

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXIII.—APRIL, 1892.—NO. 4.

## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—IS THE HIGHER CRITICISM SCIENTIFIC ?

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To this question Professor Robert Watts, of Belfast, has given a decided answer in the negative.\* If the Higher Criticism were what he appears to think it is, and if it pursued the method he appears to think it pursues, there would be no occasion for this article. What he asserts is a process that aims to disprove "the plenary verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," and that advances to this end by taking as "its chief, its fundamental *à priori* principle" "that miracle, in any shape or form, is impossible;" by "minimizing the positive evidence of verbal inspiration and magnifying the counter testimony," assuming further, at the same time, "that such intervention of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit as the verbal theory demands would be destructive of the freedom of the sacred writers, and would transform them into mere 'automaton compositors.'" How far Dr. Watts succeeds in exposing the error of this method and the inherent vice of this process need not be here discussed; for whatever the process may be, it is not Higher Criticism, and whatever the method, it is not that which the Higher Criticism pursues. The Higher Criticism is quite a different thing, has quite a different aim, and seeks to approach it by quite a different path.

I. The Higher Criticism deals with the human element in the Bible, and with that under certain aspects only. It has to do simply and only with the literary problems furnished in the Bible. It aims to learn the structure and authorship of the different books, to study the literary form of the Bible as distinguished from other biblical matters. It is not occupied with determining the exact meaning of Scripture—this is the province of exegesis. It does not construct narrative on the basis of the statements of Scripture—that would be biblical history. It does not seek to learn the religious teachings of the Bible in their historical setting and their original relations—that belongs to biblical theology. Still less does it

\* HOMILETIC REVIEW, January, 1892, pp. 12 sqq.

is to be avoided if we would grow into perfection. There was a great artist in the last century who never could paint a picture without sticking a brown tree in the foreground. We have all got our "brown trees," which we think we can do well, and these limit our ambition to secure other gifts which God is ready to bestow upon us. So, "forget the things that are behind." Cultivate a wise obliviousness of past sorrows, past joys, past failures, past gifts, past achievements, in so far as these might limit the audacity of our hopes and the energy of our efforts.

IV. So, lastly, pursue the aim with a wise, eager reaching forward.

The apostle employs a very graphic word here, which is only very partially expressed by that "reaching forth." It contains a condensed picture which it is scarcely possible to put into any one expression. "Reaching out over" is the full though clumsy rendering of the word, and it gives us the picture of the runner with his whole body thrown forward, his hand extended, and his eye reaching even further than his hand, in eager anticipation of the mark and the prize. So we are to live, with continual reaching out of confidence, clear recognition, and eager desire to make our own the unattained.

What is that which gives an element of nobleness to the lives of great idealists, whether they be poets, artists, students, thinkers, or what not? Only this, that they see the unattained burning ever so clearly before them that all the attained seems as nothing in their eyes. And so life is saved from commonplace, is happily stung into fresh effort, is redeemed from flagging, monotonous, and weariness.

The measure of our attainments may be fairly estimated by the extent to which the unattained is clear in our sight. A man down in the valley sees the nearer shoulder of the hill, and he thinks it the top. The man up on the shoulder sees all the heights that lie beyond rising above him. Endeavor is better than success. It is more to see

the Alpine heights unscathed than it is to have risen so far as we have done. They who thus have a boundless future before them have an endless source of inspiration, of energy, of buoyancy granted to them.

No man has such an absolutely boundless vision of the future which may be his as we have if we are Christian people, as we ought to be. We only can thus look forward. For all others a blank wall stretches at the end of life, against which hopes, when they strike, fall back stunned and dead. But for us the wall may be overleaped, and, living by the energy of a boundless hope, we, and only we, can lay ourselves down to die, and say then, "Reaching forth unto the things that are before."

So, dear friends, make God's aim your aim; concentrate your life's efforts upon it; pursue it with a wise forgetfulness; pursue it with an eager confidence of anticipation that shall not be put to shame. Remember that God reaches His aim for you by giving to you Jesus Christ, and that you can only reach it by accepting the Christ who is given and being found in Him. Then the years will take away nothing from us which it is not gain to lose. They will neither weaken our energy nor flatten our hopes, nor dim our confidence, and at the last we shall reach the mark, and, as we touch it, we shall find dropping on our surprised and humble heads the crown of life which they receive who have so run, not as uncertainly, but doing this one thing, pressing toward the mark for the prize.

