

in upon my thoughts, I fancied at first it was all a dream. But, no; it was stern reality, as the stains of blood upon my clothes too surely proved. So I said the De Profundis for the soul departed, and gave heartfelt thanks to our ever compassionate Queen for one more favour received at her loving hands. —Irish Catholic.

THE STORY OF CHRIST

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI
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LAMBS, SERPENTS AND DOVES
Those whom Jesus sent out to the conquest of souls were, to the eyes of the world, but they could be mild as sheep, wary as serpents, simple as doves—sheep without cowardice, serpents without poison, doves without lustfulness.

To be stripped of everything was the first duty of such soldiers. Seeking the poor, they should be poorer than the poor. And yet not beggars, for the laborer is worthy of his hire; the bread of life which they were to distribute to those hungering for justice deserved wheat bread in return. The laborers should set out on their wonderful work destitute of possessions, taking nothing for their journey save a staff only, no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse. They should be shod with sandals, clad in a single garment. The metals are a burden which weighs down the soul. The sheen of gold makes men forget the sun's splendor; the sheen of silver makes them forget the splendor of the stars; the sheen of copper makes them forget the splendor of fire. He who deals with metals weds himself to the earth and is bound fast to the earth. He does not know Heaven, and Heaven does not recognize him.

It is not enough to preach love of poverty to the poor, to talk to them about their suntuously heavy words of the rich until the rich willingly become poor. The Disciples destined to preach the beauty of poverty to both poor and rich were to set an example of happy poverty to every man in every house on every day. They were to carry nothing with them except the clothes on their backs and the sandals on their feet. They were to accept nothing; only the small piece of daily bread which would find on the tables of their hosts. The wandering priests of the goddess Siria and of other Oriental divinities carried with them, along with the sacred images, the wallet for offerings, the bag for alms, because common people do not value things which cost them nothing. The apostles of Jesus, on the contrary, were to refuse any gift or payment. "Freely ye have received, freely give." And as one of the disguises of wealth is merchandising, the messengers of the Kingdom were to renounce even a change of garments, sandals and staff: were to dispense with everything except the barest essentials.

They were to enter into the houses, open to all in a country where the locks and bolts of fear were not yet known, and which preserved some remembrance of nomad hospitality—they were to speak to the men and the women who lived there. Their duty was to announce that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, to explain in what way the kingdom of earth could become the Kingdom of Heaven, and to explain the one condition for this happy fulfilling of all the prophecies—repentance, conversion, transformation of the soul. As a proof that they were sent by One who had the authority to demand this change, they had power to heal the sick, to drive away with their words unclean spirits,—that is, the demons, and the vices which make men like demons.

They commanded men to renew their souls and at once with all the power which had been given them they aided them to commence this renovation. They did not leave them alone with this command, so difficult to execute. After the prophetic word, "The Kingdom is at hand," they began their labors; they worked to restore, to cleanse, to make over these souls which had been abandoned by their rightful shepherds. They explained what it was necessary to do to be worthy of the new Heaven on earth and they lent a hand at once to the work. In short, to complete the paradox they assassinated and brought to life. They killed the old Adam in every convert, but their words were the baptism of the second birth. Pilgrims without purses or bundles, they carried with them truth and life—peace.

"And when ye come into an house salute it," and this was the salutation, "Peace be with you." Those who received them gained peace, those who rejected them continued their bitter warfare. Coming away from the house or from the city which had not received them, they were to shake the dust from their feet, not because the dust of the houses and of the cities of those who were not willing to hear them was contaminated, but because shaking it from their feet is a symbolic answer to their deafness and ingratitude of soul. You have refused all, and will not accept anything from you, not even the dust which clings to our sandals. Because you, made of dust and fated

to return to dust as you are, will not give a moment of your time, nor a piece of your bread, we leave behind us the dust of your streets, down to the least grain.

SPEAK YE IN LIGHT
In their faithfulness to the sublime paradox of Him who sends them, the apostles bring peace and at the same time war! All men are not capable of conversion. In the same family, in the same house, there are some who will believe and others who will not. And there will spring up between them division and warfare, the hard price with which absolute and stable peace can be secured. If all men should listen at the same moment to the voice, if all could be transformed on the same day, the Kingdom of Heaven would be founded in a twinkling of an eye, with no bloody preface of battles.

Furthermore those who do not wish to change themselves, because they do not understand the news, or believe themselves already perfect, will attack the converters and accuse them before tribunals. Representatives of wealth and of the old law will be cruel to the poor who are teaching the new law to the poor. The rich are not willing to concede that their wealth is dangerous poverty; the scribes are not willing to admit that their learning is only deadly ignorance.

They will scourge you in their synagogues. . . . But when they deliver you up, take no thought of how or what ye shall speak." Jesus is sure that the poor fishermen, though they have never studied in the schools of eloquence, will find for themselves great words in their hour of accusation. One thought, when it is a great thought and profoundly fixed in the heart, engenders of itself all the derivatory and accessory thoughts, and with them perfect form in which to express the thought. The converted man who has nothing in himself, who has faith in nothing, who does not feel, burn, and suffer, though he may have studied long with the sophists of Athens and the rhetoricians of Rome, is incapable of improvising one of those powerful and illuminating answers which trouble the conscience of the hardest judges.

