THE COMING SERMON.

Dr. Talmage on Future Modes of Preaching the Gospel.

How He Thinks Religious Truths Should Be Presented—Says Ministers Should Preach the Living Christ.

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Washington, Nov. 12.

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 12:7: "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 supposed 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 afterward that he meant to ask what I thought would be the characteristics of the coming sermon of the world, the sermons of the future, the word "Cumming" as a noun pronounced 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 Gettysburg 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 style of exhortion and sermonology. Jonathan Edwards preached the sermons most adapted to the age in which he lived, but if those sermons were preached now they would divide an audience into two classes—those sound asleep and those wanting 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 banks 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 Nevadas or in a New England farmhouse or amid the ricefields of southern savannas, or this moment there may be some young man in one of our theological seminaries, in the junior or middle or senior class, shaping that weapon of power, or there may be coming some new baptism of the Holy Ghost on the churches, so that some of us who now stand in the watchtowers of Zion, waking to a realization of our present inefficiency, may preach it ourselves. That coming discourse may not be 50 years off. And let us pray God that its arrival may be hastened while I announce to you what I think will be the chief characteristics of that discourse or exhortation when it does arrive, and I want to make my remarks appropriate and suggestive to all classes of Christian workers.

First of all, I remark that 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 repetition of His titles. The world wants a living Christ, not a Christ standing at the head of a formal system of theology, but a Christ who means pardon and sympathy and condolence and brotherhood and life and Heaven, a poor man's Christ, an overworked Christ, an invalid's Christ, a farmer's Christ, a merchant's Christ, an artisan's Christ, an every man's Christ.

A symmetrical and fine worded system of theology is well enough for theological classes, but it has no more business in a pulpit than have the technical phrases of an anatomist or a psychologist or a physician in the sickroom of a patient. The world wants help, immediate and world uplifting, and it will come through a discourse in which Christ shall walk right down into the immortal soul and take everlasting possession of it, filling it as full of light as is this noonday firmament.

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 somebody is not dying for others—as the physician saving his diphtheritic 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 fireman consuming in the burning building while he is taking a child out of a fourth-story window; as in summer the strong swimmer at East Hampton or Long Branch or Cape May or Lake George himself perished trying to rescue the drowning; as the newspaper boy one summer, supporting his mother for some years, his invalid mother, when offered by a gentleman 50 cents to get some special paper, and he got it, and rushed up in his anxiety to deliver it and was crushed under the wheels of the train and lay on the grass with only strength enough to say: "Oh, what will become of my poor, sick mother now?" Vicarious suffering—the world is full of it. An engineer said to me on a locomotive in Dakota: "We men seem to be coming to better appreciation than we used to. Did you see that account the other day of an engineer who to save his passengers stuck to his place, and when he was found dead in the locomotive, which was upside down, he was found still smiling, his hand on the airbrake?" And as the engineer said it to me he put his hand on the airbrake to illustrate his meaning, and I looked at him and thought: "You would be just as much a hero in the same crisis." Oh, in that religious discourse of the future there will be living illustrations taken out from everyday life of vicarious suffering—illustrations that will bring to mind the ghastlier sacrifice of Him who in the high places of the field, on the cross, fought our battles and endured our struggle and died our death.

A German sculptor made an image of Christ, and he asked his little child, two years old, who it was, and she said: "That must be some very great man." The sculptor was displeased with the criticism, so he got another block of marble and chiseled away on it two or three years, and then he brought in his little child, four or five years of age, and said to her: "Who do you think that is?" She said: "That must be the One who took little children in His arms and blessed them." Then the sculptor was satisfied. 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!

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 who 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 audiences 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 hands? 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 lily'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 Olivetic—plain, practical, unique, earnest, comprehensive of all the woes, wants, sins and sorrows of an auditory.

But when the exhortation or discourse does come there will be a thousand gleaming scimeters to charge on it. There are in so many theological seminaries professors 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 unique faculty 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 all the churches of Christ in our great cities will be thronged! The world wants spiritual help. All who have buried their dead want comfort. All know themselves to be mortal and to be immortal, and they want to hear about the great future. I tell you, my friends, if the people of our great cities who have had trouble only thought they could get practical and sympathetic help in the Christian church, there would not be a street in Washington or New York or any other city which would be passable on the Sabbath day if there were a church on it, for all the people would press to that asylum of mercy, that great house of comfort and consolation.

A mother with a dead babe in her arms came to the god Siva and asked to have her child restored to life. The god Siva said to her: "You go and get a handful of mustard seed from a house in which there has been no sorrow and in which there has been no death, and I will restore your child to life." So the mother went out, and she went from house to house and from home to home looking for a place where there had been no sorrow and where there had been no death, but she found none. She went back to the god Siva and said: "My mission is a failure. You see, I haven't brought the mustard seed. I can't find a place where there has been no sorrow and no death." "Oh!" said the god Siva. "Understand, your sorrows are no worse than the sorrows of others. We all have our griefs, and all have our heartbreaks."

