

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXXIII.—APRIL, 1897.—No. 4.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—RATIONALISM'S CLAIM TO EXCLUSIVE SCHOLARSHIP.

BY HOWARD OSGOOD, D.D., LL.D., PROFESSOR IN ROCHESTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, LATE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN OLD-TESTAMENT REVISION COMPANY, ETC.

AFTER all the discussion, the whole Bible is still before us. It was given to each man to whom it comes for his decision. He is responsible for that decision. He can not put it off on the decision of any other man. When great schools, proud and pretentious of their learning, were found in Palestine, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Europe, the Savior constantly asked those whom He addressed, whether peasant, fisherman, priest, or scribe, "Have ye not read?" "Did ye never read?" "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" and, as this same Savior is the final and universal Judge of men, these questions take on the awful solemnity of the last dread decision. Each one of us must decide for ourselves what is and shall be our relation to the Bible, when we stand before the Lamb in the midst of the throne to render our final account.

For some years past a criticism of the Bible has been brought in to our land from Germany and Holland, that tells us the Bible is a purely human book, filled with contradictions, and of value only as a record of the evolution of human thought. Those who champion it among us tell us that this criticism has received the suffrages of all the scholars; that if any voice is raised against it, that voice betrays ignorance and want of true scholarship.

When we ask, Who are all the scholars? we are told, All the professors in Protestant universities in Germany, very many in England, Scotland, and the United States. And how many of these scholars are there? Some fifty or sixty. Are they all scholars of the first rank? No. A few are men of great natural abilities, supplemented by large learning; but the majority are men of very moderate ability, who follow the leaders, and make up in sound what is wanting in

which my Master desires me to deliver on this theme? At the very first stage he will thus be led to a careful and prayerful study of the passage. His next question must be: How may I handle the subject so as to bring out best the great lesson it contains? Not until he has revolved it well in his own mind will it be found advisable to consult commentaries and published sermons. We fear this order is too often reversed. Preachers are liable to begin by consulting commentaries. But in such a case the result is likely to be a manufactured article, not a message mingled with the convictions and vivid emotions of the preacher himself. After he has formed his plan, and briefly outlined it, he may be able to improve his plan and enrich his material from the labors of others. But let him beware of anything that will complicate his plan; for simplicity of plan is one of the greatest recommendations, and to attain simplicity is worth no little pains.

To preach well implies a great deal. But if the labor be wisely expended, it will bring ample recompense; for there is no work under the sun that will be better rewarded when this provisional economy of things is ended, and the arrangements of eternity are at last brought into effect.*

III.—HOW SHALL THE PREACHER STUDY CLASSICAL LITERATURE MOST PROFITABLY?

BY JAMES O. MURRAY, D.D., DEAN OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,
PRINCETON, N. J.

THE question assumes that classical literature may be profitably studied by the preacher. That the assumption is well founded, notwithstanding all the modern outcry against the classics, the writer, for one, strongly believes. Macaulay defined a scholar as "one who reads Plato with his feet on a fender." But there be many nowadays who rather say: "Fling Plato in the fire, and read, instead, Herbert Spencer or Hermann Lotze." The fact is, that many a preacher who has not given up his faith in classical study as an essential thing in liberal education neglects that study after his college days are done. He took leave of classical literature when he left the class-room of his Greek or Latin professor. If he did not sell his text-books, they are on his library shelves, unopened, except at rare intervals to verify a quotation. If he is attracted to literary studies, it is modern, not ancient literature that attracts him. However he may explain it, the fact of this neglect of classical authors will not be disputed. It is not proposed in this paper to open the question of classical studies. A late writer in *The Nineteenth Century* † says: "It is a hoary platitude that a few great masters of language and of life have uttered in imperish-

* The *physical* preparation for preaching,—training of the voice, cultivation of right manner, correcting of faults, acquiring physical vigor and elasticity,—belongs to a department so different that we have not embraced it in this paper.

† April, 1868.

able words, truths which are to all centuries and to all ages the same." Yes, it is a "hoary platitude." But we are beginning to feel a great respect for "hoary platitudes," since into them are apt to be condensed the wisdom and experience of ages. Without further preface or apology, I shall attempt to answer the question proposed, How shall the preacher study classical literature most profitably?

By resisting the temptation to substitute translations for the original.