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### MY CREED.

BY T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D.D. [PRESBYTERIAN], BROOKLYN, N. Y.

*And He came down with them and stood in the plain.*—Luke vi. 17.

CHRIST on the mountains is a frequent study. We have seen Him on the Mount of Olives, Mount of Beatitudes, Mount Moriah, Mount Calvary,

Mount of Ascension, and it is glorious to study Him on these great natural elevations. But how is it that never before we have noticed Him on the plain? Amid the rocks, high up on the mountain, Christ had passed the night, but now, at early dawn, He is coming down with some especial friends, stepping from shelving to shelving, here and there a loosened stone rolling down the steep sides ahead of Him, until He gets in a level place, so that He can be approached without climbing from all sides. He is on the level. My text says: "He came down with them and stood in the plain." Now, that is what the world wants to-day more than anything else—a Christ on the level, easy to get at, no ascending, no descending, approachable from all sides—Christ on the plain. The question among all consecrated people to-day is, What is the matter with the ministers? Many of them are engaged in picking holes in the Bible and apologizing for this and apologizing for that. In an age when the whole tendency is to pay too little reverence to the Bible, they are fighting against bibliolatry, or too much reverence for the Bible. They are building a fence on the wrong side of the road; not on the side where the precipice is and off which multitudes are falling, but on the upper side of the road, so that people will not fall uphill, of which there is no danger. There is no more danger of bibliolatry, or too much reverence for the Scriptures, than there is that astrology will take the place of astronomy, or alchemy the place of chemistry, or the canal-boat the place of the limited express railroad. What a theological farce it is; ministers fighting against too much reverence for the Scriptures; ministers making apology for the Scriptures; ministers pretending to be friends of the Bible, yet doing the book more damage than all the blatant infidels on all the earth. The trouble is our theologians are up in the mountain in a fight above the clouds about things which they do not understand. Come

down on the plain and stand beside Christ, who never preached a technicality or a didacticism. What do you, O wise-headed ecclesiastic, know about the decrees of God? Who cares a fig about your sublapsarianism or your supralapsarianism? What a spectacle we have in our denomination to-day; committees trying to patch up an old creed made two or three hundred years ago, so that it will fit on the nineteenth century. Why do not our millinery establishments take out of the garrets the coal-scuttle bonnets which our great-grandmothers wore and try to fit them on the head of the modern maiden? You cannot fix up a three-hundred-year-old creed so as to fit our time. Princeton will sew on a little piece, and Union Seminary will sew on a little piece, and Alleghany Seminary and Danville Seminary will sew on other pieces, and by the time the creed is done it will be as variegated as Joseph's coat of many colors. Think of having to change an old creed to make it clear that all infants dying go to heaven! I am so glad that the committees are going to let the babies in. Thank you. So many of them are already in that all the hills of heaven look like a Sunday-school anniversary. Now, what is the use of fixing up a creed which left any doubt on that subject? No man ever doubted that all infants dying go to heaven, unless he be a Herod or a Charles Guiteau. I was opposed to overhauling the old creed at all, but, now that it has been lifted up and its imperfections set up in the sight of the world, I say, overboard with it and make a new creed. There are to-day in our denomination five hundred men who could make a better one. I could make a better one myself. As we are now in process of changing the creed, and no one knows what we are expected to believe, or will two or three years hence be expected to believe, I could not wait, and so I have made a creed of my own, which I intend to observe the rest of my life. I wrote it down in my memorandum book some six months

