

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—GREAT PREACHERS.

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#### I. CHRYSOSTOM, THE STAR OF THE EAST.

JOHN of Antioch, as his contemporaries called him, or the "Golden Mouthed" (*Χρυσόστομος*) as all subsequent ages have surnamed him, was undoubtedly the greatest preacher of the Eastern Church; the greatest of that brilliant constellation which included Origen, Basil, Cyril, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret, and John of Damascus. He stands so high that it would not be easy to name any preacher of any age or country who clearly surpass him.

Between divines of the Eastern and Western churches a broad distinction has often been made. In accordance with the genius of the Greek and Roman nations respectively, the one were more inclined to speculation, the other to the real or practical; the one to the investigation of truth, the other to what concerned the regulation of the life. It was the Greek Church that labored so hard with the doctrine of the Trinity, making such an infinite difference between *δμοούσιος* and *δμοιοούσιος*; it was the Latin Church that grappled with the questions of sin and grace and redemption,—doctrines which had the closest bearing on the actual life of man. Subtlety of thought and rhetorical embellishment were characteristic of the one; practical wisdom and plain speech mark the other.

But if we look for such characteristics of the Greek Church in Chrysostom, we find them not. He was indeed a thorough scholar and a trained rhetorician; a favorite pupil of the prince of rhetoricians, the pagan Libanius, of whom it is said that when at the end of his life he was asked who ought to succeed him, he replied, "John ought to be my successor, but the Christians have stolen him." Occa-

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NOTE.—This periodical adopts the Orthography of the following Rule, recommended by the joint action of the American Philological Association and the Philological Society of England:—Change *d* or *ed* final to *t* when so pronounced, except when the *e* affects a preceding sound.—PUBLISHERS.

not be without men equal to any emergencies which may arise. It is not that the United States may occupy a more conspicuous and commanding position before the world and have a larger share in the counsels of the nations; tho this is a laudable ambition and possibly a sacred duty. It is that men may be helpt and humanity advanced in knowledge and righteousness. It is that a few more millions of the vast masses of this groaning earth may have something like a fair chance opened to them, and an additional impulse imparted to realize the high prophecy which God has wrought into every soul. It is that all the world may take one more step toward the stars.

#### GOD A MYSTERY.

BY S. L. MORRIS, D.D. [SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN], MACON, GA.

*Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior.—* Isa. xlv. 15.

GOD is a mystery, unsearchable, unfathomable, inscrutable. So am I; so is everything. In his shortest poem, "Flower in the Crannied Wall," Tennyson stored one of his profoundest thoughts: If I could explain God He would cease to be God. An infinite subject can never come within the limitations of a finite mind.

It matters not whether we surround God with clouds and darkness, or "light inaccessible"—He is equally hidden by either. Since the Prophet uttered the text, men have advanced no further into the sanctuary that veils from sight the Deity. Science has made many discoveries, solved many mysteries, but upon one subject sheds no light, and in the presence of God is "dumb with silence." With all the increase of knowledge and progress of thought men are still forced to cry: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself."

I. God hides Himself in nature.

"In him we live and move and have our being," yet where is He? "Nearer

is he than breathing, and closer than hands and feet," yet He hides Himself. The wind whistles, the thunder roars, and the waves surge, because God is in them. The lightning is the flash of His countenance; the earthquake the tread of His footstep; the cyclone the blast of His nostrils, and the clouds the dust of His feet! Worlds move in their orbits and "stars in their courses," because an unseen hand upholds and guides. The telescope brings distant worlds in view and reveals everywhere His presence and power, but no telescope is so powerful as to bring God within range of our vision. Study the origin of life, and with aid of the microscope gaze upon the simplest germs, fresh from the hand of God, and that hand seems almost in sight, and God just around the corner; but still He eludes our sight. In the roar of waves we hear His mighty voice; in the beauty of the landscape we see the drapery of His outer garments—but that is all. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself," O God of nature!

II. The God of Providence hides Himself. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy footsteps are not known," untraceable as the trackless sea, unfathomable as its profoundest depths. His providences stagger human reason, and His purposes and ways are past finding out.

The Psalmist was almost driven to skepticism at the mystery of Providence in the prosperity of the wicked and affliction of the righteous—"My feet were almost gone!" In every life there are perplexities and moments when His face is darkly hidden. "Yet behind His frowning Providence He hides a smiling face." His plans are so complicated, plans within plans, in which every life must be adjusted to the lives of others. We look on the wrong side of the "pattern," but God is behind the curtain. His hand holds the shuttle, His foot is on the treadle, His eye is on the design, and He will weave the web of our life into a pattern beautiful and glorious according to His divine design.

History is the unfolding of His providence on a large scale, which "almost reveals, but does not quite conceal" the finger that writes its records. We tremble at the possibility of His suddenly stepping forth on the stage of life, so near at times He seems; and are still more puzzled that He does not, as when brutal Turk unmolested strikes down the unoffending Christian, and butchers the innocent child and helpless maiden. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself," O God of Providence!

III. The God of Grace hides behind His purposes of grace.

The analogy between nature and grace is very striking. If men find difficulties in the Bible and the scheme of grace, are these difficulties greater than those of nature? Is it not rather proof that the Books of Nature and Revelation were written by the same hand? If the Bible contained no element of mystery, might we not suspect it of human origin? If we can not fully interpret the Book of Nature, why should we not expect in Revelation some of "the deep things of God"? The Bible reveals the truth of God, and in fairest lines His love and mercy, yet there is no exposure of God to vulgar gaze. If He comes into our world at the Incarnation He is clothed in human form. We see "the human side of God" in Christ, but the Divine is veiled by the humanity. The Divine Spirit touches mysteriously our spirits, and operates by weak and unlikely instruments and the most trivial circumstances; but while we feel His gracious influences, we are also made to feel, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself," O God of Grace!

IV. Will God hide Himself in heaven also; or will He come forth to view in the light of eternity?

"No man shall see me and live" seems to imply a possibility after death. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God"; but do not the pure of earth see God in that sense? "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then

face to face." "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." These promises are a guaranty of the explanation of providences which will fully satisfy, but they do not promise that God Himself will come fully to view. In a certain sense we will be "in His presence" and "see His face," but in all probability He will even in eternity be a God that hideth Himself in order that eternity may be a continual revelation more and more of His beauty and divine glory.

V. God hides Himself, but not His mercy.

If the text begins darkly with the statement: "Thou art a God that hidest thyself," it leads to the light as it concludes, "O God of Israel, the Savior." His love shines on every page of the Scriptures, and "His mercy is in the heavens" above the brightness of the sun. Whatever else may be dark, the way of life is plain. "A wayfaring man, tho a fool, shall not err therein." In the infinitude of His mercy, in the fulness of His love, with open arms, He invites, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

#### THE CHRISTIANITY NEEDED TO-DAY.

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*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; etc.—Luke iv. 18-19.*

It is the Christianity of Christ as given in the text.

I. *It is a Christianity that addresses itself to the neglected classes:* "To preach the Gospel to the poor."

II. *It is a Christianity of comfort:* "To bind up broken-hearted."

III. *It is a Christianity that gives hope to the most enslaved:* "To preach deliverance to the captives."

IV. *It is a Christianity of light:* "The recovering of sight to the blind."

V. *It is a Christianity of hope:* "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."