

IS THE BIBLE IN DANGER?

R.A. Torrey:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Matt. 24: 35.

SOME weeks ago I preached on this same text, but we are going to approach it to-night from a different standpoint. The question before us is, is the Bible in danger? Our text asserts that it is not, and I propose to show you to-night some reasons why the Bible certainly is not in danger. There are two classes who think that the Bible is in danger: first, there are those who think it is in danger because they are glad to think so, because it gives their consciences some little consolation in a life of sin to think that the Bible will not stand. But there is another class who fear the Bible is in danger, and it is with great reluctance that they think that it is; they love the Bible, they would be glad to believe the Bible, but they are afraid the old book must go. Let us then honestly face the question, Is the Bible in danger? I shall prove to a demonstration that it is not in danger. I will not deny that the Bible has enemies, and most able enemies, most persistent enemies. Eighteen years ago when Col. Ingersoll suddenly died there were many who breathed a sigh of relief, for they thought that the most dangerous enemy of the Bible was gone.

But Col. Ingersoll was not the most dangerous enemy of the Bible. There were more dangerous enemies of the Bible even during his lifetime than he himself was, and there are far more dangerous enemies of the Bible than he to-day. They are more dangerous because they do not make the mistake that he made of thinking that the world would accept caricature for argument, and ridicule for reason, and rhetoric for logic. They are more dangerous also because they do not come out into the open, as he did, and frankly avow themselves to be infidels. They claim, in some sense, to believe in the Bible, but all the while that they claim to believe in it they are seeking, consciously or unconsciously, to undermine the faith of others in the absolute inerrancy and authority of the Bible. The most dangerous enemies of the Bible to-day are the college professors and principals of high schools, and even theological professors who, while they claim to be endeavoring to establish faith upon a broader and therefore better basis, are all the time attempting to show that the Bible is full of errors and not in accord with the assured results of modern science and history. These enemies are legion, they are found practically everywhere, many of them are able men, and they have formulated a skilfully planned campaign against the Bible. Nevertheless the Bible is in no danger. There are six reasons why the Bible is not in danger.

1. BECAUSE THE BIBLE HAS ALREADY SURVIVED THE ATTACKS OF MORE THAN 1800 YEARS.

The attacks now being made upon the Bible are not something new. The Bible has always been hated and assaulted. The Bible's stern denunciation of sin, the Bible's uncompromising demand of a holy, unselfish, consecrated life, the Bible's merciless laying of human pride in the dust, have aroused for the Bible a more bitter hatred from men than any other book has ever met. No sooner was the Bible given to the world than it met the hatred of men and they tried to stamp it out by every method and instrument of destruction they could bring to bear against it. The arguments that are brought against the Bible to-day are not new arguments, all of them were met and answered long ago. I am not aware of one single new argument that has been brought forward against the Bible in the last ten years. The antagonists of the Bible have tricked out the old arguments in new and more attractive garments, but they are the same old arguments. The arguments brought forward by the most learned and most able enemies of the book to-day are the very arguments that have been employed for more than a century. If anyone will take the trouble to read Tom Paine's Age of Reason, he will be amazed to discover how many of the positions which men persist in calling the new views of the Bible were exploited by Tom Paine in his Age of Reason more than a century ago. Dr. Howard Osgood, a great scholar, in a discussion with the destructive critics some years ago, read a statement of the positions of the destructive critics as he understood them, and then turned to President Harper and inquired if the statements that he had read were not fair statements of the positions they held. President Harper replied that they were, and then Prof. Osgood startled his auditors, and especially his opponents, by saying, "In this statement that I have just read of your position, I have been reading verbatim from Tom Paine's Age of Reason." With all the researches and all the laboured efforts to find something against the Bible, not one single new argument has been forged in the last twenty years. There have been times in the past when the Bible has seemed to be in more peril than to-day, but when the storm of battle was over and the smoke of conflict had cleared away from the battlefield, this old, impregnable citadel of God's eternal truth has been seen standing there absolutely unhurt and unscarred, and the battle has only served to illustrate how impregnable is the citadel. Those who fancy that they are going to destroy the Bible with their puny weapons, and those also who fear it is going to be destroyed, would do well to reflect upon its history. The Book that has so triumphantly withstood the terrific assaults of eighteen centuries is not likely to succumb in a day. Voltaire, a far more gifted, versatile and skilful enemy of Christianity than any enemy living to-day, once boasted, "It took twelve men to establish Christianity. I will show the world it takes