There is no need of denying the fact that of late the classics have had the benefit of superior renderings into English. To say nothing of Jowett's Plato, which, however, is perhaps rather a full digest than translation, such works as Worsley's Iliad and Odyssey, Conyngton's Virgil, Butcher and Lang's Odyssey, Sir Thomas Martin's Horace, deserve high praise as literary undertakings. It is quite needless to say, on the one hand, that the best translation fails in giving the full context of the author. Homer is untranslatable. So is Goethe. So is Dante. We can get, at best, from translations only an approximate idea of the literary art in the original. "The breath, a finer spirit," always eludes the translator. And, on the other hand, such translations were never designed to supplant study of the original. They were meant only as helps to such as know the original, or as some unfolding of what classical literature is to those who do not. If the preacher wishes to study classical literature most profitably, let him at once put translations where they justly belong. "Use them as not abusing them." Have them on the study-table or in the library. Read your classic first, and then take your translation in hand. It will fix the beauty of a special passage in your memory. It will perhaps suggest a shade of meaning you have missed. And very probably it will send you back to your author with new veneration for the matchless art of expression found in the original.

By remembering that the study should be of the *literature*, and not of *philology*.

It is doubtless true that much of the want of interest in classical authors is due to vicious methods in college class-rooms. The grammatical drill of the preparatory school is kept up beyond the Freshman year even, sometimes never dropped. It becomes what in college parlance is called a "grind." That the teaching of the classics in our colleges and universities has greatly advanced, is true. It is headed in the right direction now. So much greater is the reason why the preacher should keep up his classical studies. If he has been trained in right methods, all he has to do is to keep them up. If he has not, then all he has to do is to profit by former errors, and strike out for himself to read Homer or Virgil as he would read Milton or Tennyson—for the poetry, and not for philology.

There is a bit of Macaulay's biography exactly in point here.* Dur-

* *Life by Trevelyan*, vol. I., p. 376.

ing his residence in India, he took up his studies in classical literature. Here is an extract from one of his letters:

"I read much, and particularly Greek; and I find that I am in all essentials still not a bad scholar. I could, I think, with a year's hard study, qualify myself to fight a good battle for a Craven's scholarship. *I read, however, not as I read at college, but like a man of the world. If I do not know a word, I pass it by unless it is important to the sense. If I find, as I have of late often found, a passage which refuses to give up its meaning at the second reading, I let it alone.*"*

And then follows an account of some authors thus read—Herodotus and Æschylus. In another letter † he further says:

"I think myself very fortunate in having been able to return to these great masters while still in the full vigor of life, and when my taste and judgment are mature. Most people read all the Greek that they ever read before they are five and twenty. They never find time for such studies afterward till they are in the decline of life, and then their knowledge of the language is in a great measure lost, and can not easily be recovered."

Now why should not the preacher treat his classics as Macaulay did? He sought simply to extract the secret of their literary power. He found his account in this. He could skip a word or a passage here and there, and still get the essential flavor and meaning of the author. Let the preacher leave his Greek or Latin grammar alone. Let him take up his classic simply as literature, and he will find, perhaps to his astonishment, how much he can get out of it.

By a judicious choice of authors to be read.

It would be well to begin with the easier. Why should we treat classical literature in any different manner from modern literature? No wise teacher would send a pupil to Robert Browning before he had read Wordsworth or Tennyson, or would counsel a study of Carlyle before a study of Addison or Thackeray. In the same way, the differences of style in the classics should be observed. Homer is easier than the Greek Tragedians. Virgil is easier than Lucretius. It would be a great mistake for the preacher, we think, in beginning a course of classical study to take up Plato. He should rather take up the Iliad or the Odyssey. A friend of mine, a man of science, busy with his scientific studies, told me, the other day, he had taken up his Homer again, and to his surprise and delight found himself soon able to read the great epic with comparative ease. Had he grappled with Plato's Republic, or Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, I apprehend the case might have been different.

Not only in selecting the easier authors, but also in choosing those to which the tastes incline, will the preacher be apt to secure profitable study of the classics. A military scholar might find some special delight in reading Cæsar's Commentaries. I can not see any reason why a preacher should be drawn to him. But take such a poet as Virgil. The Christian fathers found something in him which drew them

* The italics are ours.

