AT THE TABERNACLE.

DR. TALMAGE'S FIRST SERMON AFTER HIS RETURN FROM EUROPE.

The Sufficiency of the Gospel of Christ. There Is Ancient Learning in It, with Poetry and Sublime Rhetoric, but More Than All Else, There Is Salvation.

BROOKLYN, Sept. 25.—Dr. Talmage was greeted with a most generous and effusive welcome today by a vast congregation which assembled to hear him preach his first sermon after his return from his European preaching tour. He announced that in a Sunday or two he would give a sermon concerning his stewardship in delivering in Russia, in behalf of The Christian Herald, the $35,000 worth of flour for the starving. The subject today was "All in All." Text, Colossians iii, 11, "Christ is all and in all."

Returned after the most eventful summer of my life, I must shortly and as soon as I recover from the sea voyage give you an account of our mission of bread to famine stricken Russia, and of my preaching tour through Germany, England, Scotland and Ireland; but my first sermon on reaching here must be a hosanna of gratitude to Christ, and from the text I have chosen, I have found that the greatest name in the ocean shipping, and from Liverpool to Moscow, and from Moscow to London and Edinburgh and Belfast and Dublin, is Jesus.

Every age of the world has had its historians, its philosophers, its artists, its thinkers and its teachers. Were there histories to be written there has always been a Moses, or a Herodotus, or a Xenophon, or a Josephus to write them. Were there poems to be constructed there has always been a Job or a Homer to construct them. Were there thrones lustrous and powerful to be lifted there has always been a David or a Cæsar to raise them. Were there teachers demanded for the intellect and the hearts there has been a Socrates, and a Zeno, and a Cleanthes, and a Marcus Antoninus coming forth on the grand and glorious mission. Every age of the world has had its triumphs of reason and morality. There has not been a single age of the world which has not had some decided system of religion.

The Platonism, orientalism, stoicism, Brahminism and Buddhism, considering the ages in which they were established, were not lacking in ingenuity and force. Now, in this line of beneficent institutions and of noble men, there appears a personage more wonderful than any predecessor. He came from a family without any royal or aristocratic pretension. He became a Galilean mechanic. He had no advantage from the schools. There were people beside him day after day who had no idea that he was going to be anything remarkable or do anything remarkable. Yet notwithstanding all this, and without any title or scholarly profession or flaming rhetoric he startled the world with the strangest announcements, ran in collision with solemn priest and proud ruler, and with a voice that rang through temple and palace and over ship's deck and mountain top, exclaimed, "I am the light of the world!"

Men were taken all aback at the idea that that hand, yet hard from the use of the ax, the saw and adz and hatchet, should wave the scepter of authority, and that upon that brow, from which they had so often seen him wipe the sweat of toil, there would yet come the crown of unparalleled splendor and of universal dominion. We all know how difficult it is to think that anybody who was at school with us in boyhood has got to be anything great or famous, and no wonder that those who had been boys with Christ in the streets of Nazareth and seen him in after years in the days of his complete obscurity, should have been very slow to acknowledge Christ's wonderful mission.

THE GREAT DEVELOPMENT.

From this humble point the stream of life flowed out. At first it was just a faint rill, hardly able to find its way down the rock, but the tears of a weeping Christ added to its volume, and it flowed on until by the beauty and greenness of the banks you might know the path the crystal stream was taking. On and on, until the lepers were brought down and washed of their leprosy, and the dead were lifted into the water that they might have life, and pearls of joy and promise were gathered from the brink, and innumerable churches gathered on either bank and the tide flows on deeper and stronger and wider until it rolls into the river from under the throne of God, mingling billow with billow, and brightness with brightness, and joy with joy, and hosanna with hosanna.

I was looking at some of the paintings of the artist, Mr. Kensett. I saw some pictures that were just faint outlines; in some places you would see only the branches of a tree and no trunk; and in another case the trunk and no branches. He had not finished the work. It would have taken him days and months perhaps to have completed it. Well, my friends, in this world we get only the faintest outline of what Christ is. It will take all eternity to fill up the picture—so loving, so kind, so merciful, so great! Paul does not, in this chapter, say of Christ he is good, or he is loving, or he is patient, or he is kind, but in his exclamation of the text he embraces everything when he says, "Christ is all and in all."

I remark in the first place, Christ is everything in the Bible. I do not care where I open the Bible, I find Jesus. In whatever path I start, I come after a while to the Bethlehem manger. I go back to the old dispensation, and see a lamb on the altar, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" Then I go and see the manna provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, and say, "Jesus, the bread of life." Then I look at the rock which was smitten by the prophet's rod, and, as the water gushes out, I say, "It is Jesus, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

I go back and look at the writings of Job and hear him exclaim, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Then I go to Ezekiel and I find Christ presented there as "a plant of renown," and then I turn over to Isaiah and Christ is spoken of "as a sheep before her shearers." It is Jesus all the way between Genesis and Malachi. Then I turn over in the New Testament and it is Christ in the parable, it is Christ in the miracle, it is Christ in the evangelist's story, it is Christ in the apostle's epistles and it is Christ in the trumpet peal of the Apocalypse. I know there are a great many people who do not find Christ in the Bible.

