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OF HOMILETIC INTEREST.

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SERMONIC.*

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ORGANIC.
By HENRY C. POTTER, D.D., IN GRACE
EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NEW YORK, SUNDAY
AFTER ASCENSION DAY, MAY 25, 1879.

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, . . . Men and brethren, . . . of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us . . . must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection.— Acts i: 15, 16, 21, 22.

THE suicide of Judas Iscariot on Good Friday created a vacancy in the number of the twelve apostles. During those forty days of His earthly ministry which followed His resurrection, Christ, while speaking to His disciples of many other things "concerning the kingdom of God," does not seem to have spoken or acted concerning this. In other words, He leaves this vacancy in the number of those twelve, whom originally He Himself had chosen, to be filled by those twelve themselves, together with those others, as we are told, "about one hundred and twenty," who made up, as on this day, some eighteen hundred and seventy-nine years ago, the sum total of the membership of the Christian Church.

And this is the duty to which, in the words which I have just read to you,

the apostle Peter summons them. How characteristic of Peter it was! The little handful of Christian believers, who had just seen their risen Lord and Master vanish in the clouds, were waiting for—they scarcely knew what. He who had bidden them wait had called it "the promise of the Father;" "the gift of the Comforter;" "the Spirit of Truth;" "the baptism of the Holy Ghost;" and though, as yet, they could only dimly guess what those words stood for, they knew, at least, that they stood for that for which the world had long been waiting—"light—more and clearer."

I wonder whether it did not just here occur to some of Peter's calmer and less impetuous companions to ask themselves why, before choosing a new apostle, Peter and the rest of them had not better wait for the gift that would so soon make them so much more competent to choose? I wonder if some more phlegmatic disciple in the infant Church did not whisper to his companion, "How hasty our brother Peter always is!" It would not have been surprising if it had seemed so. Christ's farewell words to His disciples say nothing of any duty which belonged to them between His ascension and the day of Pentecost, but this: "Depart not from Jerusalem, but wait for the

* The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another of his discourse.—ED.]

etc. Said an African king, "If this (the gospel) is true, how is it that Christians in America have withheld this knowledge from us, leaving successive generations of my people to die in darkness?"

2. Importance of the work. The gospel was first preached at Jerusalem. We occupy what was originally foreign missionary ground. Christianity is a missionary religion, and the conquest of the world is its commanded duty and promised victory.—Mark xvi : 15. Ps. ii : 8. Outline the picture of the whole world evangelized.

3. Its present success. Witness Sandwich Islands, Madagascar, India, etc. Travelers like Gen. Grant and Mr. Field, not less than the Berlin Congress, testify to the great worth of missions in heathen lands, and the grand results already achieved.

4. Concerted prayer for missions is intimately connected with revivals at home and abroad. Fly, O angel, with the everlasting gospel.—Rev. xiv : 6.

SUGGESTIONS.

Get your people to pray and be interested in the prayer-meeting.

1. To pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

2. To pray for the right use of means by which to improve the prayer-meeting.

3. To pray for each other and for the peace of Zion.

4. To pray for a revival.

(1) For a constant revival of attendance.

(2) For a constant revival of love and zeal.

(3) For a constant revival of emulation and good works.

(4) For a constant revival of gospel means and methods.

NOTE.—Correspondence with regard to prayer-meeting interest and suggestive methods will be welcomed by the writer.

Peoria, Ill.

PREACHERS EXCHANGING VIEWS.

"A word to a minister is worth a word to three or four thousand souls sometimes."

M'CHEYNE.

Talmage's Method of Preparing for the Pulpit.

The following interview was held with Mr. Talmage on the Monday before his departure for Europe. "Doctor," we said, "Several clergymen have written us requesting us to ask you about your methods of study, especially in the direction of your pulpit preparations."

"All right. Will be glad to answer any question you may ask," was the hearty reply.

"It is reported that you write out your sermons and commit them to memory. Is this correct?"

