

# GOD IN THE CENTURIES.

"Consider the Years of Many Generations."

Time is Only a Piece of Eternity—Chronology Engaged in Dividing Up a Portion of Eternity—Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage's New Year's Sermon.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Sunday morning appropriately took for the subject of his New Year's day sermon "The Chronology of the Bible, or God Among the Centuries."

The text chosen was Deuteronomy xxxii. 7, "Consider the years of many generations."

At 12 o'clock last night, while so many good people were watching, an old friend passed out of our homes and a stranger entered. The old friend making valedictory was 1892; the stranger arriving is 1893. The old friend was garrulous with the occurrences of many days, but the stranger put his finger over his lip and said nothing and seemed charged with many secrets and mysteries. I did not see either the departure or the arrival, but was sound asleep, thinking that was for me the best way to be wide awake now. Good-by, 1892! Welcome, 1893!

As an army is divided into brigades and regiments and companies, and they observe this order in their march and their tread is majestic, so the time of the world's existence is divided into an army divinely commanded; the eras are the brigades, the centuries are the regiments, and the years are the companies. Forward into the eternity past, out of the eternity to come! Forward is the command, and nothing can halt them, even though the world should die. While obeying my text, "Consider the years of many generations," I propose to speak of the "Chronology of the Bible, or God Among the Centuries."

We make a distinction between time and eternity, but time is only a piece of eternity, and chronology has been engaged in the divine work of dividing up this portion of eternity that we call time into compartments and putting events in their right compartment. It is as much an injustice against the past to wrongly arrange its events as it would be an injustice if, through neglect of chronological accuracy, it should in the far distant future be said that America was discovered in 1776, and the declaration of independence was signed in 1492, and Washington born on the 23d of March, and the civil war of the United States was fought in 1840.

As God puts all the events of time in the right place, let us be careful that we do not put them in the wrong place. The chronology of the Bible takes six steps, but they are steps so long it makes us hold our breath as we watch the movement. From Adam to Abraham. From Abraham to the exodus out of Egypt. From the exodus to the foundation Solomon's temple. From the foundation of Solomon's temple to the destruction of that temple. From the destruction of the temple to the return from Babylonish captivity. From Babylonish captivity to the birth of Christ.

Chronology takes pen and pencil, and calling astronomy and history to help says: "Let us fix one event from which to calculate everything. Let it be a star, the Bethlehem star, the Christmas star." And from that we go back and see the world was created 4,004 years before Christ; the deluge came 2,348 years before Christ; the exodus out of Egypt occurred 1,491 years before Christ, and Solomon's temple was destroyed 686 years before Christ.

Chronology enters the first chapter of Genesis and says the day mentioned there is not a day of twenty-four hours, but of ages, the word there translated as "day" in other places meaning ages, and so the Bible account of the creation and the geologists' account of the creation are completely harmonious. Chronology enters the book of Daniel and says that the words "time and a half" mean a year and a half.

Chronology enters at another point and shows us that the seasons of the year were then only two—summer and winter. We find that the Bible year was 360 days instead of 365; that the day was calculated from 6 o'clock in the morning to 6 o'clock at night; that the night was divided into four watches—namely, the late watch, the midnight, the cock crowing the early watch. The clock and watch were invented so long after the world began their mission that the day was not very sharply divided in Bible times. Ahaz had a sundial, or a flight of stairs with a column at the top, and the shadow which that column threw on the steps beneath indicated the hour, the shadow lengthening or withdrawing from step to step.

But the events of life and the events of the world moved so slowly for the most part in Bible times that they had no need of such time pieces as we stand on our mantels or carry in our pockets in an age when a man may have a half dozen or a dozen engagements for one day and needs to know the exact minute for each one of them. The earth itself in Bible times was the chief time piece, and it turned once on its axis and that was a day, and once around the sun and that was a year.

It was not until the Fourteenth century that the almanac was born, the almanac that we toss carelessly about, not realizing that it took the accumulated ingenuity of more than 5,000 years to make one. Chronology had to bring into its service the monuments of Egypt, and the cylinders of Assyria, and the bricks of Babylon, and the pot-

tery of Nineveh, and the medals struck at Antioch for the battle of Actium, and all the hieroglyphics that could be deciphered, and had to go into the extremely delicate business of asking the ages of Adam and Seth and Enoch and Methuselah, who after their 300th year wanted to be thought young.

