

## Our Contributors.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

### Historical Criticism, XII. \*

Genesis xviii.

This chapter contains a remarkable narrative having an "independent unity," which reveals in the writer (the Jehovist) an epic ability not equalled even by that of Bunyan. We notice again the writer's fondness for telling of God's interest in man, and his frank anthropomorphism. These anthropomorphic conceptions belonged, not to the writer's own age, but to the childhood of the nation. We find similar stories about the gods appearing in the guise of men, in the early literature of other nations, of which the Homeric poems are the most familiar example. But mark the difference. The comparison is true up to a certain point, but the line of cleavage is most instructive. The gods in Homer are but larger men, the God of the Jehovist is a Spiritual Being, transcendent over all things. That is to say, along with the naive anthropomorphism of an earlier age we find interwoven into this narrative great prophetic truths which could only be clearly grasped and expressed and understood by men who stood with the writer far up the heights of history and looked back on a track every stage of which was marked by the providence of God.

Let us turn then to these prophetic truths which make the Bible a unique book, and which are therefore the marrow of inspiration.

1. God is plenteous in mercy, slow to anger but will by no means clear the guilty. This was a new idea, not found in any other literature. It is the prophetic idea of God as distinguished from the priestly idea. It adds to the conception of God as a Holy Being, high and lifted up, as in Isaiah's vision, the quality of interest in man. This was a great theological lesson given to Abraham and through him to all his posterity and to the world.

2. It is in the moral doings of man that God is interested, because in his moral faculty lies his greatness, his likeness to God. If we look at man's achievements in art, in literature, music, painting or sculpture, we see that it is a high achievement in proportion as it is based on a sound morality. Take away from the life of a community moral principles, and you create a vacuum in which man's higher nature cannot live.

3. God deals with men as individuals, not in the mass, as Abraham thought. He supposed that if the righteous were saved or destroyed, it must be along with the wicked. Individualism was foreign to the Jewish mind. Their self-consciousness was of a corporate kind. The clan or tribe was thought of as a whole and the life of the individual was merged in that of the tribe. But Abraham is taught that God deals with each one by himself. Men are not saved or condemned according as they belong to one nation or place or to another. At a later time, the Jews had to learn that descent from Abraham

would not gain them admission into the kingdom of Heaven.

4. Abraham proves his fitness to be a prophet of God, by becoming an intercessor for men. This attitude is characteristic of all the prophets, who in this foreshadowed the ministry of Christ. Abraham was full of that broad universal sympathy, in which lies the hope of man and the salvation of the world. G.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

### On the Union of the Churches.

BY PRESBYTER.

Travelling to Montreal a few weeks ago in company with a Methodist brother from that city, we fell into conversation about the great subject of the Union of the Churches and of course we both agreed as to its utility and desirability. He had been visiting in the country district, where I am temporarily at work for the Master, and in which there is a great waste of energy and resources, of men and money. Five men are labouring in that district, where two could do all the work and do it better too, as the traveling would be much curtailed. And alas! this is too common a thing in the older settlements of the country and the only cure is union of the denominations. Any attempt at apportioning fields to the various denominations will fail, as no one is willing to be coerced into connection with a different denomination. In one place the Methodists and Presbyterians lovingly worship together in the one church in the morning and in the other in the afternoon; but they must have the two churches and the two ministers, although totally unable to support them, and with no prospect of ever doing so.

My fellow traveller then remarked that he did not see much prospect of union between all the denominations, but he could see no difficulty to prevent Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists uniting. We felt that the others had too many specific things to lay aside ere union could be even talked with them. The Apostolic Succession of the Episcopalians, and the water of the Baptists seem impassable barriers.

He then asked me what name I would suggest for the United Church; and in answer I said we might get a help from the Church of Wales, which called itself The Calvinistic Methodists. Could the church not be called The Methodist Presbyterian Church? The names of all three churches refer only to the form of government, and not to any distinctive feature of creed. Presbyterian has the advantage of age and of Biblical origin. The various courts are practically alike of the two larger churches, but the names Presbytery and Synod are decidedly more dignified and distinctive.

I asked the next question, What about Itineracy? He answered, How would it do to station every year, as we do, but remove all time limit? Capital! I said; that is a good plan, not only for such a union, but for the cure of many evils in the practices of the churches. It would abolish the very objectionable necessity of

preaching for a call; it would secure work for every man and exclude the evils of vacancies. Presbyteries adopt this plan of stationing men in the Mission Fields, and they have the power of veto against a man refusing or accepting a call. The Stationing Committee would have to consider calls given to certain men and could respect the wishes of him who was called and those of his own congregation as well as those of the congregation calling, while at the same time acting in the best interests of the Church at large. This yearly stationing would relieve unfortunate unions between pastors and people without the odium attached at present to the man who resigns. He may be no failure, although in the wrong place. This is worthy of very serious consideration as it provides both for change and permanency.

The next subject considered was the paying of salaries. We felt that the present system of each congregation paying directly to the minister and, where sufficient salaries were not paid, denominational aid being given, was most unsatisfactory. Few ministers in country charges are regularly paid, usually they are months in arrears; and the minister is helpless to mend matters; the treasurer will only pay as it comes to him. In the cities and larger towns this difficulty is not felt. There business men become the managers of the finances, and, when funds are short, enough is borrowed from the bank to give the minister his regular monthly cheque. Can we wonder that men in country charges are anxious to leave such? This state of things ought not to exist, and could easily be remedied by such a system as the Sustentation Fund, which was devised by the late Dr. Chalmers, when the Free Church was established in Scotland. Congregations are each required to contribute so much per member or per family in order that the various ministers receive an adequate salary; but the money has to be sent to the Treasurer of the Denomination who disburses it to the ministers. Any congregation may supplement this salary as they please. This fund would do away with the Augmentation, Home Mission, and French Evangelization Funds, and might be made to include the Aged and Infirm Ministers' and the Widows' and Orphans' Funds, thereby greatly simplifying the present complex machinery of the Church. Such a system would place a minister above the fear of offending and permit him boldly to preach the truth. It is too common a thing today that an offending minister is starved out by a not too godly congregation.

Such formed the subjects of a very pleasant conversation, and after arranging them in order and putting them as concisely as possible I feel constrained to give them publicity, with the hope that they may further this cause of union which is dear to every true Christian's heart. May it soon be accomplished is my earnest prayer.

Quebec.

Pittsburg, Pa., United Presbyterian:  
If the joys of this world have deceived you and, like the autumn flowers, lie dead at your feet, give them an honorable burial and turn to him who is your chief joy and in whose hands no hopes ever wither.

\* Notes of the twelfth of a series of sermons by Rev. G. M. Milligan, D.D., of Old St. Andrew's Church, Toronto.