Here is a man who studies the Bible as a historian. Well, if you come as a historian, you will find in this book how the world was made, how the seas fled to their places, how empires were established, how nation fought with nation, javelin ringing against harbegeon, until the earth was ghastly with the dead. You will see the coronation of princes, the triumph of conquerors, and the world turned upside down and back again and down again, cleft and scarred with great agonies of earthquake and tempest and battle. It is a wonderful history, putting to the blush all others in the accuracy of its recital and in the stupendous events it records. Homer and Thucydides and Gibbon could make great stories out of little events; but it took a Moses to tell how the heavens and the earth were made in one chapter, and to give the history of thousands of years upon two leaves.

MISUSE OF THE BIBLE.

There are others who come to the Bible merely as antiquarians. If you come as an antiquarian, you will find a great many odd things in the Bible—peculiarities of manner and custom, marriage and burial; peculiarities of dress, tunics, sandals, crisping pins, amulets and girdles and tinkling ornaments. If you come to look at military arrangements, you will find coats of mail and javelins and engines of war and circumvallation and encampments. If you look for peculiar musical instruments, you will find psalteries and shigionoths and rams' horns. The antiquarian will find in the Bible curiosities in agriculture, and in commerce, and in art, and in religion that will keep him absorbed a great while. There are those who come to this Bible as you would to a cabinet of curiosities, and you pick up this and say, "What a strange sword that is!" and "What a peculiar hat this is!" and "What an unlooked for lamp that is!" and the Bible to such becomes a British museum.

Then there are others who find nothing in the Bible but the poetry. Well, if you come as a poet, you will find in this book faultless rhythm, and bold imagery, and startling antithesis, and rapturous lyric, and sweet pastoral, and instructive narrative, and devotional psalm; thoughts expressed in a style more solemn than that of Montgomery, more bold than that of Milton, more terrible than that of Dante, more natural than that of Wordsworth, more impassioned than that of Pollock, more tender than that of Cowper, more weird than than that of Spenser. This great poem brings all the gems of the earth into its coronet, and it weaves the flames of judgment in its garland and pours eternal harmonies in its rhythm.

Everything this book touches it makes beautiful, from the plain stones of the summer thrashing floor, and the daughters of Nahor filling the trough for the camels, and the fish pools of Heshbon, up to the psalmist praising God with diapason of storm and whirlwind, and Job leading forth Orion, Arcturus and the Pleiades. It is a wonderful poem, and a great many people read it as they do Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh," and Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake," and Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade." They sit down, and are so absorbed in looking at the shells on the shore that they forget to look off on the great ocean of God's mercy and salvation.

Then there are others who come to this book as skeptics. They marshal passage against passage, and try to get Matthew and Luke in a quarrel, and would have a discrepancy between what Paul and James say about faith and works, and they try the account of Moses concerning the creation by modern decisions in science, and resolve that in all questions between the scientific explorer and the inspired writer they will give the preference to the geologist. These men—these spiders, I will say—suck poison out of the sweetest flowers. They fatten their infidelity upon the truths which have led thousands to heaven, and in their distorted vision prophet seems to war with prophet, and evangelist with evangelist, and apostle with apostle, and if they can find some bad trait of character in a man of God mentioned in that Bible these carrion crows caw and flap their wings over the carcass. Because they cannot understand how the whale swallowed Jonah they attempt the more wonderful feat of swallowing the monster whale of modern skepticism. They do not believe it possible that the Bible story should be true which says that the dumb ass spake, while they themselves prove the thing possible by their own utterances.

I am amused beyond bounds when I hear one of these men talking about a future life. Just ask a man who rejects that Bible what heaven is, and hear him befog your soul. He will tell you that heaven is merely the development of the internal resources of a man; it is an efflorescence of the dynamic forces into a state of ethereal and transcendental lucubration, in close juxtaposition to the ever present "was" and the great "to be" and the everlasting "no." Considering themselves wise, they are fools for time, fools for eternity.

AS TO VAIN DISPUTATIONS.

Then there is another class of persons who come to the Bible as controversialists. They are enormous Presbyterians or fierce Baptists or violent Methodists. They cut the Bible to suit their creed instead of cutting their creed to suit the Bible. If the Scriptures think as they do, well; if not, so much the worse for the Scriptures. The Bible is merely the whetstone on which they sharpen the dissecting knife of controversy. They come to it as a government in time of war comes to armories or arsenals for weapons and munitions. They have declared everlasting war against all other sects, and they want so many broadswords, so many muskets, so many howitzers, so many columbiads, so much grape and canister, so many fieldpieces with which to rake the field of dispute, for they mean to get the victory though the heavens be darkened with the smoke and the earth rent with the thunder. What do they care about the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I have seen some such men come back from an ecclesiastical massacre as proud of their achievements as an Indian warrior boasting of the number of scalps he has taken. I have more admiration for a man who goes forth with his fists to get the championship than I have for these theological pugilists who make our theological magazines ring with their warcry. There are men who seem to think the only use of the sword of truth is to stick somebody. There is one passage of the Scriptures that they like better than all others, and that is this: "Blessed be the Lord which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." Woe to us if we come to God's word as controversialists, or as skeptics, or as connoisseurs, or as fault finders, or merely as poets!

