

HIS COUNTRY'S FATHER

REV. DR. TALMAGE'S ANNUAL SERMON
ON GEORGE WASHINGTON.

NAME'S FADELESS LUSTER

Trace His Achievements to a Higher Source—Never Failed to Acknowledge That It Was By the Help of God That He Won His Victories—Heavenly Cohorts Fought in His Behalf—How He Overcame.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1905, by Frederick Dyer, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Feb. 19.—The preacher takes occasion, in view of the approaching celebration of Washington's birthday, to remind the nation of its indebtedness to God throughout its history for the same care and protection that he vouchsafed to his people at a crisis of their national affairs. The text is Joshua x. 12: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon."

I choose to-day this story of Joshua as a topic for our thoughts because it emphasizes with Oriental imagery the great lesson of Washington's career. The materialist would exclude God from his universe; here, in ancient and modern history with the sublime truth that the divine sympathy is on the side of righteousness and that God is able by his infinite power to give the victory to the weak who trust in him.

One reason given for the non-interference of God in human affairs is that man is an infinitesimal. Though man as a finite cannot drop a fathom line long enough to sound the bottom of God's deep seas of mysteries, that does not prove that these "divine mysteries" are not true. Because many of the leading scientific men of England doubted the practicality of George Stephenson's invention, that did not make the iron traces within which was harnessed the locomotive any less strong. Because for years and years Cyrus Field's attempts to lay the old world to the new with the wedding ring of an Atlantic cable was the butt and ridicule of thousands of unbelieving tongues, that did not make the possibility of sending a message under his sea any less an attainable fact. Because we cannot explain to the satisfaction of the skeptic this miracle of the sun standing still, shall we abandon our faith in God's providence? Shall we not rather remind them that in our own national history his interference on behalf of the weak was displayed no less conspicuously and no less effectively?

God has omnipotent power over the forces of this world—the scientific, the atmospheric and the angelic as well as the astronomical. He has again and again he has compelled them to bend the knee for the aid of men. In this sermon I am going to show you that, though man may seem to be insignificant, yet he is not so in reality. Man is so important in God's eyes that God is ready to do everything possible in his interest and for his salvation. He has not shrunk from the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, who is yet to become King of kings and Lord of all.

Let us first see how God has exalted man's throne above the stars. Let us study from the astronomical telescope how man, instead of being a mere nondescript, a being unthought of, an unrecognizable, a forgotten figure in an unknown world, swaying out upon the outskirts of the universe, is more important than all material worlds and more important than any other creature living this side of the New Jerusalem. Let us enter the throne room of the heavens and see how in the past, for man's good, the stars have wheeled into line and obeyed God's behests, even as a torchlight procession might march past the reviewing stand of a King or a President.

Man is a mere nondescript on the outskirts of the universe? If he is, how can you account for the order of the creation? As a bridegroom prepares a home for his bride God prepared this world for the habitation of man. He made the sun and the moon, the one to light the day and the other to guard the night.

He spoke, and the dry land appeared. He swung out into the heavens the myriad of stars. He upholstered the sky with curtains of blue. He carpeted the fields with grass. He made the hillsides great woodlands. Then God made the songsters to sing. After God had created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them he said: "Let us make now our masterpiece. Let us make man after our own image."

"So God created man in His own image," He crowned him with honor and glory and made him to have dominion over the works of his hands, of which the moon and the stars were only the works of God's fingers. Thus we find that all the worlds were in one sense created for the great climax of all earthly creations, the advent of man. Is it incredible, that, in order to work out His purpose for the human race, God should use these lower creations at His will?

If man is not more important than the stars, how can you account for the fact that Jesus Christ came to this world to die for man? There are billions upon billions of worlds. There are constellations upon constellations. These worlds are born; these worlds die. Every night the telescope eye of the astronomer can see their funeral pyres burning. Yet it was not to reanimate perishing worlds that Jesus died. It was to redeem immortal man that Jesus left heaven and suffered upon the cross. Our earth is but a speck in the universe, one of the smallest of the millions of worlds that are visible in the winter's sky, yet it was for the redemption of its inhabitants that Jesus gave himself to suffer and die. Does not this prove the importance of man? If a man is not more important than the stars, how can you account for the fact that weeks, perhaps months, before Jesus was born in the manger at Bethlehem God sent a stellar messenger to guide a star step out of its course and with finger of light become a guide to man? Does not the fact that a star was a messenger to man at the first Christmas morn prove to you that God has enrolled among the astronomical hosts mighty forces which, if necessary, are ready to serve us and our interests? How this "star of the east" was able to slip its chains and run down the boulevards of the heavens we know not. Some of the astronomers declare the "star of the east" was not a single star at all, but in order to lead those wise men God wheeled into line two, three, perhaps fifty, a thousand, stars and focused all their lights upon the stony crib. But, whether the star in the east was a single star or twenty or a hundred stars, one fact we know—"God made the heavens, and their constellations, and they are at his command; they are his servants, and they do his will."

