

## T. DE WITT TALMAGE

**T**HOMAS DE WITT TALMAGE, D. D., popular American Presbyterian clergyman and lecturer, was born at Bound Brook, N. J., Jan. 7, 1832, and educated at the University of the City of New York. He studied divinity at the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick, N. J., and became pastor of a Reformed Dutch Church at Belleville in his native State, 1856-59, and of a church at Syracuse, N. Y., 1859-62. For the next seven years he was in charge of a Presbyterian Church at Philadelphia, being already extensively known as a preacher and lecturer. He was called to the Brooklyn Tabernacle in 1870, remaining there until 1894, when he took charge of the Lincoln Memorial Church at Washington, D. C. He has been a constant contributor to the religious press, and for many years his sermons have been issued weekly. He has edited among other serials "The Christian at Work" and "The Christian Herald." Among his published works are "The Almond Tree in Blossom"; "Crumbs Swept Up" (1870); "Sermons" (1872-75); "Abomination of Modern Society" (1872); "The Battle for Bread"; "Old Wells Dug Out" (1874); "Sports that Kill" (1875); "Everyday Religion" (1875); "Night Sides of City Life" (1878); "The Mask Torn Off" (1879); "The Marriage Ring" (1886); "The Pathway of Life"; "From the Pyramids to the Acropolis" (1892); "From Manger to Throne" (1894); "The Earth Girdled" (1896).

### CHANT AT THE CORNER-STONE

"Who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together?"  
—Job. xxxviii, 6, 7.

**W**E have all seen the ceremony at the laying of the corner-stone of church, asylum or Masonic temple. Into the hollow of the stone were placed scrolls of history and important documents, to be suggestive if, one or two hundred years after, the building should be destroyed by fire or torn down. We remember the silver trowel or iron hammer that smote the square piece of granite into sanctity. We remember some venerable man who presided, wielding the trowel or hammer. We remember also the music as the choir stood on the scattered stones and timber of the building about to be constructed. The leaves of the notebooks flut-

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tered in the wind and were turned over with a great rustling, and we remember how the bass, baritone, tenor, contralto, and soprano voices commingled. They had for many days been rehearsing the special program that it might be worthy of the corner-stone laying. The music at the laying of corner-stones is always impressive.

In my text God, addressing the poet of Uz, calls us to a grander ceremony—the laying of the foundation of this great temple of a world. The corner-stone was a block of light and the trowel was of celestial crystal. All about and on the embankments of cloud stood the angelic choristers unrolling their librettos of overture, and other worlds clapped shining cymbals while the ceremony went on, and God, the architect, by stroke of light after stroke of light, dedicated this great cathedral of a world, with mountains for pillars, and sky for frescoed ceiling, and flowering fields for floor, and sunrise and midnight aurora for upholstery. "Who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together?"

The fact is that the whole universe was a complete cadence, an unbroken dithyramb, a musical portfolio. The great sheet of immensity had been spread out and written on it were the stars, the smaller of them minims, the larger of them sustained notes. The meteors marked the staccato passages, the whole heavens a gamut with all sounds, intonations and modulations; the space between the worlds a musical interval, trembling of stellar light a quaver, the thunder a base clef, the wind among trees a treble clef. That is the way God made all things a perfect harmony.

But one day a harp-string snapped in the great orchestra. One day a voice sounded out of tune. One day a discord, harsh and terrific, grated upon the glorious antiphone. It was sin that made the dissonance, and that harsh discord has

been sounding through the centuries. All the work of Christians and philanthropists and reformers of all ages is to stop that discord and get all things back into the perfect harmony which was heard at the laying of the corner-stone when the morning stars sang together.

Before I get through, if I am divinely helped, I will make it plain that sin is discord and righteousness is harmony. That things in general are out of tune is as plain as to a musician's ear is the unhappy clash of clarinet and bassoon in an orchestral rendering. The world's health out of tune; weak lung and the atmosphere in collision, disordered eye and noonday light in quarrel, rheumatic limb and damp weather in struggle, neuralgias and pneumonias and consumptions and epilepsies in flocks swoop upon neighborhoods and cities. Where you find one person with sound throat and keen eyesight and alert ear and easy respiration and regular pulsation and supple limb and prime digestion and steady nerves, you find a hundred who have to be very careful because this or that or the other physical function is disordered.

The human intellect out of tune; the judgment wrongly swerved, or the memory leaky, or the will weak, or the temper inflammable, and the well-balanced mind exceptional.