Those only get into the heart of God's truth who come seeking Christ. Welcome all such! They will find him coming out from behind the curtain of prophecy until he stands, in the full light of New Testament disclosure, Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. They will find him in genealogical table and in chronological calculation, in poetic stanza and in historical narrative, in profound parable and in startling miracle. They will see his foot on every sea, and his tears in the drops of dew on Hermon, and hear his voice in the wind, and behold his words all abloom in the valley between Mount Olivet and Jerusalem.

There are some men who come and walk around the Temple of Truth and merely see the outside. There are others who walk into the porch and then go away. There are others who come in and look at the pictures, but they know nothing about the chief attractions of the Bible. It is only the man who comes and knocks at the gate, saying, "I would see Jesus." For him the glories of that book open, and he goes in and finds Christ, and with him peace, pardon, life, comfort and heaven. "All in all is Jesus" in the Bible.

I remark again that Christ is everything in the great plan of redemption. We are slaves; Christ gives deliverance to the captive. We are thirsty; Christ is the river of salvation to slake our thirst. We are hungry; Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." We are condemned to die; Christ says, "Save that man from going down to the pit; I am the ransom." We are tossed on a sea of troubles; Jesus comes over it, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." We are in darkness; Jesus says, "I am the bright and morning star." We are sick; Jesus is the balm of Gilead. We are dead; hear the shrouds rend and the grave hillocks heave as he cries, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." We want justification; "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We want to exercise faith; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I want to get from under condemnation; "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The cross—he carried it. The flames of hell—he suffered them. The shame—he endured it. The crown—he won it. Heights of heaven sing it, and worlds of light to worlds of light all round the heavens cry, "Glory, glory!"

CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL.

Let us go forth and gather the trophies for Jesus. From Golconda mines we gather the diamonds, from Ceylon banks we gather the pearls, from all lands and kingdoms we gather precious stones, and we bring the glittering burdens and put them down at the feet of Jesus and say: "All these are thine. Thou art worthy." We go forth again for more trophies, and into one sheaf we gather all the scepters of the earth, of all royalties and dominions, and then we bring the sheaf of scepters and put it down at the feet of Jesus and say, "Thou art King of kings, and these thou hast conquered."

And then we go forth again to gather more trophies, and we bid the redeemed of all ages, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, to come. We ask them to come and offer their thanksgivings, and the hosts of heaven bring crown and palm and scepter, and here by these bleeding feet, and by this riven side, and by this wounded heart cry, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and forever!" Tell me of a tear that he did not weep, of a burden that he did not carry, of a battle that he not fight, of a victory that he did not achieve. "All in all is Jesus" in the great plan of redemption.

I remark again, Christ is everything to the Christian in time of trouble. Who has escaped trouble? We must all stoop down and drink out of the bitter lake. The moss has no time to grow on the buckets that come up out of the heart's well dripping with tears. Great trials are upon our track as certain as greyhound pack on the scent of deer. From our hearts in every direction there are a thousand chords reaching out binding us to loved ones, and ever and anon some of these tendrils snap. The winds that cross this sea of life are not all abaft. The clouds that cross our sky are not feathery and afar, straying like flocks of sheep on heavenly pastures, but wrathful and somber and gleaming with terror they wrap the mountains in fire, and come down baying with their thunders through every gorge.

The richest fruits of blessing have a prickly shell. Life here is not lying at anchor; it is weathering a gale. It is not sleeping in a soldier's tent with our arms stacked; it is a bayonet charge. We stumble over gravestones, and we drive on with our wheel deep in the old rut of graves. Trouble has wrinkled your brow, and it has frosted your head. Falling in this battle of life, is there no angel to bind our wounds? Hath God made this world with so many things to hurt and none to heal? For this snakebite of sorrow, is there no herb growing by all the brooks to heal the poison? Blessed be God that in the Gospel we find the antidote! Christ has bottled an ocean of tears. How many thorns he hath plucked out of human agony!

Oh, he knows too well what it is to carry a cross, not to help us carry ours! He knows too well what it is to climb the mountain, not to help us up the steep. He knows too well what it is to be persecuted, not to help those who are imposed upon. He knows too well what it is to be sick, not to help those who suffer. Aye, he knows too well what it is to die, not to help us in our last extremity. Blessed Jesus, thou knowest it all. Seeing thy wounded side, and thy wounded hand, and thy wounded feet, and thy wounded brow, we are sure thou knowest it all.

Oh, when those into whose bosom we used to breathe our sorrows are snatched from us, blessed be God, the heart of Jesus still beats, and when all other lights go out and the world gets dark, then we see coming out from behind a cloud something so bright and cheering, we know it to be the morning star of the soul's deliverance! The hand of care may make you stagger, or the hand of persecution may beat you down, or the hand of disappointment may beat you back, but there is a hand, and it is so kind, and it is so gentle, that it wipeth all tears from all faces.

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