

HUMDRUM ABOLISHED.

BERNON PREACHED SUNDAY, MAY 3, BY REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE.

A stirring exhortation to Christians to make their religion lively, based upon the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, the Great King.

BROOKLYN, May 3.—The capacity of the New Tabernacle was fully tested this morning by the vast audience which assembled to hear Dr. Talmage in his handsome and spacious church. He is now preaching there morning and evening, and the Christian Herald services in New York have been discontinued. This has caused much regret to many people in that city. A memorial was presented and signed by influential citizens asking Dr. Talmage to continue the services. He could not see his way to comply at the time, but as he was evidently impressed by the warmth of the welcome given him in the metropolis, and deeply moved by the good that was done, it is not improbable that in the near future he will again be found duplicating his usefulness by ministering to two congregations, as he has been doing during the past seven months. His subject this morning was "Humdrum Abolished" and his text II Chronicles ix, 9: "Of spices great abundance; neither was there any such spice as the Queen of Sheba gave King Solomon."

A WONDERFUL BUILDING. What is that building out yonder glittering in the sun? Have you not heard? It is the house of the forest of Lebanon. King Solomon has just taken to it his bride, the princess of Egypt. You see the pillars of the portico, and a great tower, adorned with one thousand shields of gold, hung on the outside of the tower—five hundred of the shields of gold manufactured at Solomon's order, five hundred were captured by David, his father, in battle. See how they blaze in the noonday sun!

Solomon goes up the ivory stairs of his throne between twelve lions in statuary, and sits down on the back of the golden bull, the head of the bronze beast turned toward the people. The family and attendants of the king are so many that the caterers of the place have to provide every day one hundred sheep and thirteen oxen, besides the birds and the venison. I hear the stamping and pawing of four thousand fine horses in the royal stables. There were important officials who had charge of the work of gathering the straw and the barley for these horses. King Solomon was an early riser, tradition says, and used to take a ride out at daybreak; and when in his white apparel, behind the swiftest horses of all the realm, and followed by mounted archers in purple, as the cavalcade dashed through the streets of Jerusalem I suppose it was something worth getting up at five o'clock in the morning to look at.

Solomon was not like some of the kings of the present day—crowned imbecility. All the splendor of his palace and retinue was eclipsed by his intellectual power. Why, he seemed to know everything. He was the first great naturalist the world ever saw. Peacocks from India straggled in the trees and deer stalked the parks, and there were aquariums with foreign fish and aviaries with foreign birds, and tradition says these birds were so well tamed that Solomon might walk clear across the city under the shadow of their wings as they hovered and flitted about him.

SOLOMON AND HIS RIDDLES. More than this, he had a great reputation for the conundrums and riddles that he made and guessed. He and King Hiram, his neighbor, used to sit by the hour and ask riddles, each one paying in money if he could not answer or guess the riddle. The Solomon's navy visited all the world, and the sailors, of course, talked about the wealth of their king, and about the riddles and enigmas that he made and solved, and the news spread until Queen Balkis, away off south, heard of it, and sent messengers with a few riddles that she would like to have Solomon solve, and a few puzzles which she would like to have him find out. She sent among other things to King Solomon a diamond with a hole so small that a needle could not penetrate it, asking him to thread that diamond. And Solomon took a worm and put it at the opening in the diamond, and the worm crawled through, leaving the thread in the diamond.

The queen also sent a goblet to Solomon, asking him to fill it with water that did not pour from the sky, and she did not rush out from the earth, and immediately Solomon put a slave on the back of a swift horse and galloped him around and around the park until the horse was nigh exhausted, and from the perspiration of the horse the goblet was filled. She also sent King Solomon five hundred boys in girls' dress, and five hundred girls in boys' dress, wondering if he would be acute enough to find out the deception. Immediately Solomon, when he saw them wash their faces, knew from the way they applied the water that it was all a cheat.

THE VISIT OF THE QUEEN. Queen Balkis was so pleased with the acuteness of Solomon that she said, "I'll just go and see him for myself." Yonder it comes—the cavalcade—horses and dromedaries, chariots and charioteers, jingling harness and clattering hoofs, and blazing shields, and flying ensigns, and clapping symbols. The plumes of war are in the perfume. She brings cinnamon and saffron and calamus and frankincense and all manner of sweet spices. As the retinue sweeps through the gate the armed guard inhale the aroma. "Halt!" cry the charioteers, as the wheels grind the gravel in front of the pillared portico of the king. Queen Balkis alights in an atmosphere bewitched with perfume. As the dromedaries are driven up to the king's storehouses, and the bundles of camphor are unloaded, and the sacks of cinnamon, and the boxes of spices are opened, the purveyors of the palace discover what my text announces, "Of spices, great abundance; neither was there any such spice as the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."

