

COMING DISCOURSE.

Dr. Talmage Thinks It Will Be Brief and Will Strike Hard.

The Sermon of To-day Does Not Keep Pace With the Age—The Most Beautiful Thing on Earth is the Christian Religion.

In his recent discourse the popular Washington divine calls attention to the weakness of the orthodox sermon of to-day and makes a plea for more energetic work on the part of his co-laborers in the Lord's vineyard. Luke 9:60: "Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God."

The gospel is to be regnant over all hearts, all circles, all governments and all lands. The kingdom of God spoken of in the text is to be a universal kingdom, and just as wide as that will be the realm sermonic. "Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." We hear a great deal in these days about the coming man, and the coming woman, and the coming time. Some one ought to tell us of the coming sermon. It is a simple fact that everybody knows that most of the sermons of to-day do not reach the world. The vast majority of the people of our great cities never enter church.

The sermon of to-day carries along with it the deadwood of all ages. Hundreds of years ago it was decided what a sermon ought to be, and it is the attempt of many theological seminaries and doctors of divinity to hew the modern pulpit utterances into the same old-style proportions. Booksellers will tell you they dispose of a hundred histories, a hundred novels, a hundred poems, to one book of sermons. What is the matter? Some say the age is the worst of all ages. It is better. Some say religion is wearing out, when it is wearing in. Some say there are so many who despise the Christian religion. I answer, there never was an age when there were so many Christians, or so many friends of Christianity as this age has—our age; as to others a hundred to one. What is the matter, then? It is simply because our sermon of to-day is not suited to the age. It is the canal boat in an age of locomotive and electric telegraph. The sermon will have to be shaken out of the old grooves or it will not be heard and it will not be read.

But there is a coming sermon—which will preach it I have no idea; in what part of the earth it will be born I have no idea; in which denomination of Christians it will be delivered, I cannot guess. That coming sermon may be born in the country meeting house on the banks of the St. Lawrence, or the Oregon, or the Ohio, or the Tombigbee, or the Alabama. The person who shall deliver it may this moment lie in a cradle under the shadow of the Sierra Nevada, or in a New England farm house, or amid the rice fields of southern savannahs. Or this moment there may be some young man in some of our theological seminaries, in the junior, or the middle, or senior class, shaping that weapon of power. Or there may be coming some new baptism of the Holy Ghost on the churches, so that some of us who now stand in the watchtowers of Zion, waiting for the realization of our present inefficiency, may preach it ourselves. That coming sermon may not be 20 years off. And let us pray God that its arrival may be hastened, while I announce to you what I think will be the chief characteristic of that sermon when it does arrive; and I want to make the remarks appropriate and suggestive to all classes of Christian workers.

First of all, I remark that the coming sermon will be full of a living Christ, in contradiction to didactic technicalities. A sermon may be full of Christ though hardly mentioning His name, and a sermon may be empty of Christ while every sentence is repetitious of His titles. The world wants a living Christ, not a Christ standing at the head of a formal system of theology, but a Christ who means pardon and sympathy and condolence and brotherhood and life and Heaven. A poor man's Christ. An overworked man's Christ. An invalid's Christ. A farmer's Christ. A merchant's Christ. An artisan's Christ. An every man's Christ.

A symmetrical and finely worded system of theology is well enough for theological classes, but it has no more business in a pulpit than have the technical phrases of an anatomist, or a physician, in the sick room of a patient. The world wants help, immediate and world-uplifting, and it will come through a sermon in which Christ shall walk right down into the immortal soul and take everlasting possession of it, filling it as full of light as is the noonday firmament. That sermon of the future will not deal with men in the threadbare illustrations of Jesus Christ. In that coming sermon there will be instances of vicarious sacrifice taken right out of everyday life, for there is not a day somebody is not dying for others. As the physician, saving his diphtheric patient by sacrificing his own life; as the ship captain going down with his vessel, while he is getting his passengers into the lifeboat; as the fireman, consuming in the burning building, while he is taking a child out of a fourth-story window; as last summer the strong swimmer at Long Branch or Cape May, or Lake George himself perished trying to rescue the drowning; as the newspaper boy not long ago, supporting his mother for some years, his invalid mother, when offered by a gentleman 50 cents to get some special paper, and he got it and rushed up in his anxiety to deliver it and was crushed under the wheels of the train, and lay on the grass with only strength enough to say, "Oh, what will become of my poor sick mother now?"

