

TALMAGE ON THE CREEDS

HE GIVES HIS OPINION IN ANSWER TO MANY QUESTIONS.

Satan Himself Is the Chief Instigator of the Controversy Now Raging in Many Churches, and Earnest Work for Christ Is the Remedy.

BROOKLYN, June 14.—Dr. Talmage dealt in his sermon this morning with the very timely topic—the Battle of Creeds. After so long and exhaustive a discussion in clerical circles and in the secular press there seemed nothing more to be said on the subject. Dr. Talmage, however, has his own way of looking at all subjects, and even people who thought they knew all that could be said on both sides received light from the fresh and original contribution which he made to the controversy. His text was taken from Proverbs xxvi, 17: "He that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him is like one that taketh a dog by the ear."

Solomon here deprecates the habit of rushing in between contestants, of taking part in the antagonisms of others, of joining in fights which they ought to shun. They do no good to others and get damage for themselves. He compares it to the experiment of taking a dog by the ear. Nothing so irritates the canines as to be clutched by the lugs. Take them by the back of the neck and lift them and it does not seem to hurt or offend; but you take the dog by the ear, and he will take you with his teeth. In all the history of kennels no intelligent or spirited dog will start that "Now," says Solomon, "you go into quarrels or controversies that are not yours and you will get incensed and torn and bitten. He that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him is like one that taketh a dog by the ear."

THIS IS THE AGE OF CONTROVERSY. This is a time of resounding ecclesiastical quarrel. Never within your memory or mine has the air been so full of missiles. The Presbyterian church has on hand a controversy so great that it finds it prudent to postpone its settlement for at least one more year, hoping that something will turn up. Somebody might die or a new general assembly may have grace to handle the exciting questions. The Episcopal church has cast out some recalcitrants, and its digestive organs are taxed to the utmost in trying to assimilate others. "Shall women preach?" "Or be sent as delegates to conferences?" are questions that have puzzled many of our Methodist brethren on the "anxious seat." And the waters in some of the great baptistries are troubled waters. Because of the controversies through out Christendom the air is now like an August afternoon about 5 o'clock, when it has been steaming hot all day, and clouds are gathering, and there are lions of thunder with grumbling voices and flashing eyes coming forth from their cloudy lairs, and people are waiting for the full burst of the tempest. I am not much of a weather prophet, but the clouds look to me mostly like wind clouds. It may be a big blow, but I hope it will soon be over. In regard to the Battle of the Creeds, I am every day asked what I think about it. I want to make it so plain this morning what I think that no one will ever ask again.

Let those who are jurymen in the ecclesiastical courts have the questions put directly before them—weigh and decide. Let the rest of us keep out. The most damaging thing on earth is religious controversy. No one ever comes out of it as good a man as he goes in. Some of the ministers in all denominations who before the present assembly were good and kind and useful, now seem almost swearing mad. These brethren notice always upon their violent meetings with prayer before devouring each other, thus saying grace before meat. They have a moral hydrophobia that makes us think they have taken a dog by the ear. They never read the Imperial Psalms of David with such zest as since the Briggs and Newton and MacQuary and Bridgman and Brooks questions got into full swing. May the rams of the sheepfold soon have their horns sawed off! Before the controversies are settled a good many ministers will, through what they call liberalism, be landed into practical infidelity, and others through what they call conservatism will shrink up into bigots tight and hard as the mummies of Egypt which got through their controversies three thousand years ago.

SATAN STIRRED UP. This trouble throughout Christendom was directly inspired by Satan. He saw that too much good was being done. He craves to be being gathered by hundreds of thousands to the Gospel standard. The victories for God and the truth were too near together. Too many churches were being dedicated. Too many ministers were being ordained. Too many philanthropies were being fostered. Too many souls were being saved. It had been a dull time in the nether world, and the arrivals were too few. So Satan one day rose upon his throne and said, "Ye powers of darkness, bear!" And all up and down the caverns the cry was, "Hear! Hear!" Satan said: "There is that American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It must either be demolished or crippled, or the first thing you know they will have all nations brought to God. Apollyon the Younger! You go up to Andover and get the professors to discussing whether the heathen can be saved without the Gospel. Divert them from the work of missions and get them in angry convention in a room at Young's hotel, Boston, and by the time they get to the cause of foreign missions will be gloriously and magnificently injured. Diabolus the Younger! You go up and get Union Theological Seminary of New York and the general assembly of the Presbyterian church at Detroit at sword's points and diverted from the work of making earnest ministers of religion, and turn that old Presbyterian church, which has been keeping us out of customers for hundreds of years, into a splendid pandemonium on a small scale. Aladdon the Third! You go up and assault that old Episcopal church, which has been storming the heavens for centuries with the sublimest prayers that were ever uttered—church of Bishop Lightfoot, Bishop White and Bishop McVaine, and get that demonstration discussing men instead of discussing the eternities. Aladdon the Fourth! You go up to that old Methodist church, which has, through her revivals, saved millions to heaven which we would otherwise have added to our population. The church of Wesley and Matthew Simpson, against which we have an especial grudge, and get them so absorbed in discussing whether women shall take part in her conference that they shall not have so much time to discuss how many sons and daughters she will take to glory."

