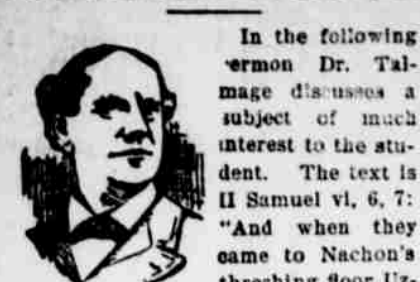


THE BIBLE'S GEOLOGY



In the following sermon Dr. Tallmage discusses a subject of much interest to the student. The text is II Samuel vi, 6, 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 there for his error, and there he died by the ark of God."

A band of music is coming down the road, cornets blows, timbrels struck, harps thrummed and cymbals clapped, all led on 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 imperiled 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 so 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 day, 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 oxen have not yet been yoked which can upset that ark of the world's salvation. Written by the Lord Almighty, he is going to protect it until its 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 different—one story 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 199,000,000 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 nervously rushing about for fear the strong oxen of scientific discovery would upset the Bible that I went somewhat apprehensively to look into the matter, when I found that the Bible and geology agree in saying that first were built the rocks, then the plants greened the earth, then marine creatures were created from minnow to whale, then the wings and throats of aerial choirs were colored and tuned, 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 impression that the world was millions 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 stone and the heavy timbers. The house is about done, but it is not finished for comfortable residence. Suddenly the owner calls in upholsterers, plumbers, gas fitters, paper hangers, and in one week it is ready for occupancy.

But for years good people feared geology, and without any imploration 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 parishioner of Dr. Guthrie, came forth and told the world that there was no contradiction 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 out of which the world was formulated, the hands of God packing together the land and tossing up the mountains into great heights and lining 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. Exhumed Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem, Tyre and Egyptian hieroglyphics are crying out in the ears of the world: "The Bible is right! All right! 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 of the deluge and the sinking of the mountains under the wave? Tell us something we can believe. "Believe that," says geology, "for how do you account for those seashells and seaweeds and skeletons of sea animals found on the top of some of the highest mountains. If the waters did not sometimes rise about the mountains, how did those seashells and seaweeds and skeletons of sea animals get there? Did you put them there?"

But, now, you do not really believe that story about the storm of fire and brimstone, whelming 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 packed 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, burn-out 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 prophecies concerning it are fulfilled.

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 hatches are kept down the only reason that it does not become one complete blaze—masts on fire, rattles on fire, everything from cutwater to taffrail on fire.

If anything in the history or condition of the earth seems for the time contradictory of anything in geology, you must remember that geology is all the time correcting itself and more and more coming to harmonization with the great book. In the last century the French Scientific association printed a list of 80 theories of geology which had been adopted and afterward rejected. Lyell, the scientist, announced 50 theories of geology that had been believed in and afterward thrown overboard. Meanwhile the story of the Bible has not changed at all, and if geology has cast out between 100 and 200 theories which it once considered established we can afford to wait until the last theory of geology antagonizing divine revelation shall have been given up.

The geology of the Bible shows that our religion is not a namby, pamby, nervous dilettantish religion. It was projected and has been protected by the God of the rocks. Religion a balm? Oh, yes. Religion a soothing power? Oh, yes. Religion a beautiful sentiment? Oh, yes. But we must have a God of the rocks, a mighty God to defend, an omnipotent God to achieve, a force able to overcome all other forces in the universe. Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley is he, combination of all gentleness and tenderness and sweetness? Oh, yes. But if the mighty forces now arrayed for the destruction of the nations are to be met and conquered, we must have a God of the rocks. The "Lion of Judah's tribe," as well as the "Lamb who was slain." One hundred and thirty times does the Bible speak of the rock as defense, as armament, as refuge, as overpowering strength. David, the psalmist, lived among the rocks, and they reminded him of the Almighty, and he ejaculates "The Lord liveth; blessed be my rock." "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." And then, as if his prayer had been answered, he feels the strength come into his soul, and he cries out, "The Lord is my rock." "He shall set me up upon a rock."

