

GOD AMONG THE STARS.

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage Takes Up a Prolific Subject.

First of a Series of Discourses on "God in the Natural World, as Disclosed in the Bible". The Heavens Declare His Glory.

The following initial discourse of a series on "God in the Natural World, as Disclosed in the Bible," was delivered by Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage in the Brooklyn tabernacle from the text:

"It is He that buildeth His stories in the heavens."—Amos, iv. 6.

That is first-rate poetry from Amos, the herdsman. While guarding his flocks at night, he got watching the heavens. He saw stars above stars, and the universe seemed to him like a great mansion many stories high, silver room above silver room, silver pillars beside silver pillars, and windows of silver and doors of silver, and turrets and domes of silver rising into the immensities, and the prophet's sanctified imagination walks through that great silver palace of the universe, through the first story, through the second story, through the third story, through the twentieth story, through the hundredth story, through the thousandth story, and realizing that God is the architect and carpenter and mason of all that upheaved splendor, he cries out in the words of the text: "It is He that buildeth His stories in the heavens."

My brothers, it is time that we widen our and heightened our religious thoughts. In our pulpits and Sabbath classes and Christian work of all sorts we ring the changes on a few verses of Scripture until they excite no interest. Many of the best parts of the Bible have never yet been preached from or indeed even noticed. Hence I to-day begin a series of sermons, not for consecutive Sabbath mornings, but as often as I think it best for variety's sake, on the astronomy of the Bible or God among the rocks, the ornithology of the Bible or God among the birds, the ichthyology of the Bible or God among the fishes, the pomology of the Bible or God among the orchards, the precious stones of the Bible or God among the amethysts, the conchology of the Bible or God among the shells, the botany of the Bible or God among the flowers, the chronology of the Bible or God among the centuries. The fact is that we have all spent too much time on one story of the great mansion of God's universe. We need occasionally to go upstairs or downstairs in this mansion; downstairs and in the cellar study the rocks, or upstairs and see God in some of the higher stories, and learn the meaning of the text when it says: "It is He that buildeth His stories in the heavens."

Astronomy was born in Chaldea. Its mother was astrology, or the science of foretelling events by juxtaposition of stars. The orientals, living much out of doors and in a very clear atmosphere, through which the stars shone especially lustros, got the habit of studying the night heavens. In the hot seasons caravans journeyed chiefly at night, and that gave travelers much opportunity of stellar information. On the first page of the Bible the sun and moon and stars roll in. The sun, a body nearly three million miles in circumference and more than twelve thousand times as large as our earth; the moon, more than two thousand miles in diameter. But God is used to doing things on such an omnipotent scale that He takes only one verse to tell of this stellar and lunar manufacture. Yea, in three words all the other worlds are thrown in. The record says: "The stars also!" It takes whole pages for a man to extol the making of a telescope or a microscope or a magnetic telegraph or a threshing machine, or to describe a fine painting or statue, but it was so easy for God to hang the celestial upholstery that the story is compassed in one verse—"God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. The stars also!" Astronomers have been trying to call the roll of them ever since, and they have counted multitudes of them passing in review before the observatories built at vast expense, and the size and number of those heavenly bodies have taxied to the utmost the scientists of all ages. But God finishes all He has to say about them in these words—"the stars also!" That is Mars, with its more than fifty-five million square miles, and Venus, with its more than one hundred and ninety-one million square miles, and Saturn, with its more than nineteen billion square miles, and Jupiter with its more than twenty-four billion square miles, and all the planets of our system of more than seventy-eight billion square miles, and these stars of our system, when compared with the stars of the other systems, as a handful of sand compared with all the Rocky mountains and all the Alps. "The stars also!" For brevity, for ponderosity, for splendor, for suggestiveness, for sublimity piled on sublimity, these words exceed all that human speech ever uttered or human imagination ever soared after: "The stars also!" It is put in as you write a postscript—something you thought of afterwards—as hardly worth putting into the body of a letter: "The stars also."

