

AT THE TABERNACLE.

THE DIVINE ASTRONOMY AS DESCRIBED BY THE PROPHETS.

In the Unchanging Volume of the Skies It is Written That God is a God of Infinite Order and Without Variableness or Shadow of Turning.

BROOKLYN, March 20.—In this sermon Dr. Talmage traverses wild realms of thought to teach useful everyday lessons, based on the text, Amos v. 8, "Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

A country farmer wrote this text—Amos of Tekoa. He plowed the earth and thrashed the grain by a new thrashing machine just invented, as formerly the cattle trod out the grain. He gathered the fruit of the sycamore tree and scarified it with an iron comb just before it was getting ripe, as it was necessary and customary in that way to take from it the bitter seed.

He was the son of a poor shepherd and stuttered, but before the stammering rustic the Philistines and Syrians and Phoenicians and Moabites and Ammonites and Edomites and Israelites trembled. Moses was a lawgiver, Daniel was a prince, Isaiah a courtier and David a king; but Amos, the author of my text, was a peasant, and, as might be supposed, nearly all his parallels are pastoral, his property full of the odor of new mown hay.

What a life of solitude, all alone with his herds! Poor Amos! And at 12 o'clock at night heark to the wolf's bark, and the lion's roar, and the bear's growl, and the owl's screech, and the serpent's hiss, as he stumbles through the dark while the other herdsmen, got the habit of studying the map of the heavens, because it was so much of the time spread out before him.

He noticed some stars advancing and others receding. He associated their dawn and setting with certain seasons of the year. He had a poetic nature, and he read night by night, and month by month, and year by year, the poem of the constellations, stars especially attracted his attention while seated on the ground or lying on his back under the open scroll of the midnight heavens—the Pleiades, or Seven Stars, and Orion. The former group this rustic prophet associated with the spring, as it rises about the first of May. The latter he associated with the winter, as it comes to the meridian in January. The Pleiades, or Seven Stars, connected with all sweetest and joyous things, the herald of the temperate season.

And there are some things which make me think that it may not have been all superstition which connected the movements and appearance of the heavenly bodies with great moral events on earth. Did not a meteor run on evangelistic errand on the first Christmas night and designate the rough cradle of our Lord? Did not the stars in their courses fight against Sisera? Was not the moon eclipsed for twelve consecutive nights? Did it merely happen so that a new star appeared in constellation Cassiopeia, and then disappeared just before King Charles IX of France, who was responsible for the St. Bartholomew massacre, died? Was it without significance that in the days of the Roman emperor Justinian war and famine were preceded by the dimness of the sun, which for a year gave no more light than the moon, although there were no clouds to obscure it?

Astrology, after all, may have been something more than a brilliant heathenism. No wonder that Amos of the text, having heard these two anthems of the stars, put down the stout rough staff of the herdsman and took into his brown hand and cut and knotted fingers the pen of a prophet and advised the recreant people of his time to seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion.

In the first place, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made the Pleiades and Orion must be the God of order. It was not so much a star here and a star there that impressed the inspired herdsman, but seven in one group and seven in another group. He saw that night after night and season after season and decade after decade they had kept step of light, each one in its own place, a sisterhood never clashing and never contesting precedence. From the time Hesiod called the Pleiades the "seven daughters of Atlas," and Virgil wrote in his "Æneid" of "Stormy Orion" until now, they have observed the order established for their coming and going, order written not in the manuscript that may be pigeonholed, but with the hand of the Almighty on the dome of the sky, so that all nations may read it. Order. Persistent order. Sublime order. Omnipotent order.

What a consolation to you and me, to whom communities and nations sometimes seem going pell-mell, and world ruled by some fiend at haphazard and in all directions maladministration! He who keeps seven worlds in their circuit for six thousand years can certainly keep all the affairs of individuals and nations and continents in adjustment. We had not better fret much, for the peasant's argument of the text was right. If God can take care of the seven worlds of the Pleiades and the four chief worlds of Orion, he can probably take care of the one world we inhabit.

So I feel very much as my father felt one day when we were going to the country mill to get a grind, and I, a boy of seven years, sat in the back part of the wagon, and our yoke of oxen ran away with us and along a labyrinthine road through the woods, so that I thought every moment we should be dashed to pieces, and I made a terrible outcry of fright, and my father turned to me with a

face perfectly calm, and said: "De Witt, what are you crying about? I guess we can ride as fast as the oxen can run." And, my hearers, why should be frightened and lose our equilibrium in the swift movement of worldly events, especially when we are assured that it is not a yoke of unbroken steers that are drawing us on, but that order and wise government are in the yoke?

