THE CHARM OF RELIGION.

Dr. Talmage Says It Illuminates and Brightens the Lives of Men and Women.

Religion Is Superior to the Crystal in Exactness.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.—The charm of an exalted religion is by Dr. Talmage in this discourse illustrated and commended; text, Job xxviii, 17, "The crystal cannot equal it."

Many of the precious stones of the Bible have come to prompt recognition, but for the present I take up the less valuable crystal. Job, in my text, compares saving wisdom with a specimen of topaz. An infidel chemist or mineralogist would pronounce the latter worth more than the former, but Job makes an intelligent comparison, looks at religion and then looks at the crystal and pronounces the former as of far superior value to the latter, exclaiming in the words of my text, "The crystal cannot equal it."

Now, it is not a part of my sermonic design to depreciate the crystal, whether it be found in Cornish mine or Harz Mountain or Mammoth Cave or tinkling among the pendants of the chandeliers of a palace. The crystal is the star of the mountain; it is the queen of the cave; it is the eardrop of the hills; it finds its heaven in the diamond. Among all the pages of natural history there is no page more interesting to me than the page crystallographic. But I want to show you that Job was right when, taking religion in one hand and the crystal in the other, he declared that the former is of far more value and beauty than the latter, recommending it to all the people and to all the ages, declaring, "The crystal cannot equal it."

In the first place I remark that religion is superior to the crystal in exactness. That shapeless mass of crystal against which you accidentally dashed your foot is laid out with more exactness than any earthly city. There are six styles of crystallization and all of them divinely ordained. Every crystal has mathematical precision. God's geometry reaches through it, and it is a rhomboid or in some way it has a mathematical figure. Now, religion beats that in the simple fact that spiritual accuracy is more beautiful than material accuracy. God's attributes are exact, God's law exact, God's decrees exact, God's management of the world exact. Never counting wrong, though He counts the grass blades and the stars and the sands and the cycles. His providence never dealing with us perpendicularly when those providences ought to be oblique, nor laterally when they ought to be vertical. Everything in our life arranged without any possibility of mistake. Each life a six-headed prism. Born at the right time, dying at the right time. There are no "happen so's" in our theology. If I thought this was a slipshod universe I would be in despair. God is not an Anarchist. Law, order, symmetry, precision, a perfect square, a perfect rectangle, a perfect rhomboid, a perfect circle. The edge of God's robe of government never frays out. There are no loose screws in the world's machinery. It did not just happen that Napoleon was attacked with indigestion at Borodino so that he became incompetent for one day. It did not just happen that John Thomas, the missionary, on a heathen island, waiting for an outfit and orders for another missionary tour, received that outfit and those orders in a box that floated ashore, while the ship and the crew that carried the box were never heard of. I believe in a particular providence. I believe God's geometry may be seen in all our life more beautifully than in crystallography. Job was right, "The crystal cannot equal it."

Again, I remark that religion is superior to the crystal in transparency. We know not when or by whom glass was first discovered. Beads of it have been found in the tomb of Alexander Severus. Vases of it are brought up from the ruins of Herculaneum. There were female adornments made out of it 3000 years ago—those adornments found now attached to the mummies of Egypt. A great many commentators believe that my text means glass. What would we do without the crystal—the crystal in the window to keep out the storm and let in the day, the crystal over the watch, defending its delicate machinery, yet allowing us to see the hour; the crystal of the telescope, by which the astronomer brings distant worlds so near he can inspect them?

Oh, the triumphs of the crystals in the celebrated windows of Rouen and Salisbury! But there is nothing so transparent in a crystal as in our holy religion. It is a transparent religion. You put it to your eye, and you see man—his sin, his soul, his destiny. You look at God, and you see something of the grandeur of His character. It is a transparent religion. Infidels tell us it is opaque. Do you know why they tell us it is opaque? It is because they are blind. "The natural man receiveth not the things of God because they are spiritually discerned." There is no trouble with the crystal; the trouble is with the eyes which try to look through it. We pray for vision, Lord, that our eyes might be opened! When the eye salve cures our blindness then we find that religion is transparent.

