

THE ROCK OF AGES.

REV. DR. TALMAGE ON THE GEOLOGY OF THE BIBLE.

A Sermon of Interest to All, Showing That Geology Confirms the Truth of the Word of God.

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Washington, Dec. 19.—The throng coming to Dr. Talmage's preaching services at the First Presbyterian church are all the time increasing and far beyond the capacity of his church to hold. In this sermon he discusses a subject interesting to all—viz., "The Geology of the Bible, or God Among the Rocks." The text is II. Samuel vi. 7: "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him through for his error, and there he died by the ark of God."

A band of music is coming down the road, cornets blown, timbrels struck, harp thrummed and cymbals clapped, all led by David, who was himself a musician. They are ahead of a wagon on which is the sacred box called the ark. The yoke of oxen drawing the wagon hurried it. Some critics say that the oxen kicked, being struck with the driver's goad, but my knowledge of oxen leads me to say that if on a hot day they see a shadow of a tree or wall, they are apt to suddenly shy off to get the coolness of the shadow. I think these oxen suddenly turned that the sacred box seemed about to upset and be thrown to the ground. Uzzah rushed forward and laid hold of the ark to keep it upright. But he had no right to do so. A special command had been given by the Lord that no one save the priest under any circumstances should touch that box. Nervous and excited and irate Uzzah disobeyed when he took hold of the ark, and he died as a consequence. In all ages, and never more so than in our own, there are good people all the time afraid that the Holy Bible, which is the sacred ark of our time, will be upset, and they have been a long while afraid that science, and especially geology, would overthrow it.

While we are not forbidden to touch the holy book and, on the contrary, are urged to fondle and study it, any one who is afraid of the overthrow of the book is greatly offending the Lord with his unbelief. The ark have not yet been yoked which can upset that ark of our world's salvation. Written by the Lord Almighty, he is going to protect it until his mission is fulfilled and there shall be no more need of a Bible because all its prophecies will have been fulfilled and the human race will have exchanged worlds. A trumpet and a violin are very different instruments, but they may be played in perfect accord. So the Bible account of the creation of the world and the geological account are as different as horn written on parchment and the other on the rocks and yet in perfect and eternal accord. The word "day," repeated in the first chapter of Genesis, has thrown into paroxysms of criticism many exegeses. The Hebrew word "yom" of the Bible means sometimes what we call a day, and sometimes it means ages. It may mean 24 hours or 100,000 years. The order of creation as written in the book of Genesis is the order of creation discovered by geologists' crowbar. So many Uzzahs have been mercilessly crushed for fear the strong oxen of scientific discovery would upset the Bible that I went somewhat apprehensively into the matter, when I found that the geological geology agrees in saying that they were built the rocks, then the plants grew on the earth, then marine creatures were created from man to whale, then the wings and throats of "seral chloirs were colored and tamed, and the quadrupeds began to bleat and bellow and neigh. What is all this fuss that has been filling the church and the world concerning a fight between Moses and Agassiz? There is no fight at all. But is not the geological geology of years building antagonistic to the theory of one week's creation in Genesis? No. A great house is to be built. A man takes years to draw to the spot the foundation stones and the heavy timbers. The house is about done, but is left unfinished for comfortable residence. Suddenly the owner calls in upholsterers, plumbers, gas fitters, paper hangers, and in a week it is ready for occupancy. Now, it requires no stretch of imagination to realize that God could have taken millions of years for the bringing of the rocks and the timber of this world together, yet only one week more to make it inhabitable and to furnish it for human residence. Remember also that all up and down the Bible the language of the times was used—some of the passages—and it was not always to be taken literally. Just as we say every day that the world is round when it is not round. It is spheroidal—flattened at the poles and protuberant at the equator. Professor Small, with his chain of triangles, and Professor Varin, with his shortened pendulum of his clock, found it was not round. But we do not become critical of any one who says the world is round. Let us deal as fairly with Moses or Job as we do with each other.

But for years good people feared geology, and without any implication on their part apprehended that the rocks and mountains would fall on them, until Hugh Miller, the elder of St. John's Presbyterian church in Edinburgh, and the parishioner of Dr. Hutton, came forth an antagonist between the mountains and the church, and O. M. Mitchell, a brilliant lecturer before he became brigadier-general, dying at Beaufort, S. C., during our civil war, took the platform and spread his map of the strata of rock in the presence of great audiences, and Professor Alexander Winchell of Michigan university and Professor Taylor Lewis of Union college showed that the "without form and void" of the first chapter of Genesis was the very chaos of chaos, of which the world was formulated, the hands of God packing together the land and tossing up the mountains into great heights and flinging down the seas into their great depths. Before God gets through with this world there will hardly be a book of the Bible that will not find confirmation either in archaeology or geology. Examined Babylon, Ninevah, Jerusalem, Tyre and Egyptian hieroglyphics are crying out in the ears of the world: "Everlastingly right!" Geology is saying the same thing, not only confirming the truth about the original creation, but confirming so many passages of the Scriptures that I can only slightly refer to them.