Vicarious suffering? The world is full of it. An engineer said to me on a locomotive in Dakota: "We men seem to be coming to better appreciation than we used to. Did you see that accident the other day of an engineer who, to save his passengers, stuck to his place, and when he was found dead in the loco-

motive, which was run down, he was found stuck to his hand on the air-brake?" And as the engineer said it to me, he put his hand on the air-brake to illustrate his meaning, and I looked at him and thought, "You would be just as much of a hero in the same crisis."

A German sculptor made an image of Christ, and he asked his little child, 3 years old, who it was, and she said: "That must be some very great man." The sculptor was displeased with the criticism, so he got another block of marble and chiseled away on it two or three years, and then he brought in his little child, 4 or 5 years of age, and he said to her: "Who do you think that is?" "That must be the One who took little children in His arms and blessed them." Then the sculptor was satisfied. Oh my friends, what the world wants is not a cold Christ, not an intellectual Christ, not a severely magisterial Christ, but a loving Christ, spreading out His arms of sympathy to press the whole world to His loving heart.

But I remark again, that the coming sermon of the Christian church will be a short sermon. Condensation is demanded by the age in which we live. No more need of long introductions and long applications and so many divisions to a discourse that it may be said to be hydra-headed. In other days men got all their information from the pulpit. There were few books and there were no newspapers, and there was little travel from place to place, and people would sit and listen two and a half hours to a religious discourse, and "seventeenthly" would find them fresh and chipper. In those times there was enough room for a man to take an hour to warm himself up to the subject and an hour to cool off. But what was a necessity then is a superfluous now. Congregations are full of knowledge from books, from newspapers, from rapid and continuous intercommunication, and long disquisitions of what they know already will not be abided. If a religious teacher cannot compress what he wishes to say to the people in the space of 45 minutes, better adjourn it to some other day.

The trouble is, we preach audiences into a Christian frame and then we preach them out of it. We forget that every auditor has so much capacity of attention, and when that is exhausted he is restless. That accident on the Long Island railroad came from the fact that the brakes were out of order, and when they wanted to stop the train they could not stop; hence the casualty was terrific. In all religious discourses we want locomotive power and propulsion; we want at the same time stout brakes to let down at the right instant. It is a dismal thing, after a hearer has comprehended the whole subject, to hear a man say: "Now, to recapitulate," and a "few words by way of application," and "once more," and "finally," and "now to conclude."

Paul preached until midnight, and Eutychus got sound asleep and fell out of a window and broke his neck. Some would say, "Good for him." I would rather be sympathetic like Paul, and resuscitate him, that accident is often quoted now in religious circles as a warning against somnolence in church. It is just as much a warning to ministers against prolixity. Eutychus was wrong in his somnolence, but Paul made a mistake when he kept on until midnight. He ought to have stopped at 11 o'clock, and there would have been no accident. If Paul might have gone on to too great length, let all of us who are now preaching the gospel remember that there is a limit to religious discourse, or ought to be, and that in our time we have no apostolic power or miracles. Napoleon, in an address of seven minutes, thrilled his army and thrilled Europe. Christ's sermon on the mount—the model sermon—was less than 18 minutes long at ordinary mode of delivery. It is not electricity scattered all over the sky that strikes, but electricity gathered into a thunderbolt and hurled; and it is not religious truth scattered over, spread out over a vast reach of time, but religious truth projected in compact form that flashes light upon the soul and rives its indifference.

When the coming sermon arrives in this land and in the Christian church—the sermon which is to arouse the world and startle the nations and usher in the kingdom—it will be a brief sermon. Hear it, all theological students, all ye men just entering upon religious work, all ye men and women who in Sabbath-schools and other departments are toiling for Christ and the salvation of immortals. Brevity! Brevity!

But I remark also that the coming sermon of which I speak will be a popular sermon. There are those in these times who speak of a popular sermon as though there must be something dull about it. As these critics are dull themselves, the sermon is good in proportion as it is stupid. Christ was the most popular preacher the world ever saw, and considering the small number of the world's population had the largest audiences ever gathered. He never preached anywhere without making a great sensation. People rushed out in the wilderness to hear Him, reckless of their physical necessities. So great was their anxiety to hear Christ, that, taking no food with them, they would have fainted and starved had not Christ performed a miracle and fed them. Why did so many people take the truth at Christ's hands? Because they all understood it. He illustrated his subject by a hen and her chickens, by a bushel measure, by a handful of salt, by a bird's flight, and by a lily's aroma. All the people knew what he meant, and they flocked to him. And when the coming sermon of the Christian church appears, it will not be Princetonian, nor Rochesterian, nor Andoverian, nor Middletonian, but Olivetian—plain, practical, unique, earnest, comprehensive of all the woes, wants, sins, sorrows, and necessities of an auditory.

