

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUN-DAY SERMON

Subject: "God Among the Birds."

TEXT: "Behold the fowls of the air" - Matthew vi, 26.

There is silence now in all our January forests, except as the winds whistle through the bare branches. Our northern woods are deserted except by the owls. The organ lofts in the temple of nature are hushed. Trees which were full of carol and chime are now waiting for the coming back of rich plumage and warbling voices, solos, duets, quartets, cantatas and Te Deums. But the Bible is full of birds at all seasons, and prophets and apostles, and Christ Himself, employ them for moral and religious purposes. My text is an extract from the sermon on the mount, and perhaps it was at a moment when a flock of birds flew past that our Lord fixed His hand toward them and said, "Behold the fowls of the air." And so in this course of sermons on God everywhere I preach to you this third sermon concerning the Ornithology of the Bible; or, God Among the Birds.

Most of the other sciences you may study or not study as you please. Use your own judgment, exercise your own taste. But about this science of ornithology we have no option. The divine command is positive when it says in my text, "Behold the fowls of the air." That study their habits. Examine their colors. Notice their speed. See the hand of God in their construction. It is easy for me to obey the command of the text, for I was brought up among the race of wings and from boyhood heard their matins at sunrise and their vespers at sunset.

Their nests have been to me a fascination, and my satisfaction is that I never robbed one of them any more than I would steal a child from a cradle. A bird is a child of the sky, and its nest is the cradle. They are almost human, for they have their loves and hates, affections and antipathies, understand just and grief, have conjugal and maternal instinct, wage wars and entertain jealousies, have a language that we can understand by association. Thank God for birds and skies full of them! It is useless to expect to understand the Bible unless we study natural history.

Five hundred and ninety-three times does the Bible allude to the facts of natural history, and I do not wonder that it makes so many allusions ornithological. The skies and the caverns of Palestine are friendly to the winged creatures, and so many fly and root and nest and hatch in that region that inspired writers do not have far to go to get ornithological illustration of divine truth. There are over forty species of birds recognized in the Scriptures.

Oh, what a variety of wings in Palestine! There is the eagle, the hawk, the falcon, the raven or plunging bird, hurrying itself from sky to wave and with long beak clutching its prey; the thrush, which especially dislikes a crow; the partridge; the hawk, bold and ruthless, hovering head to windward while watching for prey; the sparrow, home among the marshes and fifth step so constructed it can walk on the leaves of water plants; the raven, the lapwing, the malodorous and in the Bible denounced as inedible, though it has extraordinary headgear; the stork; the ostrich, which in the East had a habit of dropping on a stone the turtle it had lifted and so killing it for food, and on one occasion mistook the bald head of Eschylus, the Greek poet, for a white stone, and dropped a turtle upon it, killing the famous Greek; the crane, which was so head and crimson throat and wings snow tipped, but too lazy to build its own nest, and so having the habit of depositing its eggs in nests belonging to other birds; the bunting, the grouse, the plover, the magpie, the kingfisher, the pelican, which is the creature of all the feathered creation; the owl, the goldfinch, the titmouse, the barrier, the bulbul, the osprey, the vulture, that king of scavengers, with neck covered with repulsive down instead of feathers, which he uses to resemble a scorpion; the quail, the peacock, the ostrich, the lark, the crow, the kite, the bat, the blackbird and many others, with all colors, all sounds, all uses, all habits, all architecture of nests, leaving nothing wanting in suggestiveness. They were at the creation placed all around on the rocks and in the trees and on the ground to serenade Adam's arrival. They took their places on Friday, as the first man was made on Saturday. Whatever else he had or did not have, he should have music. The first sound that struck the human ear was a bird's voice.

Yes, Christianology—geology for you know there is a Christian geology as well as an infidel geology—Christian geology comes in and helps the Bible show what we owe to the bird creation. Before the human race came into this world the world was occupied by reptiles and by all sorts of destructive monsters—millions of creatures, loathsome and hideous. God sent huge birds to clear the earth of these creatures before Adam and Eve were created. The remains of these birds have been found imbedded in the rocks. The skeleton of one eagle has been found twenty feet in height and fifty feet from tip of wing to tip of wing. Many armies of beaks and claws were necessary to clear the earth of creatures that would have destroyed the human race with one clip. I like to find this harmony of revelation and science, and to have demonstrated that the God who made the world made the Bible.

