OUR DEBT TO GREECE

REV. DR. TALMAGE RECOUNTS THE OBLIGATION IN AN ABLE SERMON.

The Great Divine Speaks of Grecian Influence In Literature and Art—Thermopylæ and Bunker Hill—How to Repay the Obligation—Paul's Peroration.

WASHINGTON, March 28.—As Dr. Talmage's sermons are published on both sides the ocean, this discourse on a subject of worldwide interest will attract universal attention. His text was Romans i, 14, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians."

At this time, when that behemoth of abominations, Mohammedanism, after having gorged itself on the carcasses of 100,000 Armenians, is trying to put its paws upon one of the fairest of all nations, that of the Greeks, I preach this sermon of sympathy and protest, for every intelligent person on this side, like Paul, who wrote the text, is debtor to the Greeks. The present crisis is emphasized by the guns of the allied powers of Europe, ready to be unlimbered against the Hellenes, and I am asked to speak out. Paul, with a master intellect of the ages, sat in brilliant Corinth, the great Acro-Corinthus fortress frowning from the height of 1,686 feet, and in the house of Gaius, where he was a guest, a big pile of money near him, which he was taking to Jerusalem for the poor.

In this letter to the Romans, which Chrysostom admired so much that he had it read to him twice a week, Paul practically says: "I, the apostle, am bankrupt. I owe what I cannot pay, but I will pay as large a percentage as I can. It is an obligation for what Greek literature and Greek sculpture and Greek architecture and Greek prowess have done for me. I will pay all I can in installments of evangelism. I am insolvent to the Greeks." Hellas, as the inhabitants call it, or Greece, as we call it, is insignificant in size, about a third as large as the state of New York, but what it lacks in breadth it makes up in height, with its mountains Cylene and Eta and Taygetus and Tymphrestus, each over 7,000 feet in elevation, and its Parnassus, over 8,000. Just the country for mighty men to be born in, for in all lands the most of the intellectual and moral giants were not born on the plain, but had for cradle the valley between two mountains. That country, no part of which is more than 40 miles from the sea, has made its impress upon the world as no other nation, and it today holds a first mortgage of obligation upon all civilized people. While we must leave to statesmanship and diplomacy the settlement of the intricate questions which now involve all Europe and indirectly all nations, it is time for all churches, all schools, all universities, all arts, all literatures, to sound out in the most emphatic way the declaration, "I am debtor to the Greeks."

The Best Sermon.

In the first place, we owe to their language our New Testament. All of it was first written in Greek, except the book of Matthew, and that, written in the Aramæan language, was soon put into Greek by our Saviour's brother James. To the Greek language we owe the best sermon ever preached, the best letters ever written, the best visions ever kindled. All the parables in Greek. All the miracles in Greek. The sermon on the mount in Greek. The story of Bethlehem, and Golgotha, and Olivet, and Jordan banks, and Galilean beaches, and Pauline embarkation, and Pentecostal tongues, and seven trumpets that sounded over Patmos, have come to the world in liquid, symmetric, picturesque, philosophic, unrivaled Greek, instead of the gibberish language in which many of the nations of the earth at that time jabbered. Who can forget it, and who can exaggerate its thrilling importance, that Christ and heaven were introduced to us in the language of the Greeks, the language in which Homer had sung, and Sophocles dramatized, and Plato dialogued, and Socrates discoursed, and Lycurgus legislated, and Demosthenes thundered his oration on "The Crown?" Everlasting thanks to God that the waters of life were not handed to the world in the unwashed cup of corrupt languages from which nations had been drinking, but in the clean, bright, golden lipped, emerald handled chalice of the Hellenes. Learned Curtius wrote a whole volume about the Greek verb. Philologists century after century have been measuring the symmetry of that language, laden with elegy and philippic, drama and comedy, "Odyssey" and "Iliad," but the grandest thing that Greek language ever accomplished was to give to the world the benediction, the comfort, the irradiation, the salvation, of the gospel of the Son of God. For that we are debtors to the Greeks.

