

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—THE MYSTERY OF HEALING.

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*I am the Lord that healeth thee.—Ex. xv. 26.*

THIS revelation of the Lord as a healer was a natural sacrament. It was made beside a bitter well, whose waters were made sweet; and the Lord showed the deep significance of the occasion by connecting the great spiritual truth with the natural symbol. It was no chance circumstance that Marah should be the first experience of the Israelites in the wilderness. God placed it there, and led His people up to it designedly, to teach them a profound religious lesson. The bitter well was a representation of the diseases that belonged to their old life in Egypt; and the sweetening of its nauseous waters was a symbol of the removal of these diseases, and their immunity from them, in consequence of obedience to God's laws of holiness and health in the new land and the new life before them. God healed the evil of the natural world as an outward proof that He could heal the deeper and more trying evils of the human world.

We have no reason to suppose that a miraculous efficacy was given to the tree cast into the water for the special purpose of doing what it could not accomplish by its own inherent powers. In nature there are many trees and shrubs which possess the power of precipitating the mineral particles that render water bitter, and making it pure and sweet. We are told that the tea plant was first used in China for the purpose of counteracting the bad qualities of the drinking water, and in that way its stimulating properties were first discovered. The adventurers who first explored the Western lands of America infused into the alkaline water of the prairies a sprig of sassafras or wild sage to purify it; while in India a kind of bitter nut is ground down and mixed with stagnant water, to clarify it and make it wholesome. And a tree with natural properties of a similar kind may have been that which God guided Moses to select. It must have been

Through the Son of God the world is placed between condemnation and salvation. The unbeliever rejects salvation, and through his own deeds thus falls under the condemnation.

It would already be a voice of sadness if our Pentecost Gospel lesson ended here. We would then already know that it is at least *possible* that some do not believe and are thereby condemned; but the Pentecostal gladness becomes a Pentecostal sadness when we hear the Saviour lament: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved."

This is the Pentecostal sadness of the Church of Christ. The light of the world has come in Jesus Christ, as John and the Saviour Himself testify. The light has come, but men love the darkness more than the light. This is the history of the Christian Church from the first Pentecost to the present day. There always have been those who loved the darkness. Why this is so is seen in the words, That he who doeth ill hateth the light. The thief loves the darkness of night for his nefarious work. Thus it is with our spiritual life. We must, indeed, confess that all our works are evil, that we in thought, word, and deed do much wrong; and yet it makes a great difference whether we do such evil intentionally and willingly, or struggle against our sinful propensities. He who does evil and desires to do evil hateth the light and does not come into the light.

It is true, indeed, that men generally deny that they willingly and intentionally sin. We seek to cover and hide our evil; and yet the Son of God, who knew what is in man, looks into his heart and reveals its innermost thoughts. When Paul spoke to Felix of righteousness and judgment, he told the apostle that he would hear him at a more convenient time. An old negro woman in

Jamaica was asked why she did not go to hear the missionary. She replied, "Because I yet intend to do some evil." God has *loved* the world; but evil-doers *hate* the light. The light has *come* into the world; but they do *not come* to the light. They flee the Word, the Church, the sacraments, and, in snort, all that is of the Light; and this they do lest their "works should be reproved." It is a silly fear. It is a useless fear, because by the very fact that they hate the light they fall under the condemnation.

This, then, is the Pentecostal sadness of the Church that so many hate the light and will not come to the light; and he who has tasted the love of God, the goodness of Christ Jesus, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the blessedness of faith and the powers of eternal life—must he not lament and regret this state of affairs? The Church of Christ in her Pentecostal sadness shows heartfelt repentance. She asks herself whether she is not in a measure the cause of this; and when she recognizes the fact that she has not done her whole duty in spreading the Word of truth, she is sorry for her guilt and sin; and this, too, is a part and portion of the Pentecost festival. This all the pastors and people of the Christian churches should this day remember; and then let them bring forth the due fruits of repentance. Let the Pentecost season urge and incite all Christians on to renewed work in the great cause of Christian activity, love, and enterprise. To this end may the merciful God bless these Pentecostal services to the hearts of all Christian people. Amen.

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### ANGELS OF JESUS.

BY ROBERT P. KERR, D.D. [PRESBYTERIAN, SOUTH], RICHMOND, VA.

*His angels.* Matt. xvi. 27.

