

### REVIVALS A BENEFIT.

#### Dr. Talmage Draws Lessons From Famous Religious Awakenings.

#### The Most Useful Christians Are Those Converted in Early Life—Bringing the Multitude Into Safety.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.—This discourse of Dr. Talmage is most pertinent at this time, when a widespread effort for religious awakening is being made. Text, Luke v. 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 them again to sink the net. Sure enough, soon the net is full of fishes, and the sailors begin to haul in. So large a school of fishes was taken that the hardy men began to look red in the face as they pulled, 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 boat.

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 state of dancing on the waves, 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 being almost upset and the net broken and having to call for help and getting sopping wet with the sea!"

The church is the boat, the gospel is the net, society 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. He knows the way he unwinds the reel and adjusts the bait and drops the hook in a quiet place on a still afternoon and there catches one and there one, but I like also a man who with swift oars and stout sails and a stiff breeze 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.

In other words, I believe in revivals. The great work of saving men is done with 3000 people joining the church in one day, and it will close with forty or a hundred million 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 not get broken, then they take their own knives and slit the net. "They inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and the net brake."

It is sometimes opposed 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 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 take their own knives and slit the net. "They inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and the net brake."

A canon ball depends upon the impulse with which it starts, for how far it shall go and how swiftly, and the greater the impulse with which a soul is started the more far-reaching and far-reaching will be the execution of the plan. But it is sometimes objected to revivals that people mistake hysteria for religion. We 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 go through 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 hoofs 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 is forever into 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 we are dead. It is the 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 that which is bad, it is bad excitement, but if it makes us agitated about our eternal welfare, if it makes us pray, if it makes us attend to Christian service, if it makes us cry unto God for mercy, then it is 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 preachers, was converted at twelve years of age. It is likely 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 eleven years of age; Isabella Graham, immortal in the Christian church, was converted at ten years of age; Dr. Watts, whose hymns will be sung all down the ages, was converted at nine years of age; Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the mightiest intellect that the American pulpit ever produced, was converted at seven years of age, and that father and mother take an awful responsibility when they tell their child at seven 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 ten years of age and the other is forty years of age, I will have more confidence in the profession of religion of the one ten years of age than the one forty years of age. Why? The one who professes at forty 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 ten years of age than the man at forty.

I am very apt to look upon revivals as connected with certain men who fostered them. People who in this day do 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, Osborne, Knapp, Nettleton, Moody and

many others whose names come to my mind. The strength of their intellect and the holiness of their lives make me not think they would not have had 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 the after meetings I despise. When the prayer meeting begins, I always go up in 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 the smoke in your eyes. Why don't you come in the door and sit down and warm?"

Oh, I am afraid to say anything against revivals of religion or against anything that looks like them because I think it may 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 the face of the Holy Ghost and I speak against that revival, do I not speak against the Holy Ghost? And whose speech against the Holy Ghost, says the Bible, he shall never be forgiven neither in this world nor 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 that God had for his country or for the church of God had been rightly disposed, but his name is associated with treason against the United States government, which he tried to overthrow and with libertinism and immorality. Do you know where Aaron Burr started on the downward road? It was when he was in college and he converted every man, 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. I have heard about that. Don't go there." He turned away.

And who is responsible for his ruin for this world and his everlasting ruin in the world to come? Was it the minister who warned him against that revival? When I speak of excitement in revivals, I do not mean temporary derangement of the nerves, I do not mean the absurd things of which we have read as training 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—that 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 pail of water and try to put out this spark of religious influence, and they try to put out another spark. Do they succeed? 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 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.

Aroused puppets will make aroused puppets; puppets of adobe will make puppets of adobe. 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.

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, how long before the world will be saved? Never—absolutely never!

During our Civil War the President of the United States made proclamation for 75,000 troops. Some of you remember the big stir. But the King of the universe to-day asks for 1,200,000,000 more troops than are enlisted, and we want it done softly, imperceptibly, no excitement, one by one. 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 a thousand yards of cloth. Do you say: "Thank you, I'll sell you a thousand yards of cloth, but I'll sell you twenty yards to-day and twenty to-morrow, and twenty the next day, and if it takes me six months I'll sell you the whole thousand 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, a thousand yards of cloth are too much to sell all 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 thousand yards of cloth at one stroke the next Sabbath in church will stroke his beard and wonder whether it would not be better for a thousand 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 a man who says 200 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? Suppose by prolongation of human life at the end of the next fifty years you should walk the length of Pennsylvania avenue, Washington or the length of Broadway, New York—in all those walks you would not find one person that you recognize. Why? All dead or so changed you would not know them. In other words, if you postpone the redemption of this world for fifty years you admit that the majority of the two whole generations shall go off the stage unblest and unsaved. I tell you, the church of Jesus Christ cannot consent to it. We must pray and toil and have the revival spirit, and we must struggle to have the whole world saved before the men and women now in middle life part.

"Oh," you say, "it is too vast an enterprise to be conducted in so short a time." Do you know how long it would take to save the whole world if each man would bring another? It would take ten years. By a calculation in compound interest each man bringing another, and that one another, and that one another, in ten years the whole earth would be saved—1911. Before the organs in our churches are worn out they ought to sound the grand march of the whole earth saved. If the world is not saved in the next ten years, it will be the fault of the church of Christ. But it will all depend upon the revival spirit. The hook and line fishing will not do it.

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