Well, my friends, you know that all the theologians agree in making Solomon a type of Christ, and making the Queen of Sheba a type of every truth seeker, and I shall take the responsibility of saying that all the spikenard and cassia and frankincense which the Queen of Sheba brought to King Solomon are mightily suggestive of the sweet spices of our holy religion. Christianity is not a collection of sharp technicalities and angular facts and chronological tables and dry statistics. Our religion is compared to frankincense and to cassia, but never to nighthead. It is a bundle of myrrh. It is a dash of holy light. It is a sparkle of cool fountains. It is an opening of opaline gates. It is a collection of spices. Would God that we were as in taking spices to our Divine King as Queen Balkis was wise in taking the spices to the earthly Solomon! What many of us most need is to have the humdrum driven out of our

life and the humdrum out of our religion. The American and English and Scottish church will die of humdrum unless there be a change.

An editor from San Francisco a few weeks ago wrote me saying he was getting up for his paper a symposium from many clergymen, discussing among other things "Why do not people go to church?" and he wanted my opinion, and I gave it in one sentence, "People do not go to church because they cannot stand the humdrum." The fact is that most people have so much humdrum in their worldly calling that they do not want to have added the humdrum of religion. We need in all our sermons and exhortations and songs and prayers more of what Queen Balkis brought to Solomon—namely, more spice.

LIFE IS HUMDRUM. The fact is that the duties and cares of this life, coming to us from time to time, are stupid often and insane and intolerable. Here are men who have been bartering and negotiating, climbing, pounding, hammering for twenty years, forty years, fifty years. One great long drudgery has their life been. Their face anxious, their feelings benumbed, their days monotonous. What is necessary to brighten up that man's life, and to sweeten that acid disposition, and to put sparkle into the man's spirits? The spicing of our holy religion. Why, if between the losses of life there dashed a gleam of an eternal gain; if between the betrayals of life there came the gleam of the undying friendship of Christ, if in dull times in business we found ministering spirits flying to and fro in our office and store and shop, everyday life, instead of being a stupid monotony, would be a glorious inspiration, pendulating between calm satisfaction and high rapture.

How any woman keeps her heart about the religion of Christ to help her is a mystery to me. To have to spend the greater part of one's life, as many women do, in planning for the meals, in stitching garments that will soon be rent again, and deploring breakages and supervising tardy subordinates and driving off dust that soon again will settle, and doing the same thing day in and day out, and year in and year out, until their hair silver, and the back stoops, and the spectacles crawl to the eyes, and the grave breaks open under the thin sole of the shoe—oh, it is a long monotony! But when Christ comes to the drawing room, and comes to the kitchen, and comes to the nursery, and comes in the dwelling, then how cheery becomes all womanly duties. She is never alone now; Martha gets through fretting and joins Mary at the feet of Jesus.

All day long Deborah is happy because she can help Lepidoth; Hannah because she can make a coat for young Samuel; Miriam, because she can watch her infant brother; Rachel, because she can help her father water the stock; the widow of Sarepta, because the crust of oil is being replenished. O woman! having in your pantry a nest of boxes containing all kinds of condiments, why have you not tried in your heart and life the spicing of our holy religion? "Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

SOME RELIGION IS INSIPID. I must confess that a great deal of the religion of this day is utterly insipid. There is nothing piquant or elevating about it. Men and women go around humming psalms in a minor key, and culturing melancholy, and their worship has in it more sighs than rapture. We do not doubt their piety. Oh, no. But they are sitting at a feast where the cook has forgotten to season the food. Everything is flat in their experience and in their conversation. Emancipated from sin and death and hell, and on their way to a magnificent heaven, they act as though they were trudging on toward an everlasting Botany bay. Religion does not seem to agree with them. It seems to catch in the windpipe and become a tight strangulation instead of an exhilaration.

All the infidel books that have been written from Voltaire down to Herbert Spencer, have not done so much damage to our Christianity as insipid Christians. Who wants a religion woven out of the shadows of the night? Why go growling on your way to celestial enhancement? Come out of that cave and sit down in the warm light of the Sun of Righteousness. Away with your odes to melancholy and Hervey's "Meditations Among the Tombs."

Then let our songs abound, And every tear be dry, We're marching through Emmanuel's ground To fairer worlds on high.

I have to say, also, that we need to put more spice and enlivenment in our religious teaching, whether it be in the prayer meeting, or in the Sabbath school, or in the church. We ministers need more fresh air and sunshine in our lungs and our heart and our head. Do you wonder that the world is so far from being converted when you find so little vivacity in the pulpit and in the pew? We want, like the Lord, to plant in our sermons and exhortations more lilies of the field. We want fewer rhetorical elaborations and fewer sequipedalian words; and when we talk about shadows, we do not want to say adumbration; and when we mean querness, we do not want to talk about idiosyncrasy; or if a stitch in the back, we do not want to talk of lumbago, but in the plain vernacular preach that gospel which proposes to make all men happy, honest, victorious and free.