It is a transparent Bible. All the mountains of the Bible come out—Sinai, the mountain of the law; Pisgah, the mountain of prospect; Olivet, the mountain of instruction; Calvary, the mountain of sacrifice. All the rivers of the Bible come out—Hidekel, or the river of paradisaical beauty; Jordan, or the river of holy chrism; Cherith, or the river of prophetic supply; Nile, or the river of palaces, and the pure river of life from under the throne, clear as crystal. While reading this Bible, after our eyes have been touched by grace, we find it all transparent, and the earth rocks, now with crucifixion agony and now with judgment terror, and Christ appears in some of His 256 titles, as far as I can count them—the Bread, the Rock, the Captain, the Commander, the Conqueror, the Star, and on and beyond any capacity of mine to rehearse. Transparent religion!

The providence that seemed dark before becomes pellucid. Now you find God is not trying to put you down. Now you understand why you lost that child and why you lost your property. It was to prepare you for eternal treasures. And why sickness came, it being the precursor of immortal juvenescence. And now you understand why they lied about you and tried to drive you hither and thither. It was to put you in the glorious company of such men as Ignatius, who when he went out to be destroyed by the lions said, "I am the wheat, and the teeth of the wild beasts must first grind me before I can become pure bread for Jesus Christ," or the company of such men as "that ancient Christian martyr" who, standing in the midst of the amphitheatre waiting for the lions to come out of their cave and destroy him, and the people in the galleries jeering and shouting, "The lions!" replied "Let them come on!" and then, stooping down toward the cave where the wild beasts were roaring to get out, again cried, "Let them come on!" Ah, yes, it is persecution to put you in glorious company, and, while there are many things that you will have to postpone to the future world for explanation, I tell you that it is the whole tendency of your religion to unravel and explain and interpret and illumine and irradiate. Job was right. It is a glorious transparency. "The crystal cannot equal it."

I remark again that religion surpasses the crystal in its beauty. The lump of crystal is put under the magnifying glass of the crystallographer, and he sees in it indescribable exquisiteness—snowdrift and splinters of hoarfrost and corals and wreaths and stars and crowns and constellations of conspicuous beauty. The fact is that crystal is so beautiful that I can think of but one thing in all the universe that is as beautiful, and that is the religion of the Bible. No wonder this Bible represents that religion as the daybreak, as the apple blossoms, as the glitter of a king's banquet. It is the joy of the whole earth.

People talk too much about their cross and not enough about their crown. Do you know that the Bible mentions a cross but twenty-seven times, while it mentions a crown eighty times? Ask that old man what he thinks of religion. He has been a close observer. He has been cultivating an aesthetic taste. He has seen the sunrises of half a century. He has been an early riser. He has been an admirer of cameos and corals and all kinds of beautiful things. Ask him what he thinks of religion, and he will tell you: "It is the most beautiful thing I ever saw. The crystal cannot equal it."

Beautiful in its symmetry. When it presents God's character, it does not present Him as having love like a great protuberance on one side of His nature, but makes that love in harmony with His justice—a love that will accept all those who come to Him and a justice that will by no means clear the guilty. Beautiful religion in the sentiment it implants! Beautiful religion in the hope it kindles! Beautiful religion in the fact that it proposes to garland and enthrone and emparadise an immortal spirit! Solomon says it is a lily. Paul says it is a crown. The Apocalypse says it is a fountain kissed of the sun. Ezekiel says it is a foliaged cedar. Christ says it is a bridegroom come to fetch home a bride. While Job in the text takes up a whole vase of precious stones—the topaz and the sapphire and the chrysoprasus—he takes out of this beautiful vase just one crystal and holds it up until it gleams in the warm light of the eastern sky, and he exclaims, "The crystal cannot equal it!"

