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Conversion of Cities

This New Century to Witness Their Complete Purification and Salvation.

A Washington report: In this discourse Dr. Talmage tells something of what he expects the next hundred years will achieve and declares that the outlook is most inspiring. Text, II Samuel, xxiii, 4: "A morning without clouds."

"What do you expect of this new century?" is the question often asked of me, and many others have been pilled with the same inquiry. In the realm of invention I expect something as startling as the telegraph and the telephone and the X ray. In the realm of poetry I expect as great poets as Longfellow and Tennyson. In the realm of medicine I expect the cure of cancer and consumption. In the realm of religion I expect more than one Pentecost like that of 1867, when 500,000 souls professed to have been converted. I expect that universal peace will reign and that before the arrival of the two thousandth year gunpowder will be out of use except for blasting rocks or pyrotechnic entertainment. I expect that before the new century has expired the millennium will be fully inaugurated. The twentieth century will be as much an improvement on the nineteenth century as the nineteenth century was an improvement on the eighteenth. But the conventional length of sermonic discourse will allow us only time for one hopeful consideration, and that will be the redemption of the cities.

Pulpit and printing press for the most part in our day are busy in discussing the condition of the cities at this time, but would it not be healthfully encouraging to all Christian workers and to all who are toiling to make the world better if we should this morning for a little while look forward to the time when our cities shall be revolutionized by the gospel of the Son of God and all the darkness of sin and trouble and crime and suffering shall be gone from the sky and it shall be "a morning without clouds?"

I have noticed that a man never likes a city where he has not behaved well. People who have a free ride in the prison van never like the city that furnishes the vehicle. When I find Argos and Rhodes and Smyrna trying to prove themselves the birthplace of Homer, I conclude right away that Homer behaved well. He liked them and they liked him. We must not war on laudable city pride or with the idea of building ourselves up at any time to try to pull others down. Boston must continue to point to its Faneuil hall and to its superior educational advantages. Philadelphia must continue to point to its independence hall and its mint and its Girard college. New York must continue to exult in its matchless harbor and its vast population and its institutions of mercy and its ever-widening commerce. Washington must continue to rejoice in the fact that it is the most beautiful city under the sun.

If I should find a man coming from any city having no pride in that city, that city having been the place of his nativity or now being the place of his residence, I would feel like asking him right away: "What mean thing have you been doing there? What outrageous thing have you been guilty of that you do not like the place?"

Every city is influenced by the character of the men who founded it. Romulus impressed his life upon Rome. The Pilgrim Fathers will never relax their grasp from New England. William Penn left a legacy of fair dealing and integrity to Philadelphia, and you can now any day, on the streets of that city, see his customs, his manners, his morals, his hat, his wife's bonnet and his meeting house. So the Hollanders, founding New York, left their impression on all the following generations. So this capital of the nation is a perpetual eulogy upon the Washington who founded it.

I thank God for the place of our residence, and while there are a thousand things that ought to be corrected and many wrongs that ought to be overthrown, while I thank God for the past, I look forward this morning to a glorious future. I think we ought—and I take it for granted you are all interested in this great work of evangelizing the cities and saving the world—we ought to toil with the sunlight in our faces. We are not fighting in a miserable Bull Run of defeat. We are on the way to final victory. We are not following the rider on the black horse, leading us down to death and darkness and doom, but the rider on the white horse, with the moon under his feet and the stars of heaven for his tiara. Hail, Conqueror, hail!

I know there are sorrows and there are sins and there are sufferings all around us, but in some bitter cold winter day when we are thrashing our arms around us to keep our thumbs from freezing we think of the warm spring day that will after awhile come, or in the dark winter night we look up and we see the northern lights, the windows of heaven illumined by some great victory, just so we look up from the night of suffering and sorrow and wretchedness in our cities, and we see a light streaming through from the other side, and

we know we are on the way to morning—more than that, on the way to the "morning without clouds." I want you to understand, all you who are toiling for Christ, that the castles of sin the all going to be captured. The victory for Christ in these great towns is going to be so complete that not a man on earth or an angel in heaven or a devil in hell will dispute it. How do I know it? I know it just as certainly as God lives and that this is the holy truth. The old Bible is full of it. The nation is to be saved; of course, all the cities are to be saved. It makes a great difference with you and with me whether we are toiling on towards a defeat or toiling on toward a victory.