In your occupation, your mission, your sphere, do the best you can, and then trust to God; and if things are all mixed and disquieting, and your brain is hot and your heart sick, get some one to go out with you into the starlight and point out to you the Pleiades, or, better than that, get into some observatory, and through the telescope see further than Amos with the naked eye could—namely, two hundred stars in the Pleiades, and that in what is called the sword of Orion there is a nebula computed to be two trillion two hundred thousand billions times larger than the sun. Oh, be at peace with the God who made all that and controls all that—the wheel of the constellations turning in the wheel of galaxies for thousands of years without the breaking of a cog or the slipping of a band or the snap of an axle. For your placidity and comfort through the Lord Jesus Christ I charge you, "Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

THE LIGHT OF GOD. Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made these two groups of the text was the God of light. Amos saw that God was not satisfied with making one star, or two stars or three stars, but he makes seven; and having finished that group of worlds, makes another group—group after group. To the Pleiades he adds Orion. It seems that God likes light so well that he keeps making it. Only one being in the universe knows the statistics of solar, lunar, stellar, meteoric creations, and that is the Creator himself. And they have all been lovingly christened, each one a name as distinct as the names of your children. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." The seven Pleiades had names given to them, and they are Alcione, Merope, Celaeno, Electra, Sterope, Taygete and Maia.

But think of the billions and trillions of daughters of starry light that God calls by name as they sweep by him with beaming brow and lustrous robe! So fond is God of light—natural light, moral light, spiritual light. Again and again in light narrows for symbolization—Christ, the bright morning star; evangelization, the day-break; the redemption of nations, Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in his wings. O men and women, with so many sorrows and sins and perplexities, if you want light of comfort, light of pardon, light of goodness, in earnest prayer through Christ, "Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made these two archipelagos of stars must be an unchanging God. There had been no change in the stellar appearance in this herdsman's lifetime, and his father, a shepherd, reported to him that there had been no change in his lifetime. And these two clusters hang over the celestial arbor now just as they were the first night that they shone on the Edenic bowers; the same as when the Egyptians built the pyramids from the top of which to watch them; the same as when the Chaldeans calculated the eclipses; the same as when Elihu, according to the book of Job, went out to study the aurora borealis; the same under Ptolemaic system and Copernican system; the same from Callisthenes to Pythagoras, and from Pythagoras to Herschel. Surely, a changeless God must have fashioned the Pleiades and Orion! Oh, what an antidote amid the ups and downs of life, and the flux and reflux of the tides of prosperity, to know that we have a changeless God, the same "yesterday, to-day and forever!"

FICKLENESS OF EARTHLY MONARCHS. Xerxes garlanded and knighted the steersman of his boat in the morning and hanged him in the evening of the same day. The world sits in its chariot and drives tandem, and the horse ahead is Huzzo and the horse behind is Anathema. Lord Cobham, in King James' time, was applauded, and had thirty-five thousand dollars a year, but was afterward execrated and lived on scraps stolen from the royal kitchen. Alexander the Great after death remained unburied for thirty days, because no one would do the honor of shoveling him under. The Duke of Wellington refused to have his iron fence mended because it had been broken by an infuriated populace in some hour of political excitement, and he left it in ruins that men might see what a fickle thing is human favor. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to them that fear him, and his righteousness unto the children's children of such as keep his commandments to do them." This moment "Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made these two beacons of the oriental night sky must be a God of love and kindly warning. The Pleiades rising in midsky said to all the herdsmen and shepherds and husbandmen, "Come out and enjoy the mild weather and cultivate your gardens and fields." Orion, coming in winter, warned them to prepare for tempest. All navigation was regulated by these two constellations. The one said to shipmaster and crew, "Hoist sail for the sea and gather merchandise from other lands." But Orion was the storm signal, and said, "Heed sail, make things snug, or put into harbor, for the hurricanes are getting their wings out." As the Pleiades were the sweet angels of the spring, Orion was the warning prophet of the winter.

LESSONS OF THE SEASONS. Oh, now I get the best view of God I ever had! There are two kinds of sermons I never want to preach—the one that preaches God so kind, so indulgent, so lenient, so imbecile that men may do what they will against him and fracture his every law and put the pry of their impertinence and rebellion under his throne, and while they are spitting in his face and stabbing at his heart, he takes them up in his arms and kisses their infuriated brow and cheek, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The other kind of sermon I never want to preach is the one that represents God as all fire and torture and thundercloud, and with red hot pitchfork tossing the human race into paroxysms of infinite agony. The sermon that I am now preaching believes in a God of loving, kindly warning, the God of spring and winter, the God of the Pleiades and Orion.

You must remember that the winter is just as important as the spring. Let one winter pass without frost to kill vegetation and ice to bind the rivers and snow to enrich our fields and then you will have to enlarge your hospitals and your cemeteries. "A green Christmas makes a fat graveyard" was the old proverb. Storms to purify the air. Thermometer at ten degrees above zero to tone up the system. December and January just as important as May and June. I tell you we need the

storms of life as much as we do the sunshine. There are more men ruined by prosperity than by adversity. If we had our own way in life, before this we would have been impregnations of selfishness and worldliness and disgusting sin, and puffed up until we would have been like Julius Caesar, who was made by sycophants to believe that he was divine, and the freckles on his face were as stars of the firmament.