And while speaking of our philological obligation let me call your attention to the fact that many of the intellectual and moral and theological leaders of the ages got much of their discipline and effectiveness from Greek literature. It is popular to scoff at the dead languages, but 50 per cent of the world's intellectuality would have been taken off if through learned institutions our young men had not, under competent professors, been drilled in Greek masterpieces, Hesiod's "Weeks and Days," or the eulogium by Simonides of the slain in war, or Pindar's "Odes of Victory," or "The Recollections of Socrates," or "The Art of Words," by Corax, or Xenophon's "Anabasis."

Leaders of the Ages.

From the Greeks the world learned how to make history. Had there been no Herodotus and Thucydides there would have been no Macaulay or Bancroft. Had there been no Sophocles in tragedy there would have been no Shakespeare. Had there been no Homer, there would have been no Milton. The modern wits, who are now or have been out on the divine mission of making the world laugh at the right time, can be traced back to Aristophanes, the Athenian, and many of the jocosities that are now taken as new had their suggestions 2,300 years ago in the 54 comedies of that master of merriment. Grecian mythology has been the richest mine from which orators and essayists have drawn their illustrations and painters the themes for their canvas, and, although now an exhausted mine, Grecian mythology has done a work that nothing else could have accomplished. Boreas, representing the north wind; Sisyphus, rolling the stone up the hill, only to have the same thing to do over again; Tantalus, with fruits above him that he could not reach; Achilles, with his arrows; Icarus, with his waxen wings, flying too near the sun; the Centaurs, half man and half beast; Orpheus, with his lyre; Atlas, with the world on his back—all these and more have helped literature, from the graduate's speech on commencement day to Rufus Choate's eulogium on Daniel Webster at Dartmouth. Tragedy and comedy were born in the festivals of Dionysius at Athens. The lyric and elegiac and epic poetry of Greece 500 years before Christ has its echoes in the Tennysons, Longfellows and Bryants of 1,800 and 1,900 years after Christ. There is not an effective pulpit or editorial chair or professor's room or cultured parlor or intelligent farmhouse today in America or Europe that could not appropriately employ Paul's ejaculation and say, "I am debtor to the Greeks."

The fact is this—Paul had got much of his oratorical power of expression from the Greeks. That he had studied their literature was evident when, standing in the presence of an audience of Greek scholars on Mars' hill, which overlooks Athens, he dared to quote from one of their own Greek poets, either Cleanthus or Aratus, declaring, "As certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'" And he made accurate quotation, Cleanthus, one of the poets, having written:

For we thine offspring are. All things that creep
Are but the echo of the voice divine.

And Aratus, one of their own poets, had written:

Doth care perplex? Is lowering danger nigh?
We are his offspring, and to Jove we fly.

It was rather a risky thing for Paul to attempt to quote extemporaneously from a poem in a language foreign to his and before Greek scholars, but Paul did it without stammering and then acknowledged before the most distinguished audience on the planet his indebtedness to the Greeks, crying out in his oration, "As one of your own poets has said."

Inventors of Architecture.

Furthermore, all the civilized world, like Paul, is indebted to the Greeks for architecture. The world before the time of the Greeks had built monoliths, obelisks, cromlechs, sphinxes and pyramids, but they were mostly monumental, to the dead whom they failed to memorialize. We are not certain even of the names of those in whose commemoration the pyramids were built. But Greek architecture did most for the living. Ignoring Egyptian precedents and borrowing nothing from other nations, Greek architecture carved its own columns, set its own pediments, adjusted its own entablatures, rounded its own moldings and carried out as never before the three qualities of right building, called by an old author "firmitas, utilitas, venustas"—namely, firmness, usefulness, beauty.

