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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE BIBLE AND THE HOMILY IN OLD ENGLISH.

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IN the course of my regular English studies, I have become so interested in the topic at the head of this paper that I have thought it might be helpful to the readers of THE HOMILETIC REVIEW if I should give them the benefit of such studies.

With reference to our present purpose, we do not deem it essential to insist upon rigid chronological distinctions as to our language and literature. Suffice it to say, that by the phrase, Old English, we mean that portion of our speech and authorship that lies between the middle of the seventh century and the opening of the sixteenth; between Caedmon's Paraphrase, in 650 A. D., and Tyndale's Version, in 1526. As it may conduce to clearness, we may study this general period in its two well-defined divisions—that of First English, extending to the close of the twelfth century, and that of Middle English, from this latter date on to the modern era of Fox and Latimer. In each of these eras we shall aim to show that a distinctive and an ever-increasing Christian element is visible; so prominent, at times, as to control the current speech and never so in abeyance as to be without decided potency. So manifest, indeed, is this to the discerning student of our oldest literature that it is not unhistorical to say that Old English, taken as a whole, is more biblical and ethical in its tone than it is secular, and might be assigned, as to much of it, to the alcoves of theology and morals, of ecclesiastical history and pastoral teaching.

Nor is this altogether strange. Our forefathers in continental Europe were pagans, and came to British shores in the great Teutonic movement as pagans of the most pronounced type. No sooner had they landed, however, than they came in contact with a form of religious influence, crude indeed and mixed with error, and yet religious at the basis and unspeakably in advance of anything that they had known. Long prior to the time of their entrance, there had been a native ministry in Britain, and we read to this day with interest of the Culdees