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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

HE PREACHES ON THE OBJECTIONS TO REVIVALS.

The Great Revivalist of the Past—Beginning of Aaron Burr's Downward Career—From Paradise to the Judgment Conflagration.

A Net Full of Fish.

Dr. Talmage chose for the subject of his sermon through the press last Sunday "The Objections to Religious Revivals," from the text Luke x, 6, "They inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake."

Simon and his comrades had experienced the night before what fishermen call "poor luck." Christ steps on board the fishing smack and tells the sailors to pull away from the beach and direct their nets again to sink the net. Sure enough, very soon the net is full of fishes, and the sailors begin to haul in. So large a school of fish was taken that the hardy men began to look red in the face as they pull, and hardly have they begun to rejoice at their success when snap goes a thread of the net, and snap goes another thread, so there is danger not only of losing the fish but of losing the net.

Without much care as to how much the boat tilts or how much water is splashed on deck, the fishermen rush about, gathering up the broken meshes of the net. Out yonder there is a ship dancing on the wave, and they hail it, "Ship ahoy, bear down this way!" The ship comes, and both boats, both fishing smacks, are filled with the floundering treasures.

"Ah," says some one, "how much better it would have been if they had staid on shore, and fished with a hook and line, and taken one at a time, instead of having this great excitement, and the boat almost upset, and the net broken, and having to call for help, and getting sopping wet with the sea?" The church is the sea, and a great revival is a whole school brought in at one sweep of the net. I have admiration for that man who goes out with a hook and line to fish. I admire the way he unravels the reel and adjusts the bait and drops the hook in a quiet place on a still afternoon, and here catches one and there one, but I like also a big boat, and a large crew, and a net a mile long, and swift oars, and stout sails, and stiff breezes, and a great multitude of souls brought, so great a multitude that you have to get help to draw it ashore, straining the net to the utmost until it breaks here and there, letting a few escape, but bringing the great multitude into eternal safety.

Objections to Revivals.

In other words, I believe in revivals. The great work of saving men began with 3,000 people joining the church in one day, and it will close with 40,000,000 or 100,000,000 people saved in twenty-four hours, when nations shall be born in a day. But there are objections to revivals. People are opposed to them because the net might get broken, and if by the pressure of souls it does get broken then they take their own penknives and slit the net. "They inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake."

It is sometimes objected to revivals of religion that those who come into the church at such times do not hold out. As long as there is a gale of blessing they have their sails up, but as soon as strong winds stop blowing then they drop into a dead calm. But what are the facts in the case? In all our churches the vast majority of the useful people are those who are brought in under great awakenings, and they hold out. Who are the prominent men in the United States in churches, in prayer meetings, in Sabbath schools? For the most part they are the product of great awakenings.

I have noticed that those who are brought into the kingdom of God through revivals have more persistence and more determination in the Christian life than those who come in under a low state of religion. People born in an icehouse may live, but they will never get over the cold they caught in the icehouse. A cannon ball depends upon the impulse with which it starts for how far it shall go and how swiftly, and the greater the revival force with which a soul is started the more far-reaching and far-resounding will be the execution.

But it is sometimes objected to revivals that there is so much excitement that people mistake hysteria for religion. A Useful Excitement. We must admit that in every revival of religion there is either a suppressed or a demonstrated excitement. Indeed if a man can go out of a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance with God, or see others do, without any agitation of soul, he is in an unhealthy, morbid state and is as repulsive and absurd as a man who should boast he saw a child snatched out from under a horse's hoof and felt no agitation, or saw a man rescued from the fourth story of a house on fire and felt no acceleration of the pulses.

Salvation from sin and death and hell into life and peace and heaven forever is such a tremendous thing that if a man tells me he can look on it without any agitation I doubt his Christianity. The fact is that sometimes excitement is the most important possible thing. In case of resuscitation from drowning or freezing the one idea is to excite animation. Before conversion the church to revive, arouse, business of the church to revive, arouse, awaken, resuscitate, startle into life. Excitement is bad or good according to what it makes us do. If it makes us do what it makes us do, if it makes us do our eternal welfare, if it makes us pray, if it makes us attend upon Christian service, if it makes us cry unto God for mercy, then it is a good excitement.

It is sometimes said that during revivals of religion great multitudes of children and young people are brought into the church, and they do not know what they are about. It has been my observation that the earlier people come into the kingdom of God the more useful they are.

