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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

A CHARACTERISTIC AND ELOQUENT DISCOURSE.

He Takes for His Subject From Conquest to Conquest—Is Christianity Retrograding and the Bible Losing Its Hold?—An Encouraging Discourse.

At the Tabernacle.

In the Brooklyn Tabernacle Sunday Rev. Dr. Talmage preached a most eloquent and characteristically vigorous sermon in refutation of the oft renewed assertion of the enemies of religion that Christianity is retrograding and the Bible losing its hold upon the hearts and consciences of men. The subject of the discourse was, "From Conquest to Conquest," the text being taken from Amos ix, 13, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper."

Picture of a tropical clime with a season so prosperous that the harvest reaches clear over to the planting time, and the swarthy husbandman swinging the sickle in the thick grain almost feels the breath of the horses on his shoulders, the horses hitched to the plow preparing for a new crop. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper." When is that? That is now. That is this day when hardly have you done reaping one harvest before the plowman is getting ready for another.

I know that many declare that Christianity has collapsed; that the Bible is an obsolete book; that the Christian church is on the retreat. I will here and now show that the opposite of that is true.

An Arab guide was leading a French infidel across a desert, and ever and anon the Arab guide would get down in the sand and pray to the Lord. It disgusted the French infidel, and after awhile as the Arab got up from one of his prayers the infidel said, "How do you know there is any God?" and the Arab guide said, "How do I know that a man and a camel passed among our tents last night? I know it by the footprints in the sand. And you want to know how I know whether there is any God. Look at that sunset. Is that the footstep of a man?" And by the same process you and I have come to understand that this book is the footstep of God.

Growth of Christianity.

But now let us see whether the Bible is a last year's almanac. Let us see whether the church of God is a Bull Run retreat, muskets, canteens, and haversacks strewn all the way. The great English historian, Sharon Turner, a man of vast learning and of great accuracy, not a clergyman, but an attorney as well as a historian, gives this overwhelming statistic in regard to Christianity and in regard to the number of Christians in the different centuries: In the first century, 300,000 Christians; in the second century, 2,000,000 Christians; in the third century, 5,000,000 Christians; in the fourth century, 10,000,000 Christians; in the fifth century, 15,000,000 Christians; in the sixth century, 20,000,000 Christians; in the seventh century, 24,000,000 Christians; in the eighth century, 30,000,000 Christians; in the ninth century, 40,000,000 Christians; in the tenth century, 50,000,000 Christians; in the eleventh century, 60,000,000 Christians; in the twelfth century, 80,000,000 Christians; in the thirteenth century, 75,000,000 Christians; in the fourteenth century, 80,000,000 Christians; in the fifteenth century, 10,000,000 Christians; in the sixteenth century, 125,000,000 Christians; in the seventeenth century, 155,000,000 Christians; in the eighteenth century, 200,000,000 Christians; and now there are 25,000,000 missionaries and native helpers and evangelists. At the beginning of this century there were only 50,000 heathen converts. Now there are 1,750,000 converts from heathendom.

Poor Christianity! What a pity it has no friends! How lonesome it must be! Who will take it out of the poorhouse? Poor Christianity! Three hundred millions in one century. In a few weeks of the year 1881, 2,000,000 copies of the New Testament distributed. Why, the earth is like an old castle with twenty gates and a park of artillery ready to thunder down every gate. Lay aside all Christendom and see how heathendom is being surrounded and honeycombed and attacked by this all conquering gospel. At the beginning of this century there were only 150 missiaries. Now there are 25,000 missionaries and native helpers and evangelists. At the beginning of this century there were only 50,000 heathen converts. Now there are 1,750,000 converts from heathendom.

There is not a sea-coast on the planet but the battery of the gospel is planted and ready to march on, north, south, east, west. You all know that the chief work of an army is to plant the batteries. It may take many days to plant the batteries, and they may do all their work in ten minutes. These batteries are being planted all along the sea-coasts and in all nations. It may take a good while to plant them, and they may do all their work in one day. They will. Nations are to be born in a day. But just come back to Christendom and recognize the fact that during the last ten years as many people have connected themselves with evangelical churches as connected themselves with the churches in the first fifty years of this century.

Survival of the Fittest.

