

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

VOL. XXI.—APRIL, 1891.—No. 4.

## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—THE PRESENT RELATIONS OF THE FALSE RELIGIONS TO CHRISTIANITY.

BY F. F. ELLINWOOD, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

It is difficult to account for the half suspicion which exists in many Christian minds against the study of false systems of religion and philosophy. It is perhaps partly a result of exaggerated ideas of their utter defilement and a disposition to regard them as puerile and trivial, and partly owing to the use which antichristian writers have made of them as rivals of Christianity. It cannot be denied that infidelity in the hope of disparaging the Christian faith has taken the lead in the study of Oriental religions and has put forth their claims for wisdom and moral purity, for charity and superior benevolence with such boldness and persistency, that timid souls seem half afraid of a dangerous rivalry. At least they feel that the less Christian men and women have to do with false religions the better for the simplicity and earnestness of their faith. This timid spirit is groundless and is a half surrender to the enemy: it cannot meet the demands of this age of dauntless inquiry.

One cannot fail to mark the different aspect in which we view the mythologies of Greece and Rome. If the religions of those countries had remained unknown till the present time, if the moral maxims of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius had been kept a secret, if Socrates had just now been presented to the public as the Light of Greece and that in the glowing verse of an acknowledged poet like Sir Edwin Arnold, there would probably be no small commotion in the religious world and the high claims of the Christian faith to an absolute supremacy might seem imperilled.

But simply because we thoroughly understand the religions and the ethics of classic lands, we are without the slightest fear. By common consent they have taken their subordinate place as compared with the Christian faith. They rather add to the lustre of the truth by their contrasts. What is good in them is so frankly and fearlessly acknowledged that our Christian colleges contend for a classical course

## V.—“THE GOSPEL TO THEM THAT ARE DEAD.”

BY T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

IN the issue of this REVIEW for November, 1890, the writer had the privilege of making a somewhat critical examination of the celebrated passage (1 Pet. iii : 18, 19) which treats of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison, the design being to show that, even under the most rigid application of the principles of exegesis, the passage gives no support to the theory of probation after death. Through the courtesy of the editors, the opportunity is now afforded of subjecting to a similar examination, and with the same end in view, the closely related passage (1 Pet. iv : 6) which refers to the Gospel that “was preached to them that are dead.” It is manifest that the treatment of one of these passages would be incomplete so long as all consideration of the other was omitted. Whilst there is, as we shall soon have occasion to see, no such vital relation between them as the advocates of second probation imagine, the *νεκροῖς* of the one representing a class entirely distinct from the *τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν* of the other, and the *εὐηγγελίσθη* of the one an altogether different function from the *ἐκήρυξεν* of the other, yet there is a parallelism both of thought and of grammatical structure between the two passages, of such a character that the study of one cannot fail to throw light upon the interpretation of the other.

As to their subject matter, the connecting link between the two passages is found in the opening words of the fourth chapter : “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” Up to this point, the leading thought in the Apostle's mind has been the personal suffering of Christ, with its glorious issue in his triumph over death and the grave, and in the exaltation to which he attained through the bloody baptism of the Cross. From this point forward, the great thought before him is the peculiar share which so many of Christ's persecuted people were to have in this bloody baptism of his, and the glorious exaltation at his right hand in the heavens to which they were to pass through the fires and floods of martyrdom. For it must be borne in mind that this epistle was written during the awful period of the Neronian persecutions. Its date is usually fixed as A.D. 64–68. It was in the year 64 that the first general persecution under Nero began, and it was in the year 68 that the Neronian persecutions finally came to an end.

After all that has been said to the contrary, the testimony of Moseheim, and many later historians, still remains unimpeached, that these persecutions were general, extending throughout the whole Roman empire. There is internal evidence in this epistle to show that the Apostle Peter had distinctly before his mind the details of the arraignment of Christians before the Roman tribunals, the blas-

phemous accusations brought against them, the inquisitorial tortures to which they were subjected, and their merciless condemnation to the sword, the torch and the lions. Peter uses the technical language of the Roman tribunals. As an eminent writer has truly said (*Princeton Review*, March, 1878, p. 458), "His *κακοποιούντες*, or evil-doers, are but the '*Malefici*,' gibbeted by the Roman historians. His *Χριστιανός* is the Roman '*Christianus*' sent to the lions of the amphitheatre. The *λογός*, the *ἀπολογία*, the *ἐπηρεάζοντες*, the *κρίμα*, the *κριθῶσι*, and the *πάσχειν ὡς Χριστιανός*, all bring us to the judgment-seat of the Roman prætor, as Christ was brought before Pilate. What are the *πύρωσις*, the 'burning' of iv : 12 (compare Rev. xviii : 9, 18), and the trial of faith 'by means of fire' *διὰ πυρός* (i : 7), but blazing pillars of testimony, one in the doorway, the other on the central shrine of the epistle itself, witnessing that martyrdom by fire had already spread over the empire when the epistle was written? that many a confessor of Christ had already 'suffered in the flesh,' not alone on the cross, like his Master, but had 'given his body to be burned' (1 Cor. xiii : 3)? Who can fail to see the gardens of Nero with the Christians standing erect as lamp-posts in their shirts of fire for the emperor's amusement, the '*flammati*' of Suetonius, the proscribed and tortured '*hostes Cæsarum, populique Romani*,'—state criminals, judicially condemned to the stake for their love to Christ,—a '*crimen majestatis*' against the imperial monster?"

