

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

The Eminent Brooklyn Divine's Sunday Sermon.

Subject: "Humdrum Abolished."

TEXT: "Of spices great abundance, neither was there any such spice as the Queen of Sheba gave King Solomon."—II Chronicles, ix.

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 with one thousand bells of silver. Outside of these 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 two lions in stately air, 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 palace have to provide every day one hundred and thirty oxen, and 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 has it that he awoke 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 person in the world to use a microscope. He had peeped from India, through the telescope, and he had peeped 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 wings of the angels, and they hovered and flitted about him.

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 trying to outwit the other. He was not a riddle maker, he was a riddle solver, 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 find the thread.

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 tell her what it was. He took from the sky, and that did not do it 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 cute 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.

Queen Balkis was so pleased with the wisdom 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 big shields, and flying ensigns, and clapping symbols. The place is saturated with perfume. She brings cinnamon and saffron and calamus and frankincense and all manner of sweet spices. As the retinue sweeps through the gates, the gilded wheels grind the Queen of Sheba into the King of Sheba, and the Queen of Sheba is 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 nightshade. It is a bundle of myrror. 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 wise in taking spices to our Divine King as Queen Balkis was wise in taking the spices to the earthly Solomon!

What many of us need now is to have the humdrum driven out of our life and the humdrum out of our religion. The American and English 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.

The fact is that the duties and cares of this life, coming to us from time to time, are stupid often and lame and intolerable. Here are men who have been battling and negotiating, hammering, pounding, hammering for twenty years, forty years, fifty years. One great long drudgery has their life been. Their face anxious, their feelings banished, 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 spirit? 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 unsinking throne; if in the midst of our daily drudgery we found ministering spirits flying to and fro in our office and store and street, every day instead of being a stupor mugging world, a glori-

ous inspiration, penduluming between calm satisfaction and high rapture.

How any woman keeps house without 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 cooking 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, turning their hair silvers, and the back stoops, and the spectacles crawl to the eyes, and the graves breaking them up 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 cheer becomes all womanly duties. She is never alone now, Marthe gets through fretting and joins Mary at the feet of Jesus.

All day long Deborah is happy because she can help Laphoth; 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 cruce 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 the other shall not be taken away from her." 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 muttering recitatives, and their worship has in it more sighs than capture. 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 hearts. 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 throat and become a slight 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 lubricious Christians. Who want a religion woven out of the shadows of the night? Why go growling on your way to celestial entitlement? Come out of that cave and sit down in the warm light of the Sun of Righteousness. Away with your odious melancholy and Harvey's "Meditations Among the Tombs."

Then let our songs abound, and every text be dry. We march through Ekmassah's grand To fairer world's 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 we here, do you wonder that the word 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 sepulchral 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 idiosyncracies; or if a stitch in the back, we do not want to talk about lumbago, but in the plain vernacular preach that gospel which proposes to make all men happy, honest, prosperous and free.

In other words, we want more cinnamon and less ginger. 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 sensual. 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.

More than that, we want more life and spice in our Christian work. The poor do not want so much to be ground over as sugar to. With the bread and medicines and the garments you give them, let there be an accompanying word of encouragement and promise. Do not stand and talk to them about the wretchedness of their abode, and the hunger of their looks, and the hardness 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 hope of fall then 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, 'kiss' it, you poor miserables, 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 for you than it is for the good you can do for me. Come in that spirit the gift will be aromatic to the spikenard on the feet of Christ, and all the hovels 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 choir, or psalteries, or organs, or bass violins, 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 make us long before the whole world would wake up with the coming God. Why, in most churches nine-tenths of the people do not sing, or they sing so feebly that the people at their elbows do not know they are singing. People mouth and mumble the practices of a hundred who makes "a joyful noise" into 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 inspiration that church music will be a hundred years from now, when the coming generation shall wake up to its duty.

I promise 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, fortify times more volume of sound. German chorals in German cathedrals are a thing of the hands of God compared with America; and ought the acclamation in Berlin be louder than that in Brooklyn? Soft, low draw out music is appropriate for the drawing room and appropriate for the concert, but St. John gives us an idea of the sort of music and sacred 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 voice of mighty thunderings, calling...

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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 glory. Let us gather, let us laugh at, a sermion they can 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 no religion at all as such.' I thought it was a nuisance; it had for me a repulsion; I held my breath as though it were malarious; I have been appalled at its advance. I have said, if I have any religion at all, I want to have just a little of it. As it is possible to get a minor key and an enduring melancholy, and here we look at it as such. I thought it was a nuisance; it had for me a repulsion; I held my breath as though it were malarious; I have been appalled at its advance. I have said, if I have any religion at all, I want to have just a little of it. As it is possible to get a minor key and an enduring melancholy, and here we look at it as such. 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