

RELIGION EXALTED.

Dr. Talmage Draws a Sermon from the Words of Job.

Discourse on the Latter's Comparison of Religion and the Beautiful Crystal—Power of the Gospel.

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The charm of an exalted religion is by Dr. Talmage in this discourse illustrated and commended; text, Job, 28:17: "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 saying 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 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 square, or it is a rectangle, or 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 laterly when they ought to be vertical. Everything in our life arranged without any possibility of mistake. Each life a six-sided 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 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 the 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; 3,000 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 region. 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.

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, when standing in the midst of the amphitheater 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."

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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 hoar frost 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 crowns. Do you know that the Bible mentions a cross but 27 times, while it mentions a crown 80 times? Ask that old man what he thinks of religion. He has been a close observer. He has been cultivating an esthetic 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 by 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 chrysolite—he holds 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 cheek 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."

Again, religion is superior to the crystal in its transformations. The diamond is only a crystallization. Carbonate of lime rises till it becomes calcite or aragonite. Red oxide of copper crystallizes into cubes and octahedrons. Those crystals which adorn our persons and our homes and our museums have only been resurrected from forms that were far from lustre. Scientists for ages have been examining these wonderful transformations. But I tell you in the Gospel of the Son of God there is a more wonderful transformation. Over souls by reason of sin black as coal and hard as iron God, by His comforting grace, stoops and says: "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." "What!" say you. "Will God wear jewelry?" If He wanted it, He could make the stars of the heaven His belt and have the evening cloud for the sandals of His feet, but He does not want that adornment. He does not want 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 scaples 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." Now, I have no liking for those people who are always enlarging in Christian meetings about their early dissipation. Do not go into the particulars, my brother. Simply say you were sick, but make no display of your ulcers. The chief stock in trade of some ministers and Christian workers seems to be their early crimes and dissipations. The number of pockets you picked and the number of chickens you stole make very poor prayer meeting rhetoric. Besides that, it discourages other Christian people who never got drunk or stole anything. But it is pleasant to know that those who were farthest down have been brought highest up. Out of infernal serfdom into eternal liberty. Out of darkness into light. From coal to the solitaire. "The crystal cannot equal it."

But, my friends, the chief transforming power of the Gospel will not be seen in this world, and not until Heaven breaks upon the soul. When that light falls upon the soul, then you will see the crystals. What a magnificent setting for these jewels of eternity! I sometimes hear people representing Heaven in a way that is far from attractive to me. It seems almost a vulgar Heaven as they represent it, with great blotches of color and bands of music making a deafening racket. John represents Heaven as exquisitely beautiful. Three crystals! In one place he says: "Her light was like a precious stone, clear as crystal." In another place he says: "I saw a pure river from under the throne, clear as crystal." In another place he says: "Before the throne there was a sea of glass clear as crystal." Three crystals! John says crystal atmosphere. That means health. Balm of eternal June. What weather after the world's east wind! No rack of stormclouds. 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 embitter 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 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 fouled 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 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 off the shore, 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.

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How He Lost His Chill. "I see they are predicting a cold winter," said the man with the summer suit, "but I'm not worrying about it. In fact, I'm hoping for an early winter and something below zero right along. You see, I went over to Philadelphia last June and got a chill and was never so cold in my life. I walked into a saloon and asked for a hot Scotch, but after looking at me for a minute the bartender said: 'What you want is four fingers of regular old burning lava, with two red peppers, a dash of horseradish and a spoonful of tobacco sauce.' 'He prepared it, and I drank it, and do you know I have worn an alpaca suit ever since, and had to sleep with my feet to a chunk of ice to even get up a decent shiver.'—Brooklyn Citizen.

Promotion for Bravery. Word reaches us of a small band of soldiers who held at bay a large number of Filipinos for over two hours until assistance arrived, thereby saving an important point from capture. For their bravery they were all given promotion. To be brave it is necessary to have strong nerves and a good digestion. If your stomach is weak and you suffer from indigestion, heartburn, belching, nervousness or acidity, you should try **WATERBURY'S Stomach Bitters**. It will cure you.

Not That Kind. "These hirelings of capital may interrupt me," growled the shaggy-haired orator, "but they can't make me stop talking! If they had their way, my fellow citizens, they would silence me with giant powder!" "Not at all, sir," replied one of the jeering minions of capital. "They would use insect powder on you!"—Detroit Free Press.

Of Two Evils. "All those stories the papers are printing about you are lies," said the politician's friend. "Why don't you make them stop it?" "I would," replied the politician, "but I'm afraid they'd begin printing the truth then."—Philadelphia Press.

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How It May Be. "Have you any sort of machine to sew on buttons?" asked the bachelor in the twentieth century department store. "You will find the matrimonial agency the third aisle to the right," replied the floorwalker.—Philadelphia Record.

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"It is better to give than to receive," said the street car conductor, as he sized up the plugged nickel.—Philadelphia Record.

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