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...THE...
**UNION SEMINARY
REVIEW**

OCTOBER—NOVEMBER, 1913.

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EDITORIAL

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THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

VOL. XXV. OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 1913. No. 1.

DR. GIVENS BROWN STRICKLER.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR THOMAS C. JOHNSON, D. D., LL. D.

Givens Brown Strickler was born April 25, 1840, at Strickler's Springs (now Wilson's Springs), Rockbridge County, Virginia, of a lineage marked for strength and character. He was a son of Joseph Strickler and Mary Jane Brown, his wife.

Joseph Strickler was devoted to politics, and ambitious for his sons to take a leading part in the affairs of state. His grandfather—the first of his line in this country—was a minister of the Lutheran Church, a preacher of considerable power, who had migrated from Holland into this new world.

Mary Jane Brown Strickler was a comely woman, full of energy, firm in the discipline of her family, and pious. She early began the religious training of her children in the best fashion of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. To their great loss she died while her children were still young.

Givens Brown Strickler had two brothers, the younger of whom died early. The older brother, the eldest member of the family, was a youth of great parts. He was handsome and attractive in person and gifted in mind and heart. Dr. George Junkin wrote of this young man, Cyrus Strickler: He "was a very rare sample of superior talent, used in a most zealous and affectionate manner." His life was lost to his country and to the ministry in the first battle of Manassas.

The subject of this sketch had also two sisters, one of whom—Miss Virginia M. Strickler, of the Mary Baldwin Seminary—

OUR FIRST LESSON IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST.

Gen. 1: 1—2: 3.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR THERON H. RICE, D. D.

When we become disciples of Jesus he puts a text-book into our hands. That text-book is an ample volume, usually bound in black leather and labeled in gold letters, "Holy Bible." As we turn its pages we discover that it is made up of sixty-six parts, commonly called "the books of the Bible." On closer examination these "books" are found to have been written by a number of men, perhaps as many as forty. They were written, too, at different times along the course of something like fifteen hundred years. Here they are, bound up between one pair of covers, and to all appearances one Book. Not to the eye only but to the mind is this true. To adapt the words of another: "While it might seem that we had no right to attribute such a unity to a collection of writings which are upon the face of them independent and occasional, yet it is certain that, when taken as a whole, this is the *effect*, and that it makes upon the mind the impression of unity and design. He who reads through the Koran (albeit the work of a single author) finds himself oppressed, as by a shapeless mass of accidental accretions. He who reads through the Bible finds himself educated as by an orderly scheme of advancing doctrine. The several books seem to have grown into their places as component parts of an organic whole; and the "Holy Bible" lies before us as a perfected revelation, and a course of divine teaching designed and prepared by *one presiding mind*." That "presiding mind" is the mind of God. It is because "the holy men of old" who wrote the books of the Bible "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" that their several contributions are found to fit so perfectly into the completed volume. No other supposition can account for the

miracle which we hold in our hands; it is a thoroughly human book: yes, but it is also divine. When, therefore, we accept the Saviour's invitation and take His yoke upon us to learn of Him we find that in becoming our Teacher Jesus has taken into His hands the preparation of our text-book. "Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation."

Such a view of the authorship of the Bible leads us to expect not only surpassing excellence in the matter but the utmost skill in its arrangement. We are not disappointed. In accordance with the rules of all wise teaching first things come first, the simpler things precede the more complex; elements are first taught and then we advance to more mature revelations. Hence the method of study which, on the whole, is simplest and most satisfying is to take up the material as it comes and master the several parts in the order in which they lie in the English Version.

