# DAY'S SERMON.

## DR. T. DEWITT TALMAGE'S STIRRING DISCOURSE.

Subject: "The Generations."

TEXT: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh."—Ecclesiastes i, 4.

According to the longevity of people in any particular century has a generation been one hundred years, or fifty years, or thirty years, or fifty years, or thirty years? By common consent in our nineteenth century a generation is fixed at twenty-five years.

The largest procession that ever moved is the procession of years, and the greatest army that ever marched is the army of generations. In each generation there are about 9125 days of regiments of days. These 9125 days of each generation march with wonderful precision. They never break ranks. They never break. They never pitch tents. They never present arms. They never off on furlough or on furlough. They never halt. They came out of the eternity past, and they move on toward the eternity future. They sweep rivers without any bridge or boats. They are immortals of the Crimea dashing into battle. They make no confusion. They move as well at midnight as at midnoon. Their haversacks are full of good bread and bitter herbs, platters of richest vintage and bottles of baking tears. With a regular tread and in order of "double quick" can hasten or slacken, their tramp is on and on and on while mountains crumble and worlds die. "One generation passeth away, another generation cometh."

This is my twenty-fifth anniversary sermon, and 1894. It is twenty-five years since I assumed the Brooklyn pastorate. A whole generation has passed. Three generations we have known—that which preceded us, that which is now at the front, and that coming on. We are at the heels of our predecessors, and our successors are at our heels. What a generation it was that preceded us! We who are now in the front rank are the only ones competent to tell about the only one generation just now coming in sight of our predecessors were. Biography cannot tell it. Autobiography cannot tell it. Obituaries are generally written by special friends of the departed—perhaps by wife or son or daughter—and they only tell the good things. The biographers of one of the first Presidents of the United States make no reference to the President's account books, now in the archives at the Capitol, which I have been telling how much he lost or gained at the gaming table. The biographers of one of the early Secretaries of the United States never described the scene that day when and when the Secretary was carried dead drunk from the State apartments to his own home. Autobiography is written by the man himself, and no one would record for the world his own weaknesses and moral failures. Those who keep diaries put down things that read well. No man or woman ever lived would dare to make full record of all the thoughts and words of a day. We who saw and heard much of the generation marching just ahead of us are far more able than any book to describe accurately to our successors who our predecessors were. Very much like ourselves, I thank you. Human nature in them was much like human nature in us. At our age of life they were very much like we now are. All the time they were in their teens they were very much like you are in your teens, and all the time they were in their twenties they were very much like you are in your twenties. Human nature got an awful start under a fruit tree in Eden, and by the grace of God does much to straighten things every new generation has to untwist, and the same work of straightening out has to be done over again in every father in the country districts, expecting neighbors at her table on some gala day, filled with her own hands arranged everything in taste, and as she was about to call them to it to receive her guests saw her little child by accident upset a pitcher all over the white cloth and soil everything, and the mother lifted her hand to slap the child, but suddenly remembered the time when she, a child herself, in her father's house, had done what they had always before been used to do on the purchase of a lamp, which was a matter of rarity and pride, she took it from the hands and dropped it, crashing into fragments, and looking up in her father's face, saw the chastisement, heard only the words, "It is a sad loss, but never mind; I did not mean to do it."

History repeats itself. Generations are usually alike. Among that generation past, as in our own, and as it will be in the generation following us, those who succeed became the target, shot at by those who did not succeed. In those times, as in ours, a man's bitterest enemies were often those he had befriended and helped. Envies, jealousies and revenges were just as rife in 1869 as in 1894. Hypocrisy sniffled and looked solemn then as now. There was much avarice among the apple barrels and now among the cotton bales and the wheelbarrows as among the chariots. The tallow candles saw the same things that are now found under the electric lights. Homespun was just as much in the modern fashion plate. As is the modern fashion plate. Twenty-five years—yea, twenty-five centuries—have not changed human nature a particle. Enough for the encouragement of those who fear that our times monopolize all the wickedness of the ages.

Immediately after Adam got outside of Eden he was just like you, O man! One minute after Eve left the gate she was just like you, woman! All the faults and vices are centuries and centenarians. Yea, the cities of Gomorrah, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Nineveh and ancient Memphis were as much worse than our modern cities as you suspect from the fact that the modern cities have somewhat yielded to the restraint of Christianity, while those ancient cities were not limited in their abominations.

The one generation which passed off within the last twenty-five years had their beginnings, their temptations, their struggles, their disappointments, their successes, their failures, their kindnesses and their sins. All these two generations now in advance and that following, twenty-five years between 1869 and 1894, how much they saw! How much they heard! How much they felt! Within that time have been performed the miracles of the telephone and the phonograph. From observatories other worlds have been brought in sight. Six Presidents of the United States have been inaugurated. Trans-Atlantic voyage abbreviated from ten days to six. Chicago and New York, once seven days apart, now only twenty-four hours by the vestibule limited. Two additional railroads have been built to the Pacific. Brazil has passed from monarchy to republic. Many of the cities have nearly doubled their populations. During that time the chief surviving heroes of the war have gone into the encampment of the dead. The chief physicians, attorneys, merchants, have passed off the earth and the retirement waiting for transition. In the editorial chairs, in pulpits, in the professions, in legislative, Senate, and Congressional halls.