I think it must have been in recognition of the stupendous work of making an almanac that all the days of the week are named after the gods. Sunday, after the sun, which was of old worshiped as a god. Monday, after the moon, which was also worshiped as a god. Tuesday, after Tiuco, the god of war. Wednesday, after Woden, the chief god of the Scandinavians. Thursday, after Thor, the god of thunder. Friday, after Frea, the goddess of marriage. And Saturday, after Saturn. The old Bible year began with the 25th of March. Not until 1532 did the first of the month of January get the honor in legal documents in England of being called the first day of the year.

Improvements all along have been made in chronology until the calendar, and the almanac, and the clock, and the watch seem to have reached perfection, and all the nations of Christendom have similarity of time calculations and have adopted what is called "new style," except Russia, which keeps what is called the "old style," and is twelve days different, so that, waiting from there, if you wish to be accurate, you date your letter January 1 and January 13, or December 10 and December 21. It is something to thank God for that the modes are so complete for calculating the cycles, the centuries, the decades, the years, the months, the days, the hours, the seconds.

Think of making appointments as in the Bible days for the time of the new moon. Think of making one of the watches of the night in Bible times a rooster crowing. The Bible says, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." "If the Master cometh at the cockerowing," and that was the way the midnight watch was indicated. The crowing of that barnyard bird has always been most uncertain. The crowing is at the lowest temperature of the night, and the amount of dew and the direction of the wind may bring the lowest temperature at 11 o'clock at night or 2 o'clock in the morning, and at any one of six hours. Just before a rain the crowing of chanticleer in the night is almost perpetual.

Compare these modes of marking time with our modes of marking time, when 12 o'clock is 12 o'clock, and 6 o'clock is 6 o'clock, and 10 o'clock is 10 o'clock, and independent of all weather, and then thank God that you live now. But notwithstanding all the imperfect modes of marking hours or years or centuries Bible chronology never trips up, never falters, never contradicts itself, and here is one of the best arguments for the authenticity of the Scriptures.

If you can prove an alibi in the courts, and you can prove beyond doubt that you were in some particular place at the time you were charged with doing or saying something in quite another place, you gain the victory, and infidelity has tried to prove an alibi by contending that events and circumstances in the Bible ascribed to certain times must have taken place at some other time, if they took place at all. But this book's chronology has never been caught at fault. It has been proved that when the Hebrews went into Egypt there were only seventy of them, and that when they came out there were 3,000,000 of them.

"Now," says infidelity, with a guffaw that it can not suppress, "what an absurdity! They went down into Egypt seventy and came out 3,000,000. That is a falsehood on the face of it. Nations do not increase in that ratio." But, my skeptical friend, hold a moment. The Bible says the Jews were 430 years in Egypt, and that explains the increase from seventy persons to 3,000,000, for it is no more, but rather less than the ordinary increase of nations. The pilgrim fathers came to America in the Mayflower, one small shipload of passengers, less than 300 years ago, and now we have a nation of 60,000,000. Where, then is so-called impossibility that the seventy Jews who went into Egypt in 430 years became 3,000,000? Infidelity wrong and Bible chronology right.

Now stop and reflect. Why is it that this sublime subject of Bible chronology has been so neglected, and that the most of you have never given ten minutes to the consideration of it, and that this is the first sermon ever preached on this stupendous and overwhelming theme? We have stood by the half day or the whole day at grand reviews and seen armies pass.

Again and again and again on the Champs Elysees Frenchmen by the hundreds of thousands have stood and watched the bannered armies go by, and the huzza has been three miles long and until the populace were so hoarse they could huzza no longer. Again and again and again the Germans by hundreds of thousands have stood on the palaces and stately Unter den Linden, Berlin, and strewn garlands under the feet of uniformed hosts led on by Von Moltke or Buecher or Frederick the Great.

