

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

Subject: "The Secret Place of Thunder."

TEXT: "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder."—Psalm lxxxix, 7.

It is past midnight, and two o'clock in the morning, far enough from sunset and sunrise to make the darkness very thick, and the Egyptian army in pursuit of the escaping Israelites are on the bottom of the Red Sea, its waters having been set up on either side in masonry of sapphire, for God can make a wall as solid out of water as out of granite, and the trowels with which these two walls were built were none the less powerful because invisible. Such walls had never before been lifted.

When I saw the waters of the Red Sea rolling through the Suez Canal they were blue and beautiful and flowing like other waters, but to-night, as the Egyptians look up to them built into walls, now on one side and now on the other, they must have been flowing water, for it is probable that the same power that lifted them up might suddenly fling them prostrate. A great lantern of cloud hung over this chasm between the two walls. The door of that lantern was opened toward the Israelites, giving them light, and the back of the lantern was toward the Egyptians, and it growled and rumbled and jarred with thunder, not thunder like that which cheers the earth after a drought, promising the refreshing shower, but charged and surcharged with threats of doom.

The Egyptian captains lost their presence of mind, and the horses reared and snorted and would not answer to their bits, and the chariot wheels got interlocked and torn off, and the chariot drivers were hurled around, and the Red Sea fell on all the host. The confusing and confounding thunder was in answer to the prayer of the Israelites. With their backs out to the sea, and their feet bleeding, and their bodies drenched with the suffering of whole generations, they had asked Almighty God to annihilate their Egyptian pursuers in one great saragophaic, and the splash and the roar of the Red Sea as it dropped to its natural bed were only the shutting of the Israelites' eyes and the deafening of their ears.

That is the meaning of the text when God says, "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder." Now thunder, all up and down the Bible, is the symbol of power. The Egyptian plagues of hail were accompanied with the full diapason of the heavens. While Samuel and his men were making a burnt offering of a lamb, and the Philistines were about to attack them, it was by terrifying thunder that they were routed. It was by the combination of the Danesque and the Miltonic, was solemnized on this reverberation of the heavens, and cried, "The thunder of His power, who can understand?" and he challenges the universe by saying, "Cane thou thunder with a voice like mine?" and he throws Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" into the shade by the Bible photograph of a war-horse, when he describes his neck as "clothed with thunder." Because of the power of James and John, they were called "thunder of thunder." The law of the sea, and the crags of Mount Sinai was emphasized with this cloudy eddiness. The skies all around that St. John at Patmos were full of the thunder of war, and the thunder of Christy triumph, and the thunder of resurrection, and the thunder of eternity.

But when my text says, "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder," it suggests there is some mystery about the thunder. To the ancients the cause of this booming earth with loud sounds and lightning, and every school of thought something about the fact that it is the passage of electricity from cloud to cloud that makes the heavenly racket which we call thunder. But after all that chemistry has taught the world, there are mysterious things about the thunder, and my text, true to the time of the Psalmist, is true now and always will be true, that there is some secret about the place of thunder.

To one thing known about the thunder there are a number of things unknown. After all the scientific batteries have been doing their work for a thousand years to come and learned men have discoursed to the utmost about atmospheric electricity and magnetic electricity and galvanic electricity and thermoelectric electricity and frictional electricity and positive electricity and negative electricity my text will be as suggestive as it is today, when it speaks of the secret place of thunder.

Now right along by a natural law there is always a spiritual law, as there is secret place of moral thunder. In other words, the religious power that you see abroad in the church in the world has a hiding place, and in many cases it is never discovered at all. I will use a simile. I can give you a dim outline of a picturesque case, for many of the remarkable circumstances I have forgotten. Many years ago there was a large church. It was characterized by strange and unaccountable conversions. There were no great revivals but individual cases of spiritual arrest and transformation.

