

The Neglected Sword

THERE IS A SWORD that never wears out. Its edge is never blunted. On its blade no rust ever yet has gathered. It cuts to heal. It smites to save. It kills to make alive. It is the sword of the Spirit. now is the time when it calls for strong hands and brave hearts to wield it. It has the property of giving skill to the untaught and valor to the once fearful and unbelieving. It can be held by a child and do execution. It may be thrust into the right place, when love directs, and made to flash with the light of its own brightness, even when there be the darkness of an almost despairing eye to trace its pathway to its object.

This sword, however, can do nothing while left in its scabbard. It is for use and not for ornament. Soldiers of Christ, Knights of the Cross, what is the world waiting for? Is it not for aggressive action? The battle cry is sounding. Bugles are blowing. Trumpets call. The Great Captain gives the word, "Forward." The Church has been cold, timid, compromising. Religion has degenerated into a sentiment. It has lost in part the power of conviction. Ministers and newspapers claiming to be orthodox and religious have surrendered to a false liberality. They have yielded up the very ark of salvation to the Philistines. They have mumbled a pleasing rhetoric as a substitute for the old Faith of Calvary, they have betrayed the Master.

Is it not high time, when the land is fainting under its heavy burdens, and the people are lost in the tangled wilderness of worldly disappointment, and corruption reeks in high places and in dark places, to bring back the power of the Bible to bear on personal character, on family training, on political morals, and on the Church of the Living God? History has its lessons. When nations have apostatized from faith and lost their way, the Bible has restored and delivered. That has the sovereign virtue. That and that alone can work reformation where all true reformation must begin—in the hearts of the people. Let the sword of the Spirit descend on our land, and our worst foes will retreat.

—T. DeWitt Talmage (1839-1902)