People used to say, "There are so many different denominations of Christians. That shows there is nothing in religion." I have to tell you that all denominations agree on the two or three or four radical doctrines of the Christian religion. They are unanimous in regard to Jesus Christ, and they are unanimous in regard to the divinity of the Scriptures. How is it on the other side? All split up. You cannot find two of them alike. Oh, it

makes me sick to see these literary fops going along with a copy of Darwin under one arm and a case of transfused grasshoppers and butterflies under the other arm, telling about the "survival of the fittest," and Huxley's protoplasm and the nebular hypothesis!

The fact is that some naturalists, just as soon as they find out the difference between the feelers of a wasp and the horns of a beetle, begin to patronize the Almighty, while Agassiz, glorious Agassiz, who never made any pretensions of being a Christian, puts his feet on the doctrine of evolution and says, "I see that many of the naturalists of our day are adopting facts which do not bear observation or have not passed under observation." These men warring with each other—Darwin warring against Lamarck, Wallace warring against Cope, even Herschel denouncing Ferguson.

They do not agree about anything. They do not agree on embryology; do not agree on the graduation of the species. What do they agree on? Herschel writes a whole chapter on the errors of astronomy. La Placé declares that the moon was not put in the right place. He says that if it had been put four times farther from the earth than it is now there would be more harmony in the universe, but Lionville comes up just in time to prove that the moon was put in the right place.

How many colors woven into the light? Seven, says Isaac Newton. Three, says David Brewster. How high is the aurora borealis? Two and a half miles, says Lias. One hundred and sixty eight miles, says Twining. How far is the sun from the earth? Seventy-six million miles, says Lacaille. Eighty-two million miles, says Humboldt. Ninety million miles, says Henderson. One hundred and four million miles, says Meyer. Only a little difference of 2,000,000 miles! All split up among themselves, not agreeing on anything. They come and say that churches of Jesus Christ are divided on the great doctrines. All united they are in Jesus Christ, in the divinity of the Scriptures. While they come up and propose to render their verdict, no two of them agree on that verdict.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed on a verdict?" asks the court clerk of the jury as they come in after having spent the whole night in deliberating. If the jury say, "Yes, we have agreed," the verdict is recorded. But suppose one of the jurymen says, "I think the man was guilty of murder," and another says, "I think he was guilty of manslaughter in the second degree," and another man says, "I think he was guilty of assault and battery with intent to kill." The judge would say, "Go back to your room and bring in a verdict. Agree on something. That is no verdict."

No Growth of Infidelity. Here these infidel scientists have impaled themselves as a jury to decide this trial between infidelity, the plaintiff, and Christianity, the defendant, and after being out for centuries they come in to render their verdict. Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed on a verdict? No, no. Then go back for another 500 years and deliberate and agree on something. There is not a poor miserable wretch in the Tomb Court tomorrow that could be condemned by a jury that did not agree on the verdict, and yet you expect us to give up our glorious Christianity to please these men who cannot agree on anything.

Alas, my friends, the church of Jesus Christ, instead of falling back, is on the advance. I am certain it is on the advance. O Lord God, take thy sword from thy thigh and ride forth to the victory.

I am mightily encouraged because I find among other things that while this Christianity has been bombarded for centuries infidelity has not destroyed one church, or crippled one minister, or uprooted one verse of one chapter of all the Bible. The church all the time getting the victory, and the shot and shell of its enemies nearly exhausted.

I have been examining their ammunition lately. I have looked all through their cartridge boxes. They have not in the last twenty years advanced one new idea. They have utterly exhausted their ammunition in the battle against the church and against the Scriptures, while the sword of the Lord Almighty is as keen as it ever was. We are just getting our troops into line. They are coming up in companies, and in regiments, and in brigades, and you will hear a shout after awhile that will make the earth quake and the heavens ring with "Alleluia!" It will be this, "Forward, the whole line!"

And then I find another most encouraging thought in the fact that the secular printing press and pulpit seem harnessed in the same team for the proclamation of the gospel. Every Wall street banker to-morrow in New York, every State street banker to-morrow in Boston, every Third street banker to-morrow in Philadelphia, every banker in the United States and every merchant will have in his pocket a treatise on Christianity, a call to repentance—ten, twenty, or thirty passages of Scripture in the reports of sermons preached throughout these cities and throughout the land to-day. It will be so in Chicago, so in New Orleans, so in Charleston, so in Boston, so in Philadelphia, so everywhere.

I know the tract societies are doing a grand and glorious work, but I tell you there is no power on earth to-day equal to the fact that the American printing press is taking up the sermons which are preached to a few hundred or a few thousand people, and on Monday morning or Monday evening in the morning and evening papers, scattering that truth to the millions. What a thought it is! What an encouragement for every Christian man!