Moses, the greatest lawyer of all time and a great man for facts, had enough sentiment and poetry and musical taste to welcome the illuminated Noah and the voices divinely drilled into the best chamber of Genesis. How should Noah the old ship-carrier, 600 years of age, find out when the world was fit again for human residence after the universal freshet? A bird will tell, and nothing else can. No man can come down from the mountain to advise Noah and his family out to terra firma, for the mountains were submerged. As a bird first heralded the human race into the world, now a bird will help the human race back to the world that had shipped a sea that whelmed everything.

Noah stands on Sunday morning at the window of the ark, in his hand a cooing dove, so gentle, so innocent, so affectionate, and he said: "Now, my little dove, fly away over these waters, explore and come back and tell us whether it is safe to land." After a long flight it returned hungry and weary and wet, and by its looks and manners said to Noah and his family: "The world is not fit for you to disembark." Noah waited a week, and next Sunday morning he let the dove fly again for a second exploration, and Sunday evening it came back with a leaf that had the sign of just having been plucked from a living fruit tree, and the bird reported the world would do tolerably well for a bird to live in, but not yet sufficiently recovered for human residence.

Noah waited another week, and next Sunday morning he sent out the dove on the third exploration, but it returned not for it found the world so attractive now it did not want to be caged again, and then the emigrants from the antediluvian world landed. It was a bird that told them when to take possession of the resuscitated planet. So the human race was saved by a bird's wing, for attempting to land too soon, they would have perished.

Aye, here comes a whole flock of doves—rock doves, ring doves, stock doves—and they make a rain think of great ravals and great awakenings when souls fly for shelter like a flock of pigeons swooping to the opening of a pigeon coop, and in their flight, "Who are these that fly as doves to their windows?" David, with Saul after him, and flying from cavern to cavern, compares himself to a desert partridge, a bird which especially haunts rocky places, and boys and hunters to this day take it with sticks, for the partridge runs rather than flies. David, chased and clubbed and harried of

hunters, says, "I am hunted as a partridge on a mountain." The speaking of the Hebrew condition, he says, "I am like a partridge in the wilderness." Describing his loneliness, he says, "I am a swallow alone on the housetop." Hezekiah, in the emaciation of his sickness, compares himself to a crane, thin and wasted. Job had so much trouble he could not sleep nights, and he describes his insomnia by saying, "I am a companion to owls." Isaiah compares the desolations of banished Israel to an owl and a screech owl among a city's ruins. Jeremiah, describing the cruelty of parents toward children, compares them to the ostrich, who leaves its eggs in the sand unguarded, for crying, "The daughter of my people is become like the ostriches of the wilderness." Among the provisions piled on Solomon's bountiful table he speaks of "fatted fowl." The Israelites in the desert got tired of manna and they had quails for breakfast, quails for dinner, quails for supper, and they died of quails. The Bible re-echoes the migratory habits of the birds and says, "The stork knoweth her appointed time and the turtle and the crane and the swallow the time of their going, but my people know not the judgments of the Lord." The partridge, the most careless of all birds in choice of its place of nest, building it on the ground and often near a frequented road or in a slight depression of ground, without reference to safety, and so a fool for a squire or a cart wheel, and all. So says the prophet, a man who gathers under him dishonest dollars will hatch out of them no peace, no satisfaction, no happiness, no security.

What vivid solitude! The quickest way to amass a fortune is by inquiry, but the trouble is about keeping it. Every hour of every day some such partridge is driven off the nest. Parulas are only a flutter of partridges. It is too tedious work to become rich in the old-fashioned way, and if a man can by one falsehood make as much as he can by ten years of hard labor, why not tell it? And if one counterfeit check will bring the dollars as easily as genuine issue, why not make it? One year's fruit is equal to ten years of a lifetime's work. Why not live solely by one's wit? A fortune thus built will be firm and everlasting. Will it? Hal! build your house on a volcano's crater; go to sleep on the bosom of an avalanche; the volcano will blizz, and the avalanche will thunder.