Although the Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens is only a wreck of the storms and earthquakes and bombardments of many centuries, and although Lord Elgin took from one side of that building, at an expense of $250,000, two shiploads of sculpture, one shipload going down in the Mediterranean and the other shipload now to be found in the British museum, the Parthenon, though in comparative ruins, has been an inspiration to all architects for centuries past and will be an inspiration all the time from now until the world itself is a temple ruin. Oh, that Parthenon! One never gets over having once seen it. But what must it have been when it stood as its architects, Ikitnos and Kallikrates, built it out of Pentelican marble, white as Mont Blanc at noonday and as overwhelming. Height above height. Overtopping the august and majestic pile and rising from its roof was a statue of Pallas Promachus in bronze, so tall and flashing that sailors far out at sea beheld the plume of her helmet. Without the aid of the eternal God it never could have been planned, and without the aid of God the chisels and trowels never could have constructed it. There is not a fine church building in all the world, or a properly constructed courthouse, or a beautiful art gallery, or an appropriate auditorium, or a tasteful home, which, because of that Parthenon, whether its style or some other style be adopted, is not directly or indirectly a debtor to the Greeks.

Blessings of Sculpture.

But there is another art in my mind—the most fascinating, elevating and inspiring of all arts and the nearest to the divine—for which all the world owes a debt to the Hellenes that will never be paid. I mean sculpture. At least 650 years before Christ the Greeks perpetuated the human face and form in terra cotta and marble. What a blessing to the human family that men and women, mightily useful, who could live only within a century may be perpetuated for five or six or ten centuries! How I wish that some sculptor contemporaneous with Christ could have put his matchless form in marble! But for every grand and exquisite statue of Martin Luther, of John Knox, of William Penn, of Thomas Chalmers, of Wellington, of Lafayette, of any of the great statesmen or emancipators or conquerors who adorn your parks or fill the niches of your academies, you are debtors to the Greeks. They covered the Acropolis, they glorified the temples, they adorned the cemeteries with statues, some in cedar, some in ivory, some in silver, some in gold, some in size diminutive and some in size colossal. Thanks to Phidias, who worked in stone; to Clearchus, who worked in bronze; to Dontas, who worked in gold, and to all ancient chisels of commemoration! Do you not realize that for many of the wonders of sculpture we are debtors to the Greeks?

Yea, for the science of medicine, the great art of healing, we must thank the Greeks. There is the immortal Greek doctor, Hippocrates, who first opened the door for disease to go out and health to come in. He first set forth the importance of cleanliness and sleep, making the patient before treatment to be washed and take slumber on the hide of a sacrifice beast. He first discovered the importance of thorough prognosis and diagnosis. He formulated the famous oath of Hippocrates which is taken by physicians of our day. He emancipated medicine from superstition, empiricism and priestcraft. He was the father of all the infirmaries, hospitals and medical colleges of the last 23 centuries.

Ancient medicament and surgery had before that been anatomical and physiological assault and battery, and long after the time of Hippocrates, the Greek doctor, where his theories were not known, the Bible speaks of fatal medical treatment when it says, "In his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians, and Asa slept with his fathers." And we read in the New Testament of the poor woman who had been treated by incompetent doctors, who asked large fees, where it says, "She had suffered many things of many physicians and had spent all that she had and was nothing better, but rather grew worse." For our glorious science of medicine and surgery—more sublime than astronomy, for we have more to do with disease than with the stars; more beautiful than botany, for bloom of health in the cheek of wife and child is worth more to us than all the roses of the garden—for this grandest of all sciences, the science of healing, every pillow of recovered invalid, every ward of American and European hospital, may well cry out: "Thank God for old Dr. Hippocrates! I, like Paul, am indebted to the Greeks."

For Liberty and Right.