Now, in this municipal elevation of which I speak, I have to remark there will be greater financial prosperity than our cities have ever seen. Some people seem to have a morbid idea of the millennium, and they think when the better time comes to our cities and the world people will give their time up to psalm singing and the relating of their religious experience, and as all social life will be purified there will be no hilarity, and as all business will be purified there will be no enterprise. There is no ground for such an absurd anticipation. In the time of which I speak, where now one fortune is made there will be a hundred fortunes made. We all know business prosperity depends upon confidence between man and man. Now, when that time comes of which I speak, and all double dealing, all dishonesty, and all fraud are gone out of commercial circles, thorough confidence will be established, and there will be better business done and larger fortunes gathered and mightier successes achieved.

In that day of which I speak taxes will be a mere nothing. Now our business men are taxed for everything. City taxes, county taxes, state taxes, United States taxes, stamp taxes, license taxes, manufacturing taxes—taxes, taxes! Our business men have to make a small fortune every year to pay their taxes. What fastens on our great industries this awful load? Crime, individual and official. We have to pay the board of the villains who are incarcerated in our prisons. We have to take care of the orphans of those who plunged into their graves through beastly indulgence. We have to support the municipal governments, which are expensive just in proportion as the criminal proclivities are vast and tremendous. Who supports the almshouses and police stations and all the machinery of municipal government? The taxpayers.

But in the glorious time of which I speak grievous taxation will all have ceased. There will be no need of supporting criminals. There will be no criminals. Virtue will have taken the place of vice. There will be no orphan asylums, for parents will be able to leave a competence to their children. There will be no voting of large sums of moneys for some municipal improvement, which moneys, before they get to the improvement, drop into the pockets of those who voted them. No oyer and terminer kept up at vast expense to the people. No impaneling of juries to try theft and arson and murder and slander and blackmail. Better factories, grander architecture, finer equipage, larger fortunes, richer opulence—"a morning without clouds."

In that better time also coming to these cities the churches of Christ will be more numerous, and they will be larger, and they will be more devoted to the service of Jesus Christ, and they will accomplish greater influences for good. Now it is often the case that churches are envious of each other, and denominations collide with each other, and even ministers of Christ sometimes forget the bond of brotherhood, but in the time of which I speak, while there will be just as many differences of opinion as there are now, there will be no acerbity, no hypercriticism, no exclusiveness.

In our great cities the churches are not to-day large enough to hold more than a fourth of the population. The churches that are built—comparatively few of them are fully occupied. The average attendance in the churches of the United States to-day is not 400. Now, in the glorious time of which I speak, there are going to be vast churches, and they are going to be all thronged with worshippers. Oh, what rousing songs they will sing! Oh, what earnest sermons they will preach! Oh, what earnest prayers they will offer! Now, in our time, what is called a fashionable church is a place where a few people, having attended very carefully to their toilet, come and sit down—they do not want to be crowded, they like a whole seat to themselves—and then, if they have any time left from thinking of their store, and from examining the style of the hat in front of them, they sit and listen to a sermon warranted to hit no man's sins and listen to music which is rendered by a choir warranted to sing tunes that nobody knows. And then after an hour and a half of indolent yawning they go home refreshed. Every man feels better after he has a sleep.

In many of the churches of Christ in our day the music is simply a mockery. I have not a cultivated ear nor a cultivated voice, yet no man can do my shopping for me. I have nothing to say against artistic music. The \$2 or \$5 I pay to hear one of the great queens of song is a good investment. But when the people assemble in religious convocation and the hymn is read and the angels of God step from their thrones to catch the music on their wings, do not let us drive them away by our indifference. I have preached in churches where vast sums of money were employed to keep up the music, and it was as exquisite as any heard on earth, but I thought at the same time, for all matters practical, I would prefer the hearty, out-breaking song of a backwoods Methodist camp meeting.

