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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

(Continued from Page 10.)

death. Like the pioneer who enters the American forests and cuts away the trees and builds the home and plants the corn, in order that his children may reap the harvests after the father is gone, so John the Baptist, not for himself, but for those who should come after him, lived his life and at last laid it down, a martyr.

If you follow the teachings of the Bible very carefully you will find there was a war, a rivalry, a jealousy, between the followers of Jesus Christ and the followers of John. There was no war between John and Christ. No sooner did Jesus appear than John bent the knee and rendered unto him full and complete obedience. But this obedience was not true in reference to the Johannian school. In the fourth chapter of John we find that in order to still this rivalry Christ with his followers left the southern regions of Judaea and traveled north and went through Samaria. But no sooner was John the Baptist dead than his disciples took the headless trunk of his body and buried it and "went and told Jesus." Ah, yes, by John's death all these factions were healed. The Johannian school became in toto the "school of the Nazarene." Is it not a blessed thought that if we live for Christ this side of the grave we may still continue to live in influence for Christ after we are dead? John the Baptist, great before his sacrifice! John the Baptist, great after he was martyred!

That posthumous influence is mighty for good or evil we all know. We have felt it. In the village where my grandfather lived there labored for many years a gospel minister. He never seemed to see any great results from his ministry. Everybody loved him, yet few confessed. Christ under his preaching while he was alive. But no sooner was that good man dead than a mighty revival of religion sprang up. My father said that at one communion 300 people confessed Christ in the little village church. And the remarkable fact about that revival was that every one of those new converts traced his conversion directly to the teachings and influence of the dead pastor. Posthumous influence, a mighty influence! Oh, yes, after death we shall live on. A good influence, like that of John the Baptist shall never, never die.

But though I honor and extol the noble characteristics of this great man, there is still another lesson we must learn from the verse of my text. Christ said, "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Oh, yes, that was true as far as it went. True, if you speak in reference to those men and women who lived before Jesus was born. But there is one part of the verse you must well bear in mind. It is the last part and goes thus, "Yet, notwithstanding this, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What does that mean? Simply this: If you and I become part of Jesus Christ, if we accept his atonement and are cleansed by his blood, we become in a sense greater, aye, far greater, than the greatest man who ever lived who has not been sanctified by the Saviour's sacrifice.

Perhaps I can illustrate the Bible thought in a simple way. A great wall or fortress has to be built. The work must be pushed. One group of workmen ascend the scaffolding and lay on one layer of stone and then go to their rest. Another group lay another layer of stone upon the preceding layer and then go to their rest. And so the work upon the wall grows higher and higher, each group of workmen standing upon a loftier scaffolding than that of the preceding laborers. Well, the great wall of progress has been built in this way. Each generation represents a batch of workmen, each layer of stone the completed work of the preceding generation. The college boy of to-day knows more of geography, more of chemistry, more of astronomy, more of all the sciences, than the ablest man living three centuries ago. Why? Because he has absorbed the compact knowledge of the last 300 years, which the great scholars of those three centuries have laid at his feet.

But as the wall of mental and spiritual progress went on growing higher and higher century after century suddenly about 1,900 years ago spiritually it took a miraculous lift. Christ's sacrifice was laid upon the top of it. The Calvary stones were the layers of the year 30 A. D. Those stones will lift all succeeding generations higher in knowledge and in possibilities, higher than all sin and higher than all future condemnations. I once heard a worldly man say: "The best man that ever lived never went to heaven on his own merits. If we ever reach the city of the redeemed, it must be through what Christ has done for us and not through what we have done for ourselves." This statement contains the kernel, the essence, the heart of all the gospel. John the Baptist in his own life great? Yes! "Yet, notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Now, my friends, from a worldly standpoint it is almost impossible to compare the influences of different lives and to positively find out which one is the greater. But, though we cannot tell who is the greater in a worldly sense, we do know that in a spiritual sense no one can be great save through Christ's blood. To-day I would see a royal robe placed about your shoulders. To-day I would you might become a prince, a princess at a king's levee. To-day I would welcome you into the royal family of which God is the Father and Jesus the elder brother. To-day I would have you grow into greater spiritual importance than any one who ever lived up to the time of John the Baptist, because Christ's Calvary is lifting you above the stars. To-day I would have you a companion of Jesus. Great in life! Great in death! Great in your resurrection! May you be great through the time which shall never end!

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