

# COMING SERMON

## Dr. Talmage's Views of Future Sermons.

### NEW GOSPEL OF CHRIST

#### Ministers Ought to Declare The Living Christ Only To the People.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage addresses all Christian workers and describes what he thinks will be the modes of preaching the gospel in the future; text, Romans xii., 7. "Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering."

While I was seated on the piazza of a hotel at Lexington, Ky., one summer evening, a gentleman asked me, "what do you think of the coming sermon?" I suppose he was asking me in regard to some new discourse of Dr. Cumming of London, who sometimes preached startling sermons, and I replied, "I have not seen it." But I found out after ward that he meant to ask what I thought would be a characteristic of the coming sermon of the world, the word "Cumming" as a noun produced the same as the word coming as an adjective. But my mistake suggested to me a very important and practical theme, "The Coming Sermon."

Before the world is converted the style of religious discourse will have to be converted. You might as well go into the modern Sedan or Gattyburg with bows and arrows, instead of rifles and bombshells and parks of artillery, as to expect to conquer this world for God by the old styles of exhortation and sermonology. Jonathan Edwards presented the sermons most adapted to the age in which he lived, but if these sermons were preached now they would divide an audience into two classes—those sound asleep, and those waiting to go home.

But there is a discourse of the future. Who 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 discourse of exhortation may be born in the country meeting house on the bank 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 be in a cradle under the shadow of the Sierra Nevada or in a New England farm house or amid the rice fields of southern Savannah, or this moment there

may be some young man in one of our theological seminaries in the junior or middle or senior class, snapping that we pon of power, or there may be coming from new baptism of the Holy Ghost on the churches, so that some of us who now stand in the watch towers of Zion, waiting for a realization of our present inefficiency, may preach it ourselves.

First of all, I remark that future religious discourse will be full of a living Christ in contradistinction to didactic technicalities. A discourse 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.

That sermon or exhortation of the future will not deal with men in the threadbare illustrations of Jesus Christ. In that coming address there will be instances of vicarious suffering taken right out of everyday life, for there is not a day when there is not somebody dying for others—as the physician saving his dipteritic 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 foreman consuming in the burning building while he is taking a child out of the fourth storey window. You would be just much a hero in the same crisis.

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!

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. In all religious discourse 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 Eutyebus 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 re-uscitate 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. Eutyebus 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 those 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 of 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 and spread out over a vast reach of time, but religious truth projected in compact form that flashes light upon the soul and rivets its indifference.

When the religious discourse of the future arrives in this land and in the Christian Church, the discourse which is to arouse the world and startle the nations and usher in the kingdom, it will be a brief discourse. Hear it, all theological students, all ye men and women who in Sabbath schools and other departments are telling for Christ and the salvation of immortal—brevity, brevity.

But I remark also that the religious discourse of the future of which I speak will be a popular discourse. There are those in these times that speak of a popular sermon as though there must be something wrong about it. As these critics are dull themselves, the world gets the impression that a 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 audience 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 hand? 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 lion's aroma. All the people knew what He meant, and they flocked to Him. And when the religious discourse of the future appears it will not be Princetonian, not Rochesterian, not Andoverian, not Middletonian, but Olivetian—plain, practical, unique, earnest, comprehensive of all the woes, wants, sins and sorrows of an auditory.

But when that exhortation or discourse does come there will be a thousand

gleaming scimitars to charge on it. There are in so many theological seminaries a professor telling young men how to preach, themselves not knowing how, and I am told that if a young man in some of our theological seminaries says anything quaint or thrilling or unquaint 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

future religious discourse of the Christian Church arrives at the Churches of Christ in our great cities will be thronged!

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 and exhortations are not

interesting and practical and helpful. Some one might well tell the whole truth on this subject, and so I will tell it. The religious discourse of the future, the gospel sermon to come forth and shake the nations and lift people out of darkness, will be a popular sermon, just for the simple reason that it will meet the woes and the wants and the anxieties of the people.

There are in all our denominations ecclesiastical mummies sitting around to frown upon the fresh young pulpit of America to try to awe them down, to cry out: "Tut, tut, tut! Season all! They stand to-day preaching in churches that hold a thousand people, and there are a hundred persons present, and if they cannot have the world saved in their way it seems as if they do not want it saved at all."

That religious discourse of the future will be an everyday sermon, going right down into every man's life, and it will teach him how to plough, how to do any work he is called to do, how to wield trowel and pen, and pencil and yardstick and plane. And it will teach women how to preside over their household and how to educate their children and how to imitate Miriam and Ester and Vashti and Eunice, the mother of Timothy, and Mary, the mother of Christ, and those women who on northern and southern battle fields were mistaken by the world for angels of mercy fresh from the throne of God. So I cannot understand the nervousness of some of my brethren in the ministry. When they see a newspaper man coming in they say, "Alas, there is a reporter!" Every added reporter is 10,000, 50,000, 100,000 immortal souls added to the and tory. The time will come when all the village, town and city newspapers will produce the gospel of Christ, and sermons preached on the Sabbath will reverberate to all around the world, and some by type and some by voice, all nations will be evangelized.

The practical bearing of this is upon those who are engaged in Christian work not only upon the theological students and young ministers, but upon all who preach the gospel, and all who exhort in meetings and all of you who are doing your duty. Do you exhort in prayer meeting? Be short and spirited. Do you teach in Bible class? Though you have to study every night, be interesting. Do you accept people on the subject of religion in their homes or in public places? Study adroitness and common sense.

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 at an end for me, and eternally begins." Oh, 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, that we did it in the very best way, and whether we preach the gospel in public, 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 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 Barak in the Lord's conflict, we did our work in such a way that we will stand the test of the judgment! And in that long procession of the redeemed that march around the throne may it be found that there are many there brought to God through our instrumentality, and in whose rescue we exult. But let none of us who are still unsaved, wait for that religious discourse of the future. It may come after our obituaries. It may come after the stonecutter has chiseled our name on the slab fifty years before. Do not wait for a great steamer of the Cunard or White Star line to take you off the wreck but bail the first craft, with however weak a engine. Better a disabled schooner that comes up in time than a full rigged brig that comes up after you have sank.

Just as I was waiting for that religious discourse of the future (it may be forty, fifty years off,) take this plain invitation of a man who to have given your spirit-eyesight would be glad to be called the spittle by the hand of Christ upon the eyes of a blind man, and who would consider the highest compliment of this service if, at the close of 500 men would 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, bid you to a sympathetic Christ. The orchestras of heaven have strung their instruments to celebrate your rescue. And many were the voices around the throne, Rejoice for the Lord brings back His own.

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- PART I.**
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  - Recitativo..... Miss F. McKenna, (Piano.)
  - Tenor Solo..... Mr. Brent Melville.
  - Violin Solo..... Miss Maisey (soprano).
  - Vocal Solo..... Mr. Charles Hermans.
  - Instrumental selection..... Misses Murphy.
  - Vocal Solo..... Miss Nellie Robin.
  - Solo..... Mr. Stanley.
- Intermission Candy Sale.
- PART II.**
- Vals. Brilliant..... 1st and 2nd piano.
  - Partitone Solo..... Mr. Leslie Cook.
  - Vocal Solo..... Miss May McIntyre.
  - Reading..... Dr. P. J. Trainor.
  - Vocal Solo..... Miss Emma Bennett.
  - Comed Solo..... Mr. W. J. Brown.
  - Vocal Solo..... Mrs. J. A. Byrne.
- G. J. says the Queen.

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