

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

*AN INTERNATIONAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF RELIGIOUS
THOUGHT, SERMONIC LITERATURE, AND
DISCUSSION OF PRACTICAL ISSUES.*

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PUBLISHERS:

FUNK & WAGNALLS,

NEW YORK:

18 AND 20 ASTOR PLACE.

1890.

LONDON:

44 FLEET STREET.

TORONTO, CANADA: WILLIAM BRIGGS, 78 AND 80 KING STREET, EAST.

Year, \$3; Single Number, 30 cts. To Clergymen, \$2.50 per year, if paid in advance.

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XIX.—MAY, 1890.—No. 5.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—WHAT CONSTITUTES THE CHURCH?

BY HOWARD CROSBY, D.D., NEW YORK.

ETYMOLOGY is an unsafe guide to a word's meaning, for usage carries off a word oftentimes very far from its etymological meaning. "Dilapidation," for example, could etymologically be applied only to a *stone* house, yet we apply it properly now to a wooden house as well. Who would restrict the word "cynosure" (so often used regarding beautiful women) to its etymological meaning of "dog's tail"? The explanation of the Greek word for "church" by its etymology, so often made by writers, is an error. When the word *ἐκκλησία* was used in the time of our Lord, it simply meant an "assembly," and was the translation of the Hebrew "qahal," which is translated in the English by "assembly" and "congregation." The word occurs only three times in the Gospels, and they are all in Matthew. One is where our Lord says "upon this rock I will build my *church*" (ch. xvi : 18), and the other two are in ch. xviii : 17, "tell it unto the *church*, but if he neglect to hear the *church*." In other parts of the New Testament than the Gospels it occurs 112 times, and in all of them (except the three in Acts xix, referring to an assembly of citizens) refers to the people of God as an organization. The *ἐκκλησία*, though simply an assembly, was more or less an organized assembly. Even that boisterous crowd in the theater at Ephesus (Acts xix), which is called an *ἐκκλησία*, pretended to be organized. The town-clerk made a contrast between it and an *ἐνομος ἐκκλησία*, as one that would be *legally* called, but the session being in the theater points to an organized assembly rather than a mob.

If, therefore, we follow usage, the church in its original sense, as denoted by the Greek word *ἐκκλησία*, is the congregation of believers in an orderly form. That it consisted only of believers or of professed believers is evident from its very appointment and purpose. Christ appointed *disciples*, and gave such his precepts and his commission to disciple others. The command left room for false disciples. There

some of the commandments—the easiest—and omit those requiring effort and sacrifice.

IV. A model couple, in that they were “blameless.” This may not imply sinlessness, or “perfection” in that sentimental sense now and then insisted on by some of the “saints.” They may have made many mistakes, committed sins, but dominated by the ever present impulse of righteousness and the purpose of obedience and loyalty, they were “blameless.” We may do very little to promote the interest of the Redeemer’s kingdom—yea, much that tends rather to hinder, yet, if we have done the best possible under our human weakness and in the spirit of loving fidelity, we may stand faultless—perfect before God.

V. A model couple, and blessed as they naturally would be, with a holy generation. Their son was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. There is no surety, but the very strong probability, that the religiously devout, virtuous parents will transmit to their offspring the same spiritual tendencies. “Like stock, like fruit.” The blessed word furnishes us this photograph of a symmetrical Christian life. We may profitably contemplate it, for in it are delineated by the gospel artist, the principal features of an acceptable, enjoyable Christian life.

A DIVINE TEACHER.

BY G. S. PLUMLEY, D.D. [CONGREGATIONALIST], GREENFIELD HILL, CONN.

We know that thou art a teacher come from God.—John iii : 2.

SOME claim that signs are indispensable to establish the divine origin of Christianity. So thought Nicodemus, trained in a tradition of his nation to look for a sign from heaven.

