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--THE--

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A CHRISTMAS SERMON

PULPIT FESTOONED WITH HOLI-
DAY GREEN.

Rev. Dr. Talmage's Sermon on Christ the
Star—A Living, Speaking, Historic, and
Evangelical Star—A Discourse That
Glows with Eloquence.

Back in Brooklyn.

In the Brooklyn Tabernacle on Christ-
mas day a great audience assembled to
participate in the services. Standing
before the organ, festooned with
Christmas greens, this sermon was deliv-
ered by Rev. Dr. Talmage, after the
throng had sung "The Star of Beth-
lehem." Text, Revelation xxii, 16, "I
am the bright and the morning star."

This is Christmas eve. Our atten-
tion and the attention of the world is
drawn to the star that pointed down to
the caravanary where Christ was
born. Do not let us forget that
Christ himself was a star. To that
luminous fact my text calls us.

It seems as if the natural world were
anxious to make up for the damage it
did our race in furnishing the forbid-
den fruit. If the fruit wrought death
among the nations, now all the natural
product shall become a symbol of bless-
ing. The showing down of the wealth of
the orchard will make us think of
Him whom Solomon describes as the
apple tree among the trees of the wood,
and the flowers of tangled gien and
cultured parterre shall be the dew
glinted garland for the brow of the
Lord Jesus. Yes, even the night shall
be taxed, and its brightest star shall
be as a gem in the coronet of our
holy religion.

Have you ever seen the morning star
advantageously? If it was on your way
home from a night's carousal, you saw
none of its beauty. If you merely turn-
ed over on your pillow in the darkness,
glancing out of the window, you know
nothing about the cheerful influence
of that star. But there are many in
this house to-night who in great peace
of their life, some of them far out at
sea, have gazed at that star and been
thrilled through with indescribable glad-
ness. That star comes trembling as
though with the perils of the dark-
ness, and yet bright with the anticipa-
tions of the day. It seems emotional
with all tenderness, its eyes filled with
tears of many sorrows. It is the gem
on the hand of the morning thrush
to signal its coming. Other stars are
dim, like holy candles in a cathedral,
or silver beads counted in a convent's
prayer, but this is a living star, a speak-
ing star, a historic star, an evangelic
star—bright and brilliant and
triumphant symbol of the great Red-
eemer. The telegraphic operator
puts his finger on the silver key of the
electric instrument, and the tidings fly
across the continent. And so it seems
to me that the finger of inspiration is
placed upon this silver point in the
heavens, and its thrill through all the
earth. "Behold, I bring you good tid-
ings of great joy which shall be to all
people. Behold, I am the bright and
morning star." The meaning of my
text is this: As the morning star pre-
cedes and promises the coming of the
day, so Christ heralds the natural and
spiritual dawn.

In the first place, Christ heralds
the coming of the creation. There
was a time when there was no order,
no sound or beauty. No wing stirred,
No word was uttered. No light sped.
As far as God could look up, as far
down, as far out, there was nothing.
Immeasurable solitude. Height and
depth and length and breadth of noth-
ingness. Did Christ then exist? Oh,
yes. "By Him were all things made
that are made; things in Heaven and
things in earth and things under the
earth." Yes, He antedated the crea-
tion. He led forth Arcturus and his
sons. He shone before the first morn-
ing. His voice was heard in the con-
cert when the morning stars serenaded
the advent of our infant earth, when,
wrapped in swaddling clothes of light,
it lay in the arms of the great Jehovah.
He saw the first fountain laid. He saw
the first light kindled. That hand
which was afterward crushed upon the
cross was thrust into chaos, and it
brought out one world and swung it in
that orbit, and brought out another
world and swung it in another orbit,
and brought out all the worlds, and
swung them in their particular orbits.
They came like sheep at the call of a
shepherd. They knew His voice, and
He called them all by their names.
Oh, it is an interesting thought to me
to know that Christ had something to
do with the creation. I see now why
it was so easy for Him to change water
into wine. He first created the water.
I see now why it was so easy for Him
to cure the maniac. He first created
the intellect. I see now why it was so
easy for Him to hush the tempest. He
sank Genesaret. I see now why it
was so easy for Him to swing fish into
Simon's net. He made the fish. I see
now why it was so easy for Him to give
sight to the blind man. He created
the optic nerve. I see now why it was
so easy for Him to raise Lazarus from
the dead. He created the body of
Lazarus and the rock that shut him in.
Some suppose that Christ came a
stranger to Bethlehem. Oh, no. He
created the shepherds, and the flocks
they watched, and the hills on which
they pastured, and the heavens that
overarched their heads, and the angels
that chanted the chorus on that
Christmas night. That hand which
was afterward nailed to the cross,
was an omnipotent and creative
hand and the whole universe was poised
on the tip of one of his fingers. Be-
fore the world was Christ was. All
the world came trooping up out of the
darkness, and He greeted them, as a
father greets his children, with a
"good morning," or a "good night."
Hail, Lord Jesus, morning star of the
first creation.

