A CHRISTMAS SERMON

Dr. Talmage Tells the Story of the Incarnation.

Sunshine and Shadow on the Cradle of the Saviour—Practical Use Made of Religious Festival Days.

[Copyright, 1899, by Louis Klopsch.]
Washington, Dec. 24.

The story of the incarnation is here told by Dr. Talmage in a new way, and practical use is made of these days of festivity; next, Matthew 1:17: "So all the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are 14 generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are 14 generations."

From what many consider the dullest and most unimportant chapter of the New Testament I take my text and find it full of practical, startling and eternal interest. This chapter is the front door of the New Testament, through which all the splendors of evangelism and apostolicity enter. Three times 14 generations are spoken of in my text—that is, 42 generations, reaching down to Christ. They all had relation to Him. And at least 42 generations past affect us. If they were good, we feel the result of the goodness. If they were bad, we feel the result of their wickedness. If some were good and some were bad, it is an intermingling influence that puts its mighty hand upon us. And as we feel the effect of at least 42 generations past we will in turn influence at least 42 generations to come, if the world shall last 1,000 years. So you see the cradle is more important than the grave.

I propose to show you some of the shadows upon the Christic cradle of Bethlehem and then the sunshine that poured in upon the pillow of straw. Notice among the shadows on that infant's bed that there was here and there a specimen of dissolute ancestry. Beautiful Ruth his ancestress? Oh, yes! Devout Asa one of his forefathers? Oh, yes! Honest Joseph his father? Oh, yes! Holy Mary his mother? Oh, yes! But in that genealogical table were idolatrous and cruel Ammon and oppressive Rehoboam and some men whose abominations may not be particularized. So you see bad men may have good descendants. One of the most consecrated men I ever knew was the son of a man who lived and died a blasphemer. In the line of an oppressive Rehoboam comes a gracious and merciful and glorious Christ. Great encouragement for those who had in the 42 generations that preceded them, however close by or however far back, some instances of pernicious and baleful and corrupt ancestry.

To my amazement I found in those parts of Australia to which many years ago felons were transported from England that the percentage of crime was less than in those parts of Australia originally settled by honest men and good women. Some who are now on judicial benches in Australia and in high governmental position and in learned and useful professions and leaders in social life are the grandsons and granddaughters of men and women who were exiled from Great Britain to Australia for arson and theft and assault and fraud and murder.

Since we are all more or less affected by our ancestry we ought to be patient with those who go wrong, remembering that they may be the victims of unhappy antecedents. How lenient it ought to make us in our judgment of the fallen! Perhaps they had 42 generations back of them pushing them the wrong way. Five hundred years before they were born there may have been a percentage of iniquity augmented by a corrupt parentage 200 years ago. Do not blame a man because he cannot swim up the rapids of Niagara. Do not blame a ship captain because he cannot outride a Caribbean whirlwind. The father of this man who does wrong may have been all right and his mother all right, but away back in the centuries there may have started a bad propensity which he now feels. One of the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai recognizes the fact that evil may skip a generation, when the commandment speaks of visiting "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," but says nothing about the second generation; and if evil may skip one generation why not two and three and four and five generations, making a mighty leap and alighting very hard upon the head and the heart of some poor victim? Better be a little merciful toward the culprit lest after awhile some hereditary evil born in the year 5000 or 1200, having skipped the centuries, alight just as heavy upon you.

Meanwhile keep carefully your family records. The old place for the family record is the Bible, between the Old and the New Testaments, is a most appropriate place. That record, put in such impressive surroundings of chapter, bounded on one side by the prophecies of Malachi and on the other side by the gospel of Matthew, will receive stress and sanctity from its position. That record is appropriately bound up with eternities. Do not simply say in your family record: "Born at such a time and died at such a time," but if there has been among your ancestors some man or woman especially consecrated and useful make a note of it for the encouragement of the following generations. Two family records of the Bible—the one in Matthew reaching from Abraham to Christ and the other in Luke beginning with Joseph and reaching back to the garden of Eden, with the sublime statement "which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." I charge you to this duty of keeping the family record by the 42 generations which are past and the 42 generations which are to come. It is a good thing—the new habit among of seeking for one's pedigree. The old family record hardly ever went back further than the grandfather and grandmother. Not one of us knows anything about our great-grandparents, although they may have been indeterminably better than their children or grandchildren.