Would the Bible present a sublime picture of motherly desperation in defense of her children, it shows us Ripens on the rock for three months with disheveled hair and wild screams fighting back vultures and jackals from the corpses of her sons. Would the Bible set forth the hardness of the heart and the power of gospel to overcome it, it tells us of the "hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces." Would our Lord represent the durability of his church against all assault, he says, "Upon this rock will I build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Would he close his sermon on the mount with a peroration that would resound through centuries, standing on a rock so high that

it overlooks Lake Galilee to the right and on a clear day overlooks the Mediterranean to the left, I hear him stamp his foot on the rock beneath him as he cries to the surging multitude at the base of that rock, "Whoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

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, and geology says, of millions of years, ought to show the prolongation of God's plans and cure our impatience because things are not done in short order. Men without seeing it become critical of the Almighty and think, Why does he not do this and that and do it right away? We feel sometimes as if we could not wait. Well, I guess we will have to wait. God is never in a hurry except about two things. 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 thoughts or plans larger than his babe of 1 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 that which we would like to have done immediately.

But that was not a slip of the tongue when I said that God is never in a hurry except in two things. Those who things are when he goes to save a repentant sinner and comfort a praying mourner. The one divine hurry was set forth in the parable of the prodigal son when it says, "The father ran." He was old, and I suppose had as much as he could do to walk, but the sight of his bad boy coming home limbered the stiff knees and lengthened the shortened pace of the old man in an athletic stride. "The father ran!" Put it into your oratorics. Sound it with full orchestra. Repeat it through all heavens. "The father ran!" O, send farthest off, come back, and God, your Father, will come out to meet you at full run! The other time when God is in a hurry is when a troubled soul calls for comfort. Then the Bible represents the divine gait and swing and velocity by the reindeer, saying, "Be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bethor." That parenthesis I put in thinking that there may be some repentant sinner who wants to find pardon or some mourning soul who needs comfort, and therefore I mention the two things about which God is in a great hurry.

But concerning all the vast things of God's government of the universe be patient with the carrying out of plans beyond our measurement. Naturalists tell us that there are insects that are born and die within an hour and that there are several generations of them in one day, and if one of those July insects of an hour should say: "How slow everything goes! I was told in the chrysalis state by a wondrous instinct that I would find in this world seasons of the year—spring, summer, autumn and winter. But where are the autumnal forests upholstered in fire, and where are the glorious spring-times, with orchards waving their censers of perfume before the altars of the morning? I do not believe there are any autumns or springtimes." If, then, a golden eagle, many years old, in a cage nearby, heard the hum of that complaining insect, it might well answer "O summer insect of an hour, though your life is so short you cannot see the magnificent turn of the seasons, I can testify as to their reality, for I have seen them roll. When I was young, and before I was imprisoned in this cage, I brushed their gorgeous leafage and their fragrant blossoms with my own wing. You live an hour, I have lived 30 years. But in one of my flights high up, the gate of heaven open for a soul to go in or a seraph to come out, I heard the choir chanting, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God!' And it was an antiphonal in which all heaven responded, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' O man! O woman! So far as your earthly existence is concerned, only the insect of an hour, be not impatient with the workings of the Omnipotent and the Eternal!"

And now, for your solace and your safety, I ask you to come under the shelter, and into the deep clefts, and the almighty defense of a rock that is higher than you, higher than any Gibraltar, higher than the Himalayas—the Rock of Ages—that will shelter you from the storm; that will hide you from your enemies; that will stand when the earthquakes of the last day get their prey under the mountains and hurl them into seas boiling with the fires which are already burning their way out from red-hot centers toward the surfaces which are already here and there spouting with fire amid the quaking of the mountains under the look and touch of him of whom it is said in the sublimest sentence ever written: "He looketh upon the mountains, and they tremble. He toucheth the hills, and they smoke." He you one and all to the Rock of Ages. And now as before this sermon on the rocks I gave out the significant and appropriate hymn "How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord" I will give out after this sermon on the rocks the significant and appropriate hymn:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!

Crest Man.
"I cried all day yesterday."
"What for?"
"It was our wedding anniversary, and Henry said: 'It seems to me that something awful occurred ten years ago today, but I can't remember what it was.'"
—Detroit Free Press.

Just What She Wanted.
Teddy Thoughtless—Do you—aw—think Miss Highly would marry me, don't you know?
Charley Colden—I think so. I heard her say she was looking for a soft thing.
—N. Y. Journal.

A Paving.
Penelope—Their engagement created quite a sensation, but I believe that some cruel misunderstanding parted them.
Murie—Yes; he understood that her father was wealthy.—Brooklyn Life.

Not a First-Class Job.
"Yes," he said proudly, "I'm a self-made man."
"Too bad you couldn't have had a little more practice before tackling the job, isn't it?" remarked the lazy man in the corner.—Chicago Post.

They Leave Her Alone.
He—There is one thing I have always noticed.
She—And what is that, pray?
"That the woman who is always picking at the men is the one the men never pick."—Yonkers Statesman.

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