But we are not compelled to put our world in harmony with worlds millions and billions of miles away to find some of the mighty forces God is able and willing to command for man's life and service, for man's safety temporal and safety spiritual. We can hear God speaking to man in the voice of the storm. We can see Him smiling in laughing eyes sunbeams. Furthermore, we may learn that this voice and this smile in answer to believing prayer will come for man's blessing if we only ask Him for an atmospheric blessing. When one of the Princeton students once asked Dr. Alexander, "Professor, do you ever lose your faith in God?" he replied, "Never, except when the wind is from the east." God's power extends to all meteorological phenomena. Not yet have the wonders of the storm been reduced to a system. The weather bureau's prognostications frequently fail. As with Washington, as with Joshua, as with Moses, God's hand is outstretched for the rescue of His people. What incident in history is so astonishing as that of the passage of the Red Sea? The children of Israel, fleeing from Egyptian enslavement, were caught in a trap. In front of them was the sea. Behind the earth was shaken with the revolving chariot wheels and the thundering cavalry hoofs of the pursuing soldiers of Pharaoh. What happened? Moses said: "Fear not, my children; fear not, God will rescue us." Moses then stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind. In other words, in answer to Moses' prayer God sent a strong east wind, which blew back the waters so that the Israelites might flee away from their masters.

and to know what the power of this east wind was. Major-General Tullock of the British army a few years ago before the London Geographical Society read a paper in which he declared that he stood a few years before in exactly the same place where those Israelites were supposed to have crossed. One night he felt a strong east wind blow. It blew so hard that in one night it blew back the waters and left the ships which were once riding at anchor stranded on dry land. God answered Moses' prayer.

God exercises the same control over His animate creation that He has over the winds, and with this, too, He operates for the benefit of His people. After the children of Israel had been for months living upon the manna in the wilderness they began to crave meat. They cried unto Moses: "Give us flesh to eat! Give us flesh to eat!" The Lord answered: "There went forth a wind from the Lord and brought quails from the sea and let them fall by the camp. * * * as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth." This does not mean, as Mr. Hastings declared, that the Lord by an east wind piled up dead quails about the Israelite camp two cubits high. But it does mean that the east wind blew the quails against their will, straight toward the Israelites. The wind was so powerful that the birds, heavy of body and short of wing, had to fly low on account of the tornado. And as they flew low the men killed them. God answered the prayer of Moses. He answered it in the shrieking of winds.

But why go back in Biblical history to find how God has aided his children in the voice of the winds? What about the Spanish Armada under the "golden duke," Admiral Sidonia, with its 129 ships, defeated from invading British harbors not by the English cannon, but by the tornado which swept the English channel in 1588? What about the storm which prevented Napoleon attacking Wellington at Waterloo in 1815? morning and which delay was a great factor in the triumph of the English? What about the dense and impenetrable fog which settled in New York Harbor in the early morning of the day on which Washington and his troops escaped from Long Island and made it possible for the American boats to row to safety under the very guns of the British fleet which could have annihilated them? What about the frost which came in answer to America's prayer just at the right time after a thaw which destroyed the locusts by the millions a few years ago in our western states, where they were destroying the crops everywhere? Were not those storms and those frosts the voice of God in answer to prayer coming to the aid of his children? I tell you we have to realize that there are atmospheric answers to prayer as well as astronomical answers to prayer. God speaks to us in times of drought when we pray as he answered Elijah's prayer of old when Ahab fled to Jezreel to escape the deluge—"Hath not the rain a father?" God's rescuing voice is heard in the growl of the storm; God's smile is seen in the incubating sunshine, and if it is best for us God's storm and God's sunshine are seen and felt in answer to our believing prayers.

But I find the mighty forces not only astronomical and atmospheric but also socialistic, subverting God's children. I use the word socialistic not in its narrow sense. I allude to it in its broad sense of man's relationship to man. In the triumphs and defeats of nations, in the supremacy and the overthrow of thrones, I find that the great onward movements of the world have been employed for the rescue and salvation of God's peoples for all time.

