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DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE MODE IN WHICH THE BLEST WILL SPEND ETERNITY.

Thrilling Description of the Heavenly Host as Seen by St. John—No More Toil or Sorrow or Sighing or Tears—The Music of Heaven.

Talmage in London.

Dr. Talmage is spending a very busy season in England. Not only in the London churches, but in the provinces, enormous crowds have gathered to hear the eloquent American preacher. The great Shoreditch Tabernacle in the east of London, where Rev. W. Cuff preaches, was thronged almost to suffocation and the large Congregational Church in the Hackney district could not hold half the people who tried to get into it, though it was on Monday evening that Dr. Talmage preached there. Outside London the eagerness to hear him has been quite as intense.

In Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Crewe, and Hanley no church could be found large enough to accommodate the audiences, and Dr. Talmage preached in the halls in which the great political conventions are held, and the capacity of these was tested to the utmost. Since his arrival he has preached seven times each week. The sermon selected for publication this week is from the text, Revelations vii, 9, 10, "After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

It is impossible to come in contact with anything grand or beautiful in art, nature or religion without being profited and elevated. We go into the art gallery and our soul meets the soul of the painter, and we hear the hum of his forests and the clash of his conflicts, and see the cloud blossoming of the sky and the foam blossoming of the ocean; and we come out from the gallery better men than when we went in. We go into the concert of music and are lifted into enchantment; for days after our soul seems to rock with a very tumult of joy, as the sea, after a long stress of weather, rolls and rocks and surges a great while before it comes back to its ordinary calm.

On the same principle it is profitable to think of heaven, and look off upon that landscape of joy and light which St. John depicts; the rivers of gladness, the trees of life, the thrones of power, the commingligs of everlasting love. I wish this morning that I could bring heaven from the list of intangibles and make it seem to you as it really is—the great fact in all history, the depot of all ages, the parlor of God's universe.

This account in my text gives a picture of Heaven as it is on a holiday. Now if a man came to New York for the first time on the day that Kossuth arrived from Hungary, and he saw the arches lifted, and the flowers flung in the streets, and he heard the guns booming, he would have been very foolish to suppose that that was the ordinary appearance of the city. While Heaven is always grand and always beautiful, I think my text speaks of a gala day in Heaven.

It is a time of great celebration—perhaps of the birth or the resurrection of Jesus; perhaps of the downfall of some despotism; perhaps because of the coming in of the millennium. I know not what; but it does seem to me in reading this passage as if it were a holiday in heaven. "After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitute which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

I shall speak to you of the glorified in Heaven—their number, their antecedents, their dress, their symbols and their song. But how shall I begin by telling you of the numbers of those in Heaven? I have seen a curious estimate by an ingenious man who calculates how long the world was going to last, and how many people there are in each generation, and then sums up the whole matter, and says he thinks there will be twenty-seven trillions of souls in glory. I have no faith in his estimate. I simply take the plain announcement of the text—it is "a great multitude, which no man can number."

Every few years in this country we take a census of the population, and it is very easy to tell how many people there are in a city or a nation, but who shall give the census of the great nation of the saved? It is quite easy to tell how many people there are in different denominations of Christians—how many Baptists and Methodists and Episcopalians and Presbyterians; of all the denominations of Christians we could make an estimate.

Suppose they were gathered in one great audience room; how overwhelming the spectacle! But it would give no idea of the great audience room of Heaven—the multitudes that bow down and that lift up their hosannas. Why, they come from all the chapels, from all the cathedrals, from all sects, from all ages; they who prayed in splendid liturgy, and those who in broken sentences uttered the wish of broken hearts—from Grace Church and Sailors' Bethel, from under the shapeless rafters and from under high sprung arch—"a great multitude, that no man can number."

One of the most impressive things I have looked upon is an army, standing upon a hillside you see 40,000 or 50,000 men pass along. You can hardly imagine the impression if you have not actually felt it, but you may take all the armies that the earth has ever seen—the legions under Sennacherib and Cyrus and Cæsar, Xerxes and Alexander and Napoleon and all our modern forces and put them in one great array, and then on some swift steed you may ride along the line and review the troops, and that accumulated host from all ages seems like a half formed regiment compared with the great array of the redeemed.

I stood one day at Willimsburg and saw on the opposite side of the Potomac the forces coming down, regiment after regiment and brigade after brigade. It seemed as though there was no end to the procession. But now let me take the field glass of St. John and look off upon the hosts of Heaven—thousands upon thousands, ten thousand times ten thousand, one hundred and forty and four thousand, and thousands of thousands, until I put down the field glass and say, "I cannot estimate it—a great multitude that no man can number."

You may tax your imagination and torture your ingenuity and break down your powers of calculation in attempting to express the multitudes of the released from earth and the enraptured of Heaven, and talk of hundreds of hundreds, of hundreds, of thousands of thousands, of millions of millions, until your head aches and your heart faints, and exhausted and overburdened you exclaim, "I cannot count them—a great multitude that no man can number."

