

REV. DR. TALMAGE

The Eminent New York Divine's Sunday Sermon.

Subject: "Expurgation of the Scriptures."

TEXT: "Let God be true, but every man a liar."—Romans iii., 4.

The Bible needs reconstruction according to some inside and outside the pulpit. It is no surprise that the world bombards the Scriptures, but it is amazing to find Christian ministers picking at this in the Bible and denying that until many good people are left in the fog about what parts of the Bible they ought to believe and what parts reject. The heinousness of finding fault with the Bible at this time is most evident. In our day the Bible is assailed by scurrility, by misrepresentation, by infidel scientists, by all the vice of earth and all the venom of perdition, and at this particular time even preachers of the Gospel fall into line of criticism of the word of God. Why, it makes me think of a ship in a September equinox, the waves dashing to the top of the smoke-stack, and the hatches fastened down, and many prophesying the foundering of the steamer, and at that time some of the crew with axes and saws go down into the hold of the ship, and they try to saw off some of the planks and pry out some of the timbers because the timber did not come from the right forest.

It does not seem to be a commendable business for the crew to be helping the winds and storms outside with their axes and saws inside. Now, this old Gospel ship, what with the roaring of earth and hell around the stem and stern and mutiny on deck, is having a very rough voyage, but I have noticed that not one of the timbers has started, and the captain says he will see it through. And I have noticed that keelson and counter timber knee are built out of Lebanon cedar, and she is going to weather the gale, but no credit to those who make mutiny on deck.

When I see professed Christians in this particular day finding fault with the Scriptures, it makes me think of a fortress terrifically bombarded, and the men on the ramparts, instead of swabbing out and loading the guns and helping fetch up the ammunition from the magazine, are trying with crowbars to pry out from the wall certain blocks of stone, because they did not come from the right quarry. Oh, men on the ramparts, better fight back, and fight down the common enemy, instead of trying to make breaches in the wall!

While I oppose this expurgation of the Scriptures, I shall give you my reasons for such opposition. "What!" say some of the theological evolutionists whose brains have been addled by too long brooding over them by Darwin and Spencer, "you don't now really believe all the story of the garden of Eden, do you?" Yes, as much as I believe there were roses in my garden last summer.

"But," say they, "you don't really believe that the sun and moon stood still?" Yes, and if I had strength enough to create a sun and moon I could make them stand still or cause the refraction of the sun's rays so it would appear to stand still. "But," they say, "you don't really believe that the whale swallowed Jonah?" Yes, and if I were strong enough to make a whale I could have made very easy ingress for the refractory prophet, leaving to evolution to eject him if he were an unworthy tenant! "But," say they, "you don't really believe that the water was turned into wine?" Yes, just as easily as water now is often turned into wine with an admixture of strychnine and logwood! "But," say they, "you don't really believe that Samson slew 1000 with the jaw bone of an ass?" Yes, and I think that the man who in this day assaults the Bible is wielding the same weapon!

There is nothing in the Bible that staggers me. There are many things I do not understand, I do not pretend to understand, never shall in this world understand. But that would be a very poor God who could be fully understood by the human. That would be a very small Infinite that can be measured by finite. You must not expect to weigh the thunderbolts of Omnipotence in an apothecary's balances. Starting with the idea that God can do anything, and that He was present at the beginning, and that He is present now, there is nothing in the holy Scriptures to arouse skepticism in my heart. Here I stand a fossil of the ages, dug up from the tertiary formation, fallen off the shelf of an antiquarian, a man in the latter part of the glorious nineteenth century believing in a whole Bible from lid to lid!

I am opposed to the expurgation of the Scriptures in the first place, because the Bible in its present shape has been so miraculously preserved. Fifteen hundred years after Herodotus wrote his history, there was only one manuscript copy of it. Twelve hundred years after Plato wrote his book there was only one manuscript copy of it. God was so careful to have us have the Bible in just the right shape that we have fifty manuscript copies of the New Testament a thousand years old, and some of them 1500 years old. This book, handed down from the time of Christ, or just after the time of Christ, by the hand of such men as Origen in the second century and Tertullian in the third century, and by men of different ages who died for their principles. The three best copies of the New Testament in manuscript in the possession of the three great churches—the Protestant church of England, the Greek church of St. Petersburg and the Romish church of Italy.

It is a plain matter of history that Tischendorf went to a convent in the peninsula of Sinai and was by ropes lifted over the wall into the convent, that being the only mode of admission, and that he saw there in the waste-

basket for kindling for the fires a manuscript of the Holy Scriptures. That night he copied many of the passages of that Bible, but it was not until fifteen years had passed of earnest entreaty and prayer and coaxing and purchase on his part that that copy of the Holy Scriptures was put into the hand of the Emperor of Russia—that one copy so marvelously protected.