Again, Christ heralds the dawn of
comfort in a Christian soul. Some-
times we come to passes in life where

all kinds of tribulations meet us. You
are building up some great enterprise.
You have built the foundation—the
wall—you are just about to put on the
capstone, when everything is demoi-
lished. You have a harp all strung for
sweetest accord, and some great agony
crushes it. There is a little voice
hushed in the household. Blue eyes
closed. Color dashed out of the cheek.
The foot still. Instead of the quick
feet in the hall, the heavy tread of
those who march to the grave. Oh,
what are people to do amid all these
sorrows? Some sit down and mourn.
Some bite their lip until the blood
comes. Some wring their pale hands.
Some fall on their faces. Some lie on
their backs helpless and look up into
what seems to them an unpeopled
Heaven. Some pull their hair down
over their eyes and look through with
a fiend's glare. Some, with both
hands, press their hot brain and want
to die and cry, "O God, O God!" Long
night, bitter night, stupendous night
of the world's suffering! Some know
not which way to turn. But not so the
Christian man. He looks up toward
the heavens. He sees a bright ap-
pearance in the heavens. Can it be
only a flashing meteor? Can it be only
a falling star? Can it be only a delu-
sion? Nay, nay. The longer he looks
the more distinct it becomes, until af-
ter while he cries out, "A star—a
morning star, a star of comfort, a star
of grace, a star of peace, the star of
the Redeemer!" Peace for all trouble,
Balm for all wounds, Life for all dead.

Now Jesus, the great heart healer,
comes into our home. Peace! Peace!
that passeth all understanding. We
look up through our tears. We are
comforted. It is the morning star of
the Redeemer. "Who broke off that
flower?" said one servant in the gar-
den to another. "Who broke off that
flower?" And the other said, "The
master." Nothing more was said, for
if the master had not a right to break
off a flower to wear over his heart or
to set in the ring of the mansion, who
has a right to touch the flower? And
when Christ comes down into our
garden to gather lilies, shall we fight
him back? Shall we talk as though
He had no right to come? If any one
in all the universe has a right to that
which is beautiful in our homes, then
our master has, and He will take it, and
He will wear it over his heart, or He
will set it in the vase of the palace
eterna. "The Lord gave, and see no
Lord hath taken away; blessed be the
name of the Lord." Peace, troubled
soul! I put the balm on your wounded
heart to-night. The morning star,
the morning star of the Redeemer.

