

## Our Contributors.

For DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

### Historical Criticism, VII. \*

Genesis ch. iv : 17-26, ch. v.

These passages are not from the same pen. Chapter iv belongs to the Jehovistic document; chapter v is part of the Priestly Code and takes up the narrative at the point which this writer had reached in chapter ii : 4. But they both consist of genealogies, extending over about the same period of time. The tracing of descent was the way in which men first showed their interest in the past, and when the record was in this form it was more easily preserved by oral tradition. Hence primitive history is largely in the form of genealogical tables.

As in former cases so in this, when we compare the Hebrew story of these centuries with the Babylonian and Egyptian versions, we observe the transforming power of the Word of God upon the vehicle through which it is conveyed. In those versions the leaders of men in those times are gods and demi-gods; in this version we have got rid of all superstitions and polytheistic elements. We have an entirely different spirit.

We do not feel the difficulty which some feel about the connection between the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of chapter iv. We take the land of Nod or wandering, symbolically. But in any case we must not be misled by the word 'city'. This does not mean a place like Toronto, but one like Fort Garry, a rude fortification, a rendezvous in time of danger, not a centre for trade and commerce.

Taking a general view, we have first an extended table of the descendants of Cain by the Jehovist, and then an extended table of those of Seth from the writer of the Priestly Code. But it is quite remarkable how much they resemble each other. The names in both are similar. Both end by branching into three. In both the sacred numbers three, seven and ten are prominent. Both represent the duration of life as very long. Here we meet a vexed question. Are these figures to be taken as historically true? We think not. Various suggestions have been made, viz., that the word 'year' does not mean a space of twelve of our months; that the periods devote the life of a clan, or the duration of a dynasty, not of an individual. They look like evasions. We think that the writers set down the numbers which came to them with the tradition, without troubling themselves, as we do about their accuracy. They were thinking of more important things than the exact length of a man's life. They were tracing the hand of God in human history, and thus bring us to ask again, what is the *revelatory* value of these chapters, what moral teaching do they contain?

The theme of the first passage we may find in the words of John i : 12, 13—"as many as received him to them gave he the right to become children of God to them that believe in his name, which

were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The Jehovistic writers aim is not to chronicle the order of civilization but to show the progress of sin—how it revealed itself in Cain in a wrong state of heart towards God and towards man, and how it culminated in Lamech's song in praise of revenge, the song of a bully without any moral sense. Man left to himself goes from bad to worse, that is, in the moral sphere. He may develop the art and become more civilized, but the lesson is, that mere civilization, culture by itself cannot redeem man from sin. The grace of God and that alone can do this.

The theme of the second passage (ch. v) may be expressed in the language of Matthew 22 : 14 "Many are called but few are chosen." This writer has not the broad human interest of the other. His omission of all reference to Cain indicates the singleness of his religious motive. He was interested first and foremost in the chosen race. What was apart from their history did not concern him. We notice again the difference in style; how rigid and formal the Priestly writer is. The same formula is repeated again and again. And the monotony of these 'genealogical tables is a true representation of the monotony of human life apart from God. But the monotony of the table ends when we come to Enoch, who "walked with God." Religion, this writer would tell us, is the spice of life. Walking with God, pleasing God, is the true use of life, and the excellence of a man's life is to be measured by his power to use it aright.

In recording the translation of Enoch, he impresses this truth upon his readers, that death does not end all. Thrice was this truth brought-home to men in this striking way—to the antediluvian world by the translation of Enoch, to the Hebrew world by that of Elijah, and to the Christian world by that of our Lord. Ought not these events further to suggest that perhaps the human body has something immortal about it? This idea seems to have been in the vision of the poet, Dante, and it carries with it terrible warnings as well as lofty hopes.

### Poetry of Robert Browning.\*

When it was announced that the author of "Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life," was engaged in the preparation of a similar study of Browning, eager expectancy was awakened, because to a large number of lovers of English poetry, he is known to combine, in a rare degree, critical power, poetic enthusiasm and psychological insight. Nor will the volume which has just been issued prove a disappointment, for it is thorough sympathetic and illuminating.

Interest is quickened in the opening chapter, which contrasts Tennyson and Browning, gives a suggestive survey of the thought movements of the latter half of the 19th century, and presents new

points of view for the study of Browning. Here, too, a most instructive analysis of the peculiarities of his style is furnished as an aid to the understanding of his obscurities.

From a careful chronological examination of the poems to ascertain his treatment of nature, it is shown that in the first half of his work, "love of nature is interwoven with love of human nature," so that they are mutually suggestive. Then his interest in human nature practically pushed out his love of nature, until it became non-existent in his poetry. And later, his love of nature returned, but with diminished power, and, entering into his love for human nature, renewed the passion of his poetry.

Attention is then directed to his theory of life, as set forth in *Pauline* and *Purcellus*. By the light Mr. Brooke has here shed on this difficult subject, he has made many puzzled readers of the poet his beneficiaries.

Browning's theory of art, is little less difficult to understand, and in the elucidation of this formative principle of his poetry, the author has shown us what led to the poet's frequent disregard of the canons of expression, and the consequent obscurity of his style.

Having furnished his readers with these new lines of vision, Mr. Brooke seeks to aid them not only to understand Browning's thought, but to see the working of his mind, in the process of production, so he devotes successive chapters to separate poems or related groups.

Those devoted to "Sordello" do more to clear up the mysteries of this labyrinth, than any other exposition that has yet appeared, and nowhere else, have the relations of the poet to Sordello been so clearly indicated.

English poetic criticism is enriched by the studies of the dramas and dramatic lyrics and our indebtedness to Browning, in a new vehicle of poetic expression, the dramatic monologue, is amply illustrated.

Those treating of the "Poems on the Passion of Love," "The Passions other than Love," "Imaginative Representations," and "Womanhood in Browning," are fine examples of penetrating thought and psychological enquiry, which will be a wholesome corrective of the haphazard guesses that are sometimes indulged in, when this part of the poet's work is under consideration.

No thoughtful reader of the studies of "Baulanston," and "The Ring and the Book," will have other than a high estimate of the quality of Browning's work, and deeply regret that he did not exercise greater care to correct defects, which must have been apparent to him.

The completeness of this volume is seen in the minute attention given to his later and very last poems and the careful estimate of their exact poetic value. It is, indeed, so truly stimulating and suggestive, so sane, sympathetic and informing, that it will be the standard of literary criticism for some time to come.

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### The Training of the Minister, and his Pulpit Work.

BY REV. W. H. JAMIESON, Ph. D. D. D.

Why does the child seize the opportunity to escape into the sunlight and fresh air? He wants to see things, hear noises, try his strength, watch the bird in

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

\*The Poetry of Robert Browning, by Rev. Stopford A. Brooke. Cloth 8vo. Pp. 447, 10s. 6d. Labister & Co. London, England.