

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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THOUGHT, SERMONIC LITERATURE, AND
DISCUSSION OF PRACTICAL ISSUES.*

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THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—CANON LIDDON.

BY WILLIAM C. WILKINSON, D.D., TARRYTOWN, N. Y.

HENRY PARRY LIDDON presents the half pathetic case of a man, in some important respects well endowed to be a great preacher, pitting himself heroically against hostile circumstance and—not failing, but not splendidly succeeding. For, comparatively eloquent and comparatively famous for eloquence though Canon Liddon undoubtedly was, he fell below the mark that by merit was properly his, both in the degree, and in the renown of the degree, that as pulpit orator he achieved. St. Paul's Cathedral was too much for him; as it will always be, since it *must* always be, too much for any man that tries to produce in it the just effect of preaching. Three-quarters of Liddon's never excessive physical force was absorbed and lost in the exhausting effort to overcome the pitilessly adverse conditions of the place, and merely and barely get himself heard by his audience—if audience can fairly be called an unorganized multitude of people disposed and dispersed as people must be in that vast edifice resplendent for show and fatal for oratory. It was a cruel altar, however richly decorated, on which to sacrifice such precious gifts, always so rare, as his.

The present writer thus speaks, not from personal observation of Canon Liddon preaching in St. Paul's. The privilege of such observation he never enjoyed. But he speaks with the utmost confidence nevertheless. He has seen the place, and he has heard, sometimes rather has failed to hear, sermons preached in it. Besides this, intelligent sympathetic report of the physical cost at which Canon Liddon did his preaching there satisfies him that he keeps within bounds in estimating at three-fourths the waste of power exacted by the relentless spirit of the spot, from that eminent preacher, before he was permitted to enjoy, in any faintest degree, the orator's necessary privilege of feeling that his words were taking effect. I quote in confirmation a passage of description, which will be felt to constitute its own sufficient accreditation, from an anonymous observer writing in the *British Weekly*:

Have I made the impression on readers of an unengaging, perhaps repellant, personality in Liddon? Then I must make haste to correct the impression. Canon Liddon was the sincerest, the most loyal, of Christians; he was the most earnest, the most evangelical, of preachers. He was this in essence and to the core of his being,—always under the form and expression of a churchman, a priest. Seeing a fine “dissenting chapel” once, in an environment of obscure dwellings, he said: “Only the love of Christ could have done that.” There spoke the affectionate heart of the Christian, out from under the garb of the priest. It is not so much the liberal human sympathy expressed in the remark, that should arrest our attention, as it is the sentiment of personal affection toward Christ. There are even tears, hidden, irrepressible tears, of pathos and of love in the words.

(To be concluded.)

II.—FEDERATION OF THE CHURCHES.

BY JAMES MCCOSH, D.D., LL.D., PRINCETON, N. J.

BEFORE leaving the world, our Lord met the Eleven who represented the Church, and enjoined, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”; in the revised version, “to the whole creation” (Mark xvi:15). This command is binding on the whole Church, on every church, on every professing Christian, on me who write, and on you who read this paper. Each person is commanded to take steps to have the work executed. Christ “expects every man to do his duty”; to “build the part of the wall opposite his dwelling.”

Upwards of eighteen centuries have elapsed since the order was given, and the end contemplated; the preaching of the Gospel to every creature is yet far from being accomplished. In obeying the command, the early disciples began at Jerusalem, that is, their own home. So, it seems to me, that in spreading the Gospel we must begin with those close to us, with our own country. We all know that, in all our great cities, there are masses of people who are as ignorant of the Gospel and of common morality as the inhabitants of the Dark Continent of Africa. Not only so, but it is proven that in our villages, and on the outer skirts of our respectable country districts, there are hundreds with none to care for their souls, and, with the children, growing up as ignorant of God and Christ as savages. Now it is the business of all, and every one of us, to inquire how is the joyful sound to be carried to every one of this people.

Two agencies have been employed in all ages. One, the preaching with the reading of the Word; and the other, visitation from house to house and dealing with individuals. Let us look at the conduct of Him who has set us an example that we should follow His steps. It was His wont to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath; thus showing that we should have appointed times of worship, and that we should

wait on these regularly; thus discountenancing those who despise the ordinary means of grace in seeking for excitement, which is apt to die down, and nothing but ashes be left behind. Luke iv : 16 : "As his custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read," and preached from Isaiah : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" . . . He preached on the mountain and in the desert, on the plain and from the deck of a ship. He entered into this house and that house, to offer salvation to the inmates. When He came down from the mount, where He had proclaimed the truth to thousands, He went into the house where Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she ministered unto them, as all those do who have been healed of Christ. The people follow him into the houses which He enters. He instructs them; and "the people heard him gladly." He goes into the house of a Pharisee, and a woman, who was a sinner, heard that He was there, and she sought him out, and stood at his feet behind him weeping; and He addressed her in the most tender manner, showing how those who felt the burden of their sin might be relieved, and sent her away, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

