

OF MODERN MIRACLES

SCIENCE'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S PROMISE.

TALMAGE'S CONSTRUCTION

Jesus Christ Superior in His Day to All Natural Laws—Still He Says: "Greater Works Than These Shall He Do" That Believeth on Me—Wonders Accomplished in the Present Day.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William B. Talmage, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., July 17.—In this sermon a new construction is placed upon many of the "miracles of modern science," which are interpreted in the light of Christ's promise to his followers in John xiv., 12, "Greater works than these shall he do."

Man increases not his gospel faith by lowering the standards of the cross. You might as well expect water to run uphill of its own accord, or violets to grow during midwinter in a snowbank, as for a radiant faith capable of transforming character to exist in any temple unless the chief corner-stone of that temple is Jesus Christ. "And I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw men unto me," said Jesus Christ just a short time before his crucifixion, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me," speaks our resurrected Redeemer to the gospel workers of the present day.

Let it be clearly understood at the outset that by no word or thought would I seek to depreciate the power and influence of Christ's personality and work. He it is who fills all created things; he it is who gives life, natural, mental, social. He is the inspirer, the spring from which come all our triumphs. But I want to show you that the promise which he gave to his disciples, "Greater works than these shall he do," has been fulfilled and that man inspired with his spirit has with the natural forces at his disposal done more for uplifting humanity, as Christ said, he should, than did Christ himself. Man has taken hold of the power which Christ bestowed and has applied it beyond the opportunities which Christ had to complete the work that he initiated. Christ fed the multitudes; Christ opened the blinded eyes and straightened the crooked limbs; Christ assuaged pain and stopped the chronic issue of blood. Christ fought against the heathenish doctrine that "might is right." Christ was the greatest of all workers of wonders that the world had ever seen. There was only one Christ. There will never be another. Yet there are senses, natural as well as spiritual, in which his promise has been kept to his followers, and they have been enabled through the power emanating from him to do works which surpass those he did in his life on earth. But let it never be forgotten that these "greater works" which man has done have been accomplished only because Jesus has lived and Jesus' prophetic words have been fulfilled. In order to get a better grasp of this theme let me read to you the full verse in which the words of my text are found. "Verily, verily, I say unto you he that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."

Jesus Christ was the amazement of amazement to the people of his day and generation as a worker of natural phenomena. He seemed to his time superior to all natural laws. When he went out to visit his disciples in their ship, he did not have to use the land, as other people had to do. He stepped upon the crystal pavement of Lake Galilee as easily as an Alpine climber might rest his foot upon solid rock. When he spoke, the homage of obedience was rendered to him, not alone by men in the synagogue, by beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, but by the winds and the waves. He called to the Galilean tempest, "Peace be still."

At a word from his lip the fig tree dried up and withered away. All he had to say was "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever." At his call came whole schools of fish to be caught by the Galilean fishermen. By his touch whole ovens full of bread seemed to be miraculously created. After the sermon upon the

mount he fed the multitudes by simply breaking 25 loaves of bread into pieces. He kept on breaking those pieces again in twain until at last all were fed with bread, as much as they cared to eat. Christ was a wonder worker in natural phenomena. He could tell Peter just where to go and catch a fish which had in its mouth the "piece of money" by which the disciples should pay the just taxes to the Roman Government. In the hour of his suffering and death the earth trembled and the sun was shrouded in darkness. In him was the power which the psalmist ascribed to the Most High, "He looketh upon the earth and it trembles; he toucheth the hills and they smoke."

Wonderful were those triumphs over natural laws and forces, but what triumphs has man achieved since that time by compelling those natural laws and forces to serve his purposes and by harnessing them as his servants! What wonder can be greater than for man to speak in a telephone receiver, as I have done, in Chicago and have my voice heard in New York city, 1,000 miles away? Christ, walking upon the waves of Lake Galilee excited the wonder of the spectators, but how they would have wondered could they have known how a spark, as a mermaid, could carry man's message by running along the pathway of a Pacific cable from Vancouver to Australia, or how a great iron hull could be made to battle against storm and tide and carry thousands of human beings, besides tons upon tons of freight, from New York to Liverpool.

When I see an Edison making an electric light blaze and burn upon the tip end of a dirty piece of carbon; when I see the marvels of machinery, both with everything but a touch, and when I know that nations separated by broad seas are brought into speaking distance by wireless telegraphy, I know that one of the fulfillments of my text has come. "Anything which excites wonder, surprise or astonishment in the world of natural phenomena, when he said, 'The works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.'"