When Wellington and Posenby and the Scots Greys came back from Waterloo, or Walseley from Egypt, or Marlborough from Blenheim, what military processions through Regent street and along by the palace of London and over the bridges of the Thames! What almost interminable lines of military on the streets of our American capitals,

while mayors and governors and presidents, with uncovered heads, looked on! But put all those grand reviews together, and they are tame compared with the review which on this New Year's day you from the pew and I from the pulpit witness.

Hear them pass in chronological order—all the years before the flood; all the years since the flood; decades a breast; centuries a breast; epochs a breast; millenniums a breast; Egyptian civilization, Babylonian populations, Assyrian dominions; armies of Persian, Grecian, Peloponnesian and Roman wars; Byzantine empire, Saracenic hosts, crusaders of the first, the second, third and the last avalanche of men; dark ages in somber epaulets and brighter ages with shields of silver and helmets of gold; Italy, Spain, France, Russia, Germany, England and America, past and present; dynasties, feudal domains, despotisms, monarchies, republics, ages on ages, ages on ages, passing to-day in a chronological review, until one has no more power to look upon the advancing columns, now brilliant, now squalid, now garlanded with peace, now crimson with slaughter, how horrid with ghastliness, now radiant with love and joy.

This chronological study affords, among other practical thoughts, especially two—the one encouraging to the last degree and the other startling. The encouraging thought is that the main drift of the centuries has been toward betterment, with only here and there a stout reversal. Grecian civilization was a vast improvement on Egyptian civilization, and Roman civilization a vast improvement on Grecian civilization, and Christian civilization is a vast improvement on Roman civilization.

What was the boasted age of Pericles compared with the age of Longfellow and Tennyson? What was Queen Elizabeth as a specimen of moral womanhood compared with Queen Victoria? What were the cruel warriors of olden times compared with the most distinguished warriors of the last half century, all of them as much distinguished for kindness and good morals as for prowess—the two military leaders of our civil war on northern and southern side communicant members of Christian churches, and their home life as pure as their public life?

Nothing impresses me in this chronological review more than the fact that the regiments of years are better and better regiments as the troops move on. I thank God that you and I were not born any sooner than we were born. How could we have endured the disaster of being born in the eighteenth or seventeenth or sixteenth century? Glad am I that we are in the regiment now passing the reviewing stand, and that our children will pass the stand in a still better regiment. God did not build this world for a slaughter house or a den of infamy.

A good deal of cleaning house will be necessary before this world becomes as clean and sweet as it ought to be, but the brooms and the scrubbing brushes, and the upholsterers and plumbers are already busy, and when the world gets fixed up, as it will be, if Adam and Eve ever visit it, as I expect they will, they will say to each other: "Well, this beats paradise when we lived there, and the pears and the plums are better than we plucked from the first trees, and wardrobes are more complete, and the climate is better."

Since I settled in my own mind the fact that God was stronger than the devil I have never lost faith in the emparadisation of this planet. With the exception of a retrogression in the Dark Ages, the movement of the world has been on and on, and up and up, and I have two jubilant hosannas—one for the closing year and the other for the new year.

But the other thought coming out of this subject is that Biblical chronology, and indeed all chronology, is urging the world to more punctuality and immediateness. What an unsatisfactory and indefinite thing it must have been for two business men in the time of Ahaz to make an appointment, saying: "We will settle that business matter to-morrow when the shadow on the dial of Ahaz reaches the tenth step from the top," or "I will meet you in the street called Straight in Damascus in the time of the new moon," or when asked in a courtroom what time an occurrence took place should answer, "It was during the time of the latter rain," or "It was at the time of the third crowing of the barnyard!"

You and I remember when ministers of the gospel in the country, giving out a notice of an evening service, instead of saying at 6 or 7 or 8 o'clock, would say, "The service will begin at early candle light." Thank God for chronological achievements which have ushered in calendars and almanacs and clocks and watches, and at so cheap a rate all may possess them! Chronology, beginning by appreciating the value of years and the value of days, has kept on until it cries out, "Man, immortal; woman, immortal; look out for that minute; look out for that second!"