He is in a house in Capernaum, and straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and in order to reach him in the court of the house, they took up a paralytic whom they wished him to heal, to the parapet to let him down; and our Lord said: "Thy sins be forgiven; arise, take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house"; and he used the occasion to preach the doctrine of forgiveness to the assembled multitude (Mark ii : 3-12). From the very beginning of his ministry He began to organize a church, calling Peter, James and John from their fishing boats, and Matthew from the receipt of custom, ordaining twelve as apostles, and afterward other seventy; sending them forth, two and two, before his face, to do as He was doing. These men, when they entered a city, were to fix on an appropriate house, to remain there, and make it known as a place to which the people might resort. "Into whatsoever house ye enter first say Peace be to this house." They were not to confine their ministrations to house visitations; they were commanded specially to go out to the hedges and highways, and "compel" the people to come in—by a moral, and not a physical, compulsion. Before leaving the apostles, who were to plant the church, He commanded them to "preach the gospel to every creature."

The disciples obeyed the command, and followed the example of their Master. We find Peter preaching to multitudes in the temple; but they had also meetings in this house and in that; "they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house

to house . . . praising God, and having favor with all the people." Philip, as he goes down to Gaza, which is desert, is ready to explain the Scriptures to the Ethiopian eunuch sitting in his chariot. Paul, as he travelled on his great work, went first to the regular synagogues and preached Christ there. But he sought out opportunities of doing the same everywhere in his wide travels. When they were at Philippi, "We went out of the city by the river side where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down and spake unto the women; and the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts xvi.). In the same city, as a prisoner, he spoke to his jailer, who was baptized with all his house. At Troas, the disciples came together at a private house, and Paul preached unto them, continuing till midnight. When at Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church, and reminded them that when in their city, "I have taught you publicly, and from house to house." Thus the Gospel was propagated in the early Church, not merely by public discourses to large audiences, but in meetings in the houses of Christians. The last chapter of Romans has been felt by many to be a mere catalogue of names, but is full of precious incidents, showing that every church member named did something for the church. Phœbe is "a servant in the church, and hath been a succorer of many; Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord; Persis labored much in the Lord." A salutation is sent to the church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, showing that the disciples threw open their houses for prayer, for preaching, and for gathering the people into the fold of Christ. Christ says, "Ye are the salt of the earth"; and they are scattered everywhere, that they may have a saving influence on all with whom they come in contact.

Since the Apostolic times there have been two methods of accomplishing Christ's command. One of these is the TERRITORIAL, or PAROCHIAL. The other is the CONGREGATIONAL. Let us look at each of these plans, view the advantages of each, and inquire whether, when there is such a multitude of sects, the two may not be judiciously combined in what is called the Federation of the Churches.

I. THERE IS THE TERRITORIAL OR PAROCHIAL SYSTEM. Justin Martyr in his First Apology, written in 139 A.D., says: "On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities, or in the country, gather in one place, and the Memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, he who presides verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these things." By the end of the second century places of worship became numerous, with their attached churches in the house, and were centres from which light was diffused into the surrounding pagan darkness.

In the third century, or earlier, districts were allotted to the laborers. And here it may be mentioned that Constantine, before his con-

version to Christianity, had given a revised Constitution to the Roman Empire, which was divided into four Prefectures, each with a Prefect over it. The Prefectures were divided into Dioceses, governed by Vicars, and the Dioceses into Provinces, under Rectors or Presidents. There were subdivisions in the Provinces, and there was especially the Pagus, with its Magister or Prepontus. When the Church became united with the State, it accommodated itself to this civil constitution, and there was a territorial division, with a hierarchy and higher and lower orders of clergy. The lowest of these was the parish *παροκία* in Greek, *parochia* in Latin, corresponding to the Pagus, or parish of the civil constitution. Thus every district had its agency, which extended and consolidated the Church during the Middle Ages.

The Reformers, while they discarded the abuses of the corrupt ages, retained the parochial system. In the Protestant as in the Romish Church, a district was allotted to the pastor. He was expected to preach the Gospel to the people in the parish, and to look after the spiritual interests of all who dwelt there, whether they were professing Christians or not. This was done in Switzerland, England, Scotland and Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia. The Puritans brought over the parochial system, in a somewhat modified form, to New England, especially Connecticut, having a parish and a church in the parish, the pastor and his deacons looking after both.

II. THERE IS THE CONGREGATIONAL METHOD. This plan originated in consequence of persons seceding from the One Church, and has been continued by the division of the Church into sects. A congregation is formed, a minister is called; he preaches regularly in a place of worship, and he visits his people in their houses. Working with the minister, there is a congregational agency of elders or deacons, or deaconesses, or class-leaders, or Sabbath-school teachers. These agents are supposed to gather in as many people as they can from the neighborhood. Sometimes they attract people from a considerable distance, who like the minister and his services.