† Life, vol. I., p. 372.

strongly to his poems. A line of Virgil's converted Savonarola. Much of their admiration indeed arose from the notion that there was in his Fourth Eclogue a prophetic reference to the coming Messiah, which modern scholarship has strongly disputed. Why should not the preacher take his Virgil in hand, and begin his new classical studies with this poet? It would be easy, and should be most congenial. For, as a recent writer has said:*

"Virgil has got beyond criticism, and no critic can any longer affect his position in the world of thought. A charm which defies analysis, an unearthly beauty which only Tennyson has expressed, a haunting pathos which has appealed to religious minds more powerfully than any Christian poem except the Divine Comedy, have established Virgil forever. Deep in the gential heart of man his poems survive."

Or why should he not take up his Cicero, and read in the *De Natura Deorum* that wonderful discussion of the argument from design? or in Seneca some of the wonderful parallels of New-Testament teaching which Bishop Lightfoot, in his well-known Excursus in his "Commentary on Philippians," has pointed out? If the preacher will act on these suggestions as to choice of authors to be read, he will find no

- lack of interest in classical authors.

By some degree of regularity in the study of classical authors.

It is to be presumed that the preacher does not leave his studies to haphazard. He may give his mornings to severer work, his afternoons to parochial visiting, his evenings to general reading. After making all allowance for the endless interruptions, it is still possible for every clergyman to secure a reasonable degree of method in his intellectual work. It is simply a question of too much or too little routine. Too much makes him a slave to method. Too little always ends in waste. There are more economies to practise than that of the purse. It is a wise economy of intellectual force to have just enough of system in study to save the odds and ends of time.

Suppose, then, the preacher devotes a short time every day to reading his classical author. Let him keep on his study-table some good edition, so that he can put his hand upon it without having to hunt it up. Let it be Virgil or Homer. It will not take him very long to read, say, fifty lines. The *Æneid* has less than 10,000 lines, so that a year's pursuit of this method would take him through the great poem easily. And, of course, as he pursues his study, facility of reading increases, and the interest grows. Macaulay grew so proficient in his classics that he wrote to his friend Ellis: "I have read during the last fortnight, before breakfast, three books of Herodotus and four plays of *Æschylus*." If any reader of this paper will but try this experiment for a single season, not only will he have no reason to regret it, but he will not easily give up the practise. And if preachers generally could thus be induced to intermingle something of classical study in

* *Nineteenth Century*, April, 1896.

this type of it, I am sure their sermons would not suffer, and they would be found more strenuously than ever resisting the modern depreciation of the classics.

It will be found useful also to read such books as "Mackail's Latin Literature," Perry's "Greek Literature," and Myers's "Classical Essays." Histories of literature are generally, and I fear justly, regarded as dry. But these books are not liable to this reproach. The college student does not always gain from his curriculum a complete view of the ancient literature, read by him piece-meal in college. The preacher should supplement the deficiency by some acquaintance with the literature as a whole, gained in this method. He will find also valuable suggestions as to which authors he should read and what parts of their writing. He will find also in such authors as Mackail and Myers suggestive criticism and often stimulating views.

I have prepared this paper under the conviction that THE HOMILETIC REVIEW proposed a valuable service in projecting it. For one, I can say, had some such suggestions fallen under my eye in the earlier part of my ministry they would have been gladly taken. Perhaps some fruit in this direction may add to the wide service THE REVIEW is rendering the American ministry.

IV.—THE RELATIVE VALUE OF TOPICAL AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

BY T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D., PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, LOUISVILLE, KY.

It is necessary to begin with definition. The terms *topical* and *expository*, as applied to preaching, are used with considerable latitude of meaning. With a certain class of writers they serve to distinguish sermons founded respectively on short and long passages of Scripture, without particular regard to the method of treatment. With another class they have reference rather to the principle upon which the selection of the text proceeds,—the topical sermon being that in which a theme is first chosen, and then a text sought in which the theme is imbedded, and which will give Scriptural foundation and guidance in its treatment; whilst the expository sermon is that in which the theme of the sermon enters the mind of the hearer as the immediate result of the study of the passage of Scripture upon which it is based. In the first case the theme suggests the text; in the second, the text suggests the theme. A third class of writers, with more propriety, found their distinction between topical and textual on the method of treatment of the text after it is selected, rather than its length or the principle of its selection. With them the topical method is that in which the central truth of a text having been brought out by proper exegesis, this