Do you not know that the catalogue of the books of the Old and New Testaments as we have it is the same catalogue that has been coming down through the ages? Thirty-nine books of the Old Testament thousands of years ago. Thirty-nine now. Twenty-seven books of the New Testament 1600 years ago. Twenty-seven books of the New Testament now. Marcion, for wickedness, was turned out of the church in the second century, and in his assault on the Bible and Christianity he incidentally gives a catalogue of the books of the Bible—that catalogue corresponding exactly with ours—testimony given by the enemy of the Bible and the enemy of Christianity. The catalogue now just like the catalogue then. Assaulted and spit on and torn to pieces and burned, yet adhering. The book to-day, in 300 languages, confronting four-fifths of the human race in their own tongue. Four hundred million copies of it in existence. Does not that look as if this book had been divinely protected, as if God had guarded it all through the centuries?

Is it not an argument plain enough to every honest man and every honest woman that a book divinely protected and in this shape is in the very shape that God wants it. It pleases God and ought to please us. The epidemics which have swept thousands of other books into the sepulcher of forgetfulness have only brightened the fame of this. There is not one book out of 1000 that lives five years. Any publisher will tell you that. There will not be more than one book out of 20,000 that will live a century. Yet here is a book, much of it 1600 years old and much of it 4000 years old and with more rebound and resilience and strength in it than when the book was first put upon parchment or papyrus.

This book saw the cradle of all other books, and it will see their graves. Would you not think that an old book like this, some of it forty centuries old, would come along hobbling with age and on crutches? Instead of that, more potent than any other book of the time. More copies of it, printed in the last ten years than of any other book.

—Walter Scott's Waverley Novels, Macaulay's "History of England," Disraeli's "Endymion," the works of Tennyson and Longfellow, and all the popular books of our time having no such sale in the last ten years as this old worn out book. Do you know what a struggle a book has in order to get through one century or two centuries? Some old books, during a fire in a seraglio of Constantinople, were thrown into the street. A man without any education picked up one of those books, read it, and did not see the value of it. A scholar looked over his shoulder and saw it was the first and second decades of Livy, and he offered the man a large reward if he would bring the books to his study, but in the excitement of the fire the two parted, and the first and second decades of Livy were forever lost. Pliny wrote twenty books of history. All lost. The most of Menander's writings lost. Of 130 comedies of Plautus, all gone but twenty. Euripides wrote 100 dramas, all gone but nineteen. Eschylus wrote 100 dramas, all gone but seven. Varro wrote the laborious biographies of 700 Romans, not a fragment left. Quintilian wrote his favorite book on the corruption of eloquence, all lost. Thirty books of Tacitus lost. Dion Cassius wrote eighty books, only twenty remain. Berosus's history all lost.

Nearly all the old books are mummified and are lying in the tombs of old libraries, and perhaps once in twenty years some man comes along and picks up one of them and blows the dust off and opens it and finds it the book he does not want. But this old book, much of it forty centuries old, stands to-day more discussed than any other book, and it challenges the admiration of all the good and the spite and the venom, and the animosity, and the hypercriticism of earth and hell. I appeal to your common sense if a book so divinely guarded and protected in its present shape must not be in just the way that God wants it to come to us, and if it pleases God ought it not to please us?

Not only have all the attempts to detract from the book failed, but all the attempts to add to it. Many attempts were made to add the apocryphal books to the Old Testament. The council of Trent, the synod of Jerusalem, the bishops of Hippo, all decided that the apocryphal books must be added to the Old Testament. "They must stay in," said those learned men, but they staid out. There is not an intelligent Christian man that to-day will put the book of Maccabees or the book of Judith beside the book of Isaiah or Romans. Then a great many said, "We must have books added to the New Testament," and there were epistles and gospels and apocalypses written and added to the New Testament, but they have all fallen out. You cannot add anything. You cannot subtract anything. Divinely protected book in the present shape. Let no man dare to lay his hands on it with the intention of detracting from the book or casting out any of these holy pages.

Besides that, I am opposed to this expurgation of the Scriptures because if the attempt were successful, it would be the annihilation of the Bible. Infidel geologists would say, "Out with the Book of Genesis;" infidel astronomers would say, "Out with the Book of Joshua;" people who do not believe in the atoning sacrifice would say, "Out with the Book of Leviticus;" people who do not believe in the miracles would say, "Out with all those wonderful stories in the Old and New Testament;" and some would say, "Out with the Book of Revelation;" and others would say, "Out with the entire Pentateuch," and the work would go on until there would not be enough of the Bible left

to be worth as much as last year's almanac. The expurgation of the Scriptures means their annihilation.

