers in their prospectus have put forth the modest claim that the Polychrome Bible "will have the unique distinction of representing the united Biblical scholarship of the world." It is to be said that in its present form at any rate the work is not likely to circulate widely, since its price will prevent its obtaining many purchasers. Scholarly men will doubtless find it interesting and more or less instructive to compare the translations given in the Polychrome with the well-known versions and with the original Scriptures. The polychrome feature of the work will also be a matter of curious interest, since it sets before the reader in a very definite and striking way the remarkable claims of the higher criticism. It does not appear to us, however, that the thoughtful reader is likely to be more disposed to accept the theories of the critics after having been made to perceive so clearly what they involve. We have no disposition to deny a certain legitimate field to criticism founded upon internal evidence. If distinguished scholars tell us that they find in certain Scriptures evidence of composite authorship, we feel that their opinions should command our respect, though the Scripture may have been believed on traditional authority to have come from a single hand. But when these scholars assure us that they are able, not only to discern evidence of a composite authorship, but to distinguish clearly many different writers, mapping out the portions contributed by each in red and green and blue and purple, we begin to have a suspicion that much learning has made these wise men mad. Ridicule has been heaped upon simple-minded people who have believed that the translators of the Septuagint, and of our authorized English version were inspired as well as the original writers, but surely if any men ever required inspiration for their task, it is the translators and editors of the Polychrome Bible. Most readers, we fancy, will find it somewhat easier to believe that God could inspire one man to write the whole Book of Isaiah than to believe that a modern critic, by natural sagacity and learning, merely, can discover in Isaiah a half dozen or more writers and so map out the book that the reader shall be able at a glance to distinguish the contributions of each one from the rest. Those who can accept this new Bible for all that it claims to be, will hardly be troubled with the story of the sun standing still, or of Jonah and the whale, or any other recorded wonder of the olden time which has been wont to tax the credulity of men, for this polychrome miracle of the critics will stand forth in such stupendous proportions that the acceptance of all others will seem easy.

Indomitable Faith.

In the passage which has been selected as the Bible lesson in the International series for next Sunday, there are exceptional features which arrest attention. Jesus is found in the Phœnician country in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, and it is the only time during his ministry that we hear of his passing beyond the bounds of Palestine. His mission was first to the chosen people and through them to the world. He was not indeed Son of David only. He was Son of Man and his mission was world wide in its purpose. He taught that God loved the world, and that the outgoing of the Father's love in the gift of his Well-beloved meant the world's salvation. To suppose that the thoughts of Jesus did not extend beyond the people of Israel and that his compassion did not go out to men as men, would be to do violence to our conception of him as Son of Man and Son of God. His pitying love responded to the cry of every soul in distress. He was come to be the world's Light and the world's Saviour, his mission was to all mankind. But Jesus recognized that his mission to the world was to be accomplished by confining his personal ministry within comparatively narrow limits. It was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that he had been sent. Therefore he did not go with his Gospel of Kingdom to the Gentile countries which lay adjacent to Palestine. His presence in Phœnicia at this time was due probably to his desire to avoid enemies whose purpose to destroy him had become clearly manifest, and also perhaps to obtain rest and to renew his strength in view of the tremendous physical and spiritual strain which he was to endure before the final hour should come. His treatment of the Canaanitish woman, so strongly in contrast to his usual prompt response to

the cry of distress, is doubtless to be explained partly at least on the same grounds. It was not that Jesus did not care for the woman and her trouble. But there were thousands of others all around no doubt who needed help as well as she. To perform one miracle would be to make seclusion and rest impossible, and to enter upon work with these Phœnician people would absorb time and strength which were needed for the mission that he must accomplish in Galilee and in Judea. But further, it is to be considered that these heathen people were incapable for the most of that intelligent faith which many of the Jews were able to exercise in Jesus as the Messiah. Some of the Phœnicians might have faith enough to be healed of their physical ills, but it was to men's spiritual needs that Jesus especially addressed himself. The fields of Israel were white to the harvest. There he must labor and there also he must die and give his life, a ransom for the world.

