

FALSE GENERALIZATIONS IN MODERN OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM,
by Professor Ed. König.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF JOSEPH'S DAY: THE RELATIONS OF THE SEXES,
by Professor James A. Quarles, D. D.

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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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CONTINUING

The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

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**"Endureth
Forever."**

The history of Joseph affords apt illustration of the vitality and the fertility of the Scriptures. Were it not for the fact that familiarity blunts sensibility every one would be impressed with the phenomenon furnished by the wide and unwearied interest attaching to this history, by the seeming inexhaustibility of its suggestion and the ever fresh timeliness of its practical lessons. In volume it does not exceed the average short story in the magazine. It is told with exceeding simplicity, an altogether plain unvarnished tale, so brief as to be almost fragmentary in its mere outline of events with no attempt to develop its dramatic possibilities, with no effort after impressiveness, with no hint of an anxiety to point its moral and apply its principles. And yet the bare bones of this narrative have evinced a remarkable power of clothing themselves in the flesh of an ever living character of undying interest and of universal timeliness. Joseph is to-day, perhaps thirty-six centuries after his death, as vivid a character as Bismarck or Crispi, while the brief fragmentary record of his career, a mere tract in bulk, has been the inspiration of volumes sufficient in number and importance to form a library. Can one imagine

such an influence from the career of either the great German or the great Italian prime minister? The ready answer would be, Of course not. But why "of course?" Suppose we accept the most radical conclusions of modern criticism and follow the logical tendency of its advanced positions, we should find it extremely difficult to justify the instinctive feeling, the intuitive judgment, underlying that facile "Of course."

More than this; it seems as though "age cannot wither nor custom stale" the perennial freshness of the story; discussed as it has been for centuries, the present month will witness a general outpouring of literature dealing with the oft-treated theme and Pharaoh's prime minister will be rehabilitated to the minutest detail and will be a clearer, more vivid figure throughout the civilized world than any living statesman now within its borders. When the Pharaoh himself is merely a name and Egypt little more than a legend, it seems strange that our western world in the year 1901 should sit at the feet of this statesman of an alien race, of a period so remote as to be intangible, of a civilization so vague as to lie hard by the border of myth—always excepting the little segment illuminated by his life and saved by his immortality.

15—"to all that are in love of God, called (to be) saints;" "to preach the gospel to you." This omission of all mention of Rome and the Romans it affects to suppose the original text; and argues for it as such, through a half-dozen pages, in which no critical acumen is shown, some serious mistakes in the marshalling of evidence are made and Dr. HORN'S carefully written note is superciliously criticised. To the support of this reading, then, are brought other considerations which in Prof. SMITH'S opinion render a Roman address unlikely or impossible; the development of the church addressed, its composition, its want of harmony with the situation at Rome according to Acts xxviii. 17-31, the exaggeration of the language of the address, its confusions, its overcrowding with doctrinal conceptions; post-Pauline in origin, and its vacillation between the singular and plural—as if Paul was endowed "with a multiple consciousness." It is all very slashing and would be all very amusing if it were not all so serious.

Amidst the waste and desolation of so much of the literature now being published on Biblical themes,—as if "criticism" had atrophied men's power to take a common sense and serious view of a printed page,—it is a great pleasure to come across a sober-minded and common-sense discussion such as that which the Rev. DAVID SMITH, M. A., of Tulliallan, is contributing to *The Expositor*, under the general title of "Recent New Testament Criticism." The first of these papers appeared in the June number, under the sub-title of "Its Methods," and is devoted to a very searching account of the methods of Professor SCHMIEDEL and Mr. MOFFAT, whose article on the gospels in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*

and treatise on the *Historical New Testament*, respectively, have been the cause of considerable searchings of heart of late. We do not understand why Mr. SMITH should say (p. 410) that SCHMIEDEL alleges no principle upon which the selection of his meagre list of nine "absolutely credible" passages from the dust heap of the Synoptic Gospels, is made. The readers of *THE BIBLE STUDENT* have had this principle already expounded to them. (See the issue for May last, p. 246, and compare *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for July last, p. 462.) We need now, therefore, only hint at it. It is none other than that only that is to be considered above suspicion in a historical narrative, which makes against the historian's "case." Since the Synoptic Gospels obviously are concerned to make Jesus out divine, we can depend on nothing in their narratives except what militates against the Deity of Jesus. That is to say, since all the testimony makes Jesus out to be God, the only thing we dare be assured of is that He was not God—a rather queer way of dealing with evidence, one would think! Mr. SMITH'S second article appears in the July number of *The Expositor*, under the subordinate title of "The Evangelic Deposit and the Apostolic Witness." Its contention is that the facts of Christ's life were at first orally preserved in a well-fixed tradition carefully taught and grounded (after the fashion of the Jewish schools) as "the Fair Deposit" (2 Tim. i. 14)—to which it was the primary Apostolic duty to bear "witness." The Synoptic Gospels he supposes to represent this oral tradition and to have so far the advantage over the gospel of John. They "rarely interpret and never theologize," but simply "set forth the wondrous story" without comprehending it altogether,—whereof we have a

witness in a "tone of aloofness" "which characterizes them, as of men contemplating a transcendent mystery which they could marvel at and durst not construe." John on the contrary shows us the Lord, "as St. John understood Him"—and therefore can give us no more than an individual view. "It is the unique distinction and the priceless blessing of the Synoptic Gospels, that they do not essay an interpretation, but set forth the Lord for all time as He tabernacled among men, full of grace and truth." There seems to us to be some exaggeration in this contrast. It is certainly true that the Synoptic narratives rest more closely on the common tradition than John's does. But each uses the common material for itself and in accordance with its own end, and so as to set forth a special view—say "interpretation" if you will—of our Lord's person and work. He who reads them cannot miss the individual point of view and the special peculiarities of conception of each; there is no mechanical repetition in any, but personal, literary use by each, of the common material. And, therefore, when Mr. MOFFAT tells us that "the Gospels are not purely objective records, no mere

chronicles of pure crude fact, or of speeches preserved verbatim,"—we feel no call to contradict him, though we certainly see in the fact recited nothing to derogate from their value as witnesses to the deed and word of Christ. Our inclination is not to attempt to show that the Synoptics *are*, largely or wholly, purely objective records, mere chronicles of pure, crude fact, not understood by the recorders: but to ask rather what is the advantage of having purely objective records, mere chronicles of crude fact? Why is it not better to have the witness of living men who have investigated and learned and know, and now testify to us? No, we have no "purely objective records;" we have no "mere chronicles of crude fact." But we have something far better: we have the vital, concurring testimony of four competent observers or investigators, supported by their selections from the facts and speeches, and commending to us a unitary view of their common Lord—so consistently unitary a view that out of these facts and speeches recorded by them SCHMIEDEL can *twist* only nine brief clauses into bearing a contrary meaning. B. B. W.