In other words, we want more cinnamon and less garlic. Let this be so in all the different departments of work to which the Lord calls us. Let us be plain. Let us be earnest. Let us be common sensical. When we talk to the people in a vernacular they can understand they will be very glad to come and receive the truth we present. Would to God that Queen Balkis would drive her spice laden dromedaries into all our sermons and prayer meeting exhortations.

LIFE AND SPICE IN CHRISTIAN WORK. More than that, we want more life and spice in our Christian work. The poor do not want so much to be groaned over as sung to. With the bread and medicines and the garments you give them, let there be an accompaniment of smiles and brisk encouragement. Do not stand and talk to them about the wretchedness of their abode, and the hunger of their looks, and the sadness of their lot. Ah! they know it better than you can tell them. Show them the bright side of the thing, if there be any bright side. Tell them good times will come. Tell them that for the children of God there is immortal rescue. Wake them up out of their stolidity by an inspiring laugh, and while you send in help, like the Queen of Sheba also send in the spices.

There are two ways of meeting the poor. One is to come into their house with a nose elevated in disgust, as much as to say: "I don't see how you live here in this neighborhood. It actually makes me sick. There is that bundle; take it, you poor, miserable wretch, and make the most of it." Another way is to go into the abode of the poor in a manner which seems to say: "The blessed Lord sent me. He was

poor himself. It is not more for the good I am going to try to do you than it is for the good you can do me." Coming in that spirit the gift will be as aromatic as the spikenard on the feet of Christ, and all the hovelers in that alley will be fragrant with the spice.

We need more spice and enlivenment in our church music. Churches sit discussing whether they shall have choirs, or psalm-tors, or organs, or bass viols, or cornets. I say, take that which will bring out the most inspiring music. If we had half as much zeal and spirit in our churches as we have in the songs of our Sabbath schools it would not be long before the whole earth would quake with the coming God. Why, in most churches nine-tenths of the people do not sing, or they sing so feebly that the people sitting at the front do not know they are singing. People mouth and mumble the praises of God; but there is not more than one out of a hundred who makes "a joyful noise" unto the Rock of Our Salvation. Sometimes, when the congregation forgets itself, and is all absorbed in the goodness of God or the glories of heaven, I get an intimation of what church music will be a hundred years from now, when the coming generation shall wake up to its duty.

WAKE UP. I promise a high spiritual blessing to any one who will sing in church, and who will sing so heartily that the people all around cannot help but sing. Wake up! all the churches from Bangor to San Francisco and across Christendom. It is not a matter of preference, it is a matter of religious duty. Oh, for fifty times more volume of sound. German chorals in German cathedrals surpass us, and yet Germany has nothing at the hands of God compared with our churches and our hymns. The acclam in Berlin is louder than that in Brooklyn! Soft, long drawn out, music is appropriate for the drawing room and appropriate for the concert, but St. John gives an idea of the sonorous and resonant congregational singing appropriate for churches when, in listening to the temple service of heaven, he says: "I heard a great voice, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the hail for the church, and I heard a voice saying, 'Join with me in a crusade, giving me not only your hearts but the mighty uplifting of your voices, and I believe we can, through Christ's grace, sing fifty thousand souls into the kingdom of Christ. An argument they can laugh at, a sermon they may talk down, but a vast audience joining in one anthem is irresistible. Would that Queen Balkis would drive all her spice laden dromedaries into our church music. "Neither was there any such spice as the Queen of Sheba gave King Solomon."

Now I want to impress this audience with the fact that religion is sweetness and perfume and spikenard and saffron and cinnamon and cassia and frankincense, and all sweet spices together. "Oh," you say, "I have not looked at it as such. I thought it was a nuisance; it had for me a repulsion; I held my breath as though it were cholera; I have been appalled at its advance; I have said, 'If I have any religion at all, I want to have just as little of it as is possible to get through with.'" Oh, what a mistake you have made, my brother. The religion of Christ is a present and everlasting redolence. It counteracts all trouble. Just put it on the stand beside the pillow of sickness. It catches in the curtains and perfumes the stifling air. It sweetens the cup of bitter medicine, and throws a glow on the gloom of the turned lattice. It is a balm for the aching side, and a soft bandage for the temple stung with pain.