There are estates which have been coming together from age to age. Many years ago that estate started in a husband's industry and a wife's economy. It grew from good habits and high minded enterprise. Old fashioned industry was the mine from which that gold was dug, and God will keep the deeds of such an estate in His book. Foreclose your mortgage, spring your own judgment against family property that you cannot do it a permanent damage. Better than warehouse deed and better than fire insurance is the defense which God's own hand will give it.

But here is a man who says, "I will have my share of the world." He has been robbed by Satan of everything but his soul, yet suddenly to-morrow he is a rich man. There is no accounting for his sudden affluence. He has not yet failed often enough to become wealthy. No one pretends to account for his prosperity but the chased silver, or the bull carbed steels that rear and neigh like Balaam's asses, or the grasp of his coachman. Did he come to a sudden inheritance? No. Did he make a fortune on purchase and sale of land? No. How did he do it? The partridge hat-hat. The devil suddenly threw him up, and the devil will suddenly let him come down. That hidden scheme God saw from the first conception of the plot. That partridge, swift disaster will shoot it down for the great fool that flies the harder it falls. The prophet saw, as you and I have often seen, the awful mistake of partridges.

But from the top of a Bible fir tree I hear the shrill cry of the stork. Job, Esau, Jeremiah, speak of it. David cries out, "As for thee, the fir tree is her house." This large white Bible bird is supposed, without alighting sometimes to wing its way from the region of the Rhine to Africa. As winter comes the storks fly to warmer climates and the last one of their number that arrives at the spot to which they migrate is killed by them. What havoc it would make in our species if those men were killed who are always behind! In oriental cities the stork is domesticated and walks about on the roofs of its parents. I heard a man say, "In the city of Ecbesus I saw a long row of pillars, on the top of each pillar a stork's nest. But the word 'stork' ordinarily means mercy and affection. From the fact that this bird was distinguished for its great love for its parents, I never forgot them, and even after they become feeble protectors and providers for them. In migrating the old storks lean their necks on the young storks, and when the old ones give out the young ones carry them on their backs. I know of a man who says that he has a more heart than a bird. Blessed is that table at which an old father and mother sit; blessed that altar at which an old father and mother kneel!

What it is to have a mother they know best. The one who suffered for us, the times she wept over our cradle and the anxious sighs her boom heaved as we lay upon it, for the sick night when she watched us long after every one was tired out but God and himself. He has a heart that beats in our hearts, and her image lives in our faces. That man is graceless as a cannibal who ill treats his parents, and he who begrudges them daily bread and clothes them but shabbily, may God have patience with him; I cannot. I heard a man say, "I now have my old mother on my hands." Ye storks on your way with food to your aged parents, shame him!

But yonder in this Bible sky flies a bird that is speckled. The prophet describing the church cries out, "Mine heritage is unto you, a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her." So it was then; so it is now. Holiness picked at. Consecration picked at. Benevolence picked at. Usefulness picked at. A speckled bird is a peculiar bird; and that arouses the antipathy of all the birds of the forest.

The church of God is a peculiar institution, and that is enough to evoke attack of the world, for it is a speckled bird to be picked at. The incense-burners of Christians are on which multitudes get fat. Let there be contention among Christians, and they will say, "Harral! The church is in decadence."

Christ intended that His church should always remain a speckled bird. Let birds of another feather pick at her, but they cannot rob her of a single plum. Like the albatross, she can sleep on the bosom of a tempest. She has gone through the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces and not got burned; through the waters of the Red sea and not been drowned; through the shipwreck on the breakers of Melita and not been foundered. Let all earth and hell try to hunt down this speckled bird, but far above human scorn and infernal assault it shall sing over every mountain top and fly over every nation, and her triumphant song shall be, "The church of God! The pillar and ground of the truth. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

But we cannot stop here. From a tall cliff hanging over the sea I hear the eagle calling unto the tempest and lifting its wings to smite the whirlwind. Moses, Elijah, Hosea and Habakkuk at times in their writings take their pen from the eagle's wing. It is a bird with fierceness in its eye, its feet armed with claws of iron and its head with a dreadful beak. Two or three of them can fill the heavens with clangor. But generally this monster of the air is alone and unaccompanied, for the reason that its habits are so prodigious it requires five or ten miles of aerial or earthly dominion all for itself.