One of the swiftest transatlantic voyages made last summer by our swiftest steamer was because she had a stormy wind abaft, chasing her from New York to Liverpool. But to those going in the opposite direction the storm was buffeting and a hindrance. It is a bad thing to have a storm ahead, pushing us back; but if we be God's children and aiming toward heaven the storms of life will only chase us the sooner into the harbor. I am so glad to believe that the monsoons and typhoons and mists and stroccos of the land and sea are not unchained maniacs let loose upon the earth, but are under divine supervision! I am so glad that the God of the Seven Stars is also the God of Orion! It was out of Daniel's suffering came the sublime "Divina Comma," and out of John Milton's blindness came "Paradise Lost," and out of miserable infidel attack came the "Bridgewater Treatise" in favor of Christianity, and out of David's exile came the songs of consolation, and out of the sufferings of Christ came the possibility of the world's redemption, and out of your bereavement, your persecution, your poverty, your misfortunes may yet come an eternal blessing.

THE BLESSING WORLDS ON HIGH. Oh, what a mercy it is that in the text and all up and down the Bible God induces us to look out toward other worlds! Bible astronomy in Genesis, in Joshua, in Job, in the Psalms, in the prophets, major and minor, in St. John's Apocalypse, practically saying: "Worlds! worlds! worlds! Get ready for them!" We have a nice little world here that we stick to, as though losing that we look off to other worlds, many of them larger and grander and more resplendent. "Look there," says Job, "at Mazaroth and Arcturus and his sons!" "Look there," says St. John, "at the moon under Christ's feet!" "Look there," says Joshua, "at the sun standing still above Gibeon!" "Look there," says Moses, "at the sparkling firmament!" "Look there," says Amos, the herdsman, "at the Seven Stars and Orion!" Don't let us be so sad about the show off from this world under Christ's pilotage. Don't let us be so agitated about our own going out of this little barge or sloop or canal boat of a world to get on some Great Eastern of the heavens. Don't let us persist in wanting to stay in this barn, this shed, this house of a world when all the king's palaces already occupied by many of our best friends are swinging wide open their gates to let us in.

When I read, "In my Father's house are many mansions," I do not know but that each world is a room, and as many rooms as there are worlds, stellar stairs, stellar galleries, stellar hallways, stellar windows, stellar domes. How our departed friends must pity us shut up in these cramped apartments, tired if we walk fifteen miles, when they some morning, by one stroke of wing, can make circuit of the whole stellar system and be back in time for matins! Perhaps one twinkling of an eye they see the residence of the martyrs; that group of twelve luminaries is the celestial home of the apostles. Perhaps that steep of light is the dwelling place of angels cherubic, seraphic, archangelic. A mansion with as many rooms as worlds, and all their windows illuminated for festivity.

THE STIMULUS TO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. Oh, how this widens and lifts and stimulates our expectations! How little it makes the present and how stupendous it makes the future! How it consoles us about our pious dead, who, instead of being boxed up and under the ground, have the range of as many rooms as there are worlds, and welcome everywhere, for it is the Father's house, in which there are many mansions! Oh, Lord God of the Seven Stars and Orion, how can I endure the transport, the ecstasy of such a vision! I must obey my text and seek him. I will seek him, I will seek him now, for I call to mind that it is not the material universe that is most valuable, but the spiritual, and that each of us has a soul worth more than all the worlds which the inspired herdsman saw from his booth on the hills of Tekoa.

I had studied it before, but the Cathedral of Cologne, Germany, never impressed me as it did the last time I saw it. It is admittedly the grandest gothic structure in the world, its foundation laid in 1248, only eight or nine years ago completed. More than six hundred years in building. All Europe taxed for its construction. Its chapel of the Magi with precious stones enough to purchase a kingdom. Its chapel of St. Agnes with masterpieces of painting. Its spire springing five hundred and eleven feet into the heavens. Its stained glass the chorus of all rich colors. Statues encircling the pillars and encircling all. Statues above statues, until sculpture can do no more, but fairs and falls back against carved staves and down on pavements over which the kings and queens of the earth have walked to confession. Nave and aisles and transept and portals combining the splendors of sunrise. Interlaced, intercolored, intercolumned grandeur. As I stood outside looking at the double range of flying buttresses and the forest of pinnacles, higher and higher and higher, until I almost reeled from dizziness, I exclaimed: "Great doxology in stone! Frozen prayer of many nations!"

But while standing there I saw a poor man enter and put down his pack and kneel beside his burden on the hard floor of that cathedral. And tears of deep emotion came into my eyes as I said to myself: "There is a soul worth more than all the material surroundings. That man will live after the last pinnacle has fallen, and not one stone of all that cathedral glory shall remain unremembered. He is now a Lazarus in rags and poverty and want, but immortal and a son of the Lord God Almighty, and the prayer he now offers, though amid many superstitions, I believe God will hear, and among the apostles whose sculptured forms stand in the surrounding niches he will at last be lifted, and into the presence of that Christ whose sufferings are represented by the crucifix before which he bows, and be raised in due time out of his poverty and sculpture in rags and poverty and want, but immortal and a son of the Lord God Almighty, and the prayer he now offers, though amid many superstitions, I believe God will hear, and among the apostles whose sculptured forms stand in the surrounding niches he will at last be lifted, and into the presence of that Christ whose sufferings are represented by the crucifix before which he bows, and be raised in due time out of his poverty and sculpture in rags and poverty and want, but immortal and a son of the Lord God Almighty, and the prayer he now 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