

WORD OF THE LORD

The Divine Astronomy as Seen by the Prophets

TALMADGE'S SUNDAY SERMON

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. Talmadge traversed wide 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 threshing machine just invented, as formerly the cattle trod out the grain. He gathered the fruit of the sycamore tree and sacrificed 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 bitterness. He was the son of a poor shepherd and stammered, but before the stammering rustic the Philistines and Syrians and Phoenicians and Moabites and Ammonites and Edomites and Israelites trembled.

Moses was a lawyer, Daniel was a prince, Isaiah a courier 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 imagery full of the odor of new mown hay, and the rattle of locusts, and the rumble of carts with shaves, and the roar of wild beasts devouring the flock while the shepherd came out in their defense. He watched the herds by day, and by night inhabited a booth made out of bushes, so that through these he could see the stars all night long, and was more familiar with them than we have night roofs to our houses and hardly ever see the stars, except among the tall brick chimneys of the great towns. But at seasons of the year when the herds were in special danger, he would stay out in the open field all through the darkness, his only shelter the curtain of the night heaven, with the stellar embroideries and silvered tassels of lunar light.

What a life of solitude, all alone with his herds! Poor Amos! And at 12 o'clock at night hark 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 hissingly stings too near while moving through the thickets! So Amos, like 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, divinely rhythmic. But no reciter of stars especially attracted his attention while seated on the ground lying on his back under the open scroll of the midnight heavens—the Pleiades, or even Stars, and Orion. The former group his rustic prophet associated with the pine, as it rises about the first of May, the latter he associated with the winter. The Pleiades, or Seven Stars, connected with all sweetness and joy, Orion, the herald of the tempest. The ancients were a more apt to study the physical map of juxtaposition of the heavenly bodies, because they thought they had a special influence upon the earth, and perhaps they were right. If the moon every few hours lifts and lets down the tides of the Atlantic ocean, and the electric storms of the sun, by its scientific admission, affect the earth, why not the stars have proportionate effect?

Was it all superstition? And there are some things which make me think that it may 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 Sizer? Was it merely coincidental that before the destruction of Jerusalem the moon was 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 nearly 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 land, having heard those two anthems of the stars, put down the stout rough staff of the herdsman and took into his brown hand and out and knotted fingers the pen of a prophet and advised the recumbent people of his time to return to God, saying, "Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion." This command, which Amos gave 783 years B. C., is just as appropriate for us, 1892 A. D.

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 the other group. He saw that night after night and season after season and decade after decade they had kept step of light, such ones in its own place, a sixfold never ceasing and never ceasing procession. From the time Hezek called the Pleiades the "seven daughters of Atlas," and Virgil wrote his "Starry" (Starry) "Starry" until now, they have observed the order established for their coming and going; order written not in manuscript that may be paginated, 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.

THE CONSOLIDATION IN NATURE.

What a relative to you and me, to whom communities and nations sometimes seem going pell-mell, and world ruled by some lord of haphazard and in all directions random determination! The God who keeps seven worlds in right 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 and I got a great ground, 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 very moment we should be dashed to pieces, and I made a terrible outcry of fright, and my father turned to me with a perfectly calm, and said: "Go with, that are you saying about? I guess you are as fast as the oxen on run." And, my heart, why should be frightened and less our equilibrium in the wild movement of worldly events, especially when we are aware that it is not a yoke of oxen drawn that are drawing us on, but the order and wise government are in the job?

order to 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 someone 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 compelled 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 contrals all this—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 LORD OF GOD. Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made those 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 every 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 Alcyone, 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 is light harnessed for symbolism—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 those 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 arch 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 colored 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 Calisthenes to Pythagoras, and from Pythagoras to Herschel. Surely, a changeless God must have fashioned the Pleiades and Orion! Oh, what an anomaly amid the ups and downs of life, and the flux and reflux of the tides of property, to know that we have a changeless God, the same "yesterday, today and forever!"

TRICKLE OF EARTHQUAKES. Xerxes garlanded and knighted the steersman of his boat in the morning and headed him in the evening of the same day. The world sits in its chariot and drives tandem, and the horse ahead is Huxza 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 excommunicated 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 learn what a feeble 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 of men; of such as keep his covenant, and to those who remember his commandments to do them." This meant "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 midday 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 said shipmaster and crew, "Red sail for the sea and gather merchandise from other lands." But Orion was the storm signal, and said, "Red sail, make things snug or put into harbor, for the hurricanes are getting their wings out." As the Pleiades were the sweet evangels of the spring, Orion was the warning prophet of the winter.

LESSONS OF THE SEASONS.

Oh, how 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 sitting 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.

HE HAD A LOOLOO.