The black brown of its back and the white of its under feathers, and the fins of its eye, and the long fan of its wing makes glimmer of it as it swings down into the valley to pick up a rabbit, or a lamb, or a child and then swings back to its throne on the rock something never to be forgotten. Scattered about its entire altitude solitude are the bones of its conquests. But while the beak and the claws of the eagle are the terror of all the travelers of the air, the mother eagle is most kind and gentle to her young. God commends His treatment of His people to the eagle's care of the eaglets. Deuteronomy xxiii, 11, "As an eagle stretcheth out her wings, so stretcheth out her hand, fluttereth over her young, spreading abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead." The old eagle first shows the young one out of the nest in order to make it fly, and then takes it on her back and flies with it and snatches it off in the air, and it seems like falling quickly the younger changes takes it on her wing again. So God does with us. Disaster, failure in business, disappointment, bereavement, is only God's way of shaking us out of our comfortable nest in order that we may learn to fly. You, scattered about your entire altitude solitude are the bones of your conquests. But you have no faith or courage of Christian zeal have had it too easy. You never will learn to fly in that comfortable nest.

Like an eagle, Christ has carried us on His back. At times we have carried us off, and when we were about to fall He came under us again and brought us out of the gloomy valley to the sunny mountain. Never an eagle brooded with such love and care over her young as God's wings have brooded us. Across what oceans of trouble we have gone in safety upon the Almighty wings! From what mountains of sin we have been carried and at times have been borne up far above the gunshot of the world and the arrow of time on earth is closed on these great wings of God we shall speed with infinite quickness from earth's mountains to heaven's hills, and as from the eagle's circuit under the sun men on the ground seem small and insignificant, and if a man can by one falsehood make as much as he can by ten years of hard labor, why not tell it? And if one counterfeit check will bring the dollars as easily as genuine issue, why not make it? One year's fruit is equal to ten years of a lifetime's work. Why not live solely by one's wit? A fortune thus built will be firm and everlasting. Will it? Hal! build your house on a volcano's crater; go to sleep on the bosom of an avalanche; the volcano will blizz, and the avalanche will thunder.

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Sugar as a Stimulant.

It is related, upon good authority, that in the terrible retreat from Moscow, the few of Napoleon's army who secreted a few pounds of sugar to eat where enabled to support the intense cold. In tropic countries Europeans learn to drink sugar-water before long walks as a preventive of sunstroke and paralysis, and the French Algerian troops carry sugar on their marches to enable them to withstand the desert heat. Persons with spinal inflammation and paralytic tendencies often have a craving for sweets, which is nature reaching instinctively for help, and indulgence in such cases is followed by improvement. As much pure sugar or sweet can be eaten without producing acidity is not only safe, but beneficial for any one who craves for it. Disturbance seldom follows in any ordinary case when the sweets are perfectly pure and are taken at proper times; not nibbled constantly between meals. A man of science has said: "I have had brain-fog so entire that it seemed as if I never could write, or had written a line, relieved by taking a syrupy small glass of sugar-water, when shortly ideas gathered and took shape, and the blank brain resumed its work. I can't help fancying that the sweets craved so ardently by children have much to do with furnishing nerve aliment to their fast-growing systems. Sugar contributes both animal heat and nervous force, and seems to be a transformation of the elements of meat." That settles it.—New Orleans Picayune.

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As every school boy knows, Brazil has about the same area as the United States, but with her something more than 3,200,000 square miles of territory she is "land poor," having, by the largest estimate, barely 12,000,000 inhabitants. Only about one-third of that number are "Aryans," or people with a considerable proportion of white blood in their veins, and in this enravating climate it requires unadulterated Anglo-Saxon grit, industry, and perseverance—not, as in the temperate zone, to make the land yield anything, but to cope with and keep down the surprising energy of nature.

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