But when that sermon does come, there will be a thousand gleaming scimitars to charge on it. There are in so many theological seminaries professors telling young men how to preach,

themselves not knowing how; and I am told if a young man in some of our theological seminaries says anything quaint, or thrilling, or unique, faculty and students fly at him, and set him right, and straighten him out, and smooth him down, and chop him off until he says everything just as everybody else says it. Oh, when the coming sermon of the Christian church arrives, all the churches of Christ in our great cities will be thronged. The world wants spiritual help. All who have buried themselves to be mortal and to be immortal, and they want to hear about the great future. I tell you, my friends, if the people of these great cities who have had trouble only thought they could get practical and sympathetic help in the Christian church, there would not be a street in Washington or New York or Boston which would be passable on the Sabbath day, if there were a church on it; for all the people would press to that asylum of mercy, that great house of comfort and consolation.

We hear a great deal of discussion now all over the land about why people do not go to church. Some say it is because Christianity is dying out, and because people do not believe in the truth of God's word, and all that. They are false reasons. The reason is because our sermons are not interesting and practical, and sympathetic and helpful. But, I remark again, the sermon of the future will be an awakening sermon. From altar-rail to the front doorstep, under that sermon an audience will get up and start for Heaven. There will be in it many a staccato passage. It will not be a lullaby; it will be a battle-charge. Men will drop their sins, for they will feel the hot breath of pursuing retribution on the back of their necks. It will be a sermon sympathetic with all the physical distresses as well as the spiritual distresses of the world. Christ not only preached, but he healed paralysis, and he healed epilepsy, and he healed the dumb and the blind, and the ten lepers.

Yes, I have to tell you the sermon of the future will be a reported sermon. If you have any idea that printing was invented simply to print secular books, and stenography and phonography were invented merely to set forth secular ideas, you are mistaken. The printing press is to be the great agency of gospel proclamation. It is high time that good men, instead of denouncing the press, employ it to scatter forth the gospel of Jesus Christ. The vast majority of people in our cities do not come to church, and nothing but the printed sermon can reach them and call them to pardon and life and peace and Heaven.

So I cannot understand the nervousness of some of my brethren of the ministry. When they see a newspaper man coming in they say, "Alas! there is a reporter." Every added reporter is 1,000, or 50,000, or 200,000 immortal souls added to the auditory. The time will come when all the village, town and city newspapers will reproduce the gospel of Jesus Christ, and sermons preached on the Sabbath will reverberate all around the world; and, some by type and some by voice, all nations will be evangelized.

Do you exhort in prayer meeting? Be short and be spirited. Do you teach in Bible class? Though you have to study every night, be interesting. Do you exhort people on the subject of religion in their homes or in public places? Study adroitness and use common sense. The most graceful, the most beautiful thing on earth is the religion of Jesus Christ, and if you awkwardly present it, it is defamation. We must do our work rapidly and we must do it effectively. Soon our time for work will be gone.

A dying Christian took out his watch and gave it to a friend and said: "Take that watch, I have no more use for it; time is ended for me and eternity begins." O my friends, when our watch has ticked away for us the last moment, and our clock has struck for us the last hour, may it be found we did our work well; and whether we preached the gospel in pulpits, or taught Sabbath classes, or administered to the sick as physicians, or bargained as merchants, or pleaded the law as attorneys, or were busy as artisans, or as husbandmen, or as mechanics, or were like Martha called to give a meal to a hungry Christ, or like Hannah to make a coat for a prophet, or like Deborah to rouse the courage of some timid Barah in the Lord's conflict, we did our work in such a way that it will stand the test of the judgment. And in the long procession of the redeemed that march round the throne, may it be found there are many there brought to God through our instrumentality and in whose rescue we are exultant.

But, oh you unsaved! wait not for the coming sermon. It may come after your obsequies. It may come after the stonecutter has chiseled our names on the slab 50 years before. Do not wait for a greater steamer of the Cunard or White Star line to take you off the wreck, but hail the first craft with however low a mast, and however small a hull, and however poor a rudder, and however weak a captain. Better a disabled schooner that comes up in time than a full-rigged brig that comes up after you have sunken. Instead of waiting for that coming sermon—it may be 20, 50 years off—take this plain invitation of a man who, to have given you spiritual eyesight, would be glad to be called the spittle of the hand of Christ put on the eyes of a blind man, and who would consider it the highest compliment of this service, if at the close 500 men should start from these doors, saying: "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not. This one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." Swifter than shadows over the plain, quicker than birds in their autumnal flight, hastier than eagles to their prey, hie you to a sympathetic Christ. The orchestras of Heaven have already strung their instruments to celebrate your rescue.

