

THE STORY OF CHRIST

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI
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FATHERS AND SONS
Jesus was speaking in a house, perhaps at Capernaum, and men and women, all hungering for life and justice, all needing comfort and consolation, had filled the house.

And yet fathers at least should be faithful, because, according to Jesus, fathers have more duties toward their sons than sons toward their fathers. The Old Law recognizes only the first: "Honor thy father and thy mother," said Moses. But he does not add, "Protect and love thy children."

Here also the divine genius of the Overthrower sees what is lacking in the old ideals and insists upon fighting the balance. Fathers should give without sparing and without rest; even if the children are ungrateful, even if they abandon their father, even if they are unworthy in the eyes of the platinous sagacity of the world.

But from every point of view, fathers are debtors. The tremendous responsibility which they have accepted in giving life to a new human being must be met. Like the Heavenly Father, they must give to those of their children who ask and to those who keep silence, to the worthy and the unworthy, to those who sit about the family board and to those who are wanderers over the earth, to the good and to the bad, to the first and to the last.

Jesus therefore went on talking to the people who had filled the house. He repeated the most touching figures of His inspiration, told the most persuasive stories of the Kingdom, looked at them with those luminous eyes which shone down into the soul as the morning sun penetrates the shut-in darkness of a house.

Any one of us would give what remains of his life to be looked at by those eyes, to gaze for a moment into those eyes, shining with infinite tenderness; to listen for a moment only to that thrilling voice, changing the Semitic vernacular into melodious music. Those men and women who are now dead, those poor men, those poor women, those wretched people who today are dust in the air of the desert, or clay under the hoofs of the camels, those men and those women whom in their lifetime no one envied, and whom we the living are forced to envy after their remote and obscure death; those men and those women heard that voice, saw those eyes.

But there came a stir and voices were heard at the door of the stammered; some one wished to come in. One of those present told Jesus, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee." But Jesus did not stir. "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren!" For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

My family is all here and I have no other family. The ties of blood do not count unless they are confirmed in the spirit. My father is the Father who made me like unto Him in the perfection of righteousness; my brothers are the poor who weep; my sisters are the women who have left their loves for Love. He did not mean with these words to deny the Virgin of Sorrows, of whose womb He was the fruit; He meant to say that from the day of His voluntary exile He belonged no more to the little family of Nazareth, but only to His mission as Saviour, to the great family of mankind.

In the new organization of salvation, spiritual affiliation surpasses the simple relationships of the flesh. "If any come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Individual love must disappear in universal love. We must choose between the old affections of the old mankind and the unique love of the New Man.

The family will disappear when men, in the celestial life, shall be better than men. In the world as it is, the family is an impediment for him who helps others to rise to higher things. "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father which is in heaven." He who leaves his family shall be infinitely rewarded. "And he said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left home, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Your Heavenly Father will never forsake you, your brothers in the Kingdom will never betray you; but the fathers and the brothers of earthly life might become your assassins. "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren and kinsfolks and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death."

on them—and Jesus once more was obliged to reprove them, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

The Disciples, bearded men, proud of their authority as mature men and as lieutenants of their future Lord, could not understand why their Master consented to waste time with children who could not yet speak plainly and could not understand the meaning of grown people's words. But Jesus set in their midst one of these children and said: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Here, too, the transposition of values is complete. In the Old Law, the child was to respect the grown man, to revere and imitate the old man. The little child was to take the grown person as his model. Perfection was supposed to lie in years of maturity, or, better yet, in old age. The child was respected only as containing the hope for future manhood. Jesus reversed these ideas; grown people were to take their example from little children, elders were to try to become like infants, fathers were to imitate their sons.

In the world as it was, as it is, controlled by force, where the only valued art is the art of acquiring riches and overcoming others, children are at the most only human larvae. In the New World announced by Christ, which will be governed by fearless purity and innocent love, children are the arch-types of happy citizens. The child who seems an imperfect man is thus more perfect than the grown man. The man who is so full of himself, who has come into the world to turn back, despoil himself of his complacent complexities and return to his first youth. From having been imitated he becomes an imitator, from his position as first he becomes last.

Jesus reaffirms His own likeness to a child, and declares with no hesitation that He is identical with the children who seek Him out. "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." The saint, the poor man, the poet, present themselves under this new form which sums them all up: the child, pure and candid as the saint, bare and needy as the poor man, marveling and loving like the poet.

Jesus loves children not only as unconscious models for those who wish to attain the perfection of the Kingdom, but as the actual mediums of truth. Their ignorance is more illumined than the doctrines of learned men; their ingenuousness is more powerful than the intellect which shows itself in reasoning words. Only a clear and untarnished mirror can reflect the images of the revelation.

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Their own wisdom stands in the way of the wise, because they think they understand everything. Their own intelligence is an impediment for the intelligent, because they are not capable of understanding any other light than that of the intellect. Only the simple can understand simplicity, the innocent, innocence, the loving, love. The revelation of Jesus, open only to the virgin soul, is all purification, purification and love. But man grows older, becomes more complicated, more corrupt, prouder, and learns the horrible pleasure of hatred. Every day he goes further from Paradise, becomes less capable of finding it. He takes pleasure in his steady downfall and glories in the useless learning which hides from him the only needful truth.

To find the new Paradise, the Kingdom of innocence and love, it is needful to become like children who have already what others must strive and struggle to regain. Jesus seeks out the company of sinners, of men and women, but He feels Himself with his true brothers only when He lays His hands on the heads of the children whom the Galilean mothers bring to Him as an offering.

TO BE CONTINUED

CHEERFULNESS
Bulwer Lytton declared that, "If there is a virtue in the world at which we should aim it is cheerfulness."