We talk a great deal about the value of time, but will never fully appreciate its value until the last fragment of it has passed out of our possession forever. The greatest fraud a man can commit is to rob another of his time. Hear it, ye laggards, and repent! All the fingers of chronology point to punctuality as one of the graces. This minister or the lecturer or business man who comes to his place ten minutes after the appointed time commits a crime the enormity of which can only be estimated by multiplying the number of persons present

by ten. If the engagement be made with five persons, he has stolen fifty minutes, for he is ten minutes too late, and he has robbed each of the five persons of ten minutes apiece, and ten times five are fifty.

If there be 500 persons present and he be ten minutes too late, he has committed a robbery of 5,000 minutes, for ten times 500 are 5,000, and 5,000 minutes are eighty-three hours, which make more than three days. The thief of dry goods, the thief of bank bills, is not half so bad as the thief of time.

Dr. Rush, the greatest and busiest physician of his day, appreciated the value of time, and when asked how he had been able to gather so much information for his books and lectures he replied: "I have been able to do it by economizing my time. I have not spent one hour in amusement in thirty years." And taking a blank book from his pocket, he said, "I fill a book like this every week with thoughts that occur to me and facts collected in the rooms of my patients."

But do not let us get an impression from chronology that because the years of time have been so long in procession they are to go on forever. Matter is not eternal. No, no! If you watch half a day, or a whole day, or two days, as I once did, to see a military procession you remember the last brigade, and the last regiment, and the last company finally passed on, and as we rose to go we said to each other, "It is all over."

So this mighty procession of earthly years will terminate. Just when I have no power to prognosticate, but science confirms the Bible prophecy that the earth can not always last. Indeed there has been a fatality of worlds. The moon is merely the corpse of what it once was, and scientists have again and again gone up in their observatories to attend the deathbed of dying worlds and have seen them cremated. So I am certain, both from the Word of God and science, that the world's chronology will sooner or later come to its last chapter.

The final century will arrive and pass on, and then will come the final decade, and then the final year, and the final month, and the final day. The last spring will swing its censer of apple blossoms and the last winter bank its snows. The last sunset will burn like Moscow and the last morning radiate the hills. The clocks will strike their last hour, and the watches will tick their last second. No incendiaries will be needed to run hither and you with torches to set the world on fire.

Chemistry teaches us that there is a very inflammable element in water. While oxygen makes up a part of the water, the other part of the water is hydrogen, and that is very combustible. The oxygen drawn out from the water, the inflammable hydrogen will put instantly into conflagration the Hudsons and Savannahs and Mississippis and Rhines and Urals and Danubes, and Atlantic and Pacific and Indian and Mediterranean seas. And then the angel of God, descending from the throne, might put one foot on the surf of the sea and the other on the beach and cry to the four winds of Heaven, "Time was, but time shall be no longer!" Yet, found in Christ, pardoned and sanctified, we shall welcome the day with more gladness than you ever welcomed a Christmas or New Year's morn.

## The Trend of Our Age.

The trend of our age in theology, as in politics, literature, science and art, is toward the concrete rather than the abstract—toward helpfulness. It tends to percolate down from theory into practice. And this tendency contains the promise and potency of union. All schools of religious thought are pretty well agreed already that love and righteousness are the supreme traits in Divine and in human character; that sacrifice is the universal law of high existence; that service is the common and imperative duty of all life; that the redemption and idealization of society is the goal to be run for, and that absolute trust in God and the consequent hope of immortality are the consummate virtues. This is not a step, it is a stride forward. Galileo was right—the world does move.—St. Louis Republic.

## What Holds Churches Together.

In speaking of church union, the Independent remarks: "We are fully convinced that spiritual oneness is the only force that can bring churches together. What separates them is what is formal—intellectual or administrative differences, or theology or polity. The churches have already well-nigh learned that intellectual differences should not separate them. We are slower to learn that it is not polity that makes a church."

—Dante, Milton, Wordsworth, Whittier and Tennyson were great poets—that everybody knows. They were also great theologians—which is not commonly known. They not only taught the Divine Fatherhood, but they wrought this supreme truth into the hands and hearts of men. Whittier has now been quickly joined by Tennyson, and the world, never too rich in noble spirits, is doubly bereaved. The mortal part of great bards dies; the immortal sings on and soars forever.

—When a man loses his positive conviction of the existence of God, his belief in the immortality of the soul can not survive, nor can he hold on to his conception of the absoluteness of morality. There can be no absolute morality without a God and a soul.