but one to destroy it." But somehow or other it did not destroy as easily as he imagined it would. Voltaire has passed into history, and largely into oblivion, and he will soon pass into utter oblivion, but the Bible has gained in power, and the very room in which Voltaire wrote the words quoted has been packed from floor to ceiling with Bibles for distribution, owned by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The advance of research from excavations in Bible lands, the advance of historical investigation, and the advance of science, have all served to confirm the truthfulness of the Bible. For example, the unearthing and deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions, and the Moabite stone have shown the truth of Bible statements that were once questioned by scholars. As another illustration, not so many years ago ridicule was heaped upon the Bible implication of the existence of a great Hittite people. The investigations of comparatively recent years have proven the Bible right, and the critics utterly wrong. The sceptics of my early years made merry over the Bible mention of light before there was a sun, but to-day every man of science knows that according to the generally accepted nebular hypothesis there was light, cosmic light, before the sun became a separate body, and he also knows that even after the sun had become a separate body and the earth had been thrown off from the sun and the moon from the earth, that such dense clouds surrounded the earth for a long period of time that no light either from the sun or moon could reach the earth, and that afterwards the clouds became thin and dissipated and then, and only then, in that day, or period, of the earth's history did the sun and moon appear as definite heavenly bodies, giving light upon the earth by day or night. A very few years ago the destructive critics ridiculed the 14th chapter of Genesis and its mention of Amraphel, whom they asserted was an altogether mythical character, and many of them asserted that Abraham himself was a mythical character, but inscriptions made by this very Amraphel, or to use the modern name Hammurabbai, have been discovered, and a code of laws issued by him has been found, a code of a very lofty character, and now instead of sneering at Amraphel as a mythical character, the critics are trying to make us believe that Moses derived his legislation from him. The greatest scientist that America produced in the nineteenth century, my friend and beloved instructor in geology, Prof. James D. Dana, said, "The grand old book of God still stands; and this old earth the more its leaves are turned and pondered, the more will it sustain and illustrate the sacred word." Eighteen centuries of triumphant history and eighteen centuries of accumulating confirmation show that the Bible is not in any peril.

II. THE BIBLE IS NOT IN DANGER BECAUSE IT MEETS AND SATISFIES THE DEEPEST NEEDS OF MAN IN EVERY GENERATION.

Arthur Hallam said, "I see that the Bible fits into every fold and crevice of the human heart. " This is true, but more than this is true. The Bible has an answer to every cry of the human soul, a balm for every wound of the human heart, a supply for every need of man. What are the deeper needs of man?

1. First of all, the need of pardon and peace. We are all sinners. We may try to dispute or obscure that fact, but we all know it is true. The Christian Scientist may assert that there is really no such thing as sin, that sin is only "mortal thought," or "illusion," and yet the Christian Scientist himself shows that he really believes that there is such a thing as sin by his holding other men responsible for their wrong acts. New theologians of the Reginald Campbell type may assert that the supposed fall of man was a fall upward, and that even man when he gets drunk or goes into lust is seeking after God, but in our deeper moments we all know that this is utter nonsense. In our deepest moments we all know we are not right and, though we may try to question it, we also fear that there is a holy God to whom we shall have to give answer for this sinful life of ours, and even if there is not such a holy God we know we shall have to give answer to our own consciences, which, like Banquo's ghost, will not down. Man is a sinner. Every man is a sinner. The great question then is, is there any place where pardon from God and peace in our own consciences can be found? The Bible answers this all-important question. It tells us that pardon and peace can be found in Jesus Christ through His atoning blood, and when we seek pardon and peace in Him we find that what the Bible says on this point is true. There are many on every hand who can testify that they have found pardon and peace in Jesus Christ to whom the Bible pointed them. Years ago in Chicago a woman came to me who had been in a very real hell for fourteen years. For fourteen years conscience had tormented her with the thought of the man into whose throat she had driven a dagger and killed him. Often times in her agony she had gone down to Lake Michigan by night and thought of plunging into its dark waters to drown herself and thus be free from her accusing conscience, but she hesitated to do it for fear of the awakening that might lie beyond death. I pointed her to Isa. 53 : 6 and she found pardon and perfect peace through the One who had borne in her place the murder she had committed. The last three days of week before last and the first two days of last week I was in Chicago again. The first day I was there this woman came to me with a smiling face and told me how happy she was in Christ, and time and again she came to me at the close of some of the meetings, telling me how God was using even her in service for Him. This book has saved many a conscience-tortured one from suicide and despair.