A young man sat in one of the front pews. He was a graduate of Yale, brilliant as the north star and notoriously dissolute. Everybody knew him and liked him for his good looks, but despised his moral errantry. To please his parents he was every Sabbath morning in church. One day there was a ringing of the door-bell of the pastor of that church, and that young man, whined with repentance, implored prayer and advice, and raised into complete reformation of heart and life. All the neighborhood was astonished and asked, "Why was this?" His father and mother had said nothing to him about his life.

The next Sabbath the same church sat an old man. He paid his pew rent, but was hard on the poor, and had no interest in any philanthropy. Piles of money! And people said, "What a struggle he will have when he quits this life to part with his hoards and mortgages." One day he wrote to his minister: "Please to call immediately. I have a matter of great importance about which I want to see you." When the pastor came in the man could not speak for emotion, but after awhile he gathered self control enough to say, "I have lived for this world too long. I want to know if you think I can be saved, and if so, I wish you would tell me how." Upon his soul the light soon dawned, and the old miser, not only revolutionized in heart but in life, began to scatter benefactions, and toward all the great charities of the day he became a cheerful and bountiful alms-giver. What was the cause of this change? Everybody asked, and no one was capable of giving an intelligent answer.

In another part of the church sat, Sabbath by Sabbath, a beautiful and talented woman, who was a great society leader. She went to church because that was a respectable thing to do, and in the neighborhood where she lived it was hardly respectable not to go. Worldly was she to the last degree, and all her family worldly. She had at her house the finest Germans that were ever danced, and the costliest favors that were ever given, and though she attended church she never liked to hear any story of paths, and as to religious emotion of any kind, she thought it positively vulgar. Wines, cards, theaters, rounds of costly gaiety were to her the highest satisfaction.

One day a neighbor sent in a visiting card, and this lady came down the stairs in tears and told the whole story of how she had not slept for several nights, and she feared she was going to lose her soul, and she wondered if some one would not come around and pray for her. From that day on, her entire demeanor was changed, and though she was not called upon to sacrifice any of her amenities of life, she consecrated her beauty, her

social position, her family, her all to God and the church and usefulness. Everybody said in regard to her: "Have you noticed the change, and that in the world caused it?" and no one could make satisfactory explanation.

In the course of two years, though there was no general awakening in that church, many such isolated cases of such unexpected and unaccountable conversions took place. Every one was probably that the same power that lifted them up might suddenly fling them prostrate. A great lantern of cloud hung over this chasm between the two walls. The door of that lantern was opened toward the Israelites, giving them light, and the back of the lantern was toward the Egyptians, and it growled and rumbled and jarred with thunder, not thunder like that which cheers the earth after a drought, promising the refreshing shower, but charged and surcharged with threats of doom.

For years she had been in the habit of concentrating all her prayers for particular persons in that church. She would see some man or some woman present, and though she might not know the person's name, she would pray for that person until he or she was converted to God. All her prayers were for that one person—just that one. She waited and waited for communion days to see when the candidates for membership stood up whether her prayers had been effective. It turns out that these conversions, instances of conversion were the result of that old woman's prayers as she sat in the gallery Sabbath by Sabbath, and it was not poor and unnoticed.

A little cloud of consecrated humanity hovering in the galleries. That was the secret place of the thunder. There is some hidden, unknown, mysterious source of almost all the moral and religious power demonstrated. Not one out of a million—not one out of ten million—prayers ever strikes a human ear. On public occasions a minister of religion voices the supplications of an assemblage, but the prayers of all the congregation are in silence. There is not a second in a century when prayers are not ascending, but myriads of them are not even as loud as a whisper, for God hears a thought as plainly as a vocalization. That silence of supplication—hemispheric and perpetual—is the secret place of thunder.

In the winter of 1872 we were worshipping in the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the terrarium of churches. We had the usual great audiences, but I was oppressed beyond measure by the fact that conversions were not more numerous. One Tuesday I invited to my house five old, consecrated men—all of them gone now, except Father Pearson, and he, in blindness and old age, waiting for the Master's call to come up higher.