And many were the voices around the throne: Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.

THREATENED CRISIS.

DIPLOMACY AVERTS INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS.

How a Negro Justice of the Peace Held a British Vessel With a Writ of "No Exeat Republicum"—The Writ Was Dissolved in Liquor and a Laugh Went Around.

During the reign of the carpetbaggers in Georgia a very black but brainy old negro named Tunis G. Campbell came down from the north and became one of the leaders of his race.

In the course of time Campbell was made a justice of the peace at the port of Darien. Then the trouble began in earnest.

Justice Campbell had no use for the whites because he knew that they cordially hated him.

But he did not confine his animosity to Georgians or to Democrats. He employed a number of negro constables, authorized them to carry weapons, and in a short time made his court a terror to the community.

So much by way of introduction. One summer a British sailing vessel came to Darien and took on a cargo of naval stores. Before getting ready to sail the captain settled everything due from him and his crew—that is, everything in the way of a just account. He scoured his papers, when several negro traders of the lowest class unexpectedly put in claims for goods that had never been purchased.

These comorants alleged that the captain and his sailors were indebted to them for meals, merchandise, lodging and other things.

It was evident that these claims were fraudulent, and the captain continued his preparations for his departure.

The afternoon he was to weigh anchor Justice Campbell held a consultation with a shyster lawyer.

"I want to hold that—foreigner here," said Campbell, "until he settles these bills!"

"In England," replied the lawyer, "when you want to prevent people from leaving the country, you issue a writ of ne exeat regnum."

Justice Campbell came near falling to the floor.

"Just say that again," he said excitedly.

"A writ of ne exeat regnum."

"I see—I see," said Campbell. "Well, I want you to draw up one and keep that fellow here."

The shyster's resources were limited, and he explained to his friend that regnum meant kingdom, and as this country was a republic there would have to be a change in the verbiage.

"Change it," commanded the black justice.

The lawyer then admitted that he knew very little Latin, and for that reason was somewhat embarrassed.

"This is a republic," he said.

"All right," was the prompt reply of Campbell. "Draw up a writ of ne exeat republicum."

"I am afraid it is bad Latin," objected the lawyer.

"I'll make it stick," answered the justice. "I'll sign the paper and swear in six special constables to enforce it."

This was enough, and the lawyer proceeded to draw up the most remarkable document ever seen in America.

The writ covered 20 pages of foolscap and ordered the Englishman, under the severest pains and penalties, to remain with his ship at Darien until he settled all claims.

It was a sultry August afternoon, and the vessel was about ready to depart, when it was boarded by Justice Campbell and six negro constables armed with guns.

The justice read the writ to the captain, and after informing him that the constables would remain until the matter was adjusted the judicial tyrant went ashore again.

The captain retired to the cabin with the mate and talked it over.

Finally a plan of action was agreed upon, and when the ship's officers reappeared they were apparently in a good humor. They told the constables that they were welcome as the representatives of the law and requested them to enjoy the freedom of the vessel.

The constables were overwhelmed with tobacco and cigars and an occasional dram until their suspicions vanished.

Then the captain and his crew displayed still more hospitality, and the bottle was freely passed around.

At midnight six negro constables were in a drunken slumber, the effect of their drugged liquor, and the captain and his men were wide awake and perfectly sober.

The blacks were carefully deposited in a boat and set adrift in the harbor, and then the British sloop quietly weighed anchor and left the port at an hour when Justice Campbell was dreaming of his new and wonderful writ of ne exeat republicum.

The constables were picked up next day and sent to jail for neglect of duty, but the vessel was then beyond reach.

The British captain went straight to Savannah, where he laid his case before his consul and demanded an apology and an indemnity from the United States government.

The consul found it difficult to keep his face straight when he heard the story.

"It is an outrage," he said to the captain, "but it is a peculiar one and of a ludicrous nature. If I were you, I would not hold a friendly government responsible for the conduct of a few ignorant persons, who have not been free long enough to know their own rights and respect the rights of others."

It required a good deal of talk to appease the Englishman, but after he had been wined and dined by the merchants and had told his story a score of times, amid roars of laughter, he began to regard the affair as a good joke and agreed to let it drop.

And thus ended what threatened to be a serious international complication.

—Chicago Times-Herald.

THE INFLUENCE

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