I am also opposed to this proposed expurgation of the Scriptures for the fact that in proportion as the people become self-sacrificing and good and holy and consecrated, they like the book as it is. I have yet to find a man or a woman distinguished for self-sacrifice, for consecration to God, for holiness of life, who wants the Bible changed. Many of us have inherited family Bibles. Those Bibles were in use twenty, forty, fifty, perhaps 100 years in the generations. Today take down those family Bibles, and find out if there are any chapters which have been erased by lead pencil or pen, and if in any margins you can find the words, "This chapter not fit to read." There has been plenty of opportunity during the last half century privately to expurgate the Bible. Do you know any case of such expurgation? Did not your grandfather give it to your father, and did not your father give it to you?

Besides that I am opposed to the expurgation of the Scriptures, because the so-called delicacies and cruelties of the Bible have demonstrated no evil result. A cruel book will produce cruelty. An unclean book will produce uncleanness. Fetch me a victim. Out of all Christendom and out of all the ages fetch me a victim whose heart has been hardened to cruelty or whose life has been made impure by this book. Show me one. One of the best families I ever knew of, for thirty or forty years, morning and evening, had all the members gathered together, and the servants of the household, and the strangers that happened to be within the gates—twice a day, without leaving out a chapter or a verse, they read this holy book, morning by morning, night by night. Not only the older children, but the little child who could just spell her way through the verse while her mother helped her, the father beginning and reading one verse and then all the members of the family in turn reading a verse. The father maintained his integrity, the mother maintained her integrity, the sons grew up and entered professions and commercial life, adorning every sphere in the life in which they lived, and the daughters went into families where Christ was honored, and all that was good and pure and righteous reigned perpetually. For thirty years that family endured the Scriptures. Not one of them ruined by them.

Now, if you will tell me of a family where the Bible has been read twice a day for thirty years, and the children have been brought up in that habit, and the father went to ruin, and the mother went to ruin, and the sons and daughters were destroyed by it—if you will tell me of one such incident, I will throw away my Bible or I will doubt your veracity. I tell you if a man is shocked with what he calls the delicacies of the word of God he is prurient in his taste and imagination. If a man cannot read Solomon's Song without impure suggestion, he is either in his heart or in his life a libertine. The Old Testament description of wickedness, uncleanness of all sorts, is purposely and righteously a disgusting account, instead of the Byronic and the Parisian vernacular, which makes sin attractive instead of appalling. When those old prophets point you to a lazaretto, you understand it is a lazaretto. When a man having begun to do right falls back into wickedness and gives up his integrity, the Bible does not say he was overcome by the fascinations of the festive board, or that he surrendered to convivialities, or that he became a little fast in his habits. I will tell you what the Bible says, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." No gilding of iniquity. No garlands on a death's head. No pounding away with a silver mallet at iniquity when it needs an iron sledge hammer.

I can easily understand how people brooding over the description of uncleanness in the Bible may get morbid in mind until they are as full of it as the wings, and the beak, and the nostril, and the claw of a buzzard are full of the odors of a carcass, but what is wanted is not that the Bible be disinfected, but that you, the critic, have your mind and heart washed with carbolic acid.

I tell you at this point in my discourse that a man who does not like this book, and who is critical as to its contents, and who is shocked and outraged with its descriptions, has never been soundly converted. The laying on of the hands of presbytery or episcopacy does not always change a man's heart, and men sometimes get into the pulpit, as well as into the pew, never having been changed radically by the sovereign grace of God. Get your heart right and the Bible will be right. The trouble is men's natures are not brought into harmony with the word of God. Ah, my friends, expurgation of the heart is what is wanted!

You cannot make me believe that the Scriptures, which this moment lie on the table of the purest and best men and women of the age, and which were the dying solace of your kindred passed into the skies, have in them a taint which the strongest microscope of honest criticism could make visible. If men are uncontrollable in their indignation when the integrity of wife or child is assailed, and judges and jurors as far as possible excuse violence under such provocation, what ought to be the overwhelming and long resounding thunders of condemnation for any man who will stand in a Christian pulpit and assail the more than virgin purity of inspiration, the well beloved daughter of God?