Again Christ holds the dawn of mil-
lennial glory. It is night in China,
and the millions of the world are
in the dark. But it seems to me there
are some intimations of the morning.
All Spain is to be brought under the
influence of the gospel. What is that
light I see breaking over the top of
the Pyrenees? The morning! Yea,
all Italy shall receive the gospel. She
shall have her schools and colleges and
her churches. Her vast population
shall surrender themselves to Christ.
What is that light I see breaking over
the top of the Alps? The morning.
All India shall come to God. Her idols
shall be cast down. Her juggernauts
shall be broken. Her temples of in-
iquity shall be demolished. What is
that light I see breaking over the top
of the Himalayas? The morning. The
empurpled clouds shall gild the path
of the conquering day. The Hottentot
will come out of his mud hovel to look
at the dawn; the Chinaman will come
up on the granite cliffs, the Norwegian
will get up on the rocks, and all the
heads of heaven will be crowded with
celestial inhabitants come out to see
the sun rise over the ocean of the
world's agony. They shall come from
the East, and from the West, from the
North, and from the South, and sit
down in the kingdom of God. These
sweltered under tropical suns. These
shivered under Icelandic temperature.
These plucked the vineyards in Italy.
These packed the tea-boxes in China.
These were aborigines lifting up their
dusky faces in the dawn. And the
wind shall wait it, and every mountain
shall become a transfiguration, and the
sea will become the walking place of
Him who trod the wave-cliffs of stormy
Tiberias, and the song of joy shall rise
toward Heaven, and the great sky will
become a sounding board which shall
strike back the shout of salvation to
the earth until it rebounds again to
the throne of the Almighty, and the
morning star of Christian hope will be-
come the full sunburst of millennial
glory.

Again, Christ heralds the dawn of
Heaven upon every Christian's dying
pillow. I suppose you have noticed
that the characteristics of people in
their beautiful days are very apt to be
their characteristics in their dying
days. The dying words of ambitious
Napoleon were, "Head of the Army."
The dying words of poetic Lord Byron
were, "I must sleep now." The dying
words of affectionate Lord Nelson were,
"Kiss me, Hardy." The dying words
of Voltaire were, as he saw one he sup-
posed to be Jesus in the room. "Crush
that wretch." But I have noticed that
the dying words of Christians always
mean peace. Generally the pain is all
gone, and there is a great quietude
through the room. As one of these
brothers told me of his mother in the
last moment. "She looked up and
said, pointing to some supernatural be-
ing that seemed to be in the room,
"Look at that bright form. Why, they
have come for me now."
The notice is turned so that the light
is very pleasant. It is peace all around.
You ask yourself: "Why, can this be
a dying room? It is so different from
anything I ever expected." And you
walk the floor, and you look out of the
window, and you come back and look
at your watch, and you look at the
face of the patient again, and there is
no change, except that the face is be-
coming more radiant, more illumined.
The wave of death seems coming up
higher and higher, until it has touched
the ankle, and then it comes on up
until it touches the knee, and then it
comes on up until it reaches the girdle,

and then it comes on up until it
reaches the lip, and the soul is about
to be floated away into glory, and you
roll back the patient's sleeve, and you
put your finger on the pulse, and it is
getting weaker and weaker, and the
pulse stops, and you hardly know
whether life has gone out or not. In-
deed, you cannot tell when she goes
away, she goes away so calmly. Per-
haps it is 4 o'clock in the morning, and
you have the bed wheeled around to
the window, and the dying one looks
out into the night sky, and she sees
something that attracts her attention,
and you wonder what it is.

Why, it is a star. It is a star that
out of its silver rim is pouring a su-
per-natural light into that dying ex-
perience. And you say, "What is it
that you are looking at?" She says,
"It is a star." You say, "What star is
that seems so well to please you?"
"Oh," she says, "that is the morning
star—Jesus!" I would like to have my
death bed under that evangelical star
—I would like to have my eye on that
star, so that I could be assured of the
morning. Then the dash of the surf
of the sea of death would only be the
billowing up of the promise. "When
thou passest through the waters, I will
be with thee, and the rivers shall not
overflow thee." All other lights will
fail—the light will fall from the
scroll of fame, the light that flashes
from the gem in the beautiful apparel,
the light that flames from the burning
lamps of a banquet—but this light
burns on and burns on. Paul kept his
eye on that morning star until he
could say, "Welcome, sweet
Lord Jesus—welcome, eternity." No
other star ever pointed a mariner into
so safer a harbor. No other star ever
sunk its silver anchor into the
waters. No other star ever pierced
such accumulated cloud, or beckoned
with such a holy luster.