Robert Hall, the prince of Baptist preachers, was converted at 12 years of age. It is supposed he knew what he was about. Matthew Henry, the commentator, who did more than any man of his century for increasing the interest in the study of the Scriptures, was converted at 11 years of age; Isabella Graham, immortal in the Christian church, was converted at 10 years of age; Dr. Watts, whose hymns will be sung all down the ages, was converted at 9 years of age; Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the mightiest intellect that the American pulpit ever produced, was converted at 7 years of age; and that father and mother take an awful responsibility when they tell their child at 7 years of age, "You are too young to be a Christian," or "You are too young to connect yourself with the church." That is a mistake as long as eternity.

If during a revival two persons present themselves as candidates for the church, and the one is 10 years of age and the other is 40 years of age, I will have more confidence in the profession of religion of the one 10 years of age than the one 40 years of age. Why? The one who professes at 40 years of age has forty years of impulse in the wrong direction to correct; the child has only ten years in the wrong direction to correct. Four times ten are forty. Four times the religious prospect for the lad that comes into the kingdom of God and into the church at 10 years of age than the man at 40.

I am very apt to look upon revivals as connected with certain men who fostered them. People who in this day do not like revivals nevertheless have not words to express their admiration for the revivalists of the past, for they were revivalists—Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Fletcher, Griffin, Davies, Osborn, Knapp, Nettleton; and many others whose names come to my mind. The strength of their intellect and the holiness of their lives make me think they would not have anything to do with that which was ephemeral. Oh, it is easy to talk against revivals.

A man said to Mr. Dawson: "I like your sermons very much, but after meetings I despise. When the prayer meeting begins, I always go up into the gallery and look down, and I am disgusted." "Well," said Mr. Dawson, "the reason is you go on the top of your neighbor's house and look down his chimney to examine his fire, and of course you only get smoke in your eyes. Why don't you come in the door and sit down and warm?"

The Downward Road.

Oh, I am afraid to say anything against revivals of religion, or against anything that looks like them, because I think it would be a sin against the Holy Ghost, and you know the Bible says that a sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor the world to come! Now, if you are a painter, and I speak against your pictures, do I not speak against you? If you are an architect, and I speak against a building you put up, do I not speak against you? If a revival be a work of the Holy Ghost, and I speak against that revival, do I not speak against the Holy Ghost? And whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, says the Bible, he shall never be forgiven, neither in this world or in the world to come. I think sometimes people have made a fatal mistake in this direction.

Many of you know the history of Aaron Burr. He was one of the most brilliant men of his day. I suppose this country never produced a stronger intellect. He was capable of doing anything good and great for his country or for the church of God had he been rightly disposed, but his name is associated with treason against the United States Government, which he tried to overthrow, and with libertinism and public immorality.

Do you know where Aaron Burr started on the downward road? It was when he was in college, and he became anxious about his soul and was about to put himself under the influence of a revival, and a minister of religion said: "Don't go there Aaron; don't go there. That's a place of wildfire and great excitement. No religion about that. Don't go there." He turned away. His serious impression departed. He started on the downward road. And who is responsible for his ruin? Was it the minister who warned him against that revival?

The Real Difficulty.

When I am speaking of excitement in revivals, of course I do not mean temporary derangement of the nerves. I do not mean the absurd things of which we have read as transpiring sometimes in the church of Christ, but I mean an intelligent, intense, all-absorbing agitation of body, mind, and soul in the work of spiritual escape and spiritual rescue.

Now I come to the real, genuine cause of objection to revivals. This is the coldness of the objector. It is the secret and hidden but unmistakable cause in every case, a low state of religion in the heart. Wide-awake, consecrated, useful Christians are never afraid of revivals. It is the spiritually dead who are afraid of having their sepulcher molested. The chief agents of the devil during a great awakening are always unconverted professors of religion. As soon as Christ's work begins they begin to gossip against it, and take a spail of water and try to put out this spark of religious influence, and they try to put out another spark. Do they succeed? As well when Chicago was on fire might some one have gone out with a garden water-pot trying to extinguish it.

The difficulty is that when a revival begins in a church it begins at so many points that while you have doused one anxious soul with a pail of cold water there are 500 other anxious souls on fire. Oh, how much better it would be to lay hold of the chariot of Christ's gospel and help pull it on rather than to fling ourselves in front of the wheels, trying to block their progress! We will not stop the chariot, but we ourselves will be ground to powder.