These old men came, not knowing why I had invited them. I took them to the top of my house. I said to them, "I am calling you here for a special prayer. I am in an agony for a great turning to God of the people. We have vast multitudes in attendance and they are attentive and respectful, but I cannot see that they are saved. Let us build up many such men as you, and leave this room until we are all assured that the blessing will come and has come." It was a most intense crying unto God. I said, "Brethren, let this meeting be a secret, and I pray that it would be. That Tuesday night the service ended.

On the following Friday night occurred the usual prayer meeting. No one knew of what had occurred on Tuesday night, but the meeting was unusually thronged. Men accustomed to pray in public, and who had broken down under great grief, were in the room in tears. There were sobs and sobs and sobs, and the solemnities of such unusual power that the worshippers looked into each other's faces, as much as to say, "What does all this mean?" And when the singing Sabbath came, although we were in a secular place, over four hundred arose for prayers, and a religious awakening took place that made that winter memorable for time and for eternity. There may be in this building many who were brought to God during that great gathering, but few of them know that the upper room in my house on Quincy street, where those five old Christian men poured out their souls before God, was the secret place of thunder.

The day will come—God hasten it—when people will find out the velocity, the majesty, the multipotency of prayer. We brag about our limited express trains which put us down a thousand miles away in twenty-four hours, but there is something by which in moment we may confront people five thousand miles away. We brag about our telephones, but here is something that beats the telephone in utterance and reply, for God says, "Before they call, I will hear." We brag about the phonograph, in that man can speak, and his words and the tones of his voice can be kept for ages, and by the turning of a crank the words may come forth upon the ears of another century, but prayer allows us to speak words into the ears of the listening remembrance, and on the other side of all eternities they will be heard. Oh, ye who are wasting your breath, and wasting your brains, and wasting your nerves, and wasting your lungs wishing for this good and that good for the church and the world, why do you not go into the secret place of thunder?

"But," says some one, "that is a beautiful theory, yet it does not work in my case, for I am in a cloud of trouble, or a cloud of sickness, or a cloud of persecution, or a cloud of poverty, or a cloud of bereavement, or a cloud of perplexity." How glad I am that you told me that. That is exactly the place to which my text refers. It was from a cloud that God answered Israel—the cloud over the camp through the Red Sea—the cloud that was light to the Israelites and darkness to the Egyptians. It was from a cloud, a tremendous cloud, that God made reply. It was a cloud that was the secret place of thunder. So you cannot get away from the consolation of my text by taking that way. Let all the people under a cloud hear it. "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder."

This subject helps me to explain some things you have not understood about men and women, and there are multitudes of them, and the multitude is multiplying by the minute. Many of them have had superabundance of education. If you had their brain in a post-mortem examination, and you could weigh it, it would not weigh any heavier than the average. They have not anything especially impressive in their brains. They are not very fluent of tongue. They pretend to nothing unusual in mental faculty or social influence, but you feel their power; you are elevated in their presence; you are a better man or a better woman, having confronted them. You know that in intellectual endowment you are their superior, while in the matter of moral and religious influences they are vastly your superior. Why is this?

To find the revelation of this secret you must go back thirty or forty or perhaps sixty years to the homestead where this man was brought up. It is a winter morning, and the tall candle is lighted, and the fire is kindled, sometimes the shavings hardly enough to start the wood. The mother is preparing the breakfast, the blue edged plates are on the table, and the lid of the kettle on the hearth begins to rattle with the steam, and the shadow of the industrious woman by the flickering flame on the hearth is moved up and down the wall. The father is at the hearth feeding the stock—the cats thrown into the horses' bin and the cattle crunching the corn. The children, earlier than they would like and after being called twice, are gathered at the table. The mother, and the meat over the family Bible is put upon the white tablecloth and a chapter is read and a prayer made, which includes all the interests for this world and the next. The children pay not much attention to the prayer, for it is about the same thing day after day, but it puts upon them an impression that ten thousand years will only make more vivid and tremendous. As long as the old folks live their prayer is for their children and their children's children. Day after day, month in and month out, year in and year out, decade in and decade out the sons and daughters of that family are remembered in earnest prayer, and they

SELECT SIFTINGS.