In that time also of which I speak all the haunts of iniquity and crime and squalor will be cleansed and will be illumined. How is it to be done? You say perhaps by one influence. Perhaps I say by another. I will tell you what is my idea, and I know I am right in it. The gospel of the Son of God is the only agency that will ever accomplish this.

In that day of which I speak do you believe that there will be any midnight carousal? Will there be any kicking out from marble steps of shivering mendicants? Will there be any unwashed, unfed, uncombed children? Will there be any blasphemies in the street? Will there be any inebriated staggering past? No. No wine stores, no lager beer saloons, no breweries where they make the three X's, no bloodshot eye, no bloated cheek, no instruments of ruin and destruction, no fist pounded forehead. The grand-children of that woman who goes down the street with a curse, stoned by the boys that follow her, will be the reformers and philanthropists and the Christian men and the honest merchants of our great cities.

Who are those wretched women taken up for drunkenness and carried to the courts, and put in prison, of course? What will you do with the grogshops that made them drunk? Nothing. Who are those prisoners in jail? One of them stole a pair of shoes. That boy stole a dollar. This girl snatched a purse. All of them crimes damaging society less than \$2 or \$3. But what will you do with the gambler who last night robbed the young man of \$1,000? Nothing. What shall be done with that one who breaks through and destroys the purity of a Christian home and with an adroitness and peridy that beats the strategy of hell, flings a shrieking, shrieking soul into a bottomless perdition? Nothing. But all these wrongs are going to be righted. I expect to live to see the day. I think I hear in the distance the rumbling of the King's chariot. Not always in the minority is the Church of God going to be, or are good men going to be. The streets are going to be filled with regenerated populations. Three hundred and sixty bells rang in Moscow when one prince was married, but when Righteousness and Peace kiss each other in all the earth ten thousand times ten thousand bells shall strike the jubilee. Poverty enriched. Hunger fed. Crime purified. Ignorance enlightened. All the cities saved. Is not this a cause worth working in?

God's love will yet bring back this ruined world to holiness and happiness. An infinite Father bends over it in sympathy. And to the orphan He will be a father, and to the widow He will be a husband, and to the outcast He will be a home, and to the poorest wretch that to-day crawls out of the ditch of his abominations, crying for mercy, He will be an all-pardoning Redeemer. The rocks will turn gray with age, the forests will be unmoored in the hurricane, the sun will shut its fiery eyelid, the stars will drop like blasted figs, the sea will heave its last groan and lash itself in expiring agony, the continents will drop like anchors in the deep, the world will wrap itself in sheet of flame, and leap on the funeral pyre of the judgment day, but God's love will never die. It shall kindle its suns after all other lights have gone out. It will be a billowing sea after all other oceans have wept themselves away. It will warm itself by the blaze of a consuming world. It will sing while the archangel's trumpet peals and the air is filled with the crash of breaking sepulchers and the rush of the rising dead. Oh, commend that love to all the cities, and the morning without clouds will come!

I know that sometimes it seems a hopeless task. You toil on in different spheres, sometimes with great discouragement. People have no faith and say: "It does not amount to anything. You might as well quit that." Why, when Moses stretched his rod over the Red sea, it did not seem to mean anything especially. People came out, I suppose, and said, "Aha!" Some of them found out what he wanted to do. He wanted the sea parted. It did not amount to anything, this stretching out of his hand over the sea. But after a while the wind blew all night from the east, and the waters were gathered into a glittering passade on either side, and the billows reared as God pulled back on their crystal bits. Wheel into line. O Israel! March, march! Pearls crushed under feet. Flying spray gathers into rainbow arch of victory for the conquerors to march under. Shout of hosts on the beach answering the shout of hosts amid sea. And when the last line of the Israelites reach the beach, the cymbals clap, and the shields clang, and the waters rush over the pursuers, and the swift fingered winds on the white keys of the foam play the grand march of Israel delivered, and

the awful dirge of Egyptian overthrow.