*The Annunciation.* At the Fountain of the Annunciation, in Nazareth, there may be seen now at every sunset a large

company of women and girls gathered, bearing their earthen vessels, which having filled with clear water, they walk away toward their homes in every part of the village. Tradition says that two thousand years ago a maiden of Judah came hither for water, with a great love burning in her soul for her betrothed husband, and that an angel appeared to her at the fountain. Gabriel (*God is mighty*), the same who protected Daniel in the lion's den, and who had already appeared to Zacharias as he ministered in the temple, foretelling the birth of John the Baptist, did announce to Mary a great secret. It was a secret which, when it comes to a young wife, brings conflicting feelings of fear and love and hope; but when disclosed to this virgin meant that she should be placed under the most blighting suspicion that ever falls upon a woman's character and name. Mary's faith was equal to the strain, and she was willing to submit to God's decree, leaving to Him the vindication of her innocence. This is such a delicate subject that it is seldom touched upon, but it is too beautiful to be left in oblivion. Gabriel said to her, "Fear not, Mary;" and when she responds, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, let it be unto me according to thy word," we bow our heads and say, "Here are two angels, the celestial messenger and she who was willing to dare the world in obedience to God's command."

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus," which means Saviour. Most names are prayers in which the parents express the desire that their child may be like some one from whom the name is borrowed, or that the sentiment embodied in the name may be exemplified in the life which is just beginning; but this name was a prophecy, "for He *shall* save His people from their sins."

Joseph, in a disturbed frame of mind, filled with mortification and disappointment, having determined privately to put aside the great love and hope of his life, has also a visit from the same angel. It appears that Mary had kept

the annunciation to herself, or if disclosed to Joseph, it had not been believed; but Gabriel comes to vindicate Mary and to reveal to him the wondrous story, and he at once accepts it, following Mary in the path of faith and duty.

*The Natal Hymn.* Never was nobler lyric sung to mortal ears than that which the shepherds heard as they sat under the stars by Bethlehem. It was a more transcendent scene than the one at creation, "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." This suggested the pathos of sorrow and of sin and the exultation of victory for man and God. The celestial choristers had fought under Michael against the devil and his angels, and now sang a song of triumph over evil. The good angels are on the side of the shepherds and of all devout toilers and mourners. Stop, weary-hearted world, under the prophetic star, and hear the angels sing.

*The Angelic Warning.* "Arise and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." Joseph obeyed, and set out by night, and waited in Egypt the angel's promised return. "Arise and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young Child's life." He was also warned not to go to Bethlehem, but to pass on up into Nazareth of Galilee, and so these two names arose into the sublimities of Divine love and light and glory. Any place where Jesus rests is illustrious, or will be, whether it be a despised village or a humble mortal's heart.

*The Temptation.* After forty days' fasting and prayer, that He might be prepared for the conflict with Satan, the prince of the powers of evil meets Christ in single combat. It is the antithesis of the fall of Adam in Paradise, when our first representative lost himself and all humanity by believing and obeying Satan. Here the second Adam was conquering for Himself and all who put

their trust in Him. The mighty struggle over, "angels came and ministered unto Him." Tradition places this scene in the desert mountains between Jerusalem and Jericho, overlooking the plain of Jordan, with the mountains of Moab in sight, beyond. It was the place where Elijah was fed by ravens. They were good enough for the grand old prophet, but messengers of brighter plumage must serve the Son of man. The scene is sublime—Satan raging as he flies defeated, and Christ partaking of a repast spread in the desert by worshipping angels—ministering spirits, who wait to do His pleasure. Every faithful follower of Christ who resists the devil until he flies from him partakes of angels' food in that sweet calm which follows the conflict.

*The Angels Care.* "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up," is the promise Christ quoted to Satan in the wilderness, and doubtless there was no moment in His life when they did not minister to Him. In Gethsemane Christ had need of sympathy and comfort. He took the eleven with Him, and the favored three a little farther than the rest, that they might watch by Him while He prayed. Though prepared for what was approaching, they failed to enter into the sublime pathos of the occasion, and fell asleep. Twice He awoke them, gently chiding them, and even excusing their neglect; but their opportunity lost, we read that "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him." The sublime opportunity neglected by the disciples was caught up by the celestial host, and one of their number had the proud privilege of being His comforter. It was an angel, but it should have been a man; and often when some poor child of God suffers alone neglected by men an angel takes the place.