Domestic life out of tune; only here and there a conjugal outbreak of incompatibility of temper through the divorce courts, or a filial outbreak about a father's will through the surrogate's court, or a case of wife-beating or husband-poisoning through the criminal courts, but thousands of families with June outside and January within.

Society out of tune; labor and capital, their hands on each other's throats. Spirit of caste keeping those down in the social scale in a struggle to get up, and putting those who are up in anxiety lest they have to come down. No wonder the

old pianoforte of society is all out of tune when hypocrisy and lying and subterfuge and double-dealing and sycophancy and charlatanism and revenge have all through the ages been banging away at the keys and stamping the pedals.

On all sides there is a perpetual shipwreck of harmonies. Nations in discord without realizing it, so antipathetic is the feeling of nation for nation, that symbols chosen are fierce and destructive. In this country, where our skies are full of robins and doves and morning larks, we have for our national symbol the fierce and filthy eagle, as immoral a bird as can be found in all the ornithological catalogues. In Great Britain, where they have lambs and fallow deer, their symbol is the merciless lion. In Russia, where from between her frozen north and blooming south all kindly beasts dwell, they chose the growling bear; and in the world's heraldry a favorite figure is the dragon, which is a winged serpent, ferocious and dreadful.

And so fond is the world of contention that we climb out through the heavens and baptize one of the other planets with the spirit of battle and call it Mars, after the god of war, and we give to the eighth sign of the zodiac the name of the scorpion, a creature which is chiefly celebrated for its deadly sting. But, after all, these symbols are expressive of the way nation feels toward nation. Discord wide as the continent and bridging the seas.

I suppose you have noticed how warmly in love drygoods stores are with other drygoods stores, and how highly grocery-men think of the sugars of the grocerymen on the same block. And in what a eulogistic way allopathic and homeopathic doctors speak of each other, and how ministers will sometimes put ministers on that beautiful cooking instrument which the English call a spit, an iron roller with spikes on it, and turned

by a crank before a hot fire, and then if the minister who is being roasted cries out against it, the men who are turning him say: "Hush, brother, we are turning this spit for the glory of God and the good of your soul, and you must be quiet, while we close the service with:

'Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love.'

The earth is diametred and circumferenced with discord, and the music that was rendered at the laying of the world's corner-stone when the morning stars sang together is not heard now; and though here and there, from this and that part of society, and from this and that part of the earth, there comes up a thrilling solo of love, or a warble of worship, or a sweet duet of patience, they are drowned out by a discord that shakes the earth.

Paul says, "The whole creation groaneth," and while the nightingale and the woodlark and the canary and the plover sometimes sing so sweetly that their notes have been written out in musical notation, and it is found that the cuckoo sings in the key of D, and that the cormorant is a basso in the winged choir, yet sportsmen's gun and the autumnal blast often leave them ruffled and bleeding or dead in meadow or forest. Paul was right, for the groan in nature drowns out the prima donnas of the sky.

Tartini, the great musical composer, dreamed one night that he made a contract with Satan, the latter to be ever in the composer's service. He thought in his dream that he handed to Satan a violin, on which Diabolus played such sweet music that the composer was awakened by the emotion and tried to reproduce the sounds, and therefrom was written Tartini's most famous piece, "The Devil's Sonata;" a dream, ingenious but faulty, for all melody descends from heaven and only dis-

cords ascend from hell. All hatreds, feuds, controversies, backbitings, and revenges are the devil's sonata, are diabolic fugue, are demoniac phantasy, are grand march of doom, are allegro of perdition.

But if in this world things in general are out of tune to our frail ear, how much more so to ears angelic and deific. It takes a skilled artist fully to appreciate disagreement of sound. Many have no capacity to detect a defect of musical execution and, though there were in one bar as many offences against harmony as could crowd in between the low F of the bass and the high G of the soprano, it would give them no discomfort; while on the forehead of the educated artist beads of perspiration would stand out as a result of the harrowing dissonance.

While an amateur was performing on a piano and had just struck the wrong chord, John Sebastian Bach, the immortal composer, entered the room, and the amateur rose in embarrassment, and Bach rushed past the host who stepped forward to greet him, and before the strings had stopped vibrating put his adroit hands upon the keys and changed the painful in-harmony into glorious cadence. Then Bach turned and gave salutation to the host who had invited him.