Furthermore, all the world is obligated to Hellas more than it can ever pay for its heroics in the cause of liberty and right. United Europe today had not better think that the Greeks will not fight. There may be fallings back and vacillations and temporary defeat, but if Greece is right all Europe cannot put her down. The other nations before they open the portholes of their men-of-war against that small kingdom had better read of the battle of Marathon, where 10,000 Athenians, led on by Miltiades, triumphed over 100,000 of their enemies. At that time, in Greek council of war, five generals were for beginning the battle and five were against it. Callimachus presided at the council of war, had the deciding vote, and Miltiades addressed him, saying:

"It now rests with you, Callimachus, either to enslave Athens, or, by insuring her freedom, to win yourself an immortality of fame, for never since the Athenians were a people were they in such danger as they are in at this moment. If they bow the knee to these Medes, they are to be given up to Hippias, and you know what they will then have to suffer, but if Athens comes victorious out of this contest she has it in her power to become the first city of Greece. Your vote is to decide whether we are to join battle or not. If we do not bring on a battle presently, some factious intrigue will disunite the Athenians, and the city will be betrayed to the Medes, but if we fight before there is anything rotten in the state of Athens I believe that, provided the gods will give fair field and no favor, we are able to get the best of it in the engagement."

That won the vote of Callimachus, and soon the battle opened, and in full run the men of Miltiades fell upon the Persian hosts, shouting: "On, sons of Greece! Strike for the freedom of your country! Strike for the freedom of your children and your wives, for the shrines of your fathers' gods and for the sepulchers of your sires! All, all are now staked on the strife!" While only 192 Greeks fell, 6,400 Persians lay dead upon the field, and many of the Asiatic hosts who took to the war vessels in the harbor were consumed in the shipping. Persian oppression was rebuked, Grecian liberty was achieved, the cause of civilization was advanced, and the western world and all nations have felt the heroics. Had there been no Miltiades there might have been no Washington.

Strong In the Right.

Also at Thermopylæ 300 Greeks, along a road only wide enough for a wheel track between a mountain and a marsh, died rather than surrender. Had there been no Thermopylæ there might have been no Bunker Hill. The echo of Athenian and Spartan heroics was heard at the gates of Lucknow, and Sebastopol, and Bannockburn, and Lexington, and Gettysburg. English Magna Charta and Declaration of American Independence and the song of Robert Burns, entitled "A Man's a Man For a' That," were only the long continued reverberation of what was said and done 20 centuries before in that little kingdom that the powers of Europe are now imposing upon. Greece having again and again shown that 10 men in the right are stronger than 100 men in the wrong, the heroics of Leonidas and Aristides and Themistocles will not cease their mission until the last man on earth is as free as God made him. There is not on either side of the Atlantic today a republic that cannot truthfully employ the words of the text and say, "I am debtor to the Greeks."

But now comes the practical question, How can we pay that debt or a part of it? For we cannot pay more than 10 per cent of that debt in which Paul acknowledged himself a bankrupt. By praying Almighty God that he will help Greece in its present war with Mohammedanism and the concerted empires of Europe. I know her queen, a noble, Christian woman, her face the throne of all beneficence and loveliness, her life an example of noble wifehood and motherhood. God help those palaces in these days of awful exigency! Our American senate did well the other day when in that capitol building which owes to Greece its columnar impressiveness they passed a hearty resolution of sympathy for that nation. Would that all who have potent words that can be heard in Europe would utter them now, when they are so much needed! Let us repeat to them in English what they centuries ago declared to the world in Greek, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

An Infinite Obligation.