2. The next need of man is deliverance from sin's power. Men are in the grip of sin, we all know that. They are unable to break away from the grip of sin. It is well enough to tell a man to assert his manhood, but it doesn't work. The very lecturer who tells men that they do not need a Saviour, Jesus, to set them free from the power of sin, that all they need to do is to assert their manhood, has not asserted his own manhood and broken away from sin's grip. This slavery of sin is awful ; the soul cries out, where is deliverance to be found? The cry of Paul in his failure and defeat is the universal cry of the thoughtful heart, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). The Bible answers the question in John 8 : 36, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. When we try it we find it is true. How many men there are whom we know who have been saved from lives of drunkenness and sin by this book? How many homes there are in Los Angeles and throughout the land that were once poor, and dirty, and quarrelsome, that to-day are clean and well supplied and loving through the influence of this book? How many men and women have been saved from lives of sin by this book? With this, contrast infidelity. Where is the man who has been saved from drunkenness by the power of infidelity? Where is the home that was once poor and dirty and quarrelsome that is to-day clean and well supplied and loving which has been made so by the power of infidelity? "Where is the sinning woman who has been saved from a life of sin by infidelity in any form?

3. The next need of man is comfort in sorrow. We live in a world that is full of sorrow and bereavement. Families are broken up, dear ones taken away. Man needs consolation as he stands by the dying bed of wife or child or mother; he needs consolation as he looks into the grave into which the dearest one of earth has been lowered. Where can he find consolation in such an hour? In the Bible, and in the Bible alone. On October 19, 1894, five years after the Johnstown flood, I stood in Johnstown cemetery. I looked upon the graves of several thousand who were in one day, May 31, 1889, swept into eternity 816 unknown ones lay in a single plot. I read the inscriptions on the tombstones. What stories of sorrow they told. There lay side by side a young mother and her baby child; in another place lay father, 34 years ; Anne, 10 years ; Tommy, 6 years ; Elmer, 2, and the rest of the family were left to mourn. In another place lay seven of one family side by side. There was need of consolation in those days in Johnstown. Was there any place where it could be found? Yes, in the Bible, and in Jesus Christ of whom the Bible tells. On one tombstone I read, "Annie Llewellyn, died May 31, 1889, five years, three months, seventeen days, Safe in the arms of Jesus." Was there any comfort in that for those parents as they thought of their little one caught by the swirling flood, tossed about mid trees and crashing ruins, buried at last in the awful mass of drift and dying ones at the bridge? On the family tombstone mentioned above I read these words, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24:44). I read not one single inscription from Tom Paine, Voltaire, Col. Ingersoll, or from any infidel writer or speaker, ancient or modern. Why not? Because there is no comfort in them. A few years before his death Col. Ingersoll wrote recommending suicide as the best refuge he could suggest in great sorrow and failure. The Bible has something immeasurably better to offer.

4. Man's next need is hope in the face of death. We must all sooner or later stand face to face with death, then the soul of man, unless it has been burned out by sin, cries, Does this end all, is there no light in the grave? The Bible again meets and satisfies this cry. Col. Ingersoll once asked in a lecture delivered in Chicago, (October 13, 1894), "Why did not He (Christ) say something positive, definite and satisfactory about another world? Why did He not turn the tear-stained hope of heaven into glad knowledge of another life?" Then he answered his own question in this way: "I will tell you why. He was a man and did not know." The audacity of such an answer to an intelligent audience with an open Bible, is amazing. To imply that Christ did not tell something "positive, definite, and satisfactory about another world." To imply that He did not "turn the tear-stained hope of heaven into glad knowledge of another life, and then try to account for His not doing so! Col. Ingersoll must have thought that his hearers either had no Bible or else would not read it. Jesus said in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Is not that something positive, something definite, something satisfactory about another world? Again Jesus says in John 11:25, 26, "I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die." Is not that something positive, something definite, something satisfactory about another world? Again He says in John 5:28, 29, "The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." That certainly is plain enough, though it is not very satisfactory to those who are living lives of sin. But has the critical Colonel himself ever said anything "positive, definite and satisfactory" about another world? He had a most excellent chance to do so if he had anything to say, when he stood beside the grave of his own brother, but his pathetic but hollow eloquence on that occasion served only to illustrate the utter hollowness and emptiness of scepticism. The Bible has given men courage to die bravely and triumphantly in all the ages of its history. Infidels sometimes die stolidly and clinch their teeth and face it out, but they never die joyously and gloriously.