What amazes me most is that all people do not see that the entire movement at this time all over Christendom is satanic. Many of the infamously attacks and hidden snares and so ingenious that they are not easily discovered. But here is a

bold and uncovered attempt of the powers of darkness to split up the churches, to get ministers to take each other by the throat, to make religion a laughing stock of earth and hell, to leave the Bible with no more respect or authenticity than an old almanac of 1822, which told what would be the change of weather six months ahead and in what quarter of the month it is best to plant turnips. In a word, the effort is to stop the evangelization of the world. It seems to me very much like this: There has been a railroad accident and many are wounded and dying. There are several drug stores near the scene of casualty. All the doctors and druggists are needed and needed right away. Bandages, stimulants, anaesthetics, medicines of all sorts. What are the doctors and druggists doing? Discussing the contents of some old bottles on the top shelf, bottles of medicine which some doctors and druggists mixed two or three hundred years ago. "Come doctors!" "Come druggists!" cry the people, "and help these wounded and dying men." Are being brought from beneath the timbers of the crushed rail train. In a little while it will be too late. Come for God's sake! Come right away!" "No," says the doctor, "not until we have settled whether the medicine on that top shelf was rightly mixed. I say there were too many drops of laudanum in it, and this other man says there were too many drops of camphire, and we must get this question settled before we can attend to the railroad accident."

DOCTORS DISPUTE WHILE PATIENTS DIE. And one doctor takes another doctor by the collar and pushes him back against the counter, and one of the druggists says, "If you will not admit that I am right about that one bottle I will smash every bottle in your apothecary store," and he proceeds to smash. Meanwhile, on the lower shelf, plainly marked and within easy reach are all the medicines needed for the helping of the sufferers by the accident, and in that drawer, easily opened, are bandages and splints for the lack of which fifty people are dying outside the drug store. Before I apply this thought every one sees its application. Here is this old world, and it is off track. Sin and sorrow have collided with it. The groan of agony is fourteen hundred million voices. God has opened for relief and cure a great sanitarium, a great house of mercy, and all its shelves are filled with balsam, with catholicons, with help—glorious help, tremendous help, help so easily administered that you need not get upon any step ladder to reach it. You can reach it on your knees and then hand it to all the suffering, and the sinning, and the dying. Comfort for all the troubled! Pardon for all the guilty! Peace for all the dying! But while the world is waiting the relief and perishing for lack of it, what is the church? Why, it is full of fighting doctors. On the top shelf are some old bottles, which several hundred years ago Calvin or Arminius, or the members of the synod of Dort, or the formers of the Nicene creed filled with holy mixtures, and until we get a revision of these old bottles and find out whether we must take a teaspoonful or a tablespoonful, and whether before or after meals, let the nations suffer and groan and die. Save the bottles by all means, if you cannot save anything else.

Now, what part shall you and I take in this controversy which fills all Christendom with clangor? My advice is, take no part. In time of riot all mayors of cities advise good citizens to stay at home or in their places of business, and in this time of religious riot I advise you to go about your regular work for God. Leave the bottles on the higher shelves for others to fight about, and take the two bottles on the shelf within easy reach, the two bottles which are all this dying world needs; the one filled with a potion which is for the church, and of all things the other filled with a potion which is for the soothing of all suffering. Two gospel bottles! Christ mixed them out of his own tears and blood. In them is no human admixture. Spend no time on the mysteries! You, a man only five or six feet high, ought not to wade an ocean a thousand feet deep. My own experience has been vivid. I devoted the most of my time for years in trying to understand God's eternal decrees, and I was determined to find out what the Lord let sin come into the world, and I set out to explore the doctrine of the Trinity, and with a yardstick to measure the throne of the Infinite. As with all my predecessors, the attempt was a dead failure. For the last thirty years I have not spent two minutes in studying the controverted points of theology, and if I live thirty years longer I will not spend the thousandth part of a second in such exploration. I know two things, and these I will devote all the years of my life in proclaiming—God will through Jesus Christ pardon sin, and he will comfort trouble.

