

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

AUGUST, 1905

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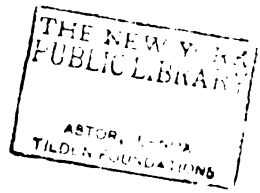
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VOL. L.—AUGUST, 1905.—No. 2

EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE movement to endow churches—a movement to which we have had occasion to refer before—is one that seems to find increasing favor in many quarters. The entire subject was investigated last year by the American Institute for Social Service, whose report is summarized in "Social Progress" for 1905. This report states that endowments to the amount of about \$4,500,000 exist, representing "more than fifty churches" investigated by the "Institute." The investigation presumably was not complete. Inquiry was made as to the period of time in each case the endowment had been held, whether it was restricted as to its use, and what its effects had been on the benevolences and general spiritual life of the churches. From the answers received the following generalizations were reached:

"1. A majority of the churches reporting endowments are seeking to increase these endowments, thus expressing their judgment that on the whole they are desirable. 2. A complete endowment has a paralyzing effect on the church possessing it. 3. Whether a partial endowment is desirable or otherwise depends on the use that is made of the funds and the location and strength of the church."

The golden mean, according to this report, is an endowment large enough and so properly restricted as to assure

the perpetuity and usefulness of the institution, without relieving the living donors and contributors in the membership from any part of their full responsibility. It is suggestive that the investigation should discover that in some instances an endowment operated to "paralyze" the energies of the church.

DURING the reign of the dog-star many preachers on vacation are supplying churches away from home. This is the usual opportunity to air favorite views and flowing rhetorical periods. But it is a process not to be overdone. For one thing, most of the favorite sermons are eloquent and long—especially long. Dog-star weather and long sermons make a serious combination. True, some one has affirmed that there is no gage for sermons—"they should be as long as a string and as short as a piece of chalk." But the minister is in a sense a guest. Tho he must be treated politely, should he not have consideration in turn for a perspiring congregation on a hot summer's night? Why should not the vacation "supply" take along with him in his "grip" or in his head a half-dozen cool sermons calculated to come well within the half-hour length? "Lessons from the Iceberg,"

day we have all the instruments we need for pulling down the strongholds of sin and building up the kingdom of God. Oh, for the baptism of fire, renewed to us again and again!

IV. Consecration to the Service of God. "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me." The King is not in straits for servants to carry His message, neither is He ignorant as to who will answer His call. When a task is waiting and men are qualified to discharge it, God commonly asks, "Who will undertake it?" He does not thrust on men a service for which they are unwilling or unprepared. He prepares the work for the man, and then by inward sweet constraint leads him toward it, yet leaves him free to choose, that in serving he may have all the grace and freedom of voluntary action. He makes the duty plain and then leaves all to love; so plain, indeed, that "doubt would be disloyalty, to falter would be sin." God has work for every one

who bears the name of Christ; and the duties of His service are no hardship. There is love of the commandment, and where it dwells the Lord's yoke is easy and His burden is light. The annals of Christian history are ablaze with the light of golden lives, that wrought with human hands the creed of creeds in loveliness of perfect deeds, followers of the great Exemplar who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister." These, without regard to rank or station, are the true immortals. Every path of earthly glory leads but to the grave; the path of Christian service leads to the home where life can never die. As the world reviews to-day the human lives that have appeared and disappeared during the lapse of nearly sixty centuries, and as we ask which lives, what class of character do men remember with affection and take to their hearts with cherished reverence and desire to emulate; are they not those lives that have been leagued with Christ in holy enterprise for the freeing and uplifting of mankind?

JOHN KNOX

BY JAMES I. VANCE, D.D., REFORMED, NEWARK, N. J.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.—John i. 6.

THERE was a man sent from God, whose name was John the Baptist; and there was a man sent from God, whose name was John Knox.

Scotland has many great sons, but in all the shining catalogue there is no name that shines with a luster surpassing that of John Knox. He published but one sermon. He was just a plain preacher of the Gospel of the Son of God, with a salary of forty pounds a year, sometimes less, sometimes more; and a heart that feared not man nor devil, and a tongue that never drew rein in the proclamation of the truth.

Knox was the dismay of time-servers, the despair of popes and kings and hierarchies, the foe of tyrants, the scourge of libertines, the iconoclast of bad customs, the rebuker of guilty courts, the torch of truth, the hand of justice, and the voice of God. Now he was a university professor and now a galley slave, now declining a bishopric and now burned in effigy, living much of his life with a price on his head, but never for one moment swerving from what he deemed the plain path of duty.