*The Mighty Reserve.* The eyes of Christ must have been always open to the celestial cohorts which hovered over His life, and we hear Him say just after the prayer under the olive shades was

over, while rebuking Peter for his tardy devotion and rash valor, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Peter might not have denied his Master if he had watched and prayed in the garden, but it was late now to show loyalty. The Lord declines it, intimating that if He needed help He would get it from that shining host, one of whom had done Him such timely service in His agony and bloody sweat; but He does not call down the armies of the sky, because He must die for the sins of Peter and the rest. So with instant deliverance in sight, He calmly says, "Take me, but let these go their way."

*The Waiting Host.* It is hardly to be supposed that the angels sang while the Lord of angels was suffering on the cross. I fancy there was silence in heaven while the Son of God was dying for a lost world, and that if angels could grieve it would be that they were not permitted to take Him from the cross and from a rebellious world and bear Him to His throne on high; but angels' thoughts flow in the currents of Divine decrees, and there is no murmur in the withholding of a command to fly to the rescue. They watched over His tomb, and guarded the body of this greater than Moses. Michael defended the ancient prophet's dust, and Satan shall not profane this sacred sepulchre.

*The Angels of the Resurrection.* The mighty drama hastens to its close. The sorrow is all past; the hour of triumph has arrived, and down from heaven, like gleam of light, flashes the angel of the Lord. With eager hand he rolls the stone away, sealed and sentinelled by the Roman guard, while the earth trembles under the mighty deed. No hand of priesthood or Sanhedrim or Roman power could roll back the stone to its place and prevent the glorious resurrection, for the angel sits upon the stone. The Lord of life arises from His rocky couch and prison. Hallelujah! Death is dead! The grave has become

the chamber of new life and immortality for men. We do not read of rapturous glories in the sky, as at the Saviour's birth; the scene seems too solemn for that; it contains too much of the tenderness of human sorrow and hope and eternal love; but in blissful reverence angels divest the august person of the ceremonies of death and, tenderly folding them, lay them in holy order by. Then they stand guard, in person like young men, marking young manhood for the same loyalty and service, while He, the Lord of men and angels in dignity Divine, steps forth, the conqueror of death and Saviour of the world. To the soldiers the angels appeared with lightening countenances and raiment like snowy Hermon's glistening armor, but to the women who came loving Christ and seeking to do Him service they were gentle messengers of joy. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." But do not tarry; God would not have His children shed a needless tear. "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead." "And as they went, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him," afraid, perhaps, that those dear feet might leave them again and now forever; but He too remembers His weeping followers, and bids the women go and tell them He will meet them in Galilee; and so the Lord departs; the angels fly away to heaven, and the women run to bring the disciples word, while nothing is left but an empty tomb, an excited city, unbelieving still, and a band of bewildered men unwilling to receive the tidings which seemed too good to be true. Though the Scriptures do not tell it, we cannot doubt but that the heavenly ether trembled that day with grander anthems than even those that sounded over Bethlehem's plain the night the Lord was born.

*The Closing Scene.* We are not to

stand long gazing up into heaven after our ascended Lord, but as our eyes do almost weeping follow Him, two angels stand by us on Olivet and close the splendid epic of His life on earth by giving a promise, that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go up into heaven." And as we walk down the mountain-side we remember that He said, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels."

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### INTERRELATION OF BELIEF AND ACTION.

BY REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM NORTH RICE, LL.D. [METHODIST], WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

*If ye continue in My words, ye shall know the truth.*—John viii. 31.

WHILE never spoken in technical forms, the teaching of our Lord was profoundly philosophical. In this utterance and in that of the seventeenth chapter, "Sanctify them through Thy truth," are embodied two laws of the development of human character. Under the action of one, the intellect is in harmony with truth and receives all truth which brings the justifying power of evidence. One thus characterized is not omniscient or infallible, for lack of evidence mars one's conclusion; but though there is much to learn there is nothing to unlearn. The other principle of development is the harmony of feeling and action with truth. Good excites pleasure and evil aversion. Volitional activity is in the line of right doing. This is spontaneous and it is constant.

One Being, the Lord Jesus, has perfectly illustrated this ideal perfection. The verdict of nineteen centuries is an iteration of that uttered by admiring hearers of old, "Never man spake like