Another way of partly paying our debt to the Greeks is by higher appreciation of the learning and self sacrifice of the men who in our own land stand for all that the ancient Greeks stood. While here and there one comes to public approval and reward, the most of them live in privation or on salary disgracefully small. The scholars, the archæologists, the artists, the literati—most of them live up three or four flights of stairs and by small windows that do not let in the full sunlight. You pass them every day in your streets without any recognition. Grub street, where many of the mighty men of the past suffered, is long enough to reach around the world. No need of wasting our sympathy upon the unappreciated thinkers and workers of the past, though Linnæus sold his works for a single ducat, though Noah Webster's spelling book yielded him more than his dictionary, though Correggio, the great painter, receiving for long continued work payment of $39, died from overjoy; though when Goldsmith's friends visited him they were obliged to sit in the window, as he had but one chair; though Samuel Boyse, the great poet, starved to death; though the author of "Hudibras" died in a garret; though "Paradise Lost" brought its author only $25 cash down, with promise of $50 more if the sale warranted it, so that $75 was all that was paid for what is considered the greatest poem ever written. Better turn our attention to the fact that there are at this moment hundreds of authors, painters, sculptors, architects, brain workers without bread and without fuel and without competent apparel. As far as you can afford it, buy their sculpture, read their books, purchase their pictures, encourage their pen, their pencil, their chisel, their engraver's knife, their architect's compass. The world calls them "bookworms" or "Dr. Dryasdust," but if there had been no bookworms or dry doctors of law and science and theology there would have been no Apocalyptic angel. They are the Greeks of our country and time, and your obligation to them is infinite.

Victory Through Sacrifice.

But there is a better way to pay them, and that is by their personal salvation, which will never come to them through books or through learned presentation, because in literature and intellectual realms they are masters. They can outargue, outquote, outdogmatize you. Not through the gate of the head, but through the gate of the heart, you may capture them. When men of learning and might are brought to God, they are brought by simplest story of what religion can do for a soul. They have lost children. Oh, tell them how Christ comforted you when you lost your bright boy or blue eyed girl! They have found life a struggle. Oh, tell them how Christ has helped you all the way through! They are in bewilderment. Oh, tell them with how many hands of joy heaven beckons you upward! "When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war," but when a warm hearted Christian meets a man who needs pardon and sympathy and comfort and eternal life then comes victory. If you can, by some incident of self sacrifice, bring to such scholarly men and women what Christ has done for their eternal rescue, you may bring them in. Where Demosthenic eloquence and Homeric imagery would fail, a kindly heart throb may succeed. A gentleman of this city sends me the statement of what occurred a few days ago among the mines of British Columbia. It seems that Frank Conson and Jem Smith were down in the narrow shaft of a mine. They had loaded an iron bucket with coal, and Jim Hemsworth, standing above ground, was hauling the bucket up by windlass, when the windlass broke, and the loaded bucket was descending upon the two miners. Then Jim Hemsworth, seeing what must be certain death to the miners beneath, threw himself against the cogs of the whirling windlass, and, though his flesh was torn and his bones were broken, he stopped the whirling windlass and arrested the descending bucket and saved the lives of the two miners beneath. The superintendent of the mine flew to the rescue and blocked the machinery. When Jim Hemsworth's bleeding and broken body was put on a litter and carried homeward and some one exclaimed, "Jim, this is awful!" he replied, "Oh, what's the difference so long as I saved the boys?"

What an illustration it was of suffering for others, and what a text from which to illustrate the behavior of our Christ, limping and lacerated and broken and torn and crushed in the work of stopping the descending ruin that would have destroyed our souls! Try such a scene of vicarious suffering as this on that man capable of overthrowing all your arguments for the truth, and he will sit down and weep. Draw your illustrations from the classics, and it is to him an old story, but Leyden jars and electric batteries and telescopes and Greek drama will all surrender to the story of Jim Hemsworth's "Oh, what's the difference so long as I saved the boys?"

The Debt Paid.

Then, if your illustration of Christ's self sacrifice, drawn from some scene of today, and your story of what Christ has done for you do not quite fetch him into the right way, just say to him, "Professor—doctor—judge, why was it that Paul declared he was a debtor to the Greeks?" And ask your learned friend to take his Greek Testament and translate for you, in his own way, from Greek into English, the splendid peroration of Paul's sermon on Mars hill, under the power of which the scholarly Dionysius surrendered—namely, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." By the time he has got through the translation from the Greek I think you will see his lip tremble, and there will come a pallor on his face like the pallor on the sky at daybreak. By the eternal salvation of that scholar, that great thinker, that splendid man, you will have done something to help pay your indebtedness to the Greeks. And now to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost be honor and glory and dominion and victory and song, world without end. Amen.