A Fact Worth Knowing.

Besides that have you noticed that during the past few years every one of the doctrines of the Bible came under discussion in the secular press? Do you not remember a few years ago when every paper in the United States had an editorial on the subject, "Is

there such a Thing as Future Punishment?" It was the strangest thing that there should be a discussion in the secular papers on that subject, but every paper in the United States and Christendom discussed, "Is There Such a Thing as Retribution?" I know there were small wits who made sport of the discussion, but there was not an intelligent man on earth who, as the result of that discussion, did not ask himself the question, "What is going to be my eternal destiny?" So it was in regard to Tyndall's prayer gauge.

About twelve years ago you remember the secular papers discussed that with just as much earnestness as the religious papers, and there was not a man in Christendom who did not ask himself the question, "Is there anything in prayer?" May the creature impress the Creator? Oh, what a mighty fact, what a glorious fact—the secular printing press and the pulpit of the church of Jesus Christ harnessed in the same team!

Then look at the international series of Sunday school lessons. Do you know that every Sabbath between 3 and 5 o'clock there are 5,000,000 children studying the same lesson—a lesson prepared by the leading minds of the country and printed in the papers—and then these subjects are discussed and given over to the teachers, who give them over to the children, so whereas once and within our memory the children nibbled here and there, at a story in the Bible, now they are taken through from Genesis to Revelation, and we shall have 5,000,000 children forestalled for Christianity. My soul is full of exultation. I feel as if I could shout—I will shout, "Alleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

Where Science Has No Place.

Then you notice a more significant fact, if you have talked with people on the subject, that they are getting dissatisfied with philosophy and science as a matter of comfort. They say it does not amount to anything when you have a dead child in the house. They tell you when they were sick and the door of the future seemed opening the only comfort they could find was in the gospel. People are having demonstrated all over the land that science and philosophy cannot solve the trouble and woes of the world, and they want some other religion, and they are taking Christianity, the only sympathetic religion that ever came into the world.

You just take your scientific consolation into that room where a mother has lost her child. Try in that case your splendid doctrine of the "survival of the fittest." Tell her that child died because it was not worth as much as the other children. That is your "survival of the fittest." Go to that dying man and tell him to pluck up courage for the future. Use your transcendental phraseology upon him. Tell him he ought to be confident in the "great to be," and the "everlasting now," and the "eternal what is it." Just try your transcendentalism, and your philosophy, and your science on him.

Go to that widowed soul and tell her it was a geological necessity that her companion should be taken away from her, just as in the course of the world a history the megatherium had to pass out of existence, and then you go on in your scientific consolation until you get to the sublime fact that 50,000,000 years from now we ourselves may be scientific specimens on a geological shelf—petrified specimens of an extinct human race.

And after you have got all through with your consolation, if the afflicted soul is not cured by it, I will send forth from this church the plainest Christian we have, and with one-half hour of prayer and reading of Scripture promises the tears will be wiped away, and the house from floor to ceiling will be flooded with the calmness of an Indian summer sunset. There is where I see the triumph of Christianity. People are dissatisfied with everything else. They want God, they want Jesus Christ.

Practical Evidence.

Talk about the exact sciences; there is only one exact science. It is not mathematics. Taylor's logarithms have many imperfections. The only exact science is Christianity—the only thing under which you can appropriately write, "Quod erat demonstrandum." You tell me that two and two make four. I do not dispute it, but it is not so plain that two and two make four as that the Lord God Almighty made this world, and for man, the sinner, he sent his only begotten son to die.

I put on the witness stand to testify in behalf of Christianity the church on earth and all the church in Heaven. Not fifty, not 1,000, not 1,000,000, but all the church on earth and all the church in Heaven.

You tell me James A. Garfield was inaugurated President of the United States on the 4th of March, 1881. How do I know it? You tell me there were 20,000 persons who did see and hear him. I say I cannot take it anyhow; I did not see and hear him. Whose testimony will you take? You will not take my testimony. You say, "You know nothing about it. You were not there. Let us have the testimony of the 20,000 persons who stood before the capitol and heard that magnificent inaugural." Why, of course that is as your common sense dictates.

Now, here are some men who say they have never seen Christ crowned in the heart, and they do not believe it is ever done. There is a group of men who say they have never heard the voice of Christ. They have never heard the voice of God. They do not believe it ever transpired or was ever heard, that anything like it ever occurred. I point to twenty, 100,000 or 1,000,000 people who say, "Christ was crowned in our hearts' affections. We have seen Him and told Him in our soul, and we have heard His voice. We have heard it in storm and darkness. We have heard it again and again. Whose testimony will you take? These men who say they have not heard the voice of Christ, have not seen the coronation, or will you take the thousands and millions of Chris-

tians who testify of what they say with their own eyes and heard with their own ears?