Did you ever hear that there was a convention once held among the icebergs in the Arctic? It seems that the summer was coming on, and the sun was getting hotter and hotter, and there was danger that the whole world would break up and flow away. By the tallest, and the coldest, and the broadest of all the icebergs, the very king of the arctics, stood at the head of the convention, and with a gavel of ice smote on a table of ice calling the convention to order. But the sun kept growing in intensity of heat, and the south wind blew stronger and stronger, and soon all the icefield began to grind up, iceberg against iceberg, and to flow away. The first resolution passed by the convention was, "Resolved, that we abolish the sun."

But the sun would not be abolished. The heat of the sun grew greater and greater until after awhile the very king of the icebergs began to perspire under the glow, and the smaller icebergs fell over, and the cry was: "Too much excitement. Order! Order!" Then the whole body, the whole field of ice began to flow out, and a thousand voices began to ask: "Where are we going to now? Where are we floating to? We will all break to pieces." By this time the icebergs had reached the gulf stream, and they were melted into the bosom of the Atlantic Ocean. The warm sun is the eternal spirit. The warm gulf stream is a great revival. The ocean into which everything melted is the great, wide heart of the pardoning and sympathizing God.

But I think, after all, the greatest obstacle to revivals throughout Christendom to-day is an unconverted ministry. We must believe that the vast majority of those who officiate at the sacred altars are regenerated, but I suppose there may float into the ministry of all denominations of Christians men whose hearts have never been changed by the grace of God. Of course they are all antagonistic to revivals.

How did they get into the ministry? Perhaps some of them chose it as a respectable profession. Perhaps some chose it as a means of livelihood. Perhaps some of them were sincere, but were mistaken. As Thomas Chalmers said, he had been many years preaching the gospel before his heart had been changed, and, as many ministers of the gospel declare, they had been preaching and had been ordained to sacred orders years and years before their hearts were regenerated. Gracious God, what a solemn thought for those of us who minister at the altar! With the present ministry in the present temperature of piety the world will never be enveloped with revivals. While the pews on one side the altar cry for mercy the pulpits on the other side the altar must cry for mercy. Ministers quarreling, ministers trying to pull each other down, ministers struggling for ecclesiastical place, ministers stargazing with whole congregations dying on their hands. What a spectacle!

Aroused pulpits will make aroused pews. Pulpits aflame will make pews aflame. Everybody believes in a revival in trade, everybody likes a revival in literature, everybody likes a revival in art, yet a great multitude cannot understand a revival in matters of religion. Depend upon it, where you find a man antagonistic to revivals, whether he be in pulpit or pew, he needs to be regenerated by the grace of God.

Volunteers Wanted. I could prove to a demonstration that without revivals this world will never be converted, and that in 100 or 200 years without revivals Christianity will be practically extinct. It is a matter of astounding arithmetic. In each of our modern generations there are at least 32,000,000 children. Now add 32,000,000 to the world's population, and then have only 100,000 or 200,000 converted every year, and how long before the world will be saved? Never—absolutely never!

You are a dry goods merchant on a large scale, and I am a merchant on a small scale, and I come to you and want to buy 1,000 yards of cloth. Do you say: "Thank you. I'll sell you 1,000 yards of cloth, but I'll sell you 20 yards to-day, and 20 to-morrow, and 20 the next day, and if it takes me six months I'll sell you the whole 1,000 yards. You will want as long as that to examine the goods, and I'll want as long as that to examine the credit, and, besides that, 1,000 yards of cloth is too much to sell at once?" No, you do not say that. You take me into the counting-room, and in ten minutes the whole transaction is consummated. The fact is we cannot afford to be fools in anything but religion!

That very merchant who on Saturday afternoon sold me the 1,000 yards of cloth at one stroke the next Sabbath in church will stroke his beard and wonder whether it would not be better for 1,000 souls to come straggling along for ten years, instead of bolting in at one service.

We talk a good deal about the good times that are coming, and about the world's redemption. How long before they will come? There is a man who says 500 years. Here is some one more confident who says in fifty years. What, fifty years? Do you propose to let two generations pass off the stage before the world is converted?

The Ocean of Life. One summer I stood on the isle of Wight, and I had pointed out to me the place where the Eurycles sank with 200 or 300 young men who were in training for the British navy. You remember when the trainingship went down there was a thrill of horror all over the world. Oh, my friends, this world is only a training ship. On it we are training for heaven. The old ship sails up and down the ocean of immensity, now through the dark wave of the midnight, now through the golden crested wave of the morn, but sails on and sails on. After awhile her work will be done, and the inhabitants of heaven will look out and find a world missing. The cry will be: "Where is that earth where Christ died and the human race were emancipated? Send out fleets of angels to find the missing craft." Let them sail up and down, cruise up and down the ocean of eternity, and they will catch not one glimpse of her mountain masts or her top-gallants of floating cloud. Gone down! The training ship of a world perished in the last tornado. Oh, let it not be that she goes down with all on board, but rather may it be said of her passengers as it was said of the drenched passengers of the Alexandrian corn ship that crashed into the breakers of Melita, "They all escaped safe to land."