But worst of all is moral discord. If society and the world are painfully discordant to imperfect man, what must they be to a perfect God. People try to define what sin is. It seems to me that sin is getting out of harmony with God, a disagreement with his holiness, with his purity, with his love, with his commands; our will clashing with his will, the finite dashing against the infinite, the frail against the puissant, the created against the Creator.

If a thousand musicians, with flute and cornet-a-piston and trumpet and violincello and hautboy and trombone and all the wind and stringed instruments that ever gathered in a Düssel-

dorf jubilee should resolve that they would play out of tune, and put concord on the rack, and make the place wild with shrieking and grating and rasping sounds, they could not make such a pandemonium as that which a sinful soul produces in the ears of God when he listens to the play of its thoughts, passions and emotions—discord, lifelong discord, maddening discord!

The world pays more for discord than it does for consonance. High prices have been paid for music. One man gave two hundred and twenty-five dollars to hear the Swedish songstress in New York, and another six hundred and twenty-five dollars to hear her in Boston, and another six hundred and fifty dollars to hear her in Providence. Fabulous prices have been paid for sweet sounds, but far more has been paid for discord.

The Crimean war cost one billion seven hundred million dollars, and our American civil war over nine and a half billion dollars, and our war with Spain cost us about three hundred million dollars, and the war debts of professed Christian nations are about fifteen billion dollars. The world pays for this red ticket, which admits it to the saturnalia of broken bones and death agonies and destroyed cities and ploughed graves and crushed hearts, any amount of money Satan asks. Discord! Discord!

But I have to tell you that the song that the morning stars sang together at the laying of the world's corner-stone is to be resumed. Mozart's greatest overture was composed one night when he was several times overpowered with sleep, and artists say they can tell the places in the music where he was falling asleep and the places where he awakened. So the overture of the morning stars, spoken of in my text, has been asleep, but it will awaken and be more grandly rendered by

the evening stars of the world's existence than by the morning stars, and the vespers will be sweeter than the matins. The work of all good men and women and of all good churches and all reform associations is to bring the race back to the original harmony. The rebellious heart to be attuned, social life to be attuned, commercial ethics to be attuned, internationality to be attuned, hemispheres to be attuned.

In olden times the choristers had a tuning fork with two prongs and they would strike it on the back of pew or music rack and put it to the ear and then start the tune, and all the other voices would join. In modern orchestra the leader has a perfect instrument, rightly attuned, and he sounds that, and all the other performers tune the keys of their instruments to make them correspond, and sound the bow over the string and listen, and sound it out over again, until all the keys are screwed to concert pitch, and the discord melts into one great symphony, and the curtain hoists, and the baton taps, and audiences are raptured with Schumann's "Paradise and the Peri," or Rossini's "Stabat Mater," or Bach's "Magnificat" in D or Gounod's "Redemption."

Now our world can never be attuned by an imperfect instrument. Even a Cremona would not do. Heaven has ordained the only instrument, and it is made out of the wood of the cross and the voices that accompany it are imported voices, cantatrices of the first Christmas night, when heaven serenaded the earth with "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men."

Lest we start too far off and get lost in generalities, we had better begin with ourselves, get our own hearts and lives in harmony with the eternal Christ. Oh, for his almighty Spirit to attune us, to chord our will and his will, to modulate our life with his life, and bring us into unison with all that is pure

and self-sacrificing and heavenly. The strings of our nature are all broken and twisted and the bow is so slack it cannot evoke anything mellifluous. The instrument made for heaven to play on has been roughly twanged and struck by influences worldly and demoniac. Oh, master-hand of Christ, restore this split and fractured and despoiled and unstrung nature until first it shall wail out for our sin and then trill with divine pardon.

The whole world must also be attuned by the same power. A few days ago I was in the Fairbanks weighing scale manufactory of Vermont. Six hundred hands, and they have never made a strike. Complete harmony between labor and capital, the operatives of scores of years in their beautiful homes near by the mansions of the manufacturers, whose invention and Christian behavior made the great enterprise. So, all the world over, labor and capital will be brought into euphony.

You may have heard what is called the "Anvil Chorus," composed by Verdi, a tune played by hammers, great and small, now with mighty stroke and now with heavy stroke, beating a great iron anvil. That is what the world must come to—anvil chorus, yard-stick chorus, shuttle chorus, trowel chorus, crowbar chorus, pick-axe chorus, gold-mine chorus, rail-track chorus, locomotive chorus. It can be done and it will be done. So all social life will be attuned by the gospel harp.