John Knox turned the tide of the Reformation in his own country and saved Scotland forever to the cause of the Protestant religion.

John Knox was a powerful personality. He accomplished what he did, not so much by organizing new machinery as by throwing himself into existing institutions and becoming their moving power. He animated Scotland.

He was rough and blunt, fiery and impetuous. He did and said some things we can not altogether approve. Perhaps if he had sought the approval of men, either present or future, he would have failed. The times called for a plain word and a rough hand. It was no kid-glove epoch. Besides, who complains of the diamond because it is hard, or of steel because it is tough?

Knox had three great outstanding characteristics. One was his simplicity, his naturalness, his genuineness, his utter sincerity. He never put on airs. He despised shams. This was a part of his hatred of idols and images in the churches. Perhaps he and his associates went too far in their antagonism to the beautiful in worship. They swung from the ex-

treme of an ornate sensuousness to the extreme of a barren simplicity. They made the form of worship perhaps too plain. Certainly John Knox could never have given his approval to some of the "church music" with which we are celebrating his four hundredth anniversary. This opposition to any embellishment of the service is seen in Scotland to-day.

The courage of Knox was as conspicuous as his simplicity. He was absolutely fearless. He was no slave to public opinion, and never lacked the courage to face the world, declare his convictions, and take the consequences.

Closely connected with his courage was his independence. He never hesitated to strike boldly in a new path, once convinced that it was right. He might well have prayed the Scotch petition: "Guide us, O Lord, for Thou knowest we are determined." Perhaps, were Knox alive to-day, he might change some of his views. He did not stand for a slavish worship of the past. He believed in progress. He did not stop to count the cost and ask after the expediency of a certain course. He was not frightened by a show of opposition nor intimidated by the prospect of suffering.

John Knox was God's man. His faith was his chief characteristic. This was the real explanation of his simplicity, courage, and independence. He was a God-made man.

Knox was true to his origin. He was pious, but he did not speak of it. He never referred, so far as we know, to his personal religious experience but once, and that was on his death-bed, when he said to his wife, "Go read where I first cast anchor," referring to the seventeenth chapter of John. Knox knew what he believed. When asked by the Parliament to write a confession of faith, he did so in four days. In these times it takes some men as many years to find what they believe and whether they can subscribe to a confession. That was a day when men had faiths. To Knox, God was a reality and the Bible his authoritative and infallible revelation. See him on his knees, wrestling in intercessory prayer and pouring out his soul to God, as he cries: "Give me Scotland or I die!" No wonder he conquered. God never turns His back on a faith like that.

What did Knox accomplish?

He did not produce the Reformation, but he did much to make it successful. Without

him, humanly speaking, it would have failed in Scotland. Knox promulgated four great ideas, which took root in the soil of his times and whose beneficent results bless modern life:

In the state he stood for a free conscience. He believed that councils were mightier than popes, nations than kings. He proclaimed the power of the people and declared that the individual has inalienable rights.

In society he stood for public schools and compulsory education. He established an elaborate system of free education.

In the church he stood for the rights of the laity. He opposed clerical monopolies of church administrations, and proclaimed the doctrine of lay representation, which, in principle, has been adopted by all Protestants.

In Christianity he stood for a world-wide Gospel. He believed in foreign missions. On the front of the confession of faith he prepared for Parliament he wrote this text: "This glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world for a witness to all nations."

But Knox's great work was modern Scotland. Knox made modern Scotland by healing the breach with England. At no time was the breach wider or angrier than in Knox's day. Henry had slain Scotland's king, burned its abbeys, destroyed its homes; and Scotland had retaliated by refusing him its princess, and giving her in marriage to the dauphin. Then came the triumph of the Reformation, and Scotland had to decide between an alliance with Catholic France or Protestant England. Cecil, the Minister of Elizabeth, wrote to the Scotch Protestants, asking "what manner of amity might ensue between these two nations." Scotland's answer came back, and it was in the handwriting of John Knox: "Constancy (as men may promise) till our lives end; yea, farther, we will divulgate and set abroad a charge and commandment to our posterity, that the amity and league between you and us, contracted and begun in Christ Jesus, may by them be kept inviolated forever."

The breach was healed.

John Knox died November 24, 1572, and was buried in old St. Giles churchyard. As the body was lowered the Regent said: "Here lieth one who never feared the face of man."

Scotland is the monument of John Knox. The heart of Protestant Christendom is his mausoleum.