But my subject advances, and tells you of their antecedents, "of all nations and kindreds and tongues." Some of them spoke Scotch, Irish, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Tamil, Choctaw, Burmese. After men have been long in the land you can tell by their accentuation from what nationality they came; and I suppose in the great throng around the throne it will not be difficult to tell from what part of the earth they came.

These reaped Sicilian wheatfields and those picked cotton from the pods. These under blistering skies gathered tamarinds and yams. Those crossed the desert on camels and those glanced over the snow, drawn by Siberian dogs, and these milked the goats far up on the Swiss crags. These fought the walrus and white bear in regions of everlasting snow and those heard the song of fiery winged birds in African thickets. They were white. They were black. They were red. They were copper color. From all lands, from all ages. They were plunged into the Austrian dungeons. They passed through Spanish inquisitions. They were confined in London tower. They fought with beasts in the amphitheater. They were Moravians. They were Waldenses. They were Albigenses. They were Scotch Covenanters. They were Sandwich Islanders.

In this world men prefer different kinds of government. The United States want a Republic. The British Government needs to be a constitutional monarchy. Austria wants absolutism. But when they come up from earth from different nationalities they will prefer one great monarchy—King Jesus ruler over it. And if that monarchy were disbanded and it were submitted to all the hosts of Heaven who should rule, then by the unanimous suffrages of all the redeemed Christ would become the President of the whole universe. Magna Chartas, bills of right, houses of burgesses, triumvirates, congresses, parliaments—nothing in the presence of Christ's scepter, swaying over all the people who have entered upon that great glory! Oh! can you imagine it? What a strange commingling of tastes, of histories, of nationalities, "of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues."

My subject advances, and tells you of the dress of those in Heaven. The object of dress in this world is not only to veil the body, but to adorn it. The God who dresses up the spring morning with blue ribbon of sky around the brow and earrings of dew drops hung from tree branch and mantle of crimson clover over the shoulder and the violetted slippers of the grass for her feet—I know that God does not despise beautiful apparel. Well, what shall we wear in Heaven? "I saw a great multitude clothed in white robes." It is white! In this world we had sometimes to have on working apparel. Bright and lustrous garments would be ridiculously out of place sweltering amid forges, or mixing paints, or plastering ceilings, or binding books.

In this world we must have the working-day apparel sometimes, and we care not how coarse it is. It is appropriate; but when all the toil of earth is past and there is no more drudgery and no more weariness we shall stand before the throne robed in white. On earth we sometimes had to wear mourning apparel—black scarf for the arm, black veil for the face, black gloves for the hands, black band for the hat. Abraham mourning for Sarah; Isaac mourning for Rebecca; Rachel mourning for her children; David mourning for Absalom; Mary mourning for Lazarus. Every second of every minute of every hour of every day a heart breaks.

The earth from zone to zone and from pole to pole is cleft with sepulchral rent, and the earth can easily afford to bloom and blossom when it is so rich with moldering life. Graves! graves! graves! But when these bereavements have all passed, and there are no more graves to dig and no more coffins to make and no more sorrow to suffer, we shall pull off this mourning and be robed in white. I see a soul going right up from all this scene of sin and trouble into glory. I seem to hear him say:

I journey forth rejoicing
From this dark vale of tears,
To heavenly joys and pleasures,
From earthly care and fears.

When Christ my Lord shall gather
All His redeemed again,
His kingdom to inherit—
Good-night till then.

I hear my Saviour calling;
The joyful hour has come,
The angel guards are ready
To guide me so our home.

When Christ our Lord shall gather
All His redeemed again,
His kingdom to inherit—
Good-night till then.

My subject advances, and tells you of the symbols they carry. If my text had represented the good in Heaven as carrying cypress branches, that would have meant sorrow. If my text had represented the good in Heaven as carrying nightshade, that would have meant sin. But it is a palm branch they carry, and that is victory. When the people came home from war in olden times the conqueror rode at the head of his troops, and there were triumphal arches and the people would come out with branches of the palm tree and wave them all along the host. What a significant type this of the greeting and of the joy of the redeemed in Heaven! On earth they were condemned, and were put out of polite circles. They had infamous hands strike them on both cheeks. Infernal spite spat in their faces. Their back ached with sorrow.

Their brow reeked with unalleviated toil. How weary they were! Sometimes they broke the heart of the midnight in the midst of all their anguish, crying out, "O God!" But hark now to the shout of the delivered captives, as they lift their arms from the shackles and cry out, "Free! free!" They look back upon all the trials through which they have passed, the battles they have fought, the burdens they carried, the misrepresentations they suffered, and because they are delivered from all these they stand before God waving their palms. They come to the feet of Christ and they look up into His face, and they remember His sorrows, and they remember His pain, and they remember His groans, and they say: "Why, I was saved by that Christ. He pardoned my sins, He soothed my sorrows," and standing there they shall be exultant, waving their palms.