## SCHOOL AND CHURCH.

—The alumni of Williams college now numbers 1,947.

—Santa Fe, N. M., has the oldest church in the United States. It was built in 1543.

—More than one-third of the teachers of the United States are men—124,929 men and 227,894 women—35.5 per cent.

—The recently elevated Cardinal Vincent Vannutelli is a younger brother of Cardinal Serafin Vannutelli, and this is said to be the first time in the history of the sacred college that seats in it have been simultaneously held by brothers.

—The Berlin City Mission society is more successful than ever in its sermon distribution. The weekly edition is now 130,000. Of these 18,000 are used in Berlin among those whose work does not permit them to attend the church services; 67,000 go to other parts of Prussia; 25,000 to other German countries, and 6,500 to other parts of Europe. The Dresden society publishes an edition of 12,000 each week, of which about 1,360 go to other countries than Saxony.

—That a Jewish rabbi should be invited to officiate as chaplain in the respective houses of congress is not so rare a circumstance as seems to be sometimes thought. Among those who have so officiated, besides Dr. Wise and Dr. Silverman, may be mentioned Dr. Krauskopf and Dr. Jastrow, of Philadelphia; Dr. Hirsch, of Chicago; Dr. Huttmacher and Dr. Szold, of Baltimore, Dr. Lillenthal, of Cincinnati; Dr. Gotthild, of New York; Dr. Raphael, who delivered the sermon on the memorable day when Banks was elected speaker; Dr. Stern, of Washington, D. C., and several others.

—The schools of Japan have made a favorable impression upon no less an educator than Prof. George T. Ladd, of Yale university, who has recently arrived home from a visit to Japan, during which he lectured before several universities. He says: "There are two kinds of institutions—the private schools, which are carried on by enterprising citizens, many of which are surrounded by Christian influences, and the government schools, which are carefully graded, and which are maintained with considerable strictness, and follow somewhat the German. There are the primary schools and Kotu Chu Gakko, which translated means the 'higher middle schools.' At the head of these is the Imperial university, situated in Tokio. There is no Latin or Greek taught here, Chinese being the classical tongue. The government institutions are not seats of the Christian religion, although there are many Christian teachers in them. There is no looseness in the curriculum, everything being strictly attended to."

## THE MORNING NAP.

The Trouble It Sometimes Causes in the Family.

It seems a very insignificant thing that morning nap, but what an amount of trouble it manages to stir up in otherwise peaceful families? I know a household that is kept in almost constant turmoil wholly because of this seductive little self-indulgence. Nearly all the family-jars may be traced to the fact that one member of the family did not have strength of mind enough to get up in the morning when he was called.

The mother is one of those mortals who have the formed habit of early rising, and she can not understand the indolence and inertia which make any one lie drowsily in bed on a beautiful bright morning. She herself longs to get up and get at the day's work. It would be utterly impossible for her to waste the best part of the day in sleep. The rest of the family, however, are not so fortunate. One in particular is a slave to his extra forty winks.

It is not that he does not desire to rise in time. He has formed resolution after resolution, but all to no purpose. He would like to get started early as well as anyone, and every night he is sure that the next day he will, but in the morning it does not seem at all the same. So down he comes, rushing, half an hour late each morning, angry with himself because he knows he will be chasing that lost half-hour vainly all through the day, and angry with the rest of the world because he knows he is in the wrong, and he imagines they think so.

It is all a bad habit, simply one of those weaknesses that people yield to because they don't seem large enough to fight against. No real struggle seems worth while. It would be easier after a few determined efforts to overcome this inclination, and wouldn't it be worth while to make such efforts if we thought at length we could join the ranks of those most blessed among men, the people who like to get up early?—Harper's Bazar.

## Good for His Business.

"I don't believe in long engagements," said a young man to a stranger with whom he had struck up an acquaintance on the train. "Well, I do. The longer the better for me." "How do they affect you?" "I am a confectioner."—Waverly Magazine.

## Nothing to Act On.

Buckton—I wonder why it is that lightning never strikes twice in the same place.

Nendick—Because after it strikes once the place isn't there any more.—Truth.