What is the meaning of that verse Galatians iv. 4, "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons?" Was not one time in the sight of God just as favorable as any other time? Oh, no. There were certain prophetic conditions which had to be fulfilled. Not the least of these was that Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem of Judaea and that this was to be accomplished? After the whole civilized world was brought under the domain of the Roman emperor God prompts Caesar to order that a Jewish census be taken. What the result? In order to obey that command, Joseph, the carpenter, who was married to Mary, had to take a trip to Bethlehem. Was one of the descendants of David, and all his family had to be counted in the village where the royal shepherd boy once lived. Then through Joseph, through Caesar, through a foreign prophecy said Christ should be born. It is folly for you and I to say, God might have fulfilled prophecy in a different way. Yes, he might. But God's way was a true way. And in order to accomplish that way Caesar must conquer and Rome must rule.

Can we not in the same way see the finger of God in the discovery of America. In the birth of our constitution, in the awful tragedy of the Civil War, in the strange acquisitions of Porto Rico and of the Sandwich and Philippine Islands? Can we not feel that the booming guns at Fort Arthur and the success of one political party over another are the voice of God heard in the same words that Paul spoke when he said that God is working out his plans through the movements of the nations? Because with our limited vision we cannot see the end from the beginning that does not lessen the workings of God heard in the movements for the salvation of nations. Man's throne is higher than the stars. God has made him a little lower than the angels. Yes, but on account of Jesus' sacrifice for us God has sent his angels to re-enforce us in the awful struggle against sin and temptation and in the battle for the world's redemption. He has sent them not here one and there one. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them as in Sinai, as in the holy place." These angels

are everywhere, willing to minister unto us and care for us.

Mighty angels for our protection! Oh, my brother, in the struggle of life can you afford to be downhearted and slothful? Have I not said enough to encourage you to do anything and everything in God's name? When the King of Syria sent his horsemen and charioteers to capture Elijah the prophet's servant was sore afraid. Elijah was not. Why? He saw reinforcements the frightened eyes of his servants could not see. At last the prophet cried to his servant: "Look, man! Look! Look at the reinforcements God is sending to us to fight against these men of Beak and blood." Then the young man looked. This is the account of the Bible: "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elijah." They were the angelic hosts. Those angels are about you to-day. They are messengers sent from God for your protection and triumph. Will you not take courage? Before your reviewing stand the nations, while at your left and right, behind and behind, stand your protecting, socialistic, astronomical, atmospheric, socialistic and angelic forces are now ready to fight for your eternal welfare.

Thus when I began the study of the tragic events of Joshua's life I did not think they were very unusual. If Joshua by the strength of his own arm had won the battles they would have been wonderful, but the victories were not won alone by the Jewish captain. They were won by the Lord God Almighty, who said to the leader: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses so I will be with thee." When I see the destruction of the city of Ai, I know it was not Joshua's work, but God's. When I hear the crashing of the walls of Jericho, I know it was not Joshua's act but God's. When I read of the combination of the five kings against Joshua, I expect to find that he was overwhelmed, but when I read of his victory I know that the God whom the sun and the stars obey must have fought for him. In the history of our own nation has not God fought for us? How otherwise would the inexperienced general whose birth we are about to celebrate have triumphed over his haughty foe?

One of the crucial battles of the east was decided by the movements of the sun and moon. The Phoenicians were sun worshippers. Their enemies worshipped the moon. When this battle was at its fiercest the moon slowly passed in front of the sun. The Phoenicians thought their god had turned his face away from them, and they turned in wild terror and fled. Their ignorance and superstition lost them the battle. We smile at their credulity, but we need to beware lest we fall into the opposite mistake. We are in danger of forgetting the God who controls natural phenomena and who governs the affairs of men. Though his power has survived and flourished. Let us serve and obey him who was with Washington in his battles and has been with us in every crisis of our history lest he turn his face from us and we perish.

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Arnold-Foster Defends War Office Plans and Expenditures.

London, Feb. 24.—The House of Commons yesterday and last night debated Mr. Norton's amendment to the address in reply to the speech from the throne, calling the attention of the King to the condition of the army, which the amendment asserts, shows "negligence and mismanagement" by the Ministers. War Secretary Arnold-Foster defended his conduct of affairs, saying that the efficiency of the army for the defence of the Empire had increased, and that the total strength of the army had been increased since the Boer war by 35,000 men, while the estimates had been reduced \$5,000,000.

It was the intention of the War Office, he said, to bring the army up to the needs of the country. "Anything less than that," he added, "means waste of money."

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