OBSIDIAN is a lava glass.

DRIVING BACK THE SEA.

Thousands of Square Miles Being Reclaimed by the People of Holland. The people of Holland have undertaken a gigantic work by means of which they expect to recover the larger part of the territory now covered by the Zuyder Zee, the inland sea of the country, and turn it again into a fertile farming region, says the Milwaukee Journal. It is now just five centuries since the inundation of that part of the Netherlands now covered by the Zuyder Zee was completed, the encroachments of the sea having been going on for 225 years, previous to which time the territory was covered with forests. By the most stupendous exertions about 350 square miles of country has already been recovered by an elaborate dike system which has gradually reclaimed section after section that was lost, but the new scheme transcends the previous work in extent and importance. The towns of the region which had become of considerable importance as seaports through the bringing of the waters of the ocean to their doors have lost considerable of that importance through the difficulties of navigation and the transfer of the trade to the North Holland Canal and the Y Ship Canal, which connects the metropolis with the ocean. On this account the remnants of commerce are not worth as much to the towns as the country would be after it is reclaimed, and therefore there is general acquiescence in the plan to drive the ocean out.

On account of the great cost it will be distributed over a period of thirty-three years, so as to make it less oppressive and to make the benefits gradually bear their share of the expense. A colossal sea wall is first to be built from North Holland to Friesland, shutting off the tides of the ocean. This wall will be 216 feet wide at the base and the top will be seventeen feet above the sea level, while along the inner side and at some distance below the top will be a track wide enough for a wagon road and a railway. After the sea is barred out the inclosed space to be reclaimed will inclose within separate embankments four areas containing in the aggregate 750 square miles. One of these areas will be first drained by pumping the water over the embankment, the water finding its way to the sea through the main channel, and as the shallower portions become exposed they will be successively brought under cultivation. It is calculated that within ten years 25,000 acres can be made annually available, and in the end the inland sea will be reduced to a channel about fifteen miles wide called the Ysselmeer, connecting with the sea by locks at Wieringen, with Amsterdam by a branch three miles wide, and by another with the mouth of the Yssel. The plan has received the sanction of the Government, and the engineers pronounce it feasible.

Humors of the Poor. Country doctors are to be envied if all of them have experiences as amusing as those described in the November number of the Cornhill Magazine. On one occasion the doctor found an old woman toiling to his door with a heavy load of potatoes. "Take 'em, doctor, take 'em," she said, magnanimously. "What saith the scriptures? Cast thy potatoes on the doctor, and thou shalt find them after many days—may be about Christmas time," she added shyly, and, with obvious glee at this ingenious method of insurance against the privations of winter, old Peggy hobbled off.

This same old lady, when on her death-bed, said "she didn't expect to go to heaven, but wherever she did go she'd put in a good word for the doctor."

Another woman lost her husband. The doctor found her fearful but not inconsolable. "Ah! poor Jim!" she said. "My good man! Eh! I'm very grateful to you, doctor, but it's a mercy the Lord took the case into his own hands."

An old couple fell ill, of old age, together. The husband died, but the wife had more vitality. On the day following her husband's death she was better, and the doctor was congratulating himself on the success of his treatment. But the woman's point of view was different. She complained bitterly: for, as she forcibly pointed out, "Ef 'ed let me alone one funeral 'ud 'a' done for us two, an' look what it 'd cost now, berying two of us separately!"

Japanese Women. Japanese women have, in the past few years, shown signs of waking up to the demands of the nineteenth century progress. Very many women of the Flowery Kingdom have engaged in business for themselves, and they are nearly as successful in the matter of independence as their Western sisters. A subscription has been raised in Tokyo, and subscribed to by several of the Ministers of State, Government officers, and others to erect a monument in Ueno Park in commemoration of Mrs. Oura, a Japanese woman who died in 1884, at the age of 87, after having achieved the distinction of being the woman pioneer of foreign commerce in Japan.

A woman is never so disappointed in love in real life that she doesn't believe in it in a story.