No wiser axiom could be uttered. Without cheerfulness life would be one eternal grind, with naught to lighten its burdens and brighten its devious pathways. People are spoken of as being "cheerful and light-hearted," "cheerful-minded," as having "a cheerful disposition," or as being "cheerful and heavy-hearted."

Those possessing the heaven-born quality of cheerfulness are not easily affected by bodily ills or adversities; to them there is a silver lining to every cloud. They, above all others, are the dispensers of happiness.

A cheerful face, like the sunshine, banishes the storm clouds. A cheery smile is a benediction that unconsciously drives away the frowns of the angry and depressed. It is not because the possessor of a cheerful disposition always says the wisest and tenderest things; it is the tone and manner in which one speaks, the expression of the eyes which penetrates to the soul and drives away cares and fears.

No matter what position people occupy in life, much of their success depends upon the cheerfulness with which they take hold of their duties. The cheerful servant is unsatisfactory, no matter with what precision and dispatch the work may be done. If, on the contrary, an employe is always bright and cheery, innumerable deficiencies will be excused and overlooked.

Of all people, the wife and the mother should be cheerful; the happiness of the husband and the children depends upon her. If she is low-spirited and melancholy, how can the husband come to her for sympathy and encouragement in his business worries? He looks to her for inspiration in all his undertakings. They may be sometimes very harassing, and he may be tried almost to desperation, and if he must go home to a wife whose face is without smiles and who is gloomy and spiritless, he is all the more depressed.

Whereas, if she is merry and bright, and insists that the worries he has are trivialities, and that they are sure to adjust themselves to his liking or to vanish altogether, nine times out of ten before he is really aware of the fact, he has forgotten them, or they have dwindled into insignificance. The mountains that despair builds up by brooding over molehills can best be removed by cheerfulness.

No duty is more obligatory than that of cheerfulness. What the sun is to nature, what God is to the stricken heart which knows how to lean upon Him, are the cheerful persons in the house and by the wayside.—The Monitor.

ANCIENT BASILICA RESTORED

HOLY YEAR PILGRIMS WILL VISIT ST. GEORGE IN VELABRO

Rome.—St. George in Velabro, one of the most ancient Roman Basilicas, will be visited with special interest by the pilgrims of the Holy Year. Recent restorations have been made to this famous old church under the direction of Cardinal Sincero, whose Titular it is.

The church, situated in the Velabro, near the Cloaca Maxima, goes back farther than the sixth century. It was erected by Pope Gregory the Great. Its Roman clock, which looks down upon the Arch of Septimius Severus, dates from the twelfth century, as does the actual portico, with its beautiful frieze.

The legends and souvenirs of the Roman epoch mingle with those of the Middle Ages about this entire quarter of Rome and the Basilica itself. This was the center of commerce in ancient Rome, together with the Forum Oltorium and the Forum Boarium.

UNIQUE HISTORY

The history of the Basilica, offers here and there great gaps. When St. Gregory the Great became a Deacon in 570, he ordered the Abbot Martinian Superior of the monks who resided there to restore the church and to officiate in it. Later, Leo II. gave it new prestige, in adding to the cult of St. George that of St. Sebastian. Tradition has also recorded that the head and blood of the Martyr, which were conserved in the patriarchate of the Lateran.

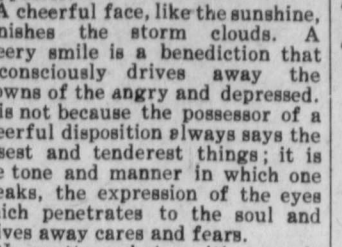
Little by little, however, the Basilica fell into ruins, to such a stage that it was necessary to reconstruct it under the care of Pope Gregory IV. in 827. Nothing more is heard of it until the end of the thirteenth century, an epoch when it arose from its ruins and was enriched by new paintings.

Pope Boniface VIII. made Cardinal Stefaneschi Titular of the church. Giotto himself was called to decorate the apse. Under Leo XII. the edifice was strengthened and two other partial restorations were made under Pope Gregory XVI. and Pius IX. Pope Pius IX. lived to see the last of the work performed in the year 1869.

Those who have visited the Basilica during the course of recent years have borne away an impression of sadness and of abandonment. The majestic pile seemed to be condemned by inexorable time to a definite death. Thanks to Cardinal Sincero, the impression is obliterated today and the aged temple has taken on new life. The work of restoration is going on with great rapidity and the workmen are daily extricating many of the ancient works of art. Notably, they have found portions of the former pavement beneath the present pavement of the church and the primitive Roman foundations are thus distinctly visible.

The treasures of the Basilica, paintings and other works of art, will be retouched in the ancient style and will delight the eye of all the visitors to the Eternal City who made a pilgrimage to St. George in Velabro.

Is your child full of life?



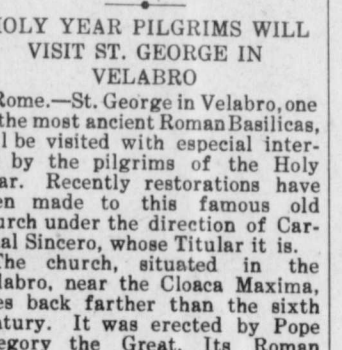
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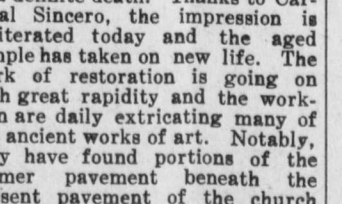
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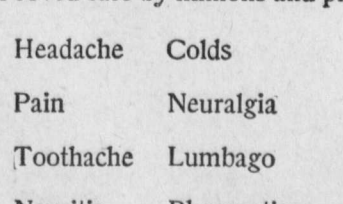
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