Not one of the last ten men or women on earth of those who were prominent twenty-five years ago. The crew of life are all changed. Others in their places, others on the "lookout," others at the helm. Time is a great anodyne, has put all generations to sound sleep. Time, which has roughly preempted the world, has locomotion driven hence all the rulers except one queen from their high places. So far as I observed that generation, for the most part they did their best. Ghastly exceptions, but so far as I know them they did quite well, and many of them gloriously well. They were born at the right time, and they died at the right time. They left the world better than they found it. We are indebted to them for the fact that they prepared the way for our coming. Eighteen hundred and ninety-four reverently and gratefully salutes 1869. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh."

There are fathers and mothers here whom I baptized in their infancy. There is not one person in this church's board of session or trustees who was here when I came. Here and there in this vast assembly is one person who heard my opening sermon in Brooklyn, but not more than one person in every 500 now present. Of the seventeen persons who gave me a unanimous call when I came, only three, I believe, are living.

But this sermon is not a dirge. It is an anthem. While this world is appropriate as a temporary stay, as an eternal residence it would be a dead failure. It would be a dreadful sentence if our race were doomed to remain here a thousand winters and a thousand summers. God keeps us here just long enough to give us an appetite for heaven. Had we been born in celestial realms we would not be able to appreciate the bliss. It needs a good many rough blasts in this world to qualify us to properly estimate the superb climate of that good land where it is never too cold or too hot, too cloudy or too glaring. Heaven will be more to us than to those supernal beings who were never tempted or sick or bereaved or tried or disappointed. So you may well take my text out of the minor key and set it to some tune in the major key. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh."

Nothing can rob us of the satisfaction that uncounted thousands of the generation just past were converted, comforted and harvested for heaven by this church, whether in the present building or the three preceding buildings in which they worshiped. The two great organs of the previous churches went down in the memorable fires, but the multitudinous songs they led year after year were not recalled or injured. There is no power in earth or hell to kill a hallelujah. It is impossible to arrest a hosanna. What a satisfaction to know that there are many thousands in glory on whose eternal welfare this church wrought mightily! Nothing can undo that work. They have ascended, the multitudes who served God in that generation. That chapter is gloriously ended. But that generation has left its impression upon this generation.

A sailor was dying on shipboard, and he said to his mates: "My lads, I can only think of one passage of Scripture, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die,' and that keeps ringing in my ears. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Can't you think of something else in the Bible to cheer me up?" Well, sailors are kind, and they tried to think of some other passage of Scripture with which to console their dying comrade, but they could not. One of them said: "Let us call up the cabin boy. His mother was a Christian, and I guess he has a Bible." The cabin boy was called up, and the dying sailor asked him if he had a Bible. He said "Yes," but he could not exactly find it, and the dying sailor scolded him and said; "Ain't you ashamed of yourself not to read your Bible?" So the boy explored the bottom of his trunk and brought out the Bible, and his mother had marked a passage that just fitted the dying sailor's case, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin." That helped the sailor to die in peace. So one generation helps another, and good things written or said or done are reproduced long afterward.

During the passing of the last generation some peculiar events have unfolded. One day while resting at Sharon Springs, N. Y., I think it was in 1870, the year after my settlement in Brooklyn, and while walking in the park of that place, I found myself asking the question: "I wonder if there is any special mission for me to execute in this world? If there is, may God show it to me!" There soon came upon me a great desire to preach the gospel through the secular printing press. I realized that the vast majority of people, even in Christian lands, never enter a church, and that it would be an opportunity of usefulness infinite if that door of publication were opened.

And so I recorded that prayer in a blank book and offered the prayer day in and day out until the answer came, though in a way different from that which I had expected, for it came through the misrepresentation and persecution of enemies, and I have to record it for the encouragement of all ministers of the gospel who are misrepresented, that if the misrepresentation be virulent enough and bitter enough and continuous enough there is nothing that so widens one's field of usefulness as hostile attack, if you are really doing the Lord's work. The bigger the lie told about me, the bigger the demand to see and hear what I really was doing. From one stage of sermonic publication to another the work has gone on until week by week, and for twenty-three years, I have had the world for my audience, as no man ever had, and to-day more so than at any other time. The syndicates inform me that my sermons go now to about 25,000,000 of people in all lands. I mention this not in vain boast, but as a testimony to the fact that God answers prayer. Would God I had better occupied the field and been more consecrated to the work! May God forgive me for lack of service in the past and double and quadruple and quintuple my work in future.

In this my quarter century sermon I record the fact that side by side with the procession of blessings have gone a procession of disasters. I am preaching to-day in the fourth church building since I began work in this city. My first sermon was in the old church on Schermerhorn street to an audience chiefly of empty seats, for the church was almost extinguished. That church filled and overflowing, we built a larger church, which after two or three years disappeared in flame. Then we built another church, which also in a line of fiery succession disappeared in the same way. Then we put up this building, and may it stand for many years, a fortress of righteousness and a lighthouse for the storm tossed, its gates crowded with vast assemblages long after we have ceased to frequent them!

We have raised in this church over $1,000,000 for church charitable purposes during the present pastorate, while we have given, free of all expense, the gospel to hundreds of thousands of strangers, year by year. I record with gratitude to God that during this generation of twenty-five years I remember but two Sabbaths that I have missed service through anything like physical indisposition. Almost a fanatic on the subject of physical exercise, I have made the parks with which our city is blessed the means of good physical [illegible] walk and run in the [illegible] seats for work and [illegible] the week. I say to all [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]