Younger is an aged Christian after 50 years experience of the power of godliness in his soul. Ask this man whether, when he buried his dead, the religion of Jesus Christ was not a consolation. Ask him if through the long years of his pilgrimage the Lord ever forsook him. Ask him when he looks forward to the future if he has not a peace, and a joy, and a consolation the world cannot take away. Put his testimony of what he has seen and what he has felt opposite the testimony of a man who says he has not seen anything on the subject or felt anything on the subject. Will you take the testimony of people who have not seen or people who have seen.

You say morphia puts one to sleep. You say in time of sickness it is very useful. I deny it. Morphia never puts anybody to sleep. It never alleviates pain. You ask me why I say that. I have never tried it. I never took it. I deny that morphia is any soothing to the nerves or any quiet in times of sickness. I deny that morphia ever put anybody to sleep. But here are twenty persons who say they have all felt the soothing effect of a physician's prescribing morphia, whose testimony will you take—those who took the medicine or my testimony. I never having taken the medicine? Here is the gospel of Jesus Christ—an antidote for all troubles, the mightiest medicine that ever came down to earth. Here is a man who says, "I don't believe in it. There is no power in it." Here are other people who say, "We have found out its power and know its soothing influence. It has cured us." Whose testimony will you take in regard to this healing medicine?

I feel that I have convinced every man in this house that it is better fully to take the testimony of those who have never tried the gospel of Jesus Christ in their own heart and life. We have tens of thousands of witnesses. I believe you are ready to take their testimony. Young man, do not be ashamed to be a friend of the Bible. Do not put your thumb in your vest, as young men sometimes do, and swagger about talking of the glorious light of the nineteenth century, and of there being no need of a Bible. They have the light of nature in India and China and in all the dark places on earth. Did you ever hear that the light of nature gave them comfort for their trouble? They have lancets to cut and juggernauts to crush, but no comfort. Ah, my friends, you had better stop your skepticism. Suppose you are put in this class. Oh, father, your child is dying! What are you going to say to her?

Colonel Ethan Allen was a famous infidel in his day. His wife was a very consecrated woman. The mother instructed the daughter in the truths of Christianity. The daughter sickened and was about to die, and said to her father: "Father, shall I take your instruction, or shall I take mothers instruction? I am going to die now. I must have this matter decided." That man, who had been loud in his infidelity, said to his dying daughter: "My dear, you had better take your mother's religion." My advise is the same to you, O young man—you had better take your mother's religion. You know how it comforted her. You know what she said to you when she was dying. You had better take your mother's religion.

Skating in Stockholm.

Every one in Sweden skates in the winter, from the King downward. Lake Malar presents a series of magnificent open-air rinks. It is most exhilarating to join the varied throng, any evening after 7 o'clock, on one of these spacious swept and garnished areas by the side of the central island. They are here in their thousands, men, women, and children. And hand stands in the middle of the areas give facility for the music so loved by the Stockholmers, and electric lamps are swung round and about the enclosures. Above shines the moon benignant here as elsewhere, while on the outskirts of the rinks are booths where one may have hot coffee and sandwiches—the Swedish air is very appetizing—or shoot at blown eggs dancing on jets of water. Some of the Swedes skate superbly. They are deft at figure-skating, too—contriving most of their work on the middle part of the skate, which is made slightly convex for the purpose. Under such conditions of weather as exist here in winter, it is natural that there should be rink rules just as there are moral rules of the pavement. Cigar-ends and dogs are, you learn from the notices, not to be endured on the ice. This is well. But the ordinary Swede, whether man or woman, boy or girl, can endure some hard tumbles without complaining. They are a hardy people, and not apt to complain of trifling inconveniences—an admirable quality, when one reflects upon it, and well worthy of imitation.

Such a Funeral Too Gay.

The old member of Congress had been appointed as one of the committee to attend the remains of a fellow member to their last resting place. "I can't possibly go," he protested. "Why not?" inquired the chairman. "Because my wife died about a month ago." "But that certainly is no reason why you can't go to a funeral," expostulated the Chairman. "Not an ordinary funeral," argued the member, "but you forget this is a Congressional funeral."—Boston Common

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