These congregations, scattered over the cities and in the rural districts, are the means, it is supposed, of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

This is the method adopted by the great body of Nonconformists, by Congregationalists, by Baptists, and to a large extent by Methodists. It is the plan generally adopted by the churches in the United States. The congregations look out for an acceptable minister; commonly try to get a popular preacher to fill their pews.

III. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE TWO METHODS. The advantage of the Territorial System is, that it can cover the whole country, and reach every family and every individual, old and young, rich and poor. It secures, when it can be carried out, that every one hears the Gospel sound, and has the offer of salvation pressed upon

him. The difficulty in the way is, that, in the now divided state of the Church, it cannot be executed. If any one denomination were to claim the right of visiting every house, it would be vigorously opposed by nearly every other denomination. This is one of the evils which have arisen from breaking up the unity of the Church. The Church is, after all, one, but it cannot reach all its members.

The Congregational method has some advantages. It allows every member of the church to go to whatever place of worship he prefers. In the church he joins he has a vote in the choice of a pastor. A congregation thus organized has commonly more energy, because it has more unity than one composed of gregarious parishioners who have no common interests. But the system is not fitted to accomplish the whole end contemplated by our Lord. Under it, churches will be apt to spring up where they will pay, rather than where they are needed. We see this very strikingly in the city of New York, where the churches have great difficulty in supporting themselves in the poorer districts, and have a tendency to go up town among the wealthier classes. The congregations being planted on no fixed principle, there will be neglected regions between them.

In all our great cities, and even in our villages and rural districts, there are masses of people who never think of going to any church. Our philanthropists scarcely know what to do with them. In most places, they appoint missionaries to labor among them. But the missionaries will tell you that their work, as a whole, is a very unsatisfactory one. The lapsed population, as a rule, is a migratory one; they are here to-day and in another district to-morrow. The impressions for good which may be made at one meeting are effaced by the surrounding temptations long before the missionary can pay a second visit, and hold a second meeting. There is need, therefore, of a more effective system, in which no one can escape from the Gospel appeals made to him.

IV. THE FEDERATION OF THE CHURCHES. Every earnest Christian is asking how are the prevailing evils to be remedied. It is evident that no one church can do this, and the common answer is: Let the churches unite. But every one who has tried it knows that, with the prevailing sentiment, this is impossible. Every church says, in effect, I am most anxious for a visible union of the Church, but it must be by every sect joining our denomination.

In the present day, the effective method of conducting the work is to combine in a judicious way the Territorial and Congregational modes of operation. The minister may feel it to be his first duty to look after his own people, who have called him, and sit under his ministry. But he knows that Christ came to *seek* as well as save that which is lost; to seek in order to save. He does not wait till the people come to him; he goes out to seek them. But it is an unsatisfactory way of ac-

completing this to waste his energies in calling upon people in a scattered and indefinite manner, here and there and everywhere. Let him have a district allotted of, say, five hundred or one thousand people, of whom he is to take oversight. Let his neighbor minister be invited to take charge of another part of the same town or country. Let the plan be urged and insisted on till every district has its superintending minister. The minister should not attempt to do the whole work himself; he should call on his congregational agency, male and female, to work with him, in setting up Sunday-schools and prayer-meetings, in visiting among the sick and dying.

When the minister knows of a certain family, that they go to a church where the Gospel is preached, he may not interfere with them except to secure their good wishes, and, if possible, their coöperation. But he and his coöperating people should so permeate the parish allotted to him as to know as to every family whether it is attending to the ordinances of religion. On calling at a dwelling, if he is received, he will speak specially to the parents and children plainly and familiarly, but very briefly, and so as to show that he is interested in their welfare. When he is evidently not welcome, let him retire without complaint, and wait for some better opportunity, which in all probability will present itself sooner or later. A member of the family, perhaps a servant, becomes sick and the minister is welcome, is perhaps sent for. A son or daughter of the family goes to his Sunday-school, which he takes care to have well taught, and he may follow the child to his or her home, which by this means is thrown open to him.

I was sixteen years a parish minister in my first charge, with seven hundred members; in my second charge, where I had a colleague, with upwards of fourteen hundred communicants; and I am able to testify how powerful is a parish machinery. In visiting from house to house, I seldom met with a declinature. On one occasion I did; in my rounds I came to a butcher who was cutting up a huge ox. I asked him to give me a few minutes to speak to him; his wife and family. His wife earnestly entreated him to do so. But he answered roughly that he did not wish for such visits; so I had to pass on, but whispered in his ear as I passed, that if ever he was on a bed of sickness he should send for me at any hour of the night or day. A few weeks after, I had a loud knock at my door about two in the morning, and on attending to it I found a young woman who told me that her father (this same butcher) was dying, and wished to see me immediately. In a few minutes I was at his bedside. He apologized for his previous rudeness, adding that I was the only one who ever seemed to care for his soul. I addressed him earnestly, and he listened keenly. He died a few hours after. The news of the incident spread over the whole district, and I never afterwards had a refusal.