Not only did Christ astonish the people in his day by his power over the forces of nature; he revealed his divine nature by showing his power over physical diseases. He tried to convince the people in his day of his power as a healer of spiritual maladies by proving himself the cleanser of leper spots, the opener of blinded eyes and the giver of the blood of health coursing through the withered limbs of him sick with the palsy. Yet to-day, as I study Christ, the healer of the sick, I see that the work he did has been taken up by his followers and its triumphs multiplied. By the few words of his power he gave sight to a few blind men, but in our day the Christian surgeons, by their operations, are giving sight to thousands. The virtue from his garment stopped one issue of blood, but in our day the Christian physician, with his medicaments in stopping thousands of issues. Christ's touch relieved a few sufferers of pain, but in the hospitals of our time thousands pass painlessly through suffering which in former times would have racked them with excruciating torture.

But to-day are the "wonders of modern surgery" any more marvelous than the "wonders of modern medicine?" Is the power of modern medicine to cure disease any more marvelous to-day than the power of modern bacteriological investigations to prevent disease? You see Christ, stopping here and there to open a blinded eye or to untie a deaf ear or to loosen the heavy and labored breathing of the asthmatic sufferer. But to-day the achievements of the healer include more than here and there an isolated physical cure. I see the lights in thousands of hospital windows gleaming like the stars in the heavens. I see the white-robed nurses and the doctors coming forth as did the angels of health who troubled the waters at the pool of Bethesda, crying to the sick everywhere, "Come and be cured of your ailments!" I see thousands and tens of thousands of strong men and women who would have died twenty years ago, but who are now hale and hearty and busy in the days when Christ lived and he

had seen them not or touched them not. Christ as the physician of the body was a wonder worker. But man to-day as a curer of physical ailments is accomplishing far more than Christ ever did. Man is not only opening the eyes of those born blind, but he is making by the thousand and the tens of thousands the deaf and the dumb speak until this ancient miracle has ceased to be a wonder because of its commonness.

Now, study Christ from another standpoint. What did Jesus come down upon earth to do? He came to save the world? Oh, yes; he came to save the world by drawing men unto himself and banding them together as Christians. That means men were to become followers of himself. Yet, after he came to earth and was born in the manger and lived in Nazareth, he literally became the "despised and the rejected of men." After he had lived and suffered, preached and worked, on and on until the day when he was crucified, the converts he had won were only a little handful of followers at the foot of his cross. If I should take you to a country pastor and say, "Rev. Mr. So-and-so, how large is your church?" he would say: "Oh, very small. We have only six score members all told." But we are part of the great Presbyterian church, with its hundreds of thousands and millions of members. Therefore we are proud to belong to the great body of this church militant. But Jesus when he died did not have any great church. He was only the humble Nazareth with one hundred and twenty disciples all told. From a tiny, widely scattered standpoint Christ's life seemed to be an abject failure. Do you wonder that Christ said to his disciples in the words of my text, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do." How has the promise been fulfilled in the great preachers and organizers of the Christian church? Inspired by his life and teaching, men have arisen whose achievements, as far as they can be measured by numbers, have surpassed a thousandfold those of their Divine Master.

Compare if you will the rapid advancement of Christianity during the century just passed with the seemingly paltry number of 120 whom Christ gathered about him in Jerusalem during his earthly ministry. In 1844 George Williams of London organized the first Y.M.C.A. association of the world. Forty-six years later, as a direct outgrowth of his work, there were 6,625 different Y.M.C.A. association societies with their enrollment of 650,000 members, with property worth over \$25,000,000. In 1845 William Booth, a humble Methodist minister, stepped out of the church of his birth and in Nottingham, England, organized the Christian Mission, the outgrowth of which is the modern Salvation Army. In thirty-five years that army, as a direct result of William Booth's work, had its 11,000 officers stationed in all parts of the world, holding annually over 2,000,000 meetings and possessing its own printing presses, scattering forth 43,000,000 pamphlets and papers of gospel news and with an income of nearly \$4,000,000 per year. In 1880 Francis E. Clark, a comparatively unknown minister, organized his young people into a band of Christian workers, called the Christian Endeavor society. He is called "Father" Clark now, not, however, because he is an old man, but because he was the father of a movement which in twenty years had a society with nearly 4,000,000 members. Consider the work of John Wesley. Compare the first band of 120 members with the conversions under the power of the Holy Ghost of Whitefield, Finney, A. A. Phelps. These men led the people by the tens of thousands to kneel at the foot of the cross. Tell me, in reference to the criterion of number, has not man as a preacher and a Christian organizer done "greater things" than did Christ?