With lanterns and torches and a
guide, we went down in the Mammoth
cave of Kentucky. You may walk
in halls of gypsum. As the guide car-
ries his lantern ahead of you, the
shadows have an appearance super-
natural and spectral. The darkness is
fearful. Two people, getting lost from
their guide only for a few hours, years
ago, were demented, and for years sat
in their insanity. You feel like hold-
ing your breath as you walk across the
bridges that seem to span the bottom-
less abyss. The guide throws his cal-
cium light into the caverns, and
the light rolls and tosses from rock
to rock and from depth to depth, making
at every plunge a new revelation of
the awful power that could have made
such a place as that.

A sense of suffocation comes upon
you as you think that you are 250 feet
in a straight line from the sunlit sur-
face of the earth. The guide after
while takes you into what is called
the "Star Chamber," and then he says
to you, "Sit here," and then he takes
the lantern and goes down under the
rocks, and it gets darker and darker,
until the night is so thick that the
hand an inch from the eye is unobserv-
able. And then, by kindling one of
the lanterns and placing it in a cleft
of the rock, there is a reflection cast
on the dome of the cave, and there are
stars coming out in constellations—a
brilliant night heavens—and you in-
voluntarily exclaim, "Beautiful!
beautiful!" Then he takes the lantern
down in other depths of the cavern,
and wanders on, and wanders
off, until he comes up from under
the rocks gradually, and it
seems like the dawn of the morning,
and it gets brighter and brighter. The
guide is a skilled ventriloquist, and he
imitates the voices of the morning,
and soon the gloom is all gone, and you
stand congratulating yourself over the
wonderful spectacle. Well, there are
a great many people who look down
into the grave as a great cavern. They
think it is a thousand miles subterranean,
and all the echoes seem to be the
voices of despair, and the cascades
seem to be the falling tears that al-
ways fall, and the gloom of earth seems
coming up in stalagmite, and the gloom
of the eternal world seems descending
in the stalagmite, making pillars of in-
describable horror. The grave is no
such place as that to me, thank God. If
our divine Guide takes us down into
the great caverns, and we have the
lamp to our feet and the light to our
path, and all the echoes in the rifts of
the rock are anthems, and all the fall-
ing waters are fountains of salvation,
and after awhile we look up and be-
hold the cavern of the tomb has be-
come a king's star chamber. And
while we are looking at the pomp of it
an over-lasting morning begins to rise,
and all the tears of earth crystallize
into stalagmite, rising up in a pillar on
the one side, and all the glori-
ous of Heaven seem to be de-
scending in stalagmite, making a pillar
on the other side, and you push
against the gate that swings between
the two pillars, and as the gate flashes
open you find it is one of the twelve
gates which are twelve pearls. Blessed
be God that through this gospel the
mammoth cave of the sepulcher has
become the illumined Star Chamber of
the King!

I would God that if my sermon to-
day does not lead you to Christ, that
before morning, locking out of the
window, the astronomy of the night
heavens might lead you to the feet of
Jesus.

FLEET-FOOTED ZEBRAS.

Their Dash of Speed When Alarmed by
the Whiz of a Rifle Ball.

