

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. IX.—JANUARY, 1885.—No. 1.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—A SYMPOSIUM ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

NO. III.

BY PROF. TIMOTHY DWIGHT, YALE COLLEGE.

A RECENT writer on the Epistle to the Romans has declared it to be in reality an inspired system of theology. This view has been held, substantially, by many theologians, and, under their influence, by very many private and unlearned readers. Accordingly, the formal and full statement of doctrine in all parts of the Christian system has been sought and found in it; if not indeed in the terms of theological science, at least with such distinctness as to be easily convertible into those terms. The Apostle has thus been conceived of, as it were, as sitting down, with the comprehensive survey of all religious truth and the calm outlook upon the ages which are supposed to characterize philosophers in the schools, to prepare a treatise upon Christianity as it had been revealed to him for the instruction and guidance of mankind. I cannot regard the Epistle as having any such character or purpose as this, or its author as having been in any such condition of mind. The Pauline writings are letters, not treatises. They are instinct with the life and thought of the time at which they were written. They set forth truths and duties, indeed, which bear equally upon men of all generations. But they are as individual and special in their relations, as directly occasioned by the demands of the hour and the circumstances of particular churches, as closely connected with existing controversies in which the author was involved, as truly affected in their phraseology and course of argument by the thoughts then interesting and occupying the minds of the Christian community, as any letters that have ever appeared in the world. We see in them, as we pass in review the progress of the years which they cover, the change in the sentiment and discussions of believers or unbelievers, as clearly as we do when we move along the course of our