Expurgate the Bible! You might as well go to the old picture galleries in Dresden and in Venice and in Rome and expurgate the old paintings. Perhaps you could find a foot of Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" that might be improved. Perhaps you could throw more expression into Raphael's "Maddonna." Perhaps you could put more pathos into Rubens's "Descent from the

Cross." Perhaps you could change the crest of the waves in Turner's "Slave Ship." Perhaps you might go into the old galleries of sculpture and change the forms and the posture of the statues of Phidias and Praxiteles. Such an iconoclast would very soon find himself in the penitentiary. But it is worse vandalism when a man proposes to refashion these masterpieces of inspiration and to remodel the moral giants of this gallery of God.

Now, let us divide off. Let those people who do not believe the Bible and who are critical of this and that part of it go clear over to the other side. Let them stand behind the devil's guns. There can be no compromise between infidelity and Christianity. Give us the out and out opposition of infidelity rather than the work of these hybrid theologians, these mongrel ecclesiasties, these half-evolved people, who believe the Bible and do not believe it, who accept the miracles and do not accept them, who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures and do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures—trimming their belief on one side to suit the skepticism of the world, trimming their belief on the other side to suit the pride of their own heart, and feeling that in order to demonstrate their courage they must make the Bible the target and shoot at God.

There is one thing that encourages me very much, and that is that the Lord made out to manage the universe before they were born, and will probably be able to make out to manage the universe a little while after they are dead. While I demand that the antagonists of the Bible and the critics of the Bible go clear over where they belong, on the devil's side, I ask that all the friends of this good book come out openly and above board in behalf of it, that book which was the best inheritance you ever received from your ancestry, and which will be the best legacy you will leave to your children when you go the good-bye as you cross the ferry to the golden city.

Young man, do not be ashamed of your Bible. There is not a virtue but it commends, there is not a sorrow but it comforts, there is not a good law on the statute book of any country but it is founded on these Ten Commandments. There are no braver, grander people in all the earth than the heroes and the heroines which it biographizes.

Of all the works of Dore, the great artist, there was nothing so impressive as his illustrated Bible. What scene of Abrahamic faith or Edenic beauty, of dominion Davide or Solomonic, of miracle or parable, of nativity or of crucifixion or of last judgment but the thought leaped from the great brain to the skillful pencil, and from the skillful pencil to canvas immortal. The Louvre, the Luxembourg, the National Gallery of London compressed within two volumes of Dore's illustrated Bible. But the Bible will come to better illustration than that. My friends, when all the deserts have become gardens and all the armories have become academies and all the lakes have become Gennesarets with Christ walking them, and all the cities have become Jerusalems with hovering Shekinah; and the two hemispheres shall be clapping cymbals of divine praise, and the round earth a footlight to Emanuel's throne—that to all lands and all ages and all centuries and all cycles will be the best specimen of Bible illustrated.

TEMPERANCE NEWS AND NOTES.

Canada's annual liquor bill is \$131,785,400. The consumption of intoxicating liquors in New Zealand is decreasing year by year.

The National W. C. T. U. will conduct summer meetings at Chautauqua and Mountain Lake Park.

It takes 9000 breweries to supply England with beer, and during the past year some 900 have been closed.

Governor Sheakley, of Alaska, refuses to issue the necessary permits for the establishment of breweries in that Territory.

Mrs. Willis Davis, a bride, killed herself in Warren County, Kentucky, on seeing her husband under the influence of liquor.

The Duke of Connaught declares that total abstinence is absolutely necessary to a ripe old age. His mother, Queen Victoria, is seventy-six.

The W. C. T. U. of Bondurant, Iowa, have had five acres of ground given them for five years rent free, and will farm it for the benefit of their work.

Belgium's revenue from the drink habit has grown in forty years from 4,000,000 to 33,000,000 francs, crime increasing 200 per cent. at the same time and insanity 128 per cent.

Finland has demonstrated that spirits are not necessary in cold countries, having become practically a total abstinence country. This change has been effected under local option and woman suffrage.

A new law for the better observance of Sunday in Russia will probably close all the dram shops throughout the Empire on that day. An effort is being made to have them keep open one hour of the day.

The Legislative Committee which investigated the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, at Quincy, Ill., found that "the great evil of the home is intemperance," and reported a resolution to authorize the Superintendent to prosecute saloon-keepers who persist in selling intoxicants to the inmates after being forbidden.

Li Hung Chang's cousin says that dignitary's yellow jacket is a joke. If he ever runs against the business end of the native American yellow jacket he'll appreciate the point sooner than the joke.

There is a scheme on foot to extend the Sheridan drive and Chicago's park system to Milwaukee.