There will be as many classes in society as now, but the classes will not be regulated by birth or wealth or accident, but by the scale of virtue and benevolence, and people will be assigned to their places as good or very good or most excellent. So also commercial life will be attuned and there will be twelve in every dozen and sixteen ounces in every pound and

apples at the bottom of the barrel will be as sound as those on the top and silk goods will not be cotton, and sellers will not have to charge honest people more than the right price because others will not pay, and goods will come to you corresponding with the sample by which you purchased them, and coffee will not be chickoried, and sugar will not be sanded, and milk will not be chalked, and adulteration of food will be a State-prison offense.

Aye, all things shall be attuned. Elections in England and the United States will no more be a grand carnival of defamation and scurrility, but the elevation of righteous men in a righteous way.

In the sixteenth century the singers called the Fischer Brothers reached the lowest bass ever recorded, and the highest note ever trilled was by La Bastardella, and Catalini's voice had a compass of three and a half octaves; but Christianity is more wonderful; for it runs all up and down the greatest heights and the deepest depths of the world's necessity, and it will compass everything and bring it in accord with the song which the morning stars sang at the laying of the world's corner-stone. All the sacred music in homes, concert halls, and churches tends toward this consummation. Make it more and more hearty. Sing in your families. Sing in your places of business. If we with proper spirit use these faculties we are rehearsing for the skies.

Heaven is to have a new song, an entirely new song, but I should not wonder if as sometimes on earth a tune is fashioned out of many tunes, or it is one tune with the variations, so some of the songs of the glorified of heaven may have playing through them the songs of earth; and how thrilling, as coming through the great anthem of the saved, accompanied by the harpers with their harps and trumpeters with their trum-

pets, if we should hear some of the strains of Antioch and Mount Pisgah and Coronation and Lenox and St. Martin's and Fountain and Ariel and Old Hundred. How they would bring to mind the praying circles and communion days and the Christmas festivals and the church worship in which on earth we mingled! I have no idea that when we bid farewell to earth we are to bid farewell to all these grand old gospel hymns, which melted and raptured our souls for so many years.

Now, my friends, if sin is discord and righteousness is harmony, let us get out of the one and enter the other. After our dreadful Civil War was over and in the summer of 1869 a great National Peace Jubilee was held in Boston, and as an elder of this church had been honored by the selection of some of his music, to be rendered on that occasion, I accompanied him to the jubilee. Forty thousand people sat and stood in the great coliseum erected for that purpose. Thousands of wind and stringed instruments. Twelve thousand trained voices. The masterpieces of all ages rendered, hour after hour, and day after day—Handel's "Judas Maccabæus," Spohr's "Last Judgment," Beethoven's "Mount of Olives," Haydn's "Creation," Mendelssohn's "Elijah," Meyerbeer's "Coronation March," rolling on and up in surges that billowed against the heavens.

The mighty cadences within were accompanied on the outside by the ringing of the bells of the city, and cannon on the commons, discharged by electricity, in exact time with the music, thundering their awful bars of a harmony that astounded all nations. Sometimes I bowed my head and wept. At other times I stood up in the enchantment, and there were moments when the effect was so overpowering I felt I could not endure it.

When all the voices were in full chorus and all the batons in full wave and all the orchestra in full triumph, and a hundred anvils under mighty hammers were in full clang, and all the towers of the city rolling in their majestic sweetness, and the whole building quaked with the boom of thirty cannon, Parepa Rosa, with a voice that will never again be equalled on earth until the archangelic voice proclaims that time shall be no longer, rose above all other sounds in her rendering of our national air, the "Star Spangled Banner." It was too much for a mortal and quite enough for an immortal to hear, and while some fainted, one womanly spirit, released under its power, sped away to be with God.

O Lord, our God, quickly usher in the whole world's peace jubilee, and all islands of the sea join the five continents, and all the voices and musical instruments of all nations combine, and all the organs that ever sounded requiem of sorrow sound only a grand march of joy, and all the bells that tolled for burial ring for resurrection, and all the cannon that ever hurled death across the nations sound to eternal victory, and over all the acclaim of earth and minstrelsy of heaven there will be heard one voice sweeter and mightier than any human or angelic voice, a voice once full of tears, but then full of triumph, the voice of Christ saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Then, at the laying of the top-stone of the world's history, the same voices shall be heard as when at the laying of the world's corner-stone "the morning stars sang together."