It is amidst these awful times that the Apostle writes to fortify the minds and hearts of those who should be exposed to this fiery ordeal, so that they might not "be afraid of their terror," but might sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, and be "ready always to give an answer," etc. For this purpose he had presented in the previous chapter the picture of Jesus suffering at the bar of Pontius Pilate, and through that "suffering of death" attaining to the glory and honor which He now has at the right hand of God. For the same reason, in this chapter, he represents those who suffer as Christians before the Roman tribunals as "partakers of the sufferings of Christ," and as subjected in the providence of God to these sufferings to the end that (*ἵνα*) "when His glory shall be revealed" these, His companions in suffering, may "be glad also with exceeding joy." As these martyrs are in a special sense partakers of His sufferings, so shall they in a special sense be partakers of His glory. It is in furtherance of this thought that the language of v. 6 is introduced. The *νεκροί*, those who had fallen under the power of human tribunals, and amidst blasphemous accusations had been sentenced to ignominious deaths, were not to be bewailed, as though some awful and irreparable calamity had befallen them. In all this God's gracious and loving purposes to them were being accomplished. The time was coming when these now dead confessors and their still living accusers should stand face

to face at the bar of Him who is the judge both of the living and the dead. Nay, the Gospel was sent to them for this very purpose that they might be witnesses for God at pagan tribunals, as Christ had witnessed before Pilate, might be "faithful unto death" as He was "obedient unto death," and being made partakers of His sufferings here in the flesh, might have part also in the glory of His resurrection.

Corresponding with this parallelism of thought is the parallelism of grammatical structure. Not only have we in each of the two passages the correlated datives, *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι*, holding the same relative positions and having evidently the same significations, but the *θανατωθεις σαρκί* which is predicated of Christ in the earlier passage has its answering *χριστων σαρκί*, predicated of his martyred disciples in the later passage; and the *ζωοποιηθεις πνεύματι* of the former, its corresponding *ζων πνεύματι* in the latter. These martyrs are indeed "drinking of the cup that Christ drank of," and being "baptized with the baptism that He was baptized withal." Both the sufferings and the glory of Christ are being reflected in his members.

We are, however, anticipating. It besteads us first to ascertain by a careful study of the passage whether the *νεκροί* of whom the Apostle writes can be identified as the martyrs to whom the Gospel was preached, in order that they might attain to the grace and crown of martyrdom. In making this examination, there are a few points of exegesis claimed by the advocates of future probation which, we think, should in all fairness and candor be conceded.

(1) The dead of *νεκροί* are literally and actually dead. The death referred to is not figurative, as of men "dead in trespasses and sins," or virtual, as of men already sentenced to death—but real, as of men who, in the ordinary sense of the words, have departed this life.

(2) The word *ευηγγελισθη* is used in its ordinary sense of the official promulgation of the glad tidings of salvation, and necessarily involves the offer of pardon and salvation to all who will believe.

(3) Although *ευηγγελισθη* is in the aorist, indicating something done in the past, and *νεκροί* represents necessarily only the present state of those to whom the Gospel was preached, so that, for all that it implies, they may have been alive when the preaching was done; yet if the two words, *νεκροί ευηγγελισθη*, stood alone, and were to be construed as constituting a complete sentence, the natural construction would be that the preaching was to dead men,—dead when the preaching was done. The assertion, therefore, that the hearers were alive when the preaching was done, and have died since, must base itself upon something more than simply the past tense of the verb.

But now, after making these concessions, which seem to us only just and fair, we are prepared to maintain that the words *νεκροί ευηγγελισθη* stand so related in this sentence as to make it obvious that the hearers