ago, and it reads as follows: "My creed: The glorious Lord. To trust Him, love Him and obey Him is all that is required. To that creed I invite all mankind. T. De Witt Talmage." The reason Christianity has not made more rapid advance is because the people are asked to believe too many things. There are, I believe, to-day millions of good Christians who have never joined the Church and are not counted among the Lord's friends because they cannot believe all the things that they are required to believe. One half the things a man is expected to believe in order to enter the Church and reach heaven have no more to do with his salvation than the question, How many volcanoes are there in the moon? or, How far apart from each other are the rings of Saturn? or, How many teeth there were in the jaw-bone with which Samson smote the Philistines. I believe ten thousand things, but none of them have anything to do with my salvation, except these two: I am a sinner and Christ came to save me. Musicians tell us that the octave consists only of five tones and two semi-tones, and all the Handels and Haydns and Mozarts and Wagners and Schumanns of all ages must do their work within the range of those five tones and two semi-tones. So I have to tell you that all the theology that will be of practical use in our world is made out of the two facts of human sinfulness and Divine atonement. Within that octave swing "The Song of Moses and the Lamb," the Christmas chant above Bethlehem and the hallelujah of all the choirs standing on seas of glass. Is there not some mode of getting out of the way these non-essentials, these superfluities, these divergencies, from the main issue? Is there not some way of bringing the Church down out of the mountain of controversy and conventionalism and to put it on the plain where Christ stands? The present attitude of things is like this: In a famine-struck district a table has been provided, and it is loaded with food enough

for all. The odors of the meats fill the air. Everything is ready. The platters are full. The chalices are full. The baskets of fruit are full. Why not let the people in? The door is open. Yes, but there is a cluster of wise men blocking up the door, discussing the contents of the castor standing mid-table. They are shaking their fists at each other. One says there is too much vinegar in that castor, and one says there is too much sweet oil, and another says there is not the proper proportion of red pepper. I say, "Get out of the way and let the hungry people come in." Now, our blessed Lord has provided a great supper, and the oxen and the fatlings have been killed, and fruits from all the vineyards and orchards of heaven crown the table. The world has been invited to come, and they look in and they are hungry, and people would pour in by the millions to this world-wide table, but the door is blocked up by controversies, and men with whole libraries on their backs are disputing as to what proportion of sweet oil and cayenne pepper should make up the creed. I cry, "Get out of the way, and let the hungry world come in." The Christian Church will have to change its tack or it will run on the rocks of demolition. The world's population annually increases 15,000,000. No one pretends that half that number of people are converted to God. There are more than twice as many Buddhists as Protestants; more than twice as many Buddhists as Roman Catholics. Protestants, 135,000,000; Catholics, 195,000,000; Buddhists, 400,000,000. There are 175,000,000 Mohammedans and 220,000,000 Brahmins. Meanwhile, many of the churches are only religious club houses, where a few people go on Sunday morning, averaging one person to a pew, or one person to a half-dozen pews, and leaving the minister at night to sweat through a sermon with here and there a lone traveller, unless, by a Sunday evening sacred concert, he can get out an audience of respectable size. The vast majority of

the church-membership round the world put forth no direct effort for the salvation of men. Did I say there would have to be a change? I correct that, and say there will be a change. If there be 15,000,000 persons added every year to the world's population, then there will be 30,000,000 added to the Church, and 40,000,000 and 50,000,000 and 60,000,000. How will it be done? It will be done when the Church will meet Christ on the plain. Come down out of the mountain of exclusiveness. Come down out of the mountain of pride. Come down out of the mountain of formalism. Come down out of the mountain of freezing indifference. Old Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, great on earth and in heaven, once said to me: "I am in favor of a change. I do not know what is the best way of doing things in the churches, but I know the way we are doing now is not the best way, or the world would be nearer its salvation than it seems to be." So I feel; so we all feel, that there needs to be a change. The point at which we all come short is not presenting Christ on the plain, Christ on the level with all the world's woes and wants and necessities. The full change will have to come from the rising ministry. We now in the field are too set in our ways. We are lumbered up with technicalities. We have too many concordances and dictionaries and encyclopædias and systems of theology on our head to get down on the plain. Our vocabulary is too frosted. We are too much under the domination of customs regnant for many centuries. Come on, young men of the ministry. Take this pulpit, take all the pulpits, and in the language of the street and the market-place and the family circle preach Christ on the plain. As soon as the Church says by its attitude, not necessarily by its words, "My one mission is to help for this life and help for the life to come all the people, and it proves its earnestness in the matter, people on foot and on horseback and in wagons and in carriages will come to the churches in such numbers