Another shadow of the Christicradle was that it stood under a depraved king. Herod was at that time ruler and the complete impersonation of all depravities. It was an unfavorable time for innocence to expect good treatment. So dark was the shadow dropping on the cradle from that iniquitous throne that the peasant mother had to lift her babe out of it and make hasty flight. Depraved habits of those in authority are apt to be copied by subjects, and from the immorals of the Herodic throne I judge of the immorals of a nation. There was a malaria of sin in the air when the infant Christ first breathed it. Thick shawl could not keep the babe warm when in that wintry month, with his mother, he became a fugitive.

It was while the peasant and his wife were on a visit for purposes of enrollment that Jesus was born. The Bible translators got the wrong word when they said that Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem to be "taxed." People went no farther then to get taxed than they do now. The effort of most people always has been to escape taxation. Besides that, these two humble folk had nothing to tax. The man's turban that protected his head from the sun was not worth taxing; the woman's sandals which kept her feet from being cut by the limestone rock, of which Bethlehem is mostly made up, were not worth taxing. No; the fact is that a proclamation had been made by the emperor that all the people between Great Britain and Parthia and of those lands included should go to some appointed place and give their names in, be registered and announce their loyalty to the Roman emperor. They stood up before the officer of the government and answered the questions: "What is your name? Where were you born? Where do you live now? Lift your hand and swear that you will support the empire of Caesar Augustus." During that patriotic and loyal visit the first cry of the Divine Boy was heard.

They had walked 80 miles over a rough road to give in their names and take the oath of allegiance. Would we walk 80 miles to announce our allegiance to our King, one Jesus? Caesar Augustus wanted to know by the record on which that man and that woman wrote their names, or had them written, just how many people in his empire he could depend on in case of exigency. How many men would unsheath sword for the Roman eagle, and how many women could be depended on to take care of the wounded on battlefields? The trouble is that in the kingdom of Christ we do not know how many can be depended on. There are so many men and women who never give in their names. They serve the Lord on the sly.

In all our churches there are so many half and half disciples, so many one-third espousers. They rather think the Bible is true, at any rate parts of it, and they hope that somehow Christianity will disenthrall the nations. They stay away from church on communion days and hope when they have lived as long as they can in this world they can somehow sneak into Heaven. Oh, give in your names! Be registered on the church record down here and in the Lamb's Book of Life up there. Let all the world know where you stand. If you have to go as far as Joseph and Mary walked, if you have to go 80 miles before you find just the right form of worship and just the right creed, start in this modern December, as those villagers started in an ancient December, and amid the congratulations of church militant and church triumphant give in your names. It was while Joseph and Mary were on a visit of duty and obeying a reasonable command of Emperor Augustus that the star pointed to the place of nativity.

Christ's oratory was unlike anything that went before or came after. Even the criticism of the world said: "Never man spoke like this man." Dramatic? Why, He took up a child out of the audience and set him on a table, and by the embarrassed look of the child taught humility. He sent the prosecutors of a poor, sinful woman, blushing and confounded, out of the room by one sentence of sarcasm. Notice His power of emphasis and enunciation when He revealed Himself after His Resurrection, by the peculiar way He pronounced the one word "Mary." His power of look shown by the way Peter, the great apostle, wilted under it. The book says: "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." It was an omnipotent facial expression. He looked upon Peter. Power of distinct utterance, so that every one could hear. "He opened His mouth, saying." No mumbling and indistinct utterance. He opened his mouth. His voice, which had been developed by open-air speaking, was a resonant and sonorous voice, or He would not have taken the top of the rocks of the Mount of Beatitudes for a pulpit, for that pulpit is so high, as I declare from observation, that no speaker that I have ever known could have from that point made any audience hear one word of a sermon.