There is a practical lesson in this example of our Lord which we ought not to miss. There are some excellent people who do less than they might do by undertaking to do too much. The fact that a certain line of work is religious or philanthropic in purpose and promises excellent results, may not be a sufficient reason why one shall undertake it. Certainly it is not, if one has to neglect a more important work and a pressing duty for that purpose. When a woman neglects her family for the sake of doing service in philanthropic enterprises, or when a minister neglects his study of divine truth and the spiritual interests of his congregation for the sake of putting his strength into enterprise which, though perhaps good in themselves, form no necessary part of a minister's work, the widening of the field of effort, it is pretty certain, will not be attended by a corresponding increase in the value of results.

The woman of the lesson affords a striking illustration of the truth of that saying of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." She did not resent the apparent lack of sympathy and kindness in the Lord's long delayed answer to her petition, she had nothing to say against the children—and she did not know perhaps that many of them were ready to wound the gracious hand that was outstretched to help and to save them; she was ready to accept the Lord's parable in its application to herself and take her place among the house-dogs,—only let her have a house-dog's portion. For "the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' tables," and (so her argument implies) if a man's love for his children does not forbid him having some thought for his dog, surely the God of Israel will not be wholly deaf to the prayer of a Phœnician woman in her distress. Here was reasoning which Jesus could not ignore, a faith which he could not disappoint. Was it not in line with his own teaching about God's love for the world, the care of the Father in heaven for his children, the lessons from the birds and the flowers, which he had impressed upon his disciples? There could be only one answer to such humility and faith as this. So the prayer of the woman is answered, and the Lord returns to Israel, to feed "the children" and to die at their hands.

Editorial Notes.

—A letter just received from Mrs. Archibald, of Chicacole, India, dated Feb. 21st, among other things, says: "We have had a most remarkable cool season, which has done us all good and the temperature is now wonderful. A native just now told me that it was owing to some worship of Siva that had been going on in the town, that it was only to last two days and that the heat would begin in earnest tomorrow. We are all very well; Mr. Archibald is at Tekkali giving over to Mr. Higgins temporary charge of that field, and it is expected that the Gullions will take it later on. Miss Clark has been transferred to this place and is now in Kimidi getting her goods. Miss Archibald is busy with the language and is picking up and using words very rapidly."

—After years of suffering which at times was very severe, our highly esteemed brother, Rev. Edward Hickson, entered into rest on Friday last. In his case death was a long prayed for and doubtless a happy release. Since Mr. Hickson retired from the active duties of the ministry, some fifteen years ago, his home has been in Carleton, which was also the scene of his last pastorate, where also he had the

joy of welcoming Mr. Hickson to work and was brethren in the and very trying faithfulness by vices which were largely attended. Dr. Carey also enjoyed a long deceased, and a quiet issue of will heartily Hickson heartment.

—The St. John Monday morning in the discussion in the schools. been presented week Rev. J. T. the name "I As self to Israel." Rev. J. R. White in relation to papers were his last Monday morning. T. Burhoe was a resolution was in which Mr. W. ters in St. John heaven might e which was heard of expressing his Conference town months that he very high placed brethren in the have made his a of large gifts a heart, sober in abounding in his back and stay.

—A prophet o should be nur mothers to the I not been without nations have n the promotion o announcement o strike us as some Prince Oscar Be Sweden, was rec series of Evange been moved the moved before. A his country and honor at the cour pital where she w the lady the Pri all right of succe Royal Highness. Outlook, "he an among the nobles and during the la self quite largely that he has a r Scriptures and th ary dramatic pow duce him and h other countries. to be seen, but unquestioned ear multitudes in the been untouched by

—The series o leadership, recentl Palace, New York numbers. "In th iner says, "Mr. M popular lines th campaign here. H free from criticism devoted himself o men to Christ. In has no equal, an harvest of souls su before seen. It is in some of the inq were brought to Moody went to C series of meetings.

—The New York attendance at all M religious phenome account. Notwith list his hold on t cannot be explain oity. "Behind th man, is the messa message which stil consciences of m the tendencies in o other conceptions of