But, again, in this worldwide sweep of man's "greater works" we must see how man is everywhere overturning the heathen doctrine that "might makes right," rather than "right makes might." We must see man as the defender of the weak man, the hope of the helpless man, the friend of the bereft man and in one sense the rescuer of the lost. Christ comes as the friend of the friendless. But, oh, how friendless and helpless himself became! All India was yet to be won up to his widow burning and the tossing of its helpless girl infants into the Ganges to be eaten by crocodiles and the heathen worship of idols, but Christ was not, in body, able as a man to set foot on the soil of India. William Carey and Alexander Duff and Bishop Thoburn went to that Africa, with its murder and rapine and cannibalistic orgies, was to build its altars to the worship of the "true God," but Christ, as a physical man, was never to penetrate into those dark missionary fields. A Livingstone, a Taylor and a Hartnell were to do that. Europe at that time shaking under the tread of the Roman legions; North and South America utterly unknown to civilization; the islands of the sea, most of them unvisited—all are yet to bow to Christ and come under the reign of love and gentleness and purity and truth. These are to be won through the instrumentality of men. Men energized by the Holy Spirit are to gain the whole world for him.

Truly, as we look at such a conquest and compare it with the work that he accomplished in Palestine we see what he meant when he said, "Greater things than these shall he do." Christ saw all this future conquest of the world, but as a man he never went away from the Palestine hills. He grew up in Nazareth. He journeyed from Nazareth a few times to Jerusalem. There at the Davidic capital he was at last led as a guilty criminal out to the Calvary heights to ignominiously die. To his followers he left the stupendous task of evangelizing the world, promising that he would be with them to the end and that through his power they should be able to win more souls than he had done.

But though we have been praising man's "great work" we would have you bear well in mind this one tremendous fact. No work of man is truly greater than Christ's work, because all of man's greater works are the outcome of Jesus' work. If you read the verse in which my text is found you will find the whole trend of the thought in the one word "because." "He shall do greater works than these because I go to my Father." Because Christ is in God and God is in us is the reason man is able to accomplish greater works than did Christ.

Never be deluded by the idea that man in his own strength is able to do anything apart from God. Only as Christ's life in its influence touches our lives are we able to do the "greater works" which are given man to do. "Oh, no," says some one, "that cannot be. Some of the greatest inventors, some of the greatest statesmen, some of the greatest of American men have been agnostics and did not believe in Christ at all. How then could they get their power from God?" By the law of association. The influence of Christianity is an elevating, civilizing, inspiring power. Even those who are personally strangers to it are affected by the atmosphere it produces. Have you not noticed that nearly all inventions, nearly all true progress, nearly all the world's best blessings are found in Christian lands alone. God blesses the just and often the unjust in a Christian land, because the work and sacrifice have been blessed in that land. Therefore, my brethren, the only way for man to achieve his greater works is by spreading abroad, as far as he can, the works of Jesus Christ, upon which all men's greater works are dependent. When Christ goes up, man goes up. When Christ goes down, man goes down.

And Moses but the instrument. To-day will you not feel that you can only accomplish the greater work Christ has given to you to do by living and working in Christ? When Marshal Bernadotte, who afterward became King Charles XIV. of Sweden, was a young man he was a revolutionist. At the beheading of King Louis XVI. of France, in order to show his hysterical joy, he had tattooed upon his arm this sentence, "Death to all kings and royal tyrants." Bernadotte afterwards was himself raised to a throne. He closely guarded that tattooing from the eyes of his people until he was dead. Oh, my friend, marked with the signs of infamy upon your heart, marked with the signs of rebellion against Christ, will you not change your belief, as Bernadotte did, to become an enthroned king? You bear on your soul the marks of sin, but if you will come to him, he will take you into his employ and will send you forth to his work in the world. As the apostle bore on his body the marks of the Lord Jesus so you may wear the badge of his service and in his name and by his power carry on the work that he began. To you, too, the promise is given, "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."

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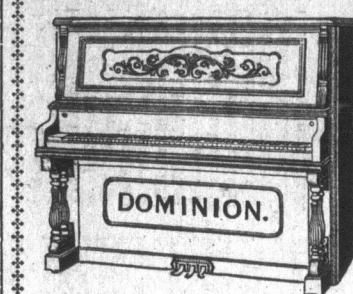
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