Proceeding in this way we open our text to find that the first division is a Book of Beginnings. Genesis is divided into ten sections, each of which is entitled, "The Generations." Let the reader note these ten sections and the titles they bear as follows:

- I. The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth—2:4-4:26.
- II. The Generations of Adam—5:1-6:8.
- III. The Generations of Noah—6:9-9:29.
- IV. The Generations of the Sons of Noah—10:1-11:9.
- V. The Generations of Shem—11:10-26.
- VI. The Generations of Terah—11:27-25:11.
- VII. The Generations of Ishmael—25:12-18.
- VIII. The Generations of Isaac—25:19-35:29.
- IX. The Generations of Esau—36:1-43.
- X. The Generations of Jacob—37:1-50:26.

The meaning of the term "generations" as used in these ten titles seems to be, "a series of developments." The things related in these several sections are knit together as cause and effect; they are presented each as growing out of something preceding it, all is exhibited as either generating or generated by something else. But this is not an endless chain. It origi-

nates in a beginning which is not relative but absolute. "The Generations" are preceded by "The Creation;" and so it comes to pass that an account of God's making all things out of nothing is the first lesson which the Bible sets us to learn.

We read the first words: "In the beginning God." The mind pauses. Here then is the first Fact with which revelation confronts us—"God!" This is very significant. It is appropriate in every way that we should at once make the acquaintance of the greatest Fact of the universe. If first things are to come first then it is right to begin with God. Moreover the Bible is striking its own keynote in this language; for the Bible is pre-eminently a book about God. Its scope is to give all glory to God. As we travel through its pages we are never out of God's presence. We encounter other characters—Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, John. But one by one they serve their generations and fall on sleep and we leave them behind us. But God is always on the scene. Never do we lose sight of Him or cease to feel His glorious presence. The first words announce the great theme of the Book—God. Well may the naturalist Cuvier say concerning them: "A sublimer passage than this from the first word to the last never can or will come from a human pen."

The next fact we notice is that God is here revealed to us as the absolute Creator of all things. He is introduced as existing before there was anything other than Himself; every other thing owes its being to God's act. This fact too is very significant as an elementary lesson. It lays the only possible foundation for a true conception of God's relation to His universe, ourselves included. That relation is one of absolute sovereignty. As we proceed in our reading of the Bible we are going to find that at every step God's sovereignty must be recognized. He is going to tell us things which we must take humbly on His word, although we cannot understand them. But when we remember that He who made all things is speaking we are able to bow to His revelation and trust its truthfulness as Jesus did when he said, "I thank Thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes—even so, Father, for so it seemed good in

Thy sight." We are going to find God making demands on us—claims to absolute ownership and the right of absolute control and disposal of us. We are prepared to yield this only as we recognize that He does own us because He made us and does have the most absolute right in our possessions and persons, because they were all made by His hand.

The third fact which we notice is that God is represented here as conducting His creative work on a teleological plan. That is to say He moves through the great process step by step and each step is progress towards a goal. This is very interesting. It suggests at once what we find to be a fact, as we pursue the divine revelation, that God works gradually toward distant ends. Here He first creates all things: heavens and earth. Then He begins fitting up the earth. Each act is a preparation for what follows. Dry land emerges from weltering wastes of water, verdure clothes it, making it habitable, and providing sustenance for life, life appears, culminating in man.

The final fact which we observe is that in this ascending process God displays His signal interest in the earth and its inhabitant, man. Many, many things which we should have been glad for God to pause and explain to us, He passes rapidly over as He hastens towards His end. Dismissing the making of the material universe in a single sentence He comes at once to the earth. The clue to the account of God's dealings with our planet is His preparation of it for man's home. Even the heavenly bodies are introduced in their relation to our earth and as servitors of man's needs. See Gen. 1:14, 15. As the first lesson in the school of Christ this is all quite understandable. We are not long in learning that this little ball on which we live is to be the battleground between good and evil, between God and the devil, it is to be the theatre of that stupendous spectacle of Calvary and its Cross. From one of its green hills there is to stream the surpassing splendour of God's reconciled attributes as they are exhibited in the death of His Son. And as God bends with such deep and tender interest over that human nature which He is making in His own image we can understand Him, for that nature He is one day to assume into personal union with Himself and wear on the throne of the universe to all eternity.