Oh, it is not a stale religion, it is not a stupid religion, it is not a toothless hag, as some seem to have represented it; it is not a Meg Merrilies with shriveled arm come to scare the world. It is the fairest daughter of God, heiress of all His wealth, her cheeks the morning sky, her voice the music of the south wind, her step the dance of the sea. Come and woo her, The Spirit and the Bride say come, and whosoever will let him come. Do you agree with Solomon and say it is a lily? Then pluck it and wear it over your heart. Do you agree with Paul and say it is a crown? Then let this hour be your coronation. Do you agree with the Apocalypse and say it is a springing fountain? Then come and slake the thirst of your soul. Do you believe with Ezekiel and say it is a foliaged cedar? Then come under its shadow. Do you believe with Christ and say it is a bridegroom come to fetch home a bride? Then strike hands with your Lord and King while I pronounce you everlastingly one. Or if you think with Job that it is a jewel, then put it on your hand like a ring, on your neck like a bead, on your forehead like a star, while, looking into the mirror of God's word, you acknowledge "The crystal cannot equal it."

"What," say you, "will God wear jewelry?" If He wanted it He could make the stars of heaven His belt, and have the evening cloud for the sandals of His feet. But He does not want that adornment. He will not have that jewelry. When God wants jewelry He comes down and digs it out of the depths and darkness of sin. These souls are all crystallizations of mercy. He puts them on, and He wears them in the presence of the whole universe. He wears them on the hand that was nailed, over the heart that was pierced, on the temples that were stung. "They shall be Mine," saith the Lord, "in the day when I make up My jewels." Wonderful transformation! Where sin abounded grace shall much more abound. The carbon becomes the solitaire. "The crystal cannot equal it."

Three crystals! John says crystal atmosphere. That means health. Balm of eternal June. What weather after the world's east wind! No rack of storm-clouds. One breath of that air will cure the worst tubercle. Crystal light on all the leaves; crystal light shimmering on the topaz of the temples; crystal light tossing in the plumes of the equestrians of heaven on white horses. But "the crystal cannot equal it." John says crystal river. That means joy. Deep and ever rolling. Not one drop of the Potomac or the Hudson or the Rhine to soil it; not one tear of human sorrow to imbitter it. Crystal, the rain out of which it was made; crystal, the bed over which it shall roll and ripple; crystal, its infinite surface. But "the crystal cannot equal it." John says crystal sea. That means multitudinously vast, vast in rapture, rapture vast as the sea, deep as the sea, strong as the sea, ever changing as the sea; billows of light, billows of beauty, blue with skies that were never clouded and green with depths that were never fathomed; Arctics and Antarctics and Mediterraneans and Atlantics and Pacifics in crystalline magnificence. Three crystals—crystal light falling on a crystal river, crystal river rolling into a crystal sea. But "the crystal cannot equal it."

"Oh," says some one, putting his hand over his eyes, "can it be that I who have been in so much sin and trouble will ever come to those crystals?" Yes, it may be—it will be. Heaven we must have, whatever we have or have not, and we come here to get it. "How much must I pay for it?" you say. You will pay for it just as much as the coal pays to become the diamond. In other words, nothing. The same Almighty power that makes the crystal in the mountain will change your heart, which is harder than stone, for the promise is, "I will take away your stony heart, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

"Oh," says some one, "it is just the doctrine I want. God is to do everything, and I am to do nothing." My brother, it is not the doctrine you want. The coal makes no resistance. It hears the resurrection voice in the mountain, and it comes to crystallization, but your heart resists. The trouble with you, my brother, is the coal wants to stay coal.

I do not ask you to throw open the door and let Christ in. I only ask that you stop bolting it and barring it. My friends, we will have to get rid of our sins. I will have to get rid of my sins, and you will have to get rid of your sins. What will we do with our sins among the three crystals? The crystal atmosphere would display our pollution. The crystal river would be befouled with our touch. Transformation must take place now or no transformation at all. Give sin full chance in your heart, and the transformation will be downward instead of upward. Instead of a crystal it will be a cinder.