"It is a mistake. I seldom write out a sermon and don't know that I ever intentionally commit. I make a clear analysis of the sermon, as clear as I can. This I hold before my mind. I have a tenacious memory. I could, if I desired, repeat verbatim nearly, if not

wholly, anything I write by looking over it carefully once or twice. I have had a singular opportunity to test the power of my memory in this direction during the past winter. I was requested to dictate on each Thursday to a short-hand reporter the sermon I expected to preach on the following Sabbath. This was novel to me and I thought it impossible, but I tried it and did it, and I found to my surprise that on Sunday I would deliver the sermon almost sentence for sentence as I had dictated it the previous Thursday."

"— I think my memory was always good, but I have greatly improved it by my extempore method. For years I have trusted it. All faculties grow by exercise."

"— No, I make no special effort to secure illustrations for my sermon. On the contrary, I have had to guard my-

self against a too free use of the fancy and the imagination. I have always been troubled with a redundancy in this direction. Some preachers, I know, jot down in memorandum books stories and similes and classify them for future reference. I have had no occasion to do this. While I am speaking the incidents which I have observed or read about come into my mind spontaneously. I never have any fear that I will lack in this respect. I do my best to make plain, so plain that any child in the audience can understand, what I am talking about, and of the many illustrations which come to my mind I choose those which are the most striking and easily understood."

"— I much prefer the topical method of sermonizing. I think it gives greater liberty to the preacher and more easily gains and holds the attention of the audience. By the topical method you can hold your audience to a single thought throughout the sermon, and so impress that thought that it will never leave the memory. Now, with the expository method you are compelled almost to be diffuse. It is impossible to make a half dozen points emphatic in one sermon. I seldom take an entire verse for a text. It would take me twenty-four hours to preach on some texts. I take a single thought, and explain it, and emphasize it, and enforce it every way. I see to it that the thought is a vital one, then I turn all of the energies of my soul to make the people comprehend and feel that thought."

"— Yes, I have often read the objection to the topical method—that the preacher will run out of topics. It is not true. In pursuing this method the preacher can be fresher and more varied in his subjects and far more interesting to his hearers. I have observed that nearly all expository preachers are most impressive when they inject a topical treatment of some subject in their discourse."

"— True, we are not all constituted alike. The plan that is best for me may not be best for all others. Each

one must experiment with himself until he hits on the method by which he can preach most effectively."

Methods of Preserving and Indexing Scraps.—The Pigeon-hole System.

The late Dr. Fish, of Newark, N. J., who owned a valuable library, was once asked by an admiring visitor what part of his library he valued most. The Doctor threw open the doors underneath the book-shelves and pointed to a number of huge scrap-books. Mr. Burnham, whose article on "The Minister's Intellectual Savings Banks" appeared in the June number of **THE PREACHER**, would not, perhaps, go as far as that. But the subject to which he refers is of great importance, and the plan, or modification of it, is continually growing in favor.

I write simply to add a thought or two. If the spare Mondays are as rare in other quarters as they are here, the scraps will lie a long time without indexing. This sometimes defeats the object. For instance: one is writing a sermon and is reminded of something he has cut out which will serve his purpose. But the "box, empty envelope, or hat-box," which is so convenient to throw certain pieces *into*, is remarkably inconvenient to pick the same pieces *out of*. In order to avoid this difficulty as much as possible, I devote a number of my "pigeon-holes" to scraps which are destined to lie some time before indexing. I distribute them according to their bearing upon certain subjects. I am guided in this apportionment by the "Amherst Classification." The pigeon-holes correspond to the "classes" of the Amherst library. For instance: Pigeon-hole No. 1 is devoted to articles bearing upon philosophy; No. 2, to those upon theology; No. 3, to sociology, etc. Of course, if one has many scraps and is particular, he can subdivide by using envelopes in these departments. For example, in No. 3 he may have an envelope in which he will put statistics; another for articles on political science; another for those on political economy, etc.