We might go on and show other needs of man that the Bible meets, but enough has been said to show that the Bible meets the deepest needs of man. As long as man needs pardon and peace, as long as man needs deliverance from the power of sin, as long as man needs comfort in sorrow, as long as man needs hope in the face of death, the Bible is not in danger. Man will not give up to satisfy any number of keen satirists or carping critics or plausible reasoners, the book that meets his deepest needs, that brings pardon and peace instead of guilt and remorse, that brings liberty, manhood and nobility instead of bondage to sin, that brings comfort in the darkest hours of sorrow, transforming the thunder-cloud into the rainbow, that inspires man with unquenchable hope in the face of death and its terrors.

III. THE BIBLE IS NOT IN DANGER BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING ELSE TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE.

The Bible contains all the truth on moral and spiritual subjects that all other books together contain. It contains more than all other books put together, and it contains all this in portable compass. Not a truth on moral or spiritual topics that cannot be found for substance within the covers of this little book. Even infidels' best thoughts are stolen from this book. For example, Ingersoll once said, "The doctrine that woman is the slave, or serf of man whether it comes from hell or heaven, from God or demon, from the golden streets of the New Jerusalem or the very Sodom of perdition is savagery pure and simple." This statement is true, but where did Col. Ingersoll learn this doctrine of woman's equality with man? He either learned it from the Bible or from some one else who had learned it from the Bible. What is the first thing that the Bible says about woman? You will find it in Gen. 2:18, "And the LORD God said, it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him." Here in its opening chapters the Bible proclaims the equality of woman with man. It declares that woman is not "the slave, or serf of man," but his companion and equal. Ingersoll was all right in his doctrine about the equality of woman, but he was unfortunately three thousand five hundred years behind the book that he sought to hold up to scorn. Turning to the New Testament he might have read in Gal. 3:28 the statement that in Christ Jesus "there is neither male nor female." He might have read again in Eph. 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it." Certainly there is no suggestion there that "woman is the slave or serf of man." And he might have read a few verses further down in verses 28 and 29, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife, loves him self. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." And then he might have read two verses still further down, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." All the respect and honour and love and care bestowed upon woman to-day, woman owes to the Bible. But not only can we find every truth in the Bible that we find elsewhere, but there is more truth in the Bible than all other literature put together, and it is in portable compass. In the lecture already referred to Col. Ingersoll proposed to give to the world another and better Bible in place of this one, but where is it? Listen to what he says: "For thousands of years men have been writing the real Bible, and it is being written from day to day and it will never be finished while man has life.

"All the wisdom that lengthens and ennobles life all that avoids or cures diseases, or conquers pain, all just and perfect laws and rules that guide and shape our lives, all thoughts that feed the flames of love, the music that transfigures, enraptures, and enthralls, the victories of heart and brain, the miracles that hands have wrought, the deft and cunning hands of those who worked for wife and child, the histories of noble deeds, of brave and useful men, of faithful, loving wives, or quenchless mother-love, of conflicts for the right, of sufferings for the truth, of all the best that all the men and women of the world have said and thought and done through all the years.

"These treasures of the heart and brain these are the sacred scriptures of the human race."

That sounds pretty, doesn't it? I challenge any man to say that that is not a masterpiece of diction. But after all it is only rhetoric. Where is this Bible of which Ingersoll spoke? People want a Bible that they can lay their hands on, that they can make use of, that they can carry with them. A poor man can not very well carry a Carnegie library in his trunk, and it would not do him much good in the great emergencies of life if he could. But here in this book we have a Bible that a man can carry in his pocket wherever he goes, and in this one small book he has more of truth of eternal value than in all the libraries of the world. No, the Bible is not in any danger, for there is nothing else to take its place.

IV. THE BIBLE IS NOT IN DANGER BECAUSE IT HAS A HOLD THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN, ON THE CONFIDENCE AND AFFECTION OF THE WISEST AND BEST MEN AND WOMEN.

The Bible has the distrust and hatred of some, but it has the confidence and affection of the wisest, and

especially the holiest of men and women. The men who know the Bible best are the men who trust it most and love it best. A superficial knowledge of the Bible, such as Col. Ingersoll, for example, had, or Tom Paine had, or that many a college and even theological professor to-day has, may lead one to distrust it and hate it, but the deep and thorough knowledge of that book comes from a pure heart and profound study will always lead one to love and trust it. The Bible is distrusted and hated by those whose influence dies with them. The Bible is loved and trusted by those whose influence lives after them. Lucian, Celsus, and Porphyry were great men, but their influence died with them, but the influence of John and Paul lives on in ever-widening power. Voltaire and Volney were able men, among the ablest men of their day, but their influence belongs wholly to the past, but the influence of Whitfield and Wesley is greater to-day than when they were here on earth. Col. Ingersoll was a man of brilliant gifts, but his influence has not lived after him. Indeed it is amazing how completely he has sunken out of sight in the eighteen years that have elapsed since his death. But the influence of Spurgeon and Moody is with us still. No, the Bible is not in danger, for it has the ever-increasing confidence of the best men and women, of those men and women whose influence lives after them, and only the distrust and hatred of those whose influence dies with them.