In the days of Carthage a Christian girl was condemned to die for her faith, and a boat was bedaubed with tar and pitch and filled with combustibles and set on fire, and the Christian girl was placed in the boat, and the wind was offshore, and the boat floated away with its precious treasure. No one can doubt that boat landed at the shore of heaven. Sin wants to put you in a fiery boat and shove you off in an opposite direction—off from peace, off from God, off from heaven, everlastingly off, and the port toward which you would sail would be a port of darkness, and the guns that would greet you would be the guns of despair, and the flags that would wave at your arrival would be the black flags of death. Oh, my brother, you must either kill sin or sin will kill you. It is no exaggeration when I say that any man or woman that wants to be saved may be saved. Tremendous choice! A thousand people are choosing this moment between salvation and destruction, between light and darkness, between charred ruin and glorious crystallization.

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN



Tawdry Bead Chains.

Bead chains are not admired by the woman who dresses well and so far are more affected by seekers after novelty. They are tawdry and would spoil the appearance of a handsome gown. They are, however, but a fleeting fancy and will soon sink into oblivion.

Skirts Are Longer.

Dress skirts are longer than ever before, some of the loveliest garden party gowns trailing over the grass in undulating folds, while the upper portion fits like a glove. Women find the clinging skirt with bouffant foot trimming far too becoming to be abandoned for something that is not nearly so graceful. Pompadour gauzes, organdies and soft muslins are made with long, serpentine trains, which are finished with innumerable little ruches and ruffles gathered or pleated. There is no stiffening whatever around the bottom of fashionable skirts, simply ruffles and flounces, to give the desired flare.

Smart Women of Seventy.

In the Government offices in Washington probably thirty-five per cent. of the female employes are past middle life, and twenty-five per cent. are over fifty years of age. There are hundreds of women in the departments over seventy years of age, earning from $900 to $1400 and $1600 a year. In no other field of labor are positions paying such very high salaries opened to be filled by women of seventy, grandmothers, in fact.

During the past seventeen years 2044 women have entered the service of the Government in Washington through means of the competitive examinations of the civil service alone. In the civil service there are no less than fifty-seven different examinations which are open to women. One-third of the entire force of the Government in Washington is composed of women.—Washington Star.

European Tea Rooms.

Gentlewomen are finding pleasant fields of employment in the opening of English tea rooms in Continental cities. Such places, daintily equipped and intelligently managed, yield good returns for a moderate outlay. An establishment of the kind recently opened in Rome is flourishing. It is patronized largely by English and Americans, but the Italians as well are taking kindly to the idea. They seem especially fond of buttered scones. An acquaintance with the language of the country is, of course, necessary where such a venture is contemplated. Those who have already tried the experiment agree in thinking it advisable to employ an English woman who understands the proper making of tea, coffee and chocolate. The proprietors of the English tea room in Rue St. Placide, Paris, do the cooking themselves, but there are several of them. As a means of earning a modest livelihood the serving of afternoon tea on the Continent grows in favor.—London Express.

Poor Girls at Vassar.

Suppose, for example, you go to Vassar. The reasonable tuition of $400 a year, the scholarships and loan funds, the thousand and one odd services to be done, "for a consideration," the democratic spirit that promptly distinguishes service from servility, and takes a girl for what she can do best—all these conditions give the poor girl a chance at Vassar, as well as the rich one. Nobody knows whether you are uncrating your own bicycle, for convenience, or one for somebody else—for fifty cents—and nobody cares. You may earn money by ironing the wrinkles out of gowns, delivering the mail, playing the piano for gymnastics, arranging the books before service in the chapel, sketching in ink, or copying Gibson's pictures, classifying in the museum, copying with the mimeograph, or inventing some scheme that no one before you has thought of. Once a girl conducted a "bureau of sales" on commission for all who had articles to dispose of, and she made it pay well. For some of the reasons mentioned, or because Vassar was the first woman's college fully equipped as such, or because you wish to apply to the men Emerson's supreme test of friendship, "ability to do without it," while pursuing a curriculum as advanced as theirs, or just because you fancy you have a "good time," you are going to Vassar.—Success.

The Servant Question in Norway.

William E. Curtis, who is traveling in Norway, says that the servant-girl problem has been solved there, although he doubts whether a similar solution would be accepted by domestic servants in America. "In large cities like Bergen and Christiania," he writes, "there is a central employment bureau under the direction of the municipal government, and twice a year—one week before New Year's Day, and one week before St. John's Day, the 24th of June—there is a general change of servants by those who are dissatisfied with existing conditions, and engagements are made for the ensuing six months of the year.

