

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XX.—NOVEMBER, 1890.—No. 5.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—A SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART I.—REVELATION.

BY WILLIAM W. McLANE, PH.D., D.D., NEW HAVEN, CONN.

MAN is a religious being. Man is endowed with a sense of relation to God. There is no race of men without some religious faith, some form of worship and some hope of a future life. These things are the evidences of a religious nature and the elements of a religious life.

The normal development of a religious nature, according to all the laws of life and growth with which we are familiar, must proceed by means of correspondence with a correlated and an appropriate environment. The highest development of a religious nature, according to the laws of evolution, must be the result of normal correspondence with an appropriate and a true environment. The truest religion, therefore, must be that religion which establishes the most complete correspondence between man and God, and which produces the normal development of man in that direction which tends to the perfection of moral character and to the attainment of the highest possible moral good to the individual man, and to human society.

There is a religion Oriental in its origin but prevailing in the Western world and spreading now in all lands which claims to be the absolutely true religion. This religion has proven its adaptability to so many races, has produced such great changes in the character and the conduct of individual men, has, in many places, so purified and elevated society and so affected for the better the spirit of the world that it is, above all other religions, worthy of scientific study. This religion is Christianity. The origin of Christianity, so far as that origin is embodied in the character and life of Jesus its Author, and recorded in the books of the New Testament must, of course, be studied, primarily, according to literary and historic methods of criticism. As Mr. Huxley has said: "The question as to what Jesus really said and did is a strictly scientific problem which is capable of solution by

traiture brings instruction and comfort. No matter how intense or how peculiar your trials, troubled one, do not try to carry them alone, but bring them to the God of Jacob. He will relieve, He alone can meet our deepest needs.

Then we also learn that life, though complex and varied, has but a few essential units or elements. Amid all its industries, hopes, joys and griefs, we are passing on rapidly. The years are going. We soon shall be where the gray locks will never be seen, where tears shall flow no more. Nor forget that all that is really permanent in this life we shall carry into eternity. If we have an anchor cast within the veil, if we have laid up durable riches in heaven, we shall not be disappointed. Love will not wither there. Treasures will not fail. God lives. Our dear ones who sleep in Jesus are safe. Every tear shall be changed into a jewel, to beautify an un-wrinkled brow. Hail triumphant realm, eternal victory! The bright epiphany of God, the sweet ties of human love, and the bitter, but healthful tonic of grief, all unite in the believer's experience below to fit him for the unveiled glory and the unalloyed bliss of immortality!

CHURCHSHIP.

BY REV. ROBT. P. KERR, D.D.

[PRESBYTERIAN], RICHMOND, VA.

The Church of the Living God.—1 Tim. iii:15.

THE definition. A church is a body of people, including their children if there be any, holding the essential doctrines of Christianity, organized for the worship of God in the offering of prayer and praise, in the administration of the sacraments, in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the prosecution of Christian work. It is not enough that they administer the sacraments, etc., as might a company of people on shipboard. They must be organ-

ized. It is not enough that they be organized, they must also administer the sacraments. Y. M. C. A.'s do everything except administer the sacraments, and are not a church. If a church stop preaching the Gospel they cease to be a church. If they stop work or worship they are not a church.

It is not of essential importance what the church is named. It may be called Reformed, Presbyterian (good names), Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, all good names; if it conforms to the definition given above it is a church of the Living God.

It is not of essential importance who organized it. We think the best way is by a classis or presbytery, but it may be by a bishop, a committee, or by an evangelist, or by no ecclesiastical agent. It may organize itself. The great church succession is not from men, but directly from Christ. Every true church is organized by Him—whatever means He may use. A body of people making a voyage by sea might be cast away on an uninhabited or heathen island. They have no minister nor organization. But as they are providentially obliged to make their home on the island can they not organize themselves into a church? Undoubtedly. So they elect of their number good men to hold office, call them what you will, and one to be pastor, and they are as complete a church as if constituted by all the classes, presbyteries, or bishops in Christendom; and if ever they came into communication with the rest of the world and sent a delegate, he would be received by any ecclesiastical body with whose doctrine and order his own organization agreed.

The Church is not the Reformed or Presbyterian, nor the Episcopal, etc. It is the body of all people who profess the essential doctrines of Christianity. They are found in all

countries and under all skies. It is one, like the sea which takes the forms and phases of all shores and climates, whether under warm suns where the orange, banana, and palm fondle its soft waves, or where its waters glisten under the icy domes and pinnacles of the north. It never can be divided. It is like a family; there may be family feuds, and alienations, but brothers must be brothers whether they love one another or not, because they have the same father. We pray for unity—but it is only that our oneness may be felt and made manifest to the world.

What are the essential doctrines of Christianity? They are the facts about Christ. That He is the Son of God, that He gives the Holy Ghost, that He created the worlds, that He was born of a woman, taught, worked miracles, suffered and died for sinners, that He arose from the dead, and sitteth at the right hand of God governing the universe, that He reveals the Father to men, and that He forgives sin, and that at last He shall judge all creatures, and usher in the consummation of His kingdom.

The invisible church is the whole body of the redeemed. This is in the purest and highest sense "the Church of the Living God." It consists of all who, born of the Spirit, are washed in the blood of the Lamb. "The Church of the Living God" in both worlds is one. Our friends who have gone before us, are in the same great family of Heaven and earth. The roll of the Invisible Church is found in "the Lamb's book of life." It is a transcript of God's eternal decree. How happy would you be to read your name written there. Perhaps you think after that you would never have another fear, nor allow any sorrow to weigh upon your soul. Well, you would be happy unless you chanced to think that

there might be another man in the great host of humanity of all ages of the same name. This would plunge you into doubt and distressing anxiety. Well, there is something better than finding your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and that is to find Christ's name written on your heart; written by the finger of the Holy Ghost dipped in the blood of Calvary's cross. This is "Christ in you the hope of glory." This can no more be erased from the heart, than can the names be taken away from God's book in Heaven.

"The Church of the Living God" triumphant, is the last phase of churchship. This completes the Church and satisfies her Lord. She will then be the perfected and glorious city of God. In the East somewhere it is said there was a city built on both sides of a river; but the inhabitants began moving to this side and making homes there. At last they had all gone over, and nothing was left on the other side but ruins and decay. So the Church of God. It is on both sides of the river of death, but the inhabitants are moving over the narrow sea. One by one they leave us, and at last they shall all be there. There shall be left here nought but crumbling walls and dust and ashes, while the Church of God triumphant shall shine resplendent in the heavens, complete and glorious forever.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

BY PROF. E. J. WOLF, D.D. [LUTHERAN], GETTYSBURG, PA.

THE occurrence of its history in four books of the New Testament emphasizes the importance of this ordinance. It was solemnly instituted by our Lord on the night before his passion. It was celebrated by his disciples, at first daily and in connection with a simple social meal, called the *agapé*, or Feast of Love, and then it was for a long