Read on in your Bibles, and after awhile the Bible flashes with the aurora borealis or northern lights, that strange illumination, as mysterious and undefined now as when, in the Book of Job, it was written: "Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds. Fair weather cometh out of the north." While all the nations supposed that the earth was built on a foundation of some sort, and many supposed that it stood on a huge turtle, or some great marine creature. Job knew enough of astronomy to say it had no foundation, but was suspended on the invisible arm of the Almighty, declaring that "He hangeth the earth upon nothing." While all nations thought the earth was level, the

sky spread over it like a tent over a flat surface, Isaiah declared the world to be globular, circular, saying of God: "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth." See them glitter in the scriptural sky—Arcturus, Orion, the Pleiades and the "Bear with her young." While running your fingers among the leaves of your Bible with the astronomical thought in your mind, you see two worlds stop—the sun and the moon. But what does that Christian know about that miracle who does not understand something of these two luminaries? Unless you watch modern astronomy put those two worlds in its steelyards and weigh them, you are as ignorant as a Hottentot about the stupendousness of that scene in the life of Joshua. The sun over three hundred thousand times as heavy as our earth and going thousands of miles the hour. Think of stopping that and starting it again without the shipwreck of the universe! But I can easily believe it. What confounds me is not that He could stop and start again those two worlds in Joshua's time, but He could have made the wheel of worlds of which the sun and moon are only cogs, and keep that wheel rolling for thousands of years—the fly-wheel of all eternity. If an engineer can start a long train, it is not surprising that he can stop it. If God could make and move the universe, which is an express train drawn by an Omnipotent engine, I am not surprised that for a part of a day He could put down the brakes on two pieces of the rotating machinery. Infidelity is hard up for ground of complaint against the Scriptures when it finds fault with the cessation of stellar and lunar travel. Here is my watch. I could make a watch if I tried, but I can stop it and start it again. My difficulty is not that God could stop two worlds and start them again, but that He could make them at all as He did make them. What pleases me and astounds me more is that each one of the millions of worlds has a God-given name. Only a comparatively small number of them have names given them by scientists. If astronomers can give a name to a whole constellation or galaxy, they think they do well, but God has a name for each star in all immensity. Inspired David declared of God: "He calleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by their names." They are not orphans that have never been christened. They are not waifs of the night. They are not unknown ships on the high seas of immensity. They belong to a family of which God is the father, and as you call your children Benjamin, or Mary, or Bertha, or Addison or Josephine, so He calls all the infant worlds and all the adult worlds by their first name, and they know it as well as though there were only one child of light in all the Divine family. "He calleth them all by their names," and when He calls I warrant they come.

On the stars! Those vestal fires kept burning on infinite altars. Those light-houses on the coast of eternity. The hands and weights, and pendulum of the great clock of the universe. According to Herschel, the so-called fixed stars are not fixed at all, but each one a sun with a mighty system of worlds rolling round it, and this whole system with all the other systems rolling on around some other great center. Millions and millions, billions and billions, trillions and trillions, quadrillions and quadrillions!

But what gladdens me, and at the same time overwhelms me, is that those worlds are inhabited. The Bible says so, and what a small idea you must have of God and His dominion if you think it only extends across this chip of a which you and I now inhabit. Have you taken this idea of all the other worlds being inhabited as human guesswork? Read Isaiah xlv. 18: "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." Now, if He inhabited the earth so that it would not be created in vain, would He make worlds hundreds and thousands of times larger and not have them inhabited? Speaking of the inhabitants of the world, He says: "The nations are the drop of a bucket." If all the inhabitants of this world are as a drop of a bucket, where are the other drops of the bucket? Again and again the Bible speaks of the hosts of Heaven and the word "hosts" means living creatures, not inert masses, and the expression "hosts of Heaven" must mean inhabitants of other worlds. The psalmist cries out: "Thy mercy is great above the heavens." If there were no inhabitants above the heavens, what use of any mercy? Again, the Bible exclaims: "Thy goodness is great above the heavens." What would be the use of His goodness above the heavens if there were no inhabitants to enjoy it? Again, the Bible says: "He has set thy glory above the heavens." And here my text comes in with its idea of a mansion of many stories: "It is He that buildeth His stories in the heaven." Is it possible that we who live on the ground-floor of this many-storyed building are the only tenants, and that the larger rooms and the more gorgeously upholstered rooms and the more brilliantly chandeliered rooms above it are uninhabited? Besides this, we are positively told in the Bible that two other worlds are inhabited—the world angelic and the world diabolic. Those two worlds, added to our own, make it positive that three worlds are inhabited. Why, then, stop with three worlds of living beings when there are not only millions but billions of worlds? Are they all standing like expensively furnished houses in time of financial panic marked "To Let" and no one to take them? All around us in this world we see economy of Omnipotence. If Christ was going to feed the hungry seven thousand in the wilderness He made use of the boy's five loaves and two fishes, expending no more of creative power than was needed. "Waste not" God hath written all over this world.

And do you suppose that God would

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