But you do not really believe that story about the storm of fire and brimstone overwhelming Sodom and Gomorrah, and enwrapping Lot's wife in such saline incrustations that she halted, a sack of salt? For the confirmation of that story the geologist goes to that region, and after trying in vain to take a swim in the lake, so thick with salt he cannot swim it—the lake beneath which Sodom and Gomorrah lie buried, one drop of the water so full of sulphur and brimstone that it stings your tongue, and for hours you cannot get rid of the nauseating drop—the scientist then digging down and finding sulphur on top of sulphur, brimstone on top of brimstone, while all round there are jets and crags and peaks of salt, and if one of them did not become the sarcophagus of Lot's wife, they show you how a human being might in that tempest have been halted and pecked into a white monument that would defy the ages.

But now, you do not really believe that New Testament story about the earthquake at the time Christ was crucified, do you? Geology digs down into Mount Calvary and finds the rocks ruptured and aslant, showing the work of an especial earthquake for that mountain, and an earthquake which did not touch the surrounding region. Go and look for yourself, and see there a dip and cleavage of rocks as nowhere else on the planet, geology thus announcing an especial earthquake for the greatest tragedy of all the centuries—the assassination of the Son of God.

But you do not really believe that story of the burning of our world at the last day? Geology digs down and finds that the world is already on fire and that the center of this globe is incandescent, molten, volcanic, a burning coal, burning out toward the surface, and the internal fires have so far reached the outside rim that I do not see how the world is to keep from complete conflagration until the prophetic concerning it are fulfilled. The lava poured forth from the mouths of Vesuvius, Mount Etna and Cotopaxi and Kilauwa is only the regurgitation from an awful inflammation thousands of miles deep. There are mines in Pennsylvania and in several parts of the world that have been on fire for many years. These coal mines burning down and the internal fires of the earth burning up, after awhile those two fires, the descending and the ascending, will meet, and then will occur the universal conflagration of which the Bible speaks when it says, "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Instead of disbelieving the Bible story about the final conflagration, since I have looked a little into geology, finding that its explorations are all in the line of confirmation of that prophecy, I wonder how this old craft of a world can keep sailing on much longer. It is like a ship on fire at sea, the fact that the hatchway has become one complete blaze—made on fire, railings on fire, everything from outwater to taffrail on fire. After geology has told us how near the internal fires have already burned their way toward the surface, it ought not to be a surprise to us at any time to hear the ringing of the fire bells of a universal conflagration. Oh, I am so glad that geology has been born! Astronomy is grand because it tells us about other worlds. But I must say that I am more interested in our world than in any other world, and geology tells of all about what it was, its origin and what will be its grave. And this geological geology has been more and more the friend of theology. Thank God for the testimony of the rocks, the Ten Commandments announced among the split rocks of Sinai; the greatest sermon of Christ preached on the limestone rocks of the mountain of Olivet; the Saviour dying on the rock of Golgotha and buried amid the limestone rocks of Joseph's sepulcher, the last day to be ushered in with a ringing of rocks and our blessed Lord suggestively entitled the "Rock of Ages."

How much the rocks have had to do with the cause of God in all ages! In the wilderness God's Israel were fed with honey out of the rock. How the rock of Horeb paid Moses back for giving up his plating silver for the golden calf, and there stands the rock with name! I guess the longest word in the Bible—salam-malekoth, and it was worthy of a sounding sequitur. Saul was compelled to his pursuit of David and go home and look after the Philistines, who were making a flank movement. There were the rocks of Bozrah and Senah, between which Jonathan clung in the day of the retreat in retreat the garrison of the uncircumcised. And yonder see David and his men hidden in the rock of Adullam and Engaddi.

But while I go on with my study of the geology of the Bible, or God among the rocks, I get a more intelligent and helpful idea of divine deliberation. These rocks, the growth of thousands of years, aid, geology says, of millions of years, to show the prolongation of God's plans and how they are not done in short order. Men without seeing it become critical of the Almighty and think, Why does he not do this and do that and do it right away? We feel sometimes as if we were waiting. Well, I guess we will have to wait. His plans, sweeping through eternity, are beyond our comprehension.

They have such wide circle, such vastness of revolution, such infinitude that we cannot compass them. Indeed he would not be much of a God whom we could thoroughly understand. That would not be much of a father who had no thought or plan larger than his babe of one year could compass. If God takes millions of years to make one rock, do not let us become critical if he takes 20 years or a century or several centuries to do what we would like to have done in a minute. Do not let us have done in a minute what he does not do in a century. Do not let us have done in a minute what he does not do in a century. Do not let us have done in a minute what he does not do in a century. Do not let us have done in a minute what he does not do in a century.

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