KEEP OUT OF THE SQUABBLE. Creeds have their uses, but just now the church is creeded to death. The young men entering the ministry are going to be launched in the thickest fog that ever settled on the coasts. As I am told that in all our services students of Princeton and Union and Drew and other theological seminaries are present, and as these words will come to thousands of young men who are soon to enter the ministry, let me say to such and through them to their associates, keep out of the bewildering, belittling, destroying and angry controversy of creeds. The questions our doctors of divinity are trying to settle will not be settled until the day after the day of judgment. It is such a poor economy of time to spend years and years in trying to fathom the unfathomable, when in five minutes in heaven we will know all we want to know. Wait till we get our throne. Wait until the light of eternity flashes upon our newly ascended spirits. It is useless for ants on different sides of a mole hill to try to discuss the comparative heights of Mount Blanc and Mount Washington. Let me say to all young men about to enter the ministry that soon the greatest novelty in the world will be the unadulterated religion of Jesus Christ. Preach that and you will have a crowd. The world is sick to regurgitation with the modern quacks in religion. The world has been swinging off from the old Gospel, but it will swing back, and by the time you young men go into the pulpits the cry will be coming up from all the millions of mankind, "Give us the bread of life; no sweetened bread, no bread with sickly raisins stuck here and there into it, but old fashioned bread as God our mother mixed it and baked it!"

You see, God knew as much when he made the Bible as he knows now. He has not learned a single thing in six thousand years. He knew at the start that the human race would go wrong and what would be the best means of its restoration and redemption. And the law which was thundered on Mount Sinai, from whose top I had the two tables of stone in yonder wall transported, is the perfect law. And the Gospel which Christ announced while dying on that mount from which I brought this stone in yonder wall, and which Paul preached on that hill from which I brought yonder granite, is the Gospel that is going to save the world. Young man, put on that Gospel armor! No other armor will triumph like that. No other shield will protect like that. No other helmet will

glance off the battle axes like that. Our theological seminaries are doing glorious work, but if ever such theological seminaries shall cease to prepare young men for this plain Gospel advocacy and shall become mere philosophical schools for guessing about God and guessing about the Bible and guessing about the soul, they will cease their usefulness, and young men, as in olden time, when they would study for the Gospel ministry, will put themselves under the care of some intelligent and warm-hearted pastor and kneel with him in family prayer at the parsonage, and go with him into the room of the sick and the dying, and see what victories the grace of God can gain when the couch of the dying saint is the marathon.

VITAL RELIGION IS THE REMEDY. That is the way the mighty ministers of the Gospel were made in olden times. Oh, for a great wave of revival to roll over our theological seminaries and our pulpits and our churches and our ecclesiastical courts, and over all Christendom! That would be the end of controversy. While such a deluge would float the ark of God higher and higher, it would put all the lions and tigers and reptiles of raging ecclesiasticism fifteen cubits under.

Now, what is the simple fact that you in the pew and Sabbath school class and reformatory association and we in the pulpits have to deal with? It is this: That God has somewhere, and it matters not where, but somewhere, provided a great heaven, great for quietness for those who want quiet, great for vast assemblage for those who like multitudes, great for architecture for those who like architecture, great for beautiful landscape for those who like beautiful landscapes, great for music for those who like music; great for processions for those who like armies on white horses, and great for anything that one especially desires in such a rapturous dominion; and through the doings of one who was born about five miles south of Jerusalem and died about ten minutes' walk from its eastern gate all may enter that great heaven for the earnest and heartfelt asking: Is that all? That is all. What, then, is your work? Our work is to persuade people to face that way and start thitherward and finally go in. But has not religion something to do with this world as well as the next? Oh, yes; but do you not see that if the people start for heaven on their way there they will do all the good they can? They will at the very start of the journey get so much of the spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of kindness and self sacrifice and generosity and burden bearing and helpfulness, that every step they take will resound with good deeds. Oh, get your religion out of evil! Get it down out of the high towers! Get it on a level with the wants and woes of our poor human race! Get it out of the dusty theological books that few people read, and put it in their hearts and lives. Good thing is it to profess religion when you join the church, but every day, somehow, we ought to profess religion.