His power of hyperbole: A camel trying to crowd its hump through the eye of a sewing woman's needle and all that learned talk about a gate called the "needle's eye," only belittling the hyperbole. Power of sarcasm: The hypocrite styled by Him "the whole who need not a physician." His power of perversion: The crashing of the timbers of the poorly built house on the beach of the Mediterranean. Power to take advantage of circumstances: When an auditor asked Him whether they ought to pay taxes to Caesar, Christ practically said: "If any gentleman in this audience has in his pocket a Roman penny, I wish he would just hand it up to Me." And some one handed Him a penny, such as you can now find in some of the museums, the obverse of it bearing the face of Tiberius, the emperor, and the reverse the words "Pontifex Maximus," the other title of the emperor, and then came the overwhelming answer of Christ: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Magnetic and epigrammatic this inspired peasant! Useless attempts he declares as "pearls cast before swine;" unimportant results He describes as the attempt to "gather figs of thistles." Allegories! Why, the parables are all allegories, and how He flung them out upon His audiences, whole armfuls of amethysts and emeralds and diamonds and rubies!

But we must not only look at Him from a worldly standpoint. How He smote whirlwinds into silence, and made the waves of the sea lie down, and opened doors of light into the midnight of those who had been born blind, and turned deaf ears into galleries of music, and with one touch made the scabs of incurable leprosy fall off, and renewed healthy circulation through severest paralysis, and made the dead girl waken and ask for her mother, and at His crucifixion pulled down the clouds until at 12 o'clock at noon it was as dark as 12 o'clock at night, and started an influence that will go on until the last desert will grow roses, and the last case of paresis take healthful brain, and the last illness become rubicund of cheek and robust of chest and bounding of foot, and the last pauper will get his palace, and the last sinner taken unto the warm bosom of a pardoning God! Where did all this start? In that cradle within sound of bleating sheep and bellowing cattle and amid rough buntering of herdsmen and camel drivers. What a low place to start for such great heights! O artists, turn your camera obscura on that village of Bethlehem! Take it all in—the wintry skies lowering, the flocks shivering in the chill air, Mary, the pale mother, and Jesus, the child. No wonder that Paul Veronese and Cuyp and Rubens and Tintoretto and Correggio and Perugino and Ghirlandajo and Raphael put their best pencils in that scene. Lord God, by Thy gracious spirit, fix that Madonna in all our souls! So these thoughts come in upon us at this gladdest part of the year.

Swing softly, bells, on Christmas morn,
Wake not the King of Glory!
Swing soft and swift across the snow
The old Judean story.

So I have shown you the shadows and the sunshine of that Christic cradle of Bethlehem. In these Christian times I realize that there are many cradles under shadows. Oh, the story of empty cradles all up and down the earth, in cabins and in palaces! There are standing in garrets or in storerooms cradles that will never rock again. "Rachel mourning for her children and will not be comforted because they are not." But through all the shadows break gleams of sunshine, as the clouds of the Christic cradle were cleft by glorious light. Escaped from the struggles through which we have all passed and must yet pass, those little ones took Heaven at one bound. Instead of an earthly career it is a Heavenly career, with capacities, with velocities, with opportunities beyond our comprehension. Instead of celebrating on earth the Saviour's birth they stand in the Saviour's presence. Instead of the holiday celebrations of the old homestead it is to them eternal jubilee at a table where the angels of God are the cupbearers and amid festivities that resound with a laughter and a music and blaze with a brilliance and a glory "that eye hath not seen nor ear heard." No use in wishing them a merry Christmas, for the merriments of Heaven ring out upon them from temples that are always open, amid pleasures that never die. Oh, it is not a dull Heaven, but a lively Heaven, for there are so many children there! They throng the streets; they look out of the "House of Many Mansions;" they stand on the beach to see the fleets cast anchor within the vale; they crowd the gates with greetings when the old folks come in; they clap their hands in an eternal gladness; they dance in an eternal glee. See you not the sunshine that pours into the shadows of that cradle until they are all gone?