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A gorilla is so rare in captivity that one brings \$20,000.

Granite is the lowest rock in the earth's crust. It is the bed rock of the world.

A North Carolina woman only learned to write after she had passed the age of eighty-two.

No chemical black ink has yet been made which will write black immediately on exposure.

Patay Sears, of Howard County, Ind., aged 108 years, has been a church member a hundred years.

Except in cooking their scanty meals the poor Italians seldom have a fire even in the severest winter weather.

A gentleman in Fort Smith, Ark., has hanged eighty persons sentenced to death by the United States court.

Cornell University has opened a diary school, where cheese and butter making breeds and feeding are the subject for study.

The agricultural society of Paris is experimenting in the making of artificial clouds to preserve plants from the effects of frost.

Wax came into use for candles in the twelfth century, and wax candles were esteemed a luxury in 1300, being but little used.

It would take forty years for all the water in the great lakes to pour over Niagara at the rate of one million cubic feet a second.

A West Philadelphia clergyman recently received an envelope containing an old fashioned copper penny as his fee for performing a wedding ceremony.

Some of the African tribes pull their fingers till the joints "crack" as a form of salutation, and one tribe has the curious fashion of showing friendship by standing back to back.

The bones of Jumbo, Barnum's big elephant, that was killed a few years ago at St. Thomas, Canada, weighed over 2400 pounds. The total weight of the body, bones and all, was six tons.

Not until the tenth day is the Zuni child put into the cradle. The baby's arms are placed by its sides, and it is so strapped in its cradle that it cannot move a hand. These cradles have hood-shaped tops, and over the whole thick coverings are placed, and it is a wonder the child does not smother.

In England in the reign of Edward IV., 1451, riders on post-horses went stages of the distance of twenty miles from each other, in order to procure the king the earliest intelligence of the events that passed in the course of the war that had arisen with the Scots, and Richard III. improved the system of couriers in 1483.

A cat born in Germany with only two legs (the hinder pair) is healthy, and goes about easily, the body in the normal condition. When startled or watching anything, it raises itself to the attitude of a kangaroo, using its tail as a support. It has twice borne kittens, in both cases two, one of which had four and the other only two feet.

Quaint and Curious Epitaphs.

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In the place of a woman who's weak, ailing, and miserable, why not be a woman who's healthy, happy, and strong? You can be. You needn't experiment. The change is made, safely and surely, with Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription.

It's a matter that rests with you. Here is the medicine—the only one for woman's peculiar weaknesses and diseases that's guaranteed to help you. It must give satisfaction, in every case, or the money is promptly returned. Take it, and you're a new woman. You can afford to make the trial, for you've nothing to lose.

But do you need to be urged?

You don't want size in a pill—it means disturbance. You want results. With Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets, smallest, cheapest, easiest to take, you get the best results. Sick Headache, Biliousness, Constipation, Indigestion, and all derangements of the Liver, Stomach and Bowels are prevented, relieved, and cured.

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A Man at

Twenty-five

Begins to feel his age.

Nicoll the Tailor's

business

has been in existence for

Twenty-five years,

but it feels its age only in increased prestige and the greater hold it has on the Purchasing public.

But Everybody

Knows this,

and we only speak of it now so you will keep us in mind when you get ready to buy your

Summer Suit.

Cheviots, Serges, Mohairs.

\$20.00 to \$30.00.

For Suits to order.

\$5.00 to \$8.00.

For Trousers to order.

Custom Clothing Only.

1,000 Styles to choose.

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