He learned a little peculiarity of the National Game. It was in a gambling place in a western town. The tenderfoot from Chicago had taken to the warpath, and announced his determination of relieving a few of the miners of what spare change they happened to have about them. Without much trouble he found a victim who was willing to try a hand or two at poker. Luck followed the stranger from the start, and he won steadily. Finally he drew four aces, and after the stakes had been run up to a comfortable figure he magnanimously refused to bet further.

"This is downright robbery," he exclaimed, "and I don't want to end the game here by bankrupting you. So here goes." He threw down four aces and reached for the money. "Hold on!" cried his antagonist. "I'll take care of the dust if you please." "But I held four aces—see?" "Well, what of it? I've got a looloo." "A what?" "A looloo—three clubs and two diamonds." "The stranger was dumb. 'A looloo,' he repeated. "Well, what is a looloo, anyway?" "Three clubs and two diamonds," coolly replied the gambler, raking in the stakes. "I guess you aren't accustomed to our poker rules out here. See there." As he spoke he jerked his thumb to-

ward a pasteboard card which ornamented the wall of the saloon. It read: A LOOLOO BEATS FOUR ACES. The game proceeded, but it was plainly evident that the unsophisticated young tiger hunter had something on his mind. Within five minutes he suddenly braced up, his face wreathed in smiles, and he began betting once more with his former vigor and recklessness. In fact, he staked his last dollar on his hand. Just at this juncture the barkeeper hung up another card.

The stranger threw down his cards with an exultant whoop. "It's my time to howl just about now!" he cried as he reached for the money. "There's a looloo for you—three clubs and two diamonds." "Tut, tut!" exclaimed the miser. "Really, this is too bad. You evidently don't understand our rules at all. You don't mean to tell me you play poker in such a fast and loose, slipshod way down east, do you? Why, look at that rule over there." He pointed directly over the head of the barkeeper. The Chicagoan read his doom in the handwriting on the wall. It was the Belshazzar case over again. The bit of pasteboard bore this legend: THE LOOLOO CAN BE PLAYED BUT ONCE A NIGHT.

The young man has not reached home yet, but as the walking is said to be pretty fair nowadays he will be due in Chicago about the middle of next week.—Chicago Mail. Unappreciated. It was her first essay at marketing, but she tackled the work with the beautiful hardihood of youth and inexperience. "Have you canvassed drinks?" she inquired of the man in the stall. "Yes, miss, and they are beautiful, and mighty scarce at this time of year. An I've got mallards and redheads too." "You may cut me off three-quarters of a yard of the canvass," she said, in her clear, classic tones; "and cut it diagonally, so that it will not ravel," and she looked about for the yardstick to see that he did not cheat her in measurement.—Detroit Free Press.

Preparing for Emergencies. Mr. Howell of the firm of Gettup & Howell—James, is there any crane in the store? Clerk—Plenty of it, sir. Mr. Howell—You may tie a piece of it on the doorknob, put up the shutters, lock up everything securely and go home. "No news of any death, I hope." (Gloomily) "Not yet, but there probably will be before night. The gas probably has come."—Chicago Tribune.

Her Aim to Please. Mrs. Greatchum—How can you wear that glaring bonnet, my love? I never liked it. Mrs. Toosweet—My husband likes it, and as long as I please him I don't care. (Intermission of two hours.) Mr. Toosweet—Can't we have a little of that quince preserve for tea tonight, Clarissa? Mrs. T.—Not much! That's for company.—Harper's Bazar.

Breaking It Gently. Foreman (quarry gang)—It's sad news O' how fur queer, Mrs. McGaharragity. Y' husband's new watch is broken. It was a fine watch, an it's smashed all to pieces. Mrs. McG.—Dearie me! How did it happen? Foreman—A ten ton rock fell on 'im.—New York Weekly.

A Wall. Oh, I cannot read and I cannot write, and my nerves are all unstrung. For my neighbor whistles from near till night. 'Till I'd gladly see him hung. Go, let the lightning whither strike him dead. Yes, I'd whistle with the blast; Then I might forget this pain in my head. And absorb a little rest.

When I begin my nap to take On a summer afternoon, My neighbor is sure to keep me awake By whistling some solemn tune; And I know if anything happens to him, Like a sudden lack of breath, He will follow up his infernal whim 'Till I am whistled to death. At five o'clock on each new morn, His whistle impales the air, And I sometimes wish I'd never been born, And I forget myself and swear. And off in the wee small hours of the night My nightmare whistles like mad, 'Till my hair has all turned from black to white, And I've lost almost all I had. I'd gladly give every cent I'm worth, And throw my wife's mother in, To be safe that no one who roams the earth Would ever whistle again. Stuff my ears with cotton when I am dead, And dig my resting place deep. So no one who whistles above my head Can ever disturb my sleep. —Warner Willie Price in Texas Notes.

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