It lifted Samuel Rutherford into a revelry of spiritual delight while he was in physical agonies. It helped Richard Baxter until, in the midst of such a complication of diseases as perhaps no other man ever suffered, he wrote "The Saint's Everlasting Rest." And it poured light upon John Bunyan's dungeon—the light of the shining gate of the shining city. And it is good for rheumatism, and for neuralgia, and for low spirits, and for consumption; it is the catholicon for all disorders. Yes, it will heal all your sorrows.

ALL HAVE HAD SORROW. Why did you look so sad today when you came in? Alas! for the loneliness and the heartbreak, and the load that is never lifted from your soul. Some of you go about feeling like Macaulay when he wrote, "If I had another month of such days as I have been spending, I would be impatient to get down into my little narrow crib in the ground like a weary factory child." And there have been times in your life when you wished you could get out of this life. You have said, "Oh, how sweet to my lips would be the dust of the valley," and wished you could pull over you in your last slumber the coverlet of green grass and daisies. You have said: "Oh, how beautifully quiet it must be in the tomb. I wish I was there." I see all around about me widowhood and orphanage and childlessness; sadness, disappointment, perplexity. If I could ask all those to rise in this audience who have felt no sorrow and been buffeted by no disappointment—if I could ask all such to rise, how many would rise? Not one.

A widowed mother with her little child went west, hoping to get better wages there, and she was taken sick and died. The overseer of the poor got her body and put it in a box, and put it in a wagon, and started down the street toward the cemetery at full trot. The little child—the only child—ran after it through the streets, bare headed, crying, "Bring me back my mother! bring me back my mother!" And it was said that as the people looked on and saw her crying after that which lay in the box in the wagon—all she loved on earth—it is said the whole village was in tears. And that is what a great many of you are doing—chasing the dead. Dear Lord, is there no appearance for all this sorrow that I see about me? Yes, the thought of resurrection and reunion far beyond this scene of struggle and tears. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Across the coaches of your sick and across the graves of your dead I fling this shower of sweet spices. Queen Balkis, driving up to the pillared portico of the house of cedar, carried no such pungency of perfume as exhales today from the Lord's garden. It is peace. It is sweetness. It is comfort. It is infinite satisfaction. This Gospel I commend to you. Some one could not understand why an old German Christian scholar used to be always so calm and happy and hopeful when he had so many trials and sicknesses and ailments. A man secreted himself in the house. He said, "I mean to watch this old scholar and Christian;" and he saw the old Christian man go to his room and sit down on the chair beside the stand and open the Bible and begin to read. He read on and on, chapter after chapter, hour after hour, until his face was all aglow with the tidings from heaven; and when the clock struck twelve he arose and shut his Bible,

and said: "Blessed Lord, we are on the same old terms yet. Good night. Good night."

Oh, you sin parched and you trouble pounded, here is comfort, here is satisfaction. Will you come and get it? I cannot tell you what the Lord offers you hereafter so well as I can tell you now. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Have you read of the Taj Mahal in India, in some respects the most majestic building on earth? Twenty thousand men were twenty years in building it. It cost about sixteen millions of dollars. The walls are of marble, inlaid with carnelian from Bagdad, and turquoise from Thibet, and Jasper from the Punjab, and amethyst from Persia, and all manner of precious stones. A traveler says that it seems to him like the shining of an enchanted castle of burnished silver. The walls are two hundred and forty-five feet high, and from the top of these springs a dome thirty feet high, that dome containing the most wonderful echo the world has ever known, so that ever and anon travelers standing below with flutes and drums and harps are testing that echo, and the sounds from below strike up, and then come down, as it were, the voices of angels all around about the building. There is around it a garden of tamarind and bay and palm and all the floral glories of the ransacked earth.

But that is only a tomb of a dead empress, and it is tame compared with the grandeur which God has builded for your living and immortal spirit. Oh, home of the blessed! Foundations of gold! Arches of victory! Capstones of praise! And a dome in which there are echoing and re-echoing the hallelujahs of the ages. And around about that mansion is a garden—the garden of God—and all the springing fountains are the bottled tears of the church in the wilderness, and all the crimson of flowers is the deep hue that was caught up from the carnage of earthly martyrdoms, and the fragrance is the prayer of all the saints, and the aroma puts into utter forgetfulness the cassia, and the spikenard, and the frankincense, and the world renowned spices which the Queen Balkis, of Abyssinia, flung at the feet of King Solomon.

When shall these eyes thy heaven bright walls And pearls gates behold, Thy bulwarks, with salvation brought, And streets of shining gold?

Through obduracy on our part, and through the rejection of that Christ who makes heaven possible, I wonder if any of us will miss that spectacle? I fear! I fear! The queen of the south will rise up in judgment against this generation and condemn it, because she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here! May God grant that through your own practical experience you may find that religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace—that it is perfume now and perfume forever. And there was an abundance of spice; "neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."

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