The rapidity with which the differ-
ent zebras have been exterminated,
owing to the advance of civilization
in South Africa, is shown by refer-
ence to such works as that of Sir
Cornwallis Harris, written in 1840,
in which the author tells us that the
quagga was at the time found in "in-
terminable herds," bands of many
hundreds being frequently seen, while
he describes Burchell's zebra as con-
gregating in herds of eighty or 100,
and abounding to a great extent; but
now, after the expiration of but fifty
years, the one species is extinct or
practically so, while the other has
been driven much farther afield and
its number are yearly being reduced.
This author's description of the com-
mon zebra is well worth repeating.
He says: Seeking the widest and
most sequestered spots, haughty
troops are exceedingly difficult to ap-
proach, as well on account of their
extreme agility and fleetness of foot
as from the abrupt and inaccessible
nature of their highland abode. Un-
der the special charge of a sentinel,
so posted on some ad centrag as to
command a view of every avenue of
approach, the checkered herd whom
"painted skins adorn" is to be viewed
perambulating some rocky ledge, on
which the rifle ball alone can reach
them. No sooner has the note of
alarm been sounded by the vidette,
than, pricking their long ears, the
whole flock hurries forward to ascer-
tain the nature of the approaching
danger, and, having gazed a moment
at the advancing hunter, whisking
their brindled tails aloft, helter-
skelter away they thunder, down
craggy precipices and over yawning
ravines, where no less agile foot could
dare to follow them." Of Burchell's
zebra he says: "Fierce, strong, fleet
and surpassingly beautiful, there is,
perhaps, no quadruped in the crea-
tion, not even excepting the moun-
tain zebra, more splendidly attired or
presenting a picture of more singu-
larly attractive beauty." Zebras are
by no means amiable animals, and,
though many of the stories told of
their ferocity are doubtless much ex-
aggerated, they have so far not
proved themselves amenable to do-
mestication.

A Very Hot Bath.

Prof. Nippoid, who was for many
years at the head of the law school at
the Tokio University, says that much
of the healthfulness of the Japanese
is due to their habitual use of very
hot water in bathing, and that, by
comparison, nations outside Japan
hardly know what a hot bath means.
The Japanese take their morning tub
at a temperature of over 104 degrees
Fahrenheit, and immediately after-
wards douch themselves with per-
fectly cold water. Herr Nippoid de-
clares that after a bath of this heat
and the subsequent cold douche, he
used to feel warm all day in the col-
dest winter weather, while in summer
the bath had the exactly contrary
effect, and was most cooling and re-
freshing. One of the most remark-
able water-cure resorts in Japan is
Kusatsu, where the boiling sulphur
springs bubble up out of the earth at
a temperature of 158 degrees Fahren-
heit, a heat which appalls even the
Japanese. At 5 o'clock in the morn-
ing, all through the bathing-season, a
great bell announces to all patients
who are ordered to take boiling baths
that their time of ordeal has come.
In the middle of the bath house is a
huge basin, filled with the sulphur
water. The bathers cluster around,
throw water over their heads, and
screw up their courage. The decisive
moment comes when the head bath-
ing official gives the word of com-
mand. Then all who have the nerve,
and many have not, to subvert them-
selves to the scalding liquid answer
in chorus, and begin to get into the
bath. This is done as gradually and
slowly as possible, because the more
the water is moved about the more
it scalds. Inch by inch the bodies
disappear, till at last the bathers are
up to their necks in water. Then
they stand motionless. To keep up
their mettle, the head bathman, who
stands in the middle of the bath,
gives notice every time a minute has
passed and the victims respond in
chorus, "Two minutes more" or
whatever the remaining term of tribu-
lation may be, and when the time is
up, they all rush and scramble out
of the water at a rate that is a curi-
ous contrast to the pace at which
they go in.

A Look Wait.

Saint-Foix, the French poet, had a
large income, but was always in
debt. Much of his time was spent
dodging creditors. He sat one day
in a barber chair with his face lat-
tered and ready to be shaved when
one of his largest creditors entered
the shop. The man saw Saint-Foix
and angrily demanded the money
due him.

"Won't you wait until I get a
shave?" quietly inquired the poet.

"Certainly," answered the other,
pleased at the prospect of getting the
money.

The poet made the barber a wit-
ness to the agreement and calmly
wiped the lather from his face. He
wore a beard to his dying day.

GENERALLY, the dearest things are
those which are advertised as free.