So you and I go forth, and all the people of God go forth, and they stretch their hands over the sea, and boiling sea of crime and wretchedness. "It doesn't amount to anything," people say. Doesn't it? God's winds of help will after awhile begin to blow. A path will be cleared for the army of Christian philanthropists. The path will be lined with the treasures of Christian beneficence, and we will be greeted to the other beach by the clapping of all heaven's cymbals, while those who pursued us and derided us and tried to destroy us will go down under the sea, and all that will be left of them will be cast high and dry upon the beach, the splintered wheel of a chariot or thrust out from the foam, the breathless nostril of a riderless charger.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON NO. IV. JANUARY 27, 1901.

Christ Silences the Pharisees.—Matt. 22: 34-46.

Commentary.—Connecting links. While Jesus was teaching in the temple three classes of individuals came to Him in succession to try to entangle Him in His talk. First came the Herodians (politicians) and asked Him whether it were lawful to give tribute to Caesar. Matt. xxi, 16-22. They came with honeyed words, intending to disarm His suspicions, and, by an appeal to His fearlessness, induce Him to commit Himself against the government so they could entrap Him. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, called them hypocrites and answered them so completely that they left Him and went their way.

34. The Pharisees.—In order to entangle Christ the Pharisees had joined themselves to their religious and political opponents, the Sadducees and Herodians. In Christ's time the Pharisees were a strong party of the Jews. While they esteemed the scriptures, yet they placed equal authority upon their traditions. They were outwardly exacting, but inwardly very corrupt.

35. A lawyer.—A scribe. A professional interpreter of the law of Moses. "Usually such a noted scribe was a teacher, and had a company of disciples about him." Tempting Him—Or testing Him. "He laid a 'theological trap,' but this trap-door prey walked through it and set him in it."

36. Which.—Of what nature is the great commandment in the law? The great commandment—This was a disputed question among their doctors of the law.

37. Thou.—Christ makes this a personal matter; He does not speak in a general way, but He brings the truth home to His questioner. Shalt—There is no chance for cavil here; no ambiguous expressions. Love the Lord thy God—The religion of the Bible does not consist in good external acts, in prayers, in our zeal for Christ, in performing the deeds of the law, or in being made happy; but in love to God and man. With all thy heart—The heart is the seat of the affections, the desires, the motives and the will. "It is the centre of all physical and spiritual life, the central focus from which all the rays of the moral life go forth." All thy soul—"He loves God with all his soul, or rather, with all his life, who is ready to give up life for His sake—to endure and suffer rather than to dishonor God." Soul is the individual existence, the person himself.

38. This is the first.—1, antiquity, 2, dignity; 3, excellence; 4, justice; 5, sanctificancy; 6, fruitfulness; 7, virtue and efficacy; 8, extent; 9, necessity; 10, duration.—Queenel. And great—This love is also the best, the noblest, the most elevating, purifying, enlarging act of the soul.—Peloubet. This is the greatest commandment.

39. The second.—The first table of the law defines our duty to God; the second, our duty to our neighbor. Is like—Of a like nature, embracing the whole of our duty to man. Thy neighbor as thyself—This love is the principle in the golden rule in practice, and the perfect keeping of all the commandments which refer to our duties to our fellow-men.

40. Hang all the law.—"Those two commandments contain the substance of all the religious and moral duties contained in the law and the prophets, which, therefore, may be all said to hang or depend on them." Love is the spirit of the whole law. It is the more excellent way (I Cor. xii, 31; xiii, 1-13); the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 1:13,10); the end of the law, I. Tim. 1, 5.

41. Were...together.—During this interview, while Jesus was still teaching in the temple, Jesus asked them—They had been asking him many questions and had tried to entangle him in his talk, and now he, in turn, asks them a question!

42. What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?—This was an easy question and was answered very readily. The question is still pertinent: What think "ye" of Christ?—As to his claims to divinity? Was he the ideal, sinless Man; the pattern of the race? The son of David—It was a fact well known and universally acknowledged among the Jews that the Messiah was to spring from the family of David. The expression, The son of David, to a Jew, meant the Messiah.

44. The Lord saith.—Jesus quotes from Psa. cx. 1. That is, Jehovah saith. Unseemly Lord.—Unseemly Lord or Christ. Sit those—Jehovah here gives Christ the place of the greatest eminence and authority, at His own right hand. These enemies thy footstool—God proposes to subdue the enemies of Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, and cause them to acknowledge their sovereign and Lord.

