

# REV. DR. PALMAGE'S SERMON

## THE SECRET PLACE OF THUNDER.

The Sunday Sermon as Delivered by the Brooklyn Divine.

TEXT: "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder."—Psalms lxxxi., 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 fleeing Israelites are on the bottom of the Red Sea, its waters having been set up on either side in masonry of sulphur, for God can make a wall as solid out of water as out of granite, and the troves 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 ordinary waters, but tonight, as the Egyptian host moved on, they were built into walls, now on one side and now on the other, they must have been frowning waters, for it was probable that the same power in the Egyptian army might suddenly frown them prostrate. A great lantern of cloud hung over these chasm between the two walls. The door of that lantern was toward the Egyptians, and it glowed 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 captain 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 chariots were hurled headlong, and the Red Sea fell on all the host. The confounding and confounding thunder was in answer to the prayer of the Israelites, and their backs out to the lash, and their feet bleeding, and their bodies despoiled with the suffering of whole generations, they had asked Almighty God to send a plague of lightning, and the lightning was sent, and the splash and the roar of the Red Sea as it dropped to its natural bed were only the slanting of its sarcophagus on a death boat. 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 plague of hail was accompanied with this full diapason of the heavens. While Samson and his men were at a banquet of a lamb, and the Philistines were about to attack them, it was by terrifying thunder they were discomfited. Job, who was a combination of the Danes and the Miles, was solemnized on this reprobation of the heavens, and cried, "The thunder of His power, can He understand? and He challenges the universe by saying, 'Can He thunder with a voice like mine?' and He throws Rosa Bonheur's 'Horse Fair' into the shade by the Bible photograph of a warhorse, when he describes the most magnificent of the world. Because of the power of James and John, they were called 'the sons of thunder.' The law given on the basaltic crags of Mount Sinai was entering, and this cloudy exultation. The skies all around about 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 this thunder. To the ancient the cause of this thundering earth with loud sound must have been more of a mystery than it is to us. The lightning, which were to them a terror, and the cause of this thunder, in our time have been domesticated. We harness electricity to vehicles and we cage it in lamps, and every schoolboy knows 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 mysteries about the sky, and the lightning and my text, true in 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 hundred things not known. After all the scientific batteries have been using their power to thousands of miles, and some learned men have discoursed to us the most about atmospheric electricity and magnetic electricity and galvanic electricity and thermionic electricity and static 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 a secret place of moral thunder. In other words, the religious power that you see 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 only a partial idea of the instances I have forgotten. Many years ago there was a large church. It was characterized by strange and mighty revivals, and individual cases of spiritual arrests 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. Every body knew him and liked him for his geniality, but deplored his moral delinquency. His parents were there every Sabbath morning in church. One day there was a young man of the door-bell of the pastor of that church, and that young man, a stranger to the congregation, implored the pastor, and passed into complete reformation of heart and life. All the neighborhood was astonished and asked, "Why was this?" The father and mother had said nothing to him about his soul's welfare.

On another aisle of the same church sat an old miser. He paid his pew rent, but was hard on the poor, and was a miserly philanthropist. Piles of money! And people said, "What a struggle he will have when he quits this life to part with his bonds and mortgages!" One day he was served by a minister. "Please to call immediately. I have a matter of great importance about which I want to see you. When this pastor came in the man could not speak for emotion, but after a while 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, then, you 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 benedictions and toward the great charities of the day he became a cheerful and bountiful almoner. 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. Worshipped was she to the last degree, and all her family worried. She had a few of the finest gems 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, was thought positively vulgar. Wins, cards, theaters, rounds of costly rackets 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 come around and pray with her. From that time her entire demeanor was changed, and though she was not called upon to sacrifice any of her beautiful life, she consecrated her beauty her

social position, her family, her all to God and the church as a witness. Every eye was turned in regard to her. "Have you noticed the change, and what 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. The very people whom no one thought would be affected by such considerations were converted. The pastor and the officers of the church were on the lookout for the solution of this religious phenomenon. "Where is it?" they said, "and who is it and what is it?" At last the discovery was made and all was explained. A poor old Christian woman standing in the vestibule of the church one Sunday morning, trying to get her breath again before she went up stairs to the gallery, heard the inquiry and told the secret.