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone;
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.

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. The reason is because our sermons and exhortations are not interesting and practical and helpful. Some one might as 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 pulpits of America to try to awe them down, to cry out: "Tut, tut, tut! Sensational!" 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.

I do not know but the old way of making ministers of the Gospel is better—a collegiate education and an apprenticeship under the care and some attention of some earnest, aged Christian minister, the young man getting the patriarch's spirit and assisting him in his religious service. Young lawyers study with old lawyers, young physicians with old physicians, and I believe it would be a great help if every young man studying for the Gospel ministry could get himself in the home and heart and sympathy and under the benediction and perpetual presence of a Christian minister.

But, I remark again, the religious discourse of the future will be an awakening sermon. From altar rail to the front door step, under that sermon, an audience will get up and start for Heaven. There will be in it many a staccato passage. It will not be a lullaby. It will be a battle charge. Men will drop their sins, for they will feel the hot breath of pursuing retribution on the back of their necks. It will be sympathetic with all the physical distresses as well as the spiritual distresses of the world. Christ not only preached, but he healed paralysis, and he healed epilepsy, and he healed the dumb and the blind and the lepers.

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 vote, how to bargain, how to plow, 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 households and how to educate their children and how to imitate Miriam and Esther and Vashti and Eunice, the mother of Timothy, and Mary, the mother of Christ, and those women who on northern and southern battlefields who were mistaken by the wounded for angels of mercy, fresh from the throne of God.

Yes, I have to tell you, the religious discourse of the future will be a reported sermon. If you have any idea that printing was invented simply to print secular books, and stenography and phonography were contrived merely to set forth secular ideas, you are mistaken. The printing press is to be the great agency of Gospel proclamation. It is high time that good men, instead of denouncing the press, employ it to scatter forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The vast majority of people in our cities do not come to church, and nothing but the printed sermon can reach them and call them to pardon and life and peace and Heaven.

So I cannot understand the nervousness of some of my brethren of 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 auditory. The time will come when all the village, town and city newspapers will reproduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and sermons preached on the Sabbath will reverberate 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 theological students and young ministers, but upon all who preach the Gospel and all who exhort in meetings and all of you if you 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 accost people on the subject of religion in their homes or in public places? Study adroitness and use common sense. The most graceful and most beautiful thing on earth is the religion of Jesus Christ, and if you awkwardly present it it is defamation. We must do our work rapidly, and we must do it effectively. Soon our time for work will be gone.

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 eternity 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 preached the Gospel in pulpits 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 it will stand the test of judgment! And in the 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 obsequies. It may come after the stonecutter has chiseled our name on the slab 50 years before. Do not wait for a great steamer of the Cunard or White Star line to take you off the wreck, but hail the first craft, with however low a mast and however small a hulk and however poor a rudder and however weak a captain.

Instead of waiting for that religious discourse of the future (it may be 40, 50 years off), take this plain invitation of a man who to have given you spiritual eyesight would be glad to be called the spittle by the hand of Christ put on the eyes of a blind man and who would consider the highest compliment of this service if, at the close, 500 men should 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, hie 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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B. Vanator, Scribe.

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Mrs. L. A. Willard, secretry.

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R. N. Goodwin, Sec'y.

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R. T. Spicer, Recording Secretary.

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A. H. Peirce, Scribe.

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Wellington Tent, No. 105, meets on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at Maccabee Hall. Visiting Knights welcome
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W. W. Helman, Record Keeper.

MASONIC.

WELLINGTON LODGE, No. 127, F. & A. M., meets Tuesday night on or before each full moon and two weeks thereafter.
Weo. W. Metzger, W. M.
F. G. Yale, Secretary.

WELLINGTON CHAPTER, No. 109, R. A. M., meets on Tuesday night following each full moon.
E. R. Stannard, High Priest.
F. G. Yale, Secretary.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.

Wellington Lodge, No. 440, K. of P., meets every Friday night at K. of P. Hall. Visiting Knights welcome.
W. T. Burdick, Chancellor Com.
R. T. Spicer, Keeper of Records and Seals.

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Wellington Hive, No. 89, meets on the first and third Friday nights of each month at Maccabee Hall. Visiting lady Maccabees welcome.
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27—Col. Ex.	5:20 pm
37—Daily Col. & Cin. Ex.	10:00 pm
51—Local Freight	11:00 am
23—Wellington Ex. (Sunday only)	9:50 am

East.

28—Daily Col. & Cin. Ex.	5:06 am
26—Galion Ex.	8:11 am
36—Daily Col. Ind & St. L. Ex.	1:08 pm
24—Wellington Ex.	5:20 pm
2—Col. Cin. & Ind. Ex.	8:19 pm
52—Local Freight	5:20 pm

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West.

Train No. 4 Daily	10:26 am
Train No. 6 Daily (except Sunday)	3:30 pm
Train No. 40 Local 10:04 a. m.	

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