

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XIV.—JULY, 1887.—No. 1.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—HOW CAN THE PULPIT BEST COUNTERACT THE INFLUENCE OF MODERN SKEPTICISM?

NO. V.

BY JESSE B. THOMAS, D.D., BROOKLYN, N. Y.

THE limitations of the question are too conspicuous to be wisely ignored. It confines itself to a particular phase of skepticism—the modern—and to the possibilities of a particular agency in its counteraction—the Pulpit. It suggests a problem of expediency solely. It asks not whether the Pulpit ought to attempt the work indicated, for that is assumed—but only how it may best accomplish it.

To this as the best antidote to skepticism it is obvious to suggest “holy living.” “His words were thunder, his life lightning,” said Basil’s epitaph. We believe in the efficacy of lightning and instinctively turn to it as the normal extinguisher of evil. But the answer is scarcely legitimate; for holy living, however powerful in itself and however certainly the duty of the preacher, is not the function of the Pulpit at all.

Nor is it much more helpful to suggest the “preaching of the Gospel” simply as the desired expedient; for that is the only function of the Pulpit; relinquishing which it would no longer be a Pulpit. There used to be a regular Saturday advertisement concerning a certain church in one of our cities stating that “the pastor” would “preach in the morning,” and that there would be “a *Gospel* service in the evening”—the seeming antithesis contributing much to the merriment of the profane. It is, of course, true that the “preaching of the Gospel” is the divinely appointed antidote not only for modern but for all skepticism, and for all other forms of evil as well. But the phrase is too comprehensive and flexible to meet an inquiry so specific as that here propounded. We still ask *how* to “preach the Gospel” so as best to reach the end indicated. “The Gospel according to Matthew” differs materially from the