But shadows have their uses. There must be a background to every good picture. Turner always put at least one flock of clouds on his canvas, and the clouds of earth will be the background to bring out more mightily the brightness of Heaven. And will it not be glorious if after all this scene of earthly vicissitude we meet again in our Father's house and talk over the past in an everlasting holiday. But meanwhile look out for the cradles. How much they decide for this world and the next! When Wellington was born at Mornington, England, that decided Waterloo and saved Europe. When Handel was born in Halle, Saxony, that decided the oratorios of "Judas Maccabaeus" and "Esther" and "Israel in Egypt" and "Jephtah" and "Messiah." When Eli Whitney was born at Westboro, that decided the wealth of all the cotton fields of the south. When Gutenberg was born at Metz, Germany, that decided the libraries of all Christendom. When Clarkson was born in Cambridgeshire, England, that decided the doom of human bondage. When Morse was born at Bevel's Hill, Mass., that decided that the lightnings of heaven should become galloping couriers or stretch a throbbing iron nerve clear under the sea. When Washington was born at Westmoreland, Va., that decided American independence. When Christ was born at Bethlehem, that decided the redemption of the world. Oh, look out for the cradles! May a Bethlehem star of hope point down to each one of them and every hovering cloud be filled with chanting angels of mercy.

IS A GREAT WORK

Distribution of Food to Destitute Porto Ricans.

THE DEATH RATE GROWS

In Some Localities the Increase Was Fully 300 Per Cent.

DEMAND FOR ASSISTANCE.

Some Portions of the Island Will Require Aid for More Than a Month, the Number of Indigent Persons Being at Least 200,000.

Washington, Dec. 26.—The war department has made public a statement showing the progress made in relief work in the island of Porto Rico between September 25 and November 30, 1899. The population of the island is estimated at 918,916. The average daily number of indigent was 221,087 persons; average weekly sick 17,372, and the average weekly death 633 persons. The annual death rate was 35 per 1,000 inhabitants, while the normal rate of death was 26 per thousand inhabitants. The increased mortality was confined to the mountain districts, where in some localities the death rate increased 300 per cent. The amount of cash received for the relief of the suffering people of the island up to November 30 was $15,224. The amount of money disbursed up to the date mentioned was $7,417.

Up to November 30 the total amount of food received to relieve the sufferers was 17,162,788 pounds. Of this amount 16,548,316 pounds had been issued up to November 30.

It was some weeks after the hurricane before the mental and physical energies of the stricken people began to rally from the shock of the disaster. They were without ready money and were brought face to face with starvation. While the damage inflicted upon the people along the coast of the island was very great, it was in part offset by the improvement in the sugar cane crop, which improvement was produced by the overflow of water on the cane lands. The prospect of a good crop enabled the planters to borrow money with which to employ the necessary labor to care for and harvest the crop. The cities along the coast were also able to come to the rescue by the employment of labor to repair the damage inflicted by the storm. In consequence of these facts supplies have gradually been suspended in the lowlands.

The coffee plantations are located in the uplands. Here the high winds swept everything in their course, leaving little or nothing for the thousands of hungry, homeless, clothesless human beings but their lives, and what could be given them to prevent starvation. The prompt action of the American people and of the people of the island was all that prevented a terrible catastrophe. The poor were fed and their lives were preserved. Although a large part of the island is no longer receiving relief, the number of indigents requiring assistance remains the same. It is believed that until February the demand for assistance is likely to increase in the mountain districts, as the plantains and bananas will not be ripe for two months to come. The greatest distress prevails in a locality where the greatest difficulty is found in getting food to the starving.

The worst area contains a population of about 250,000 and not a wagon road is to be found in any direction over which food can be transported. All food is carried on the backs of horses. Of this population 200,000 people must be fed, or they will starve. If not fed at home they will migrate to the cities, leaving the weak to die. Their work will be left undone and their future will be hopeless.

Pestilence which frequently follows flood and famine, has appeared among the unfortunate inhabitants in the mountain districts and a number of people have perished. It is feared that the epidemic will spread to the coast should there be a general movement of the mountain people in that direction. A movement of this kind has already been anticipated and is being successfully controlled. But the relief must be continued freely in the mountain districts during the greater part of January.

Not less than 2,000 additional tons of food will be required. Four-sevenths of this amount should be of rice, two-sevenths should be of beans, and the remainder of the amount required should be either codfish or bacon. With the food already issued and now on hand and with the 2,000 tons required in addition to that already issued, the total issue will be 20,162,788 pounds.

In dealing with the indigents able bodied men have been required to work for the food they received and a great deal of public work has been done.

Refused to Recognize Them.