A peculiar patchwork quilt was, during the civil war, made by a lady and sent to the hospitals at the front. She had a boy in the army, and was naturally interested in the welfare of the soldiers. But what a patchwork quilt she sent! On every block of the quilt was a passage of Scripture or a verse of a hymn. The months and years of the war went by. On that quilt many a wounded man had lain and suffered and died. But one morning the hospital nurse saw a patient under that blanket kissing the figure of a leaf in the quilt, and the nurse supposed he was only wandering in his mind. But no; he was the son of the mother who had made the quilt and he recognized that figure of a leaf as part of a gown his mother used to wear, and it reminded him of home. "Do you know where this quilt came from?" he asked. The nurse answered, "I can find out, for there was a card pinned fast to it, and I will find that." Sure enough, it confirmed what he thought. Then the nurse pointed to a passage of Scripture in the block of the quilt, the passage which says, "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." "Yes," said the dying soldier, "I was a great way off, but my father ran and kissed me and told me that I was his son, and had compassion on me." "Shall I write to your mother and tell her that the lost one is found and the dead is alive again?" He answered, "I wish you would, if it would not be too much trouble." Do you suppose that woman who made that quilt and filled it with Scripture passages had any trouble about who Melchizedek was, or how the doctrine of God's sovereignty can be harmonized with man's free agency, or who wrote the Pentateuch or the incoherence of the Nicene creed? No, no; go to work for God and man suffering and all your doubts and fears and mysteries and unbeliefs put together will not be heavy enough to stir the chemist's scales, which is accustomed to weighing one-fiftieth part of a grain of chamomile flowers. Why stop a moment to understand the mysteries when there are so many certitudes? Why spend our time exploring the dark garrets and coal holes of a great palace which has above ground one hundred rooms flooded with sunshine? It takes all my time to search what has been revealed, so that I have no time to upturn and root out and drag forth what has not been revealed. The most of the effort to solve mysteries and explore the inexplicable and harmonize things is an attempt to help the Lord out of theological difficulties. Good enough! Invention, my brother, no doubt; but the Lord is not anxious to have you help him. He will keep his throne without your assistance. Don't be afraid that the Bible will fall apart from inaccuracies. It hung together many centuries before you were born, and your funeral sermon will be preached from a text taken from its undisturbed authenticity.

LAY HOLD ON GOD'S WORD. Do you know that I think that if all ministers in all denominations would stop this nonsense of ecclesiastical strife and take hold the word of God, the only question with each of us being how many souls we can bring to Christ and in how short a time, the Lord would soon appear for the salvation of all nations? When the young queen of England visited Scotland many years ago great preparations were made for her reception. The vessel in which she sailed was far out at sea, but every hill in Scotland was illumined with bonfires and torches. The night was set on fire with artificial illumination. The queen, standing on ship's deck, knew from that that Scotland was full of heartiest welcome, and the thunder of the great guns at Glasgow and Edinburgh assailed all the echoes. Boom! they sounded out over the sea. Boom! they sounded up among the hills. Do you know that I think that our King would land if we were only ready to receive him? Why not call to him from all our churches, from all our hospitals, from all our homes? Why not all at once light all the torches of Gospel invitation? Why not ring all the bells of welcome? Why not light up the long night of the world's sin and suffering with bonfires of victory? Why not unlimber all the Gospel batteries and boom across the world the truth, and boom like that I think the King is ready to land if we are ready to receive

him. Why cannot we who are now living see his descent? Must it all be postponed to inter ages? Has not our poor world groaned long enough in mortal agonies? Have there not been martyrs enough, and have not the lakes of tears and the rivers of blood been deep enough? Why cannot the final glory roll in now? Why cannot this dying century feel the incoming tides of the oceans of heavenly mercy? Must our eyes close in death and our ears take on the deafness of the tomb, and these hearts beat their last throbs before the day comes in? O Christ! Why tarriest thou? Wilt thou not, before we go the way of all the earth, let us see thy scarred feet under some noonday cloud coming this way? Before we die let us behold thy hands that were spiked, spread out in benediction for a lost race. And why not let us, with our mortal ears, hear that voice which spoke peace as thou didst go up, speak pardon and emancipation and love and holiness and joy to all nations as thou comest down? But the skies do not part. I hear no rumbling of chariot wheels coming down over the sapphire. There is no swoop of wings. I see no flash of angelic appearances. All is still. I hear nothing but the tramp of my own heart as I pause between these utterances. The king does not land because the world is not ready, and the church is not ready. To clear the way for the Lord's coming let us devote all our energies of body, mind and soul. A Russian general riding over the battlefield, his horse rearing amid the dying and dead, a wounded soldier asked him for water, but the officer did not understand his language and knew not what the poor fellow wanted. Then the soldier cried out "Christos," and that word meant sympathy and help, and the Russian officer dismounted and put to the lips of the sufferer a cooling draught. Be that the charmed word with which we go forth to do our whole duty. In many languages it has only a little difference of pronunciation. Christos! It stands for sympathy and help. It stands for hope. It stands for heaven. Christos! In that name we were baptized. In that name we took our first sacrament. That will be the battle shout that will win the whole world for God! Christos! Put it on our banners when we march! Put it on our lips when we die! Put it in the funeral psalm at our obsequies! Put it on the plain slab over our grave! Christos! Blessed be his glorious name forever! Amen!