EUROPE'S COLONIES.

Of All the Powers Spain Alone Is Falling Steadily Behind.

The only one of the European countries having colonial possessions which is failing in respect of number, wealth and population is Spain, once the chief colonial power of the European continent. While other governments have been extending their influence and possessions, Spain has been falling in the rear, and the reason for this is seen clearly in Cuba and the Philippines. Wasteful, oppressive, mercenary and inefficient government is the direct cause.

In a census of the colonial possessions of governments made 20 years ago it appeared that the total colonial possessions of Great Britain covered 7,600,000 square miles, or more than 60 times the extent of the United Kingdom, and had a population of about 200,000,000. France had foreign colonies, exclusive of Algeria, covering 460,000 English square miles, with a population of 2,500,000. The colonial possessions of Spain, the remnant of the heritage from Spain's navigators, covered an area of 115,000 English square miles, with a population of 8,500,000. Germany, newly established as a united government, had no foreign colonies. Neither had any of the German states. The colonies of the Netherlands covered 666,000 square miles and had a population of 24,000,000. Belgium had no colonies. Denmark's colonies were chiefly islands, the total population being about 50,000. Norway and Sweden had one small island, and Portugal had colonies covering 715,000 English miles, with a population of 4,000,000. Since that time most European governments have extended their territory.

The British empire now covers 11,000,000 square miles, of which only 120,000 are in the United Kingdom. The population of the English colonies is 340,000,000. The colonies of France cover 2,900,000 square miles and have a population of 21,000,000. The area of the colonies of the Netherlands is 760,000 miles, and the population is 29,000,000. There are nearly 6,000,000 subjects of the German empire in Africa and 8,000,000 of Belgium.

The Russians have spread their colonies until these have in Asia a population in excess of 30,000,000, and, though the population of Portugal is less than 5,000,000, the colonies of Portugal have collectively a population in excess of 6,000,000, the area of Portugal's colonies being 30 times greater than that of the home country. Denmark's colonies have spread, though not much, and Italy has appeared among European nations having colonial possessions. Spain alone has made no headway. There has been no increase of her possessions or of the population of them. Many districts of Cuba and a few of those of the Philippines have been devastated by war, and the commerce of these colonies with the home country has declined appreciably. The Spaniards are in no position to hope for an extension of their colonial possessions. Indeed all present indications point to the ultimate withdrawal of Spain from much territory that she now rules.—New York Sun.

A Kind Landlord.

"I had a queer experience some years ago," remarked a leading physician in the city. "I was traveling through Illinois with a companion on business, and we had to pass through a town called Olney, where we afterward learned that an epidemic of smallpox prevailed. We went to some of the farmers living in that vicinity to get something to eat, and as soon as they found that we had passed through Olney they ordered us out of their houses. We were compelled to take a train and leave that section of the state, and in about two weeks we were both taken with severe pains in the head and spinal column. We went to bed, and the next morning we both had high fevers and did not know what to do. Finally we decided that the proper thing to do would be to send for the hotel keeper and tell him that we had the smallpox, or at least had been exposed to it, and did not know what to do under the circumstances.

"Of course we expected to have him swear and finally throw us out of the house, but we wanted him to find some other place for us to go. When he appeared, we told the story from beginning to end, and judge of our surprise when he said: 'Well, boys, I will stand by you to the end. I have a little property, and it is paid for, so you need not be alarmed. If the hotel has to go, let it go, but you shall be cared for to the end.' The next day we were better, and we found that we had been alarmed without cause. Only one man in 10,000 would have treated us as this man did, and I have never forgotten his kindness. Before we left we made him a handsome present."—Columbus (O.) Dispatch.

Too Much Shyness.

Cumso—Why don't Mr. Gilgal and Miss Perkasie get married?

Cawker—Shyness on both sides.

"How do you make that out?"

"She is a shy little thing by nature, and he is shy of cash."—Detroit Free Press.

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