"Families who want servants fill out blanks setting forth what is required, and the wages they are willing to pay. These are filed at the employment office, and are noted in a conspicuous manner upon a blackboard. Women or men in search of employment go to this bureau during the weeks named, examine the blackboard, and apply to the clerk in charge for further information. If they desire to apply for a particular position they submit their recommendations to the clerk, and if he is satisfied he gives them a card to the lady of the house. That card is good for the day only, and must be returned to the lady of the house before the close of office hours. If the girl is engaged, the blanks upon the card are filled out with a general statement as to her duties, the term of service and the wages agreed upon, and the card is filed away for reference, if necessary.

"If the lady of the house is not satisfied with the applicant she sends her away, and returns the card marked 'not satisfactory' to headquarters, with a request that other applicants be sent to her. If the applicant is satisfactory the lady of the house pays her bonus of one krone or two kroner, called "hand money"—that is, she crosses her hand with silver as an evidence of good faith—and the girl agrees to report for duty within one week after New Year's or Midsummer's Day, as the case may be. This is to allow her present employer an opportunity to fill her place."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Boudoir Chat:

A distinguished Irish antiquary was Miss Margaret Stokes, who recently died in Dublin.

Clovernook duck ranch marks the successful struggle of a woman at Chazy, N. Y., near Lake Champlain.

At Bay City, Mich., at Saginaw, Mich., and at Ellenville, N. Y., the city electric light plants are operated by women.

Out of fifteen prizes recently offered by the American Board of Foreign Missions to Sunday-school pupils for essays upon missionary themes, fourteen have been won by girls.

Mrs. Bissell has entire charge of a carpet-sweeper factory of Grand Rapids, Mich. It is even rumored that the invention was hers rather than that of her husband, now deceased.

Mrs. Laura Alderman, of Hurley, S. D., owns the largest apple orchard in the Northwest. It is known all over the country, and has been in its present hands for twenty-four years.

Mrs. John Kidder, of Nevada County, Cal., is President of the narrow-gauge road running from Colfax to Nevada City. Her husband owned much stock, and during his illness she familiarized herself with the business.

The daughter of a wealthy Buffalo man, Miss Ionia Roe, aged twenty-four, has creditably passed the Government examination for steamboat pilot's license. Having accompanied her father on many yachting tours, she can boast sixteen years' service at the wheel. The license was granted in Virginia.

A very young woman of Syracuse, N. Y., is paying her way through college by a domestic occupation on a large scale. Even as a child her spare time was spent in fruit canning and jelly making, and this work she has found more lucrative than undergraduate teaching in order to secure money for her university expenses.

FADS AND FANCIES

Winged devices are well to the front in the procession of brooches.

Silver girdles to be worn over a silk belt are heavy in character and of dark oxidized finish.

Unique as a brooch is a golden dragon, holding in its mouth a large diamond. A golden spear pierces its body.

Russian enamel is to be in high favor for jewelry. Rings, bracelets, chains, watches and brooches are adorned with it.

An extremely taking shirt waist set of sleeve links and four buttons consists of round opals set in rather wide bands of bright gold.

Photo rings are the latest adaptation of a popular idea. In form these are gold signet rings, either plain or carved, in which a tiny photograph takes the place of the usual engraved device.

The foreign idea of wearing a golden wreath in the hair was noted some time ago. At a recent swell English function one of the notable coiffure ornaments worn was a wreath of grape foliage and fruit, the leaves being rendered in green enamel and the clustered berries in gold.

Enameled floral brooches appear to be taking on new life among the fall goods, and some of the patterns are exceedingly dainty. Natural form prevails, with also a few gracefully conventionalized specimens. One of the latter consists of many frosted gold petals with pearl stamens and a diamond pistil.

New art has been introduced into hair brooches. A long, narrow leaf-like baroque pearl forms the centre of one of these. At either end is the head of a woman whose waving tresses of hair are drawn out to complete the frame of the stone and nestling in these tresses, here and there, are tiniest pearls.

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