Great Men versus Change of Name. I notice the revival of the old story of the change young John Rowland made in his name and fortune when he substituted his Rowland with Stanley, and dropped John for Henry M., being now known to the world as the great African explorer. This reminds me that several of the great men known to science, literature, war and art were originally known by names almost wholly unknown to the world at large. Henry Wilson, vice president under Grant, was christened as Henry Colbath, and was known by that name until after the end of his nineteenth year. By a curious coincidence U. S. Grant, who was president at the time Wilson was vice, as above mentioned, was also a hero with a changed name. Prior to young Grant's eighteenth birthday "U. S. Grant" was a term unknown even in the embryo general's family. "H. U. Grant" would sound odd if written on the pages of history, but, in fact, would be perfectly proper. The great general was christened Hiram Ulysses Grant, and by the name of Hiram or "Hi" was known to all his school fellows. Hon. T. L. Harmer, an ex-member of congress, is responsible for "U. S." Grant being thrust upon the world. It came about in this way: When the name of the aspiring young man was sent in as candidate to West Point, by some oversight on the part of Mr. Harmer it was sent as "U. S." in place of "H. U." Grant. "U. S." Grant was appointed. When he graduated in 1845 his commission and diploma were both made out to "U. S." Grant, therefore he was forced to accept the inevitable. Jules Grevy, so well known as the late president of the French republic, is neither "Jules" nor "Grevy," but Judith Fancoir Paul Greviot. Frank Leslie was plain Henry Carter until after he was twenty-seven years old, adopting the new name on his arrival in America.—St. Louis Republic.

The Key to Victory in War. No inventions, no changes in arms, can alter the maxims of strategy. These are immutable. Their use depends on the character of the captains. But tactics change with inventions in firearms. The maneuvers of the battlefield must depend upon the weapons of the enemy, upon the danger zones of his fire. From close we have gone to open order, only to find that scattered groups are apt to weaken discipline; and today more than ever before we need morale and cohesiveness on the battlefield. That commander who, despite the fearful decimation of modern artillery and small arms, can keep his battalions the closest in heart, will win the day. Many intelligent essays are published to prove this or the other system to be the one to govern the maneuvers of the coming battlefield, but in truth no one knows or can argue out what is to be. A theory sound today is discarded tomorrow. But a few facts are patent. Reliance can be placed only on a strictly national army. That nation the breasts of whose citizens are bared for her defense with honest patriotism and which has leaders who leave no stones unturned to keep abreast of war, will remain the strongest. No nation, in the present condition of armed expectancy which pervades all Europe, will, by better arms or more recent inventions, be able to dispense with this foundation. The rule held good in the days of the burgher soldier of Rome. It holds good now.—Colonel T. A. Dodge in Forum.

Praying Away a Plague. A regular lawsuit with creatures obnoxious and hurtful was a common procedure until the Eighteenth century. In 1538 an immense horde of grasshoppers came from Asia into middle Europe. Austria and Italy suffered most. Everything was eaten up. The swarms seem to have been about as thick and destructive as those in Kansas in 1874. The people used all possible devices against the eggs and the insects. In despair they took to prayer and the priests. The following judgment was pronounced: "As grasshoppers are obnoxious to the country and to men, be it resolved by the court that the priests, by candles burning from the pulpit, condemn them in the name of God, of his Son, and of the Holy Ghost." As all such creatures have their natural cycle of development, and pass away at the end of it, it is likely that some one's maledictions hit it at the right moment. But the trouble was that when expelled prematurely they must go to some other place and to men, be it resolved by the court that upon the conscience of some, and they refused to join in prayers to any such end.—Mary E. Spencer in St. Louis Globe Democrat.

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