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 these one person or 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 turned out that her prayers were instances of conversion were the result of that old woman's prayers as she sat in the gallery Sabbath by Sabbath, bent all wizened and poor and unnoticed.

A little cloud of consecrated humanity hovering in the galleries. That was the secret place of the thunder. There is some thing about this secret place of the thunder, almost all the moral and religious power demonstrated. Not one out of a million—no one out of ten million—prayers ever strikes its mark. The public exercises of a minister of religion voices the supplications of an assemblage, but the prayers of all the congregation are in silence. There is not a word in the contrary when the minister is 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 the application—banquet of the secret place of the thunder. There is no word in the contrary when the minister is 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 the application—banquet of the secret place of the thunder.

In the winter of 1873 we were worshipping in the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the organ loft. I had a great many converts, and the splash and the roar of the Red Sea as it dropped to its natural bed were only the slanting of its sarcophagus on a death boat. That is the meaning of the text when God says, "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder."

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know it, and they feel it, and they cannot get away from it.

Two funerals after a while—not more than two years apart, for it is seldom that there is more than that lapse of time between funerals among mothers going—two funerals put out of sight of old folks. But where are the children? The daughters are in homes where they are incarnations of good industry and piety. The sons, perhaps one a farmer, another a merchant, another a mechanic, another a minister of the Gospel, useful, consistent, honored.

What power for good those seven sons and daughters! Where did they get the power? From the schools, and the seminaries, and the colleges! Oh no, though these may have helped. From their superior mental endowment? No, I do not think they had unusual mental caliber. From accidental circumstances? No, they had nothing of what is called astounding good luck.

I think we will take a train and ride to the depot nearest to the home from which these men and women started. The train halts. Let us stop a few minutes at the village graveyard and see the tombstones of the parents. Yes, the one is seventy-four years old, and the other was seventy-two and the epitaph says that "after a useful life they died a Christian death." How appropriately the Scripture passage cut on the mother's tombstone, "She hath done what she could." And how beautiful the passage cut on the father's tombstone, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

On over the country road we ride—the road is a little rough, for the spring weather is not quite settled, and once in a while it is hard to get the wheels out again without breaking the shafts. But at last we come to the lane in front of the farmhouse, the door is open, and we open the gate while you drive through. Here is the arbor under which those boys and girls many years ago used to play. But it is quite another now. For the property is in other hands. Yonder is the orchard where they used to thrash the trees for apples, sometimes before they were ripe. There is no more to be seen but the eggs before Easter. There is the doornail upon which they used to sit. There is the room in which they had their prayers and church services, the boys and girls, the mother there and the boys and girls there.

We have got to the fountain of pious and gracious influences before they were ripe. There is no more to be seen but the eggs before Easter. There is the doornail upon which they used to sit. There is the room in which they had their prayers and church services, the boys and girls, the mother there and the boys and girls there.

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL

## LESSON FOR SUNDAY JUNE 8

"The Burning Furnace." Daniel iii., 13-25. Golden Text, Isaiah xlii., 2.

Commentary.

13. "Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. This Gentile king, to whom God gave the kingdoms of the world, and to whom also He gave the wonderful vision of chapter ii., has in the pride of his heart set up an image which commands all people to worship. Ten times this chapter it is spoken of as the golden image or the image which he had set up. It is suggestive of another image to be set up in the last days by an enemy of God, which men must either worship or die (Rev. xiii., 15). Daniel's friends refused to worship the image, and Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and therefore they are summoned to appear before the king.

14. "Do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up." This is the question asked of these young men by the man to whom it had been made known that "The God of Heaven had given him his kingship, and Nebuchadnezzar that they should have no fear of persecution or imprisonment, but that they should serve the God of Heaven, and that he refused to acknowledge the God of Heaven, but will if possible compel the servants of the image to do so." This is the question asked of these young men by the man to whom it had been made known that "The God of Heaven had given him his kingship, and Nebuchadnezzar that they should have no fear of persecution or imprisonment, but that they should serve the God of Heaven, and that he refused to acknowledge the God of Heaven, but will if possible compel the servants of the image to do so." 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