45. How is He His Son.—He is Lord in His divine relation to David, and Son as to His humanity.

46. To answer Him a word.—Not a man was able to reply; they simply had nothing to say, neither dared they ask Him any more questions.

PRACTICAL SURVEY.
Christ's judgment tested. Our Lord had just previously put the Sadducees to silence. The Pharisees now gathered together, not to express their gratitude to Him for having confirmed the truth against the Sadducees, who were the cosmic enemies of their religion, but rather to secure the name of puzzling Him who had puzzled the Sadducees. Rather were they more annoyed at Christ's victory than pleased that the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state which the Sadducees opposed had been upheld by Christ. They were more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions than for Christ's triumph of truth.

Christ's doctrine proved. He showed that the great commandment "could not be the judicial laws now that the people of the Jews to whom they pertained were so little, not the ceremonial laws now that they were waxen old and were ready to vanish away, nor any particular moral precept; but the love of God and our neighbor. Love is the first and great thing God demands from us, and therefore the first and great thing we should devote to him." All the commandments are summed up in two great ones. One embraces every duty we owe to man; and the other every duty we owe to God.

Christ's opposers confounded. The Master now proposes a question to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?" To this they readily responded, "The son of David." On their one answer he based a perplexing problem which they could not solve. "If David then call him Lord, how is he His Son?" Unlike his opposers, in putting this last question his object was not to ensnare them but to show them a truth which they were unwilling to accept, viz., that the expected Messiah is God.

NOVELS OF PHARAOH'S TIME.

The Oldest Known Romances in the World's Literature.

The Egloga, an Italian periodical, reports that Prof. Ettore Pais, the Egyptologist, recently delivered a lecture before a philological society in Naples, Italy, on the subject of ancient Egyptian works of fiction, found on papyrus and from 3,000 to 4,000 years old. These stories and novels seem to have been quite common in the days of the Pharaohs, who, like Harunur-Rashid, were fond of listening to ballads and legends recited by persons especially appointed for this office at court. There, before the king or the royal grandees, they told the most fantastic fairy tales and adventures. Twenty of these, discovered during the last ten years, are now known, and there is ground for the hope that gradually we shall come into the possession of a complete and copious ancient Egyptian literature, comprising all sorts of novels and romances. Of the 20 novels already published the majority date from the period between the twelfth and eighteenth dynasties, or from 2,000 to 1,000 B. C.

One of the stories treats of the love affair or flirtation of Ninas and Semiramis. This romantic tale is distinguished by the salient feature of its two leading characters being inflamed to burning passion in chastity and virgin love and by feelings hitherto considered to be only possible under the Christian dispensation. The same is true of the story of Parthenope and Metiochos, who, in a dialogue upon love, both confess that they never yet have fallen its victims. Metiochos departs as cold as he has come. Parthenope, however, feels that she has arrived at the point when she is ready to fall in love with her young friend. Not to risk exposing herself to the danger of being obliged to give up her "vestal condition," she cuts off her hair and disfigures herself by slashing her face, bosom and arms, so that she may never again be tempted by a desire to attract notice or by love of admiration. Metiochos, the more sensible of the two, seeks solace in solitude and the cup. There is another tale of the Princess of Bakhtan, a contemporary of Ramezes II. (Secostris). She had an intrigue with the God of Love and was only cured of her infatuation after the statue of that rough divinity had been banished from her presence.

Understood Chickens.

Mr. Nextdoor—Merely taking down a little of the paling so that I can move my chicken coop over into your yard.
"Eh! My yard?"
"Yes, I like to be neighborly and considerate of other people's feelings, you know."
"But—er—"
"Yes; you shan't have any more cause to complain about my chickens scratching up your yard."
"But you are moving your whole coop over on my property."
"That's the idea. Quick as the chickens find their coop in your yard they'll fancy that you own them, and they will spend the rest of their natural lives scratching in my yard, you know."

Industrious wisdom often doth prevent what lazy folks think ineffectual.—Massinger.