That hand once held the implement of toil or wielded the sword of war, but now it plucks down branches from the tree of life as they stand before the throne waving their palms. Once he was a pilgrim on earth; he crunched the hard crusts, he walked the weary way. But it is all gone now—the sin gone, the weariness gone, the sickness gone, the sorrow gone. As Christ stands up before the great array of the saved and recounts His victories it will be like the rocking and tossing of a forest in a tempest, as all the redeemed rise up, host beyond host, rank beyond rank, waving, waving their palms.

My subject makes another advancement, and speaks of the song they sing.

Dr. Dick, in a very learned work, says that among other things in Heaven he thinks they will give a great deal of time to the study of arithmetic and the higher branches of mathematics. I do not believe it. It would upset my idea of Heaven if I thought so; I never liked mathematics; and I would rather take the representation of my text, which describes the occupation of Heaven as being joyful psalmody. "They cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God." In this world we have secular songs, nursery songs, boatmen's songs, harvest songs, sentimental songs; but in Heaven we will have taste for only one song, and that will be the song of salvation from an eternal death to an eternal Heaven, through the blood of the Lamb that was slain.

I see a soul coming up to join the redeemed in Heaven. As it goes through the gates the old friends of that spirit come around it and say, "What shall we sing?" and the newly arrived soul says, "Sing salvation;" and after awhile an earthly despotism falls, and a scepter of iniquity is snapped, and churches are built where once there were superstitious mosques, an angel cries to angel, "Let us sing," and the answer is, "What shall we sing?" and another voice says, "Let us sing salvation;" and after awhile all the church on earth will rush into the outspread arms of the church of Heaven, and while the righteous are ascending, and the world is burning, and all things are being wound up, the question will be asked, "What shall we sing?" and there will be a voice "like the voice of many waters, like the voice of mighty thunderings," that will respond, "Sing salvation."

In this world we have plaintive songs—songs tremulous with sorrow, songs dirgeful for the dead; but in Heaven there will be no sighing of winds, no wailing of anguish, no weeping symphony. The tamest song will be hallelujah—the dullest tune a triumphal march! Joy among the cherubim! Joy among the seraphim! Joy among the ransomed! Joy forever!

On earth the music in churches is often poor, because there is no interest in it or because there is no harmony. Some would not sing, some could not sing, some sang too high, some sang too low, some sang by fits and starts, but in the great audience of the redeemed on high all voices will be accordant, and the man who on earth could not tell a plantation melody from the "Dead March in Saul" will lift an anthem that the Mendelssohns and Beethovens and the Schumanns of earth never imagined, and you may stand through all eternity and listen, and there will not be one discord in that great anthem that forever rolls up against the great heart of God. It will not be a solo, it will not be a duet, it will not be a quintet, but an innumerable host before the throne crying, "Salvation unto our God and unto the Lamb." They crowd all the temples; they bend over the battlements; they fill all the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of Heaven with their hosannas.

When people were taken into the Temple of Diana it was such a brilliant room that they were always put on their guard. Some people had lost their sight by just looking on the brilliancy of that room, and so the janitor, when he brought a stranger to the door and let him in, would always charge him, "Take heed of your eyes."

Oh, when I think of the song that goes up around the throne of God, so jubilant, many voiced, multitudious, I feel like saying, "Take heed of your ears." It is so loud a song. It is so blessed an anthem. They sing a rock song, saying, "Who is he that sheltered us in the wilderness and refreshed us in a weary land?" And the chorus comes in, "Christ, the shadow of a rock in a weary land."

They sing a star song, saying, "Who is he that guided us through the thick night, and when all other lights went out arose in the sky the morning star, pouring light on the soul's darkness?" And the chorus will come in, "Christ, the morning star, shining on the soul's darkness." They will sing a flower song, saying, "Who is He that brightened all our way, and breathed sweetness upon our soul, and bloomed through frost and tempest?" and the chorus will come in, "Christ the lily of the valley, blooming through frost and tempest." They sing a water song, saying, "Who is he that gleamed to us from the frowning crag, and lightened the darkest ravine of trouble, and brought cooling to the temples, and refreshment to the lip, and was a fountain in the midst of the wilderness?" and then the chorus will come in, "Christ, the fountain in the midst of the wilderness."

My friends, will you join that anthem? Shall we make rehearsal this morning? If we cannot sing that song on earth we will not be able to sing it in Heaven. Can it be that our good friends in that land will walk all through that great throng of which I speak, looking for us and not finding us? Will they come down to the gate and ask if we have passed through, and not find us reported as having come? Will they look through the folios of eternal light and find our names unrecorded? Is all this a representation of a land we shall never see—of a song we shall never sing?

Didn't Wish to Exaggerate.

A party of commercial travellers on the road were boasting about the magnitude of the houses they represented, when one, who was the last to speak, said:

"Gentlemen, I wouldn't like to tell you anything about the size of our premises, or the stock we carry, or the number of people we employ, because you might think I was exaggerating. But when we took stock of our employes last week we found that six cashiers and three bookkeepers had absconded three months before and had never been missed."

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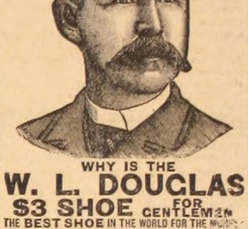

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