of the Gospel to whom the Apostle refers, though dead at the time when the epistle was written, were living at the time when the preaching was done, so that there never was a more wanton outrage upon scriptural exegesis than when Alford made his dogmatic assertion that "if *νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη* may mean the Gospel was preached to some during their lifetime who are now dead, exegesis has no longer any fixed rule, and Scripture may be made to prove anything." Let us examine for a moment the peculiar relation in which these two ominous words stand. You will observe that they are connected with a final clause giving the object or end for which the preaching was done. The telic character of this final clause is as emphatic as language can make it. You not only have as the final particle *ἵνα*, which always indicates a purpose distinctly before the mind, but this particle is preceded and reënfined by the emphatic *εἰς τὸυτο*; "for this very specific and definite purpose was the Gospel preached," etc. What was this purpose? Upon examination of the final clause you find it to be twofold, that those to whom it is preached (whoever they may be) may "be judged according to men in the flesh," and that they "may live according to God in the spirit." Let us examine these two clauses particularly. Their correlation with one another is remarkable. The *κριθῶσιν μὲν* in one has its antithetic *ζῶσιν δέ* in the other. The *κατὰ ἀνθρώπους* has its antithetic *κατὰ θεόν*, and the *σαρκί* its answering *πνεύματι*. The antithetic balancing of the two clauses is perfect. Equally remarkable is the correlation of the two clauses with the two antithetic clauses in the passage relative to the spirits in prison. The *κριθῶσιν* here answers to the *θανατωθεῖς* there; the *ζῶσιν* here to the *ζωοποιηθεῖς* there, whilst *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* stand so related to the kindred words in both passages as to make it manifest that they were intended to have the same significations in both, *σαρκί* referring to the corruptible, perishable body in which the Christian sojourns in this life, *πνεύματι* to the incorruptible and glorious body in which the Christian shall forever abide in heaven. Taking *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* in the same sense here, therefore, as in the study of the former passage, let us next inquire into the meaning of *κριθῶσιν*, the verb *κρίνω* being sometimes used to express the rendering of a judgment, whether favorable or unfavorable, and sometimes with the full force of *κατακρίνω*, to condemn, to sentence to death. When we consider its relation here by antithesis to *ζῶσιν*, and its relation by parallelism to *θανατωθεῖς* in the other passage, we shall have no difficulty in agreeing, as, indeed, is done by most of the commentators, that it should have here its strong sense of to condemn to death. And as *κριθῶσιν* by its antithetic relation to *ζῶσιν*, suggests condemnation to *death*, so *ζῶσιν*, both by its relation here to *κριθῶσιν* and in the former passage to *ζωοποιηθεῖς*, takes on the idea of coming out of death into a state of life, the permanence or continuance of which is signified by the use of the present tense.

The condemnation to death is *κατὰ ἀνθρώπους*, under the arbitrament of human tribunals. The attainment to life is *κατὰ θεόν*, under the arbitrament of God. The judgment of the human tribunal is upon the Christian *σαρκί*,—again the dative of respect. It is only in the *σάρξ*, the body, that is subject to dissolution and to suffering, the poor, frail tabernacle of flesh, that the sentence of the human court can take effect. The persecutor can crush this body. He can do no more. The admission, under the edict of God, to the higher and eternal life is *πνεύματι*, in the spiritual body. It can be in no other, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” It is in the spiritualized and glorified body alone that the perfection of that endless life before the throne can be realized.

The twofold purpose, then, for which the Gospel was preached to these *νεκροί* we find to be that in their bodies of flesh they might receive the sentence of condemnation at human tribunals, but in their spiritual bodies might attain to eternal life by the edict of God. If this be the true interpretation, and it seems to meet all the requirements of the case better than any other, then there can be no doubt that the *νεκροί*, though dead when the Apostle wrote, were living when the Gospel was preached to them, because a part of the very purpose in the preaching was that they might suffer condemnation before human tribunals while still in the flesh. No matter whether you give to *χρισθῶσιν* its gentler or severer meaning, the fact still remains that after the Gospel was preached to these hearers, and as the fulfilment of a purpose in its preaching, they were to stand in the flesh before human tribunals and be judged. The preaching was to precede the judgment, and the judgment was to take place while still in the flesh.

The only way of escaping this conclusion, and it is one of which the future probationists are not slow to avail themselves, is by trying to make it appear that *σαρκί* is to be joined with *κατὰ ἀνθρώπους* and not with *χρισθῶσιν*. Those who hold this view make the judgment to be one rendered by God after death, the dead who had never heard the Gospel in this life, having it preached to them, that they might be judged as men are judged who heard it in the flesh. But leaving out of view the fact that this throws the interpretation out of all relation to the context, it is fatally defective in that it cannot be carried out in the antithetic clause; for if the *σαρκί* of the first clause is joined with *κατὰ ἀνθρώπους*, the *πνεύματι* of the second clause must be joined with *κατὰ θεόν*. If the first is “after the manner of men who heard the Gospel in the flesh,” the second would be “after the manner of God who heard the Gospel in the spirit.” Every law of parallelism and of antithesis requires that these datives should be connected with the verbs as we have connected them; that they should tell of a

judgment in the fleshly body and a living in the spiritual body. As in the second clause *πνεύματι* manifestly connects with *ζῶσιν*, so in the first clause *σαρκί* connects with *κρίθωσιν*, and so our interpretation stands.