Indianapolis, Dec. 26. — President Donnelley and Secretary Ransewood, of the International Typographical union, have returned from Pittsburg. "We found that the Pittsburg publishers refused to meet with us or in any way recognize us," said Mr. Donnelley. "We will have nothing to do with them either, through arbitration or in any other way. The fight in Pittsburg will be to a finish."

Miners Resolve to Strike.

Paris, Dec. 26.—At a meeting of 2,500 miners held Monday in St. Etienne a resolution was adopted in favor of declaring a general strike in the coal basin of the Loire to-day. A sympathetic movement involving 80,000 men is feared.

Wellington Secret Orders.

TRIBE OF BEN-HUR.

MELCHOIR COURT, No. 38, T. B. H., meets every second Monday evening of each month in Grand Army hall. Visiting members made welcome.
A. G. Wall, Chief.
R. Venator, Scribe.

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC.

HAMLIN POST, No. 219, G. A. R., meets every second and fourth Wednesday evenings of each month at Grand Army hall.
Visiting comrades are welcome.
A. W. Griggs, Commander.
C. Sage, Adjutant.

WOODMEN OF THE WORLD.

WOODBINE CAMP, No. 60, meets each second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at Grand Army hall.
Visiting sovereigns welcome.
HOWARD HOLLENBACK, Camp Commander.
Claude R. Lebeck, Clerk.

ORDER OF CHOSEN FRIENDS.

LODGE No. 63, meets first and third Fridays of each month at Royal Arcanum hall. Visiting Chosen Friends welcome.
F. H. Phelps, Councillor.
Mrs. L. A. Willard, secretary.

ROYAL ARCANUM.

LODGE No. 563 meets every second and fourth Mondays of each month at Royal Arcanum hall. Visiting members welcome.
E. W. Adams, Regent.
R. N. Goodwin, Sec'y.

INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS.

Lorain Lodge, No. 281, meets every Tuesday night at Odd Fellows' Hall. Visiting members welcome.
J. G. Lang, Noble Grand.
R. T. Spicer, Recording Secretary.

WELLINGTON ENCAMPMENT, I. O. O. F., No. 247.

Meets on second and fourth Thursdays of each month at Odd Fellows' Hall. Visiting members welcome.
John Pember, Chief Patriarch.
A. H. Peirce, Scribe.

KNIGHTS OF THE MACCABEES.

Wellington Tent, No. 105, meets on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at Maccabee Hall. Visiting Knights welcome.
J. H. Yocum, Commander.
W. W. Helman, Record Keeper.

MASONIC.

WELLINGTON LODGE, No. 127, F. & A. M., meets Tuesday night on or before each full moon and two weeks thereafter.
Wm. W. Metzger, W. M.
F. G. Yale, Secretary.

WELLINGTON CHAPTER, No. 109, R. A. M., meets on Tuesday night following each full moon.
E. B. Steanard, High Priest.
F. G. Yale, Secretary.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.

Wellington Lodge, No. 440, K. of P., meets every Friday night at K. of P. Hall. Visiting Knights welcome.
W. T. Burdick, Chancellor Com.
R. T. Spicer, Keeper of Records and Seals.

LADIES OF THE MACCABEES.

Wellington Hive, No. 89, meets on the first and third Friday nights of each month at Maccabee Hall. Visiting lady Maccabees welcome.
Mrs. Alice Yocum, Commander.
Mrs. Emma Coates, Record Keeper.

W. R. C.

Hamlin Relief Corps, No. 38, meets on the first and third Tuesday nights of each month at Grand Army Hall. Visitors welcome.
Mrs. H. A. Knapp, President.
Mrs. Ada Kerns, Secretary.

REBEKAHS.

Lillywood Lodge, No. 222, meets on the first and third Wednesday nights of each month at Odd Fellows' Hall. Visiting Rebekahs welcome.
Mrs. Bessie Wight, N. G.
Mrs. Frances Williams, Rec. Sec'y.

ORDER EASTERN STAR.

TEMPLE CHAPTER No. 103.

Meets on the first and third Wednesday nights of each month at F. & A. M. hall. Mrs. Lettie Brink, W. M.
Ella Wadsworth, Sec'y.

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