V. THE BIBLE IS NOT IN DANGER BECAUSE IT IS THE WORD OF GOD.

I have not space to go into that at this time. Many things prove that the Bible is the Word of God : its fulfilled prophecies, its unity, its Divine power, its inexhaustible depth, the fact that as we grow in knowledge and holiness grow Godward we grow toward the Bible. Just a moment on its fulfilled prophecies. Look at the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. This chapter has been the rock upon which infidelity has always gone to pieces. Men have tried to get around the force of the argument by the desperate expedient of saying that the chapter does not refer to the Christ but to suffering Israel, but even one careful

reading of the chapter will show that it cannot refer to suffering Israel. Look at Dan. 9:25-27 with its prediction of the exact time of the manifestation of the Messiah to Israel and its prediction of His death and what would follow. Look at Mic. 5:2 and its prediction of the very place in which the Messiah should be born. Right before our own eyes in the last two years we have seen predictions from the Bible fulfilled that men said never could be fulfilled. They told us that wars were at an end forever, that man had made such progress in his evolution that a great war would never be possible again among civilized nations of the earth, and that the predictions of the Bible that greater wars and times of distress were coming than the world had ever seen were foolish and impossible of fulfilment, but to-day we see these prophecies being fulfilled before our very eyes. The other arguments to prove that the Bible is the Word of God I have not time to go into at all, but they are absolutely conclusive. The Bible is not in danger because it is God's book. "Heaven and earth may pass away but God's Word shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:25), or to put it as Peter puts it in I Peter 1: 24, 25, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord abideth forever."

VI. THE BIBLE IS NOT IN DANGER BECAUSE ANY HONEST AND EARNEST SEEKER AFTER TRUTH CAN FIND OUT FOR HIMSELF THAT THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD.

In John 7:17 Jesus offers a test that any man can try for himself. He says, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." Many have tried this test and it has never failed. A few weeks ago at the close of one of our evening services a man came to me saying that he was full of doubts, that while he believed that there was a God, he doubted that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, or that the Bible was the Word of God. He said further, he had been advised to accept it on blind faith without evidence. I told him to do nothing of the sort. I told him that believing without evidence was not faith but credulity, and that God did not ask any man to believe without evidence. Then I gave him the passage just quoted, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." I told him to surrender his will to God and then ask God to show him whether Jesus Christ was His Son or not, and whether the Bible was His Word or not, and to take the gospel of John and read it, not trying to believe it, but being willing to be convinced if it was true, and promising God that he would take his stand upon everything in it that he found to be true. Within a week I received a letter from this man telling me how he had come out into the clear light of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. I have seen the man again to-day and not only has his own scepticism entirely vanished, but he is leading other sceptics to Christ.

The Bible is in no danger. As far as the Bible is concerned all these attacks from different sources upon the Bible do only good, they set people to thinking about the Bible, they set preachers to preaching about the Bible, they serve to illustrate the invincible truth and power of the Bible by showing the ease with which such fierce attacks upon it are repelled. But while the Bible itself is in no danger, those who vent their spleen upon it are in danger. It is no small sin to ridicule the Word of an all holy and all mighty God. There are others also who are in

danger, those who listen to the fascinating eloquence of gifted unbelievers and allow it to lull them to repose in a life of sin, they are in danger. Men, and especially young men, your consciences were once troubling you and you were contemplating forsaking your folly, but you have allowed yourselves to be blinded by the voice of some brilliant agnostic and you are now about to trample under foot the Word of God and the Christ of God. Do not be deceived, these voices that speak to you are not the voices of truth but the voices of falsehood, infamous, dastardly, soul-destroying falsehood. To listen to these voices means ruin, eternal ruin. Do not listen to such voices, listen to the voice of God that speaks to you in wondrous love from this book and says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Yes, and there is another class in danger. All those who do not accept Jesus Christ are in danger. This book is not in danger, every utterance of it will stand, and this book declares in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." It is true, and if you do not believe on Christ, if you do not speedily give up your unbelief and put your trust in Him, you must perish.