It may be objected, however, that this interpretation labors under the serious difficulty of holding that the Gospel was preached to men in order that they might be condemned to death. This objection has been incidentally met as we passed along; but it may be proper at this point to announce that, so far from this being a difficulty, it is a strong point in favor of the interpretation. As the first great purpose for which God sent his Christ into the world was that "the Son of Man might suffer many things," as it was by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" that he was delivered to those by whose wicked hands he was crucified and slain, as it was part of God's eternal purpose that He should thus "witness a good confession before Pontius Pilate"; so when the Apostle here exhorts these persecuted Christians to "rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ," he would have them know that these young martyrs who have fallen, many of them just as they had put the harness of the Gospel on, have not thrown away their lives—their Christian life has not been a failure or their death a disaster. When God sent the Gospel to them with its saving and transforming power, it was with the purpose that they should become witnesses, witnessing even to the death before these pagan tribunals as Christ had done before Pilate, that thus being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they might be "partakers also of His glory." Giving up, in testimony of their faith in Him, under the sentence of human tribunals, the frail life of these perishing earthly bodies, they should attain through the infinite grace of God, and the atoning merit of the sacrifice of Christ, that life in incorruptible and glorified bodies which is eternal and changeless before the throne of God.

We reach a point here, therefore, where we can turn and look back over both the passages we have studied. We have been consistent in giving to *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* the same construction and meaning. We have maintained the literal as against the figurative sense of all the pivotal words upon which the interpretation turns. We have made a just discrimination between the pagan *κρίθωσιν* and the evangelical *εὐαγγελίζωσιν*, and Peter must have had some good reason for using one in the one passage and the other in the other. We have given most delicate balancing to the manifest parallelisms and antitheses of the two closely related sentences. We have presented an interpretation which seems to us to bring the two passages into closest harmony with the spirit of the context, and with the aim of the whole epistle. Our conclusion is that the Apostle meant to fortify his suffering brethren against the agonies of martyrdom, by pointing them in

the first passage to the glorious resurrection life, with all its awards and triumphs, upon which Christ entered through the sufferings he endured at the hands of his persecutors, and by pointing them in the second passage to the fellowship of their martyred brethren with Christ in suffering and in glory—to the higher and unchanging life with all its honors and rewards to which, by the arbitrament of the judgment day, their beloved *νεκροί*, their fallen martyr-comrades should, through God's mercy and grace, attain, and in which, if they too should fall victims to the sword or the torch of the persecutor, they also might through the same grace and mercy have a share.

### SERMONIC SECTION.

#### WHY THE PILLARS OF HIRAM WERE CROWNED WITH LILIES.

BY REV. WESLEY REID DAVIS, D.D.

(A May-day Lecture, in the Reformed Church on the Heights, Brooklyn, N. Y.)

*On the top of the pillars was lily work.*—1 Kings vii : 22.

THIS expression reveals to us the strength and beauty of Jerusalem's Temple. The original pattern of this was given to Moses when he was in the Mount with God. That pattern took its first form in the Tabernacle of the wilderness, which was the germ of the splendid structure subsequently built upon the hill of Moriah; planned by David, perfected by Solomon.

In that divinely constructed Temple there is nothing that so charms the heart, outside of the Holy of holies, as the two columns wrought by Hiram of Tyre. These were of finest brass, of great height, perfect in symmetry, and crowned with lilies. They were called Jachin and Boaz, the first standing upon the right, and the second on the left, as the worshipper entered the Temple court. The meaning of Jachin is "To establish"; and of Boaz, "In strength"; and hence, if we take the two names of the columns, and bind them together, we have the thought, He, (that is, the Infinite One) will establish in strength. The two conceptions are akin—the conception of power and the conception of stability.

Hiram, who wrought these pillars, was the son of a widow in Tyre. He was named after the king. It is said of him, that he had inspirations for all cunning workmanship, for all forms of beautiful device, conceiving his talent to be a gift from Jehovah. Labor was not, then, a thing of just so many strokes for so much pay, or so much toil as against so many hours; but was a divinely ordered force, coming into man's life, taking up his faculties and teaching him that he was a workman, not simply for himself, or for some one that was set over him, but that he was a workman for God, and that his toil must be the output of his worship. Whether he sculptured a column or drove a nail, or set the plough in the furrow, he was doing a divine thing. And that is the highest conception of Christianity; a Christianity that can get itself down into the ordinary processes of life and, grasping these, change and beautify them as they go on. There are persons who say, "I can only adore God when I am wrapped in the devotions of solitude, standing upon some summit of meditation: I cannot adore Him when I am busy about my tasks." Such a creed as that is half atheistic. The Christ dignified toil, and revealed the fact that it might be a consecration. In the kind of work that was done in the shop at Nazareth, there was a proof of his Divinity. He never did a