But Christianity rests on a much broader and firmer basis. The signs

of the Lord Jesus Christ were symbols of His greater power, wrought, not to gratify the curiosity of those who thronged him, nor to satisfy their demand for credentials, but from the overflow of His Divine might, His sympathy with the suffering and sorrowing, and as evidences of similar and higher sway in His domain of the spiritual world. Had we merely His signs to prove the truth of His claims, they would be insufficient, for false religions parade their miracles. If essential, at the beginning of the Gospel kingdom, why not still indispensable? Skeptics may well, in that case, demand them of Christian teachers today. No, the foundation of Christianity is broader and grander than signs, transcending them as the Lord Jesus Christ transcends his mightiest works.

The imperishable foundations of Christianity are the life of the Christ and the character and results of His teachings.

I. THE SINLESS LIFE.

With very many, sin against God is a trivial matter. Men now are prone to regard inherent sin as of small guilt. Outward crime, seriously injuring others, is deemed sin. But that sin is deep, polluting, heinous, though latent in one’s character, is lightly estimated. Our Master, however, calls the tree corrupt before it has borne its evil fruit. Temptations do not create, they only bring out wickedness.

Behold one completely free from this sinful character, His every emanation pure, His mind, will, affections, and life infinitely holy, every act, by testimony of friends and enemies, so spotless as to annihilate criticism! How inevitable the conclusion, this is not of earth. This teacher is from God.

II. THE CHARACTER AND RESULTS OF HIS TEACHINGS.

1. Pure. 2. Irresistibly powerful. 3. Adapted to all classes and condi-

tions of men. 4. Appropriate to every generation. No change or vicissitude of time outlives them. They never grow old, but are always pat. Changes may be wise in methods of presenting them, but themselves so imperishable, they are indispensable to each soul as it comes into being.

5. Elevating. The teacher came from God. By his teachings he lifts up to God. The Son of God became the Son of man, that the sons of men might become the sons of God. "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."

THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN.

BY REV. R. S. MACAULAY, D.D.,
IRVINE, SCOTLAND.

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.—Acts xi : 26.

THIS text suggests, with the new name,

I. *Separation*, external and visible.

(a) Jews separated from forms and formalism of Judaism.

(b) Greeks separated from pollutions of idolatry.

II. *Incorporation*, external and visible. Union and harmony existing in reality and in appearance between all disciples.

III. *Relation to Christ.*

(a) Those were then called Christians who lived for and by Christ.

(b) Christ lived in and for them. His hand was with them.

Consider, 1. Our *privileges* as specially anointed with the same anointing, to the same relationship of sonship, to the same official honors, to the same moral nature and character.

2. Our *obligations*. His name our banner. The world for Christ, the Lord : Christ.

GOD'S LOGIC OF SIN.

BY REV. J. T. WIGHTMAN [METHODIST],
BALTIMORE, MD.

And for this cause God shall send them

strong delusion, that they should believe a lie ; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.—
2 Thes. ii : 11, 12.

1. EVERY one who takes pleasure in unrighteousness is under a strong delusion.

2. Every one who is under a strong delusion believes a lie.

3. Every one who believes a lie has rejected the truth.

4. Every one who rejects the truth will be judged by God.

5. Every one who shall be judged by God shall be damned.

6. Therefore every one who receives the truth as it is in Jesus shall be saved (ver. 13).

EVERY ONE.

BY REV. M. H. BIXBY.

Every one in his watch.—Nehemiah vii : 3.

1. Every one—a place.

2. Every one—watchful.

3. Every one—faithful.

4. Every one—efficient.

5. All in one—invincible.

THEMES AND TEXTS OF RECENT SERMONS.

1. The Only True Brotherhood. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him."—Gen. iv : 8. And John i : 41—"Andrew first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Samuel H. Virgin, D.D., New York.

2. Satan at Church. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."—Job i : 6. Rev. W. E. Archibald, Ph.D., Topeka, Kas.

3. The Trials and Triumphs of Asaph's Faith. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."—Psalm lvi : 24. (Take in the whole Psalm.) J. H. Montgomery, D.D., Brooklyn, N. Y.

4. Finality and Progress. "I have seen an end of all perfection, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad."—Psalm cix : 98. Rev. Fergus Ferguson, D.D., Glasgow, Scotland.

5. The Church the Promoter of Education, Morality, and the Defence of the Sabbath. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."—Isa. lx : 12. G. H. Smyth, D.D., New York (Harlem).