that they will have to be met at the door by ushers, saying: "You were here last Sunday; you cannot come in to day. Gentlemen and ladies, you must take your turn." And it will be, as in the Johnstown freshet and disaster, when a Government station was opened for the supply of bread, and it took the officers of the law to keep the sufferers in line, because of the great rush for food. When this famine-struck world realizes that the Church is a government station set up by the government of the universe to provide the bread of eternal life for all the people, the rush will be unprecedented and unimaginable. Astronomers have been busy measuring worlds, and they have told us how great is the circumference of this world and how great is its diameter; yea, they have kept on until they have weighed our planet and found its weight to be six sextillion tons. But by no science has the weight of this world's trouble been weighed. Now Christ, standing on the level of our humanity, stands in sympathy with every trouble. There are so many aching heads. His ached under the thorns. There are so many weary feet. His were worn with the long journey up and down the land that received Him not. There are so many persecuted souls. Every hour of His life was under human outrage. The world had no better place to receive Him than a cattle pen, and its farewell was a slap on His cheek, and a spear in His side. So intensely human was He that there has not been in all our race a grief or infirmity or exhaustion or pang that did not touch Him once and that does not touch Him now. The lepers, the paralytics, the imbecile, the maniac, the courtesan, the repentant brigand—which one did He turn off, which one did He not pity, which one did He not help? The universal trouble of the world is bereavement. One may escape all the other troubles, but that no soul escapes. Out of that bitter cup every one must take a drink. For instance, in order that all might know how He sympathizes with

those who have lost a daughter, Christ comes to the house of Jairus. There is such a big crowd around the door, He and His disciples have to push their way in. From the throng of people I conclude that this girl must have been very popular; she was one of those children whom everybody likes. After Christ got in the house there was such a loud weeping that the ordinary tones of voice could not be heard. I do not wonder. The dead daughter was twelve years of age. It is about the happiest times in most lives. Very little children suffer many injustices because they are children, and childhood is not a desirable part of human existence—they get whacked or set on. But at twelve years of age the child has come to self-assertion, and is apt to make her rights known. And, then, twelve years of age is too early for the cares and anxieties of life. So this girl was, I think, the merriment of the household. She furnished for them the mimicry and the harmless mischief, and roused the guffaw that often rang through that happy home. But now she is dead, and the grief at her departure is as violent as her presence had been vivacious and inspiring. Oh, the bereavement was so sharp, so overwhelming! How could they give her up! I suspect that they blamed themselves for this or for that. Oh, if they had had some other doctor, or taken some other medicine, or had been more careful of her health, or if they had not given her that reproof some time when she had not really deserved it! Oh, if they had been more patient with her hilarities and, instead of hushing her play, had participated in it! You know there are so many things that parents always blame themselves for at such times. Only twelve years of age! So fair, so promising, so full of life a few days ago, and now so still! Oh, what it is to have a daughter dead! The room is full of folks, but yonder is the room where the young sleeper is. The crowd cannot go in there. Only six persons enter, five beside Christ—three friends and,

of course, the father and mother. They have the first right to go in. The heaviest part of the grief was theirs. All eyes in that room are on the face of this girl. There lay the beautiful hand, white and finely shapen, but it was not lifted in greeting to any of the group. Christ stepped forward and took hold of that hand, and said, with a tone and accentuation charged with tenderness and command: "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." And without a moment's delay she arose, her eyes wide open, her cheeks turning from white lily to red rose, and the parents cry, "She lives! she lives!" and in the next room they take up the sound, "She lives! she lives!" and the throng in front of the doorway repeat it, "She lives! she lives!" Will not all those who have lost a daughter feel that such a Christ as that can sympathize?

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#### "IF" AND "WHY?"

By D. J. BURRELL, D.D. [REFORMED],  
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*So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.—1 Kings xviii. 20, 21.*

HERE was an event of colossal importance. A contest of gods! Things had been going wrong in Israel. There was a confusion of worship. The king was essentially a weak man, and his consort was strong-minded and an idolatress. She had brought from her Assyrian home the rites of Baal and Astarte. The high hills were smoking everywhere with pagan sacrifices. The people were bewildered. Whom were they to worship as the true God?

The slopes of Mount Carmel were thronged by the multitude who had come to witness the Lord's controversy. Far below on one side rolled the sea;