They are to speak therefore without fear and without hiding anything of what has been taught them. What I tell you in darkness that seek ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops." With these words Jesus does not ask his Disciples to be more daring than he has been. He has spoken in the darkness, that is in obscurity; He has spoken to them, to His first faithful followers, but what He has said to them along deserted roads and in solitary rooms they are to repeat as He Himself has given them the example, on open squares of cities before crowds of people. He has whispered the truth into their ears, because the truth at first might alarm those not prepared for it, and because there were so few of the Disciples that there was no need to cry aloud. But this truth must be cried out now from the heights, in order that all may hear it, in order that there may be no one to say on that Day that he has not heard it.

Men can kill the body of the man who spreads the truth abroad, but they cannot kill his soul; from the death of a single body thousands of new souls will be born into life. But not even your body will die, because there is One who protects it. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall from the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." The birds of the air who do not sow, do not die of hunger; you who do not carry even a staff shall not die at the hands of your enemies.

They have with them a secret so precious that the flesh which contains it will not be allowed to perish. Jesus is always with them, even though from afar. What is done to them is done to Him. A mystic identity is created for all eternity between Him who sends them out and those disciples who are sent. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Jesus is the fountain of living water destined to quench the thirst of all the weary, and yet He will take account also of the cup of water which shall have quenched the thirst of the least among His friends. Those who carry with them the water of truth, which purifies and saves, may need some day a cup of the stagnant water buried at the bottom of village wells. Any person who will give them a little of this ordinary, material water will have in exchange a well-spring which intoxicates the soul more than the strongest wine.

The apostles who go about with one garment, with a single pair of sandals, without belts or wallets, poor as poverty, bare as truth, simple as joy, are, in spite of their apparent poverty, diverse forms of a king who has come to found a kingdom greater and happier than all kingdoms, to bring to poor people wealth which is worth more than all measurable riches, to offer to the unhappy a joy more profound than any fleshly pleasures. It suits this new King, as it did the kings of the Orient, to show Himself under many forms, to appear to men in diverse garments. But the dia-

grises which He prefers even today are these three: Poet, Poor Man, and Apostle.

MAMMON
Jesus is the poor man, infinitely and rigorously poor. Poor with absolute poverty! The prince of perfect destitution! The poor man who lives with the poor, who has come for the poor, who speaks to the poor, who gives to the poor, who works for the poor! Poor among the poor, destitute among the destitute, beggar among the beggars! The poor man of a great and eternal poverty! The happy and rich poor man, who accepts poverty, who desires poverty, who weds himself to poverty, who chants of poverty! The beggar who gives alms! The naked man who covers the naked! The hungry man who feeds others, the miraculous and supernatural, who changes the men, owning false riches into poor men, or poor men into those with real wealth.

There are poor men who are poor because they were never capable of acquiring wealth. There are other poor men who are poor because they give away every evening what they earned that day; and the more they give the more they have. Their wealth, the wealth of this second class of poor men, grows greater in proportion as it is given away. It is a pile which becomes greater as more is taken away from it.

Jesus was one of these poor men. Compared to one of them, men materially rich, rich as the world esteems wealth, rich with their chests of talents, minas, rupees, florins, shakels, crowns, francs, marks, and dollars, are the lamentable beggars. The money-changers of the forum, the great feasters of Jerusalem, the bankers of Florence and Frankfurt, the lords of London, the multi-millionaires of New York, compared to these poor men are only unfortunate beggars, despoiled and needy; unpaid servants of a fierce master; condemned every day to assassinate their own souls. The wretchedness of such indignity is so terrible that they are reduced to pick up the stones that are found in the mud of the earth, and grope about in filth. Theirs is a poverty so repugnant that not even the poor succeed in bestowing on them the charity of a smile.

Richness is a curse like work, but a harder and more shameful curse. He who is marked with the sign of wealth has committed, perhaps unconsciously, an infamous crime, one of those mysterious and unimaginable crimes which are nameless in human language. The rich man is either under the burden of the vengeance of God, or God wishes to put him to the test to see if he can succeed in climbing up to divine heights. For the rich man has committed the greatest sin, the most abominable and unpardonable. The rich man is the man who has fallen because of an exchange; he could have had Heaven and he chose Earth. He could have lived in Paradise and he has chosen Hell. He could have kept his soul and he has exchanged it for material things. He could have loved and he has preferred to be hated. He could have had happiness and he has desired power. No one can save him. Wealth in his hands is a metal which buries him alive under its icy mass; it is the tumor which consumes him alive in his corruption; it is the fire which burns him and reduces him to a terrible, black mummy, a blind paralytic, black mummy, a ghostly carrion which everlastingly holds out its empty hand in the cemeteries of the centuries, begging in vain for the alms of charitable remembrance.

For him there is only one salvation: to become a poor man, a true and humble poor man; to throw away the horrible destitution of wealth in order to enter again into poverty. But this resolution is the hardest that the rich man can take. The rich man is the man who is sickened by wealth, cannot even imagine that the entire renunciation of wealth would be the beginning of redemption, and because he cannot imagine such an abdication, he cannot even deliberate on it, cannot weigh the alternatives. He is a prisoner in the impregnable prison of himself. To liberate himself he must first be free.

The rich man does not belong to himself, but belongs to the things. He has not the time to think, to choose. Wealth is a pitiless master who allows no other masters near him. The rich man cannot think of his soul, bowed as he is under the care of his riches, under the fear of losing his riches, under the material joys which are offered to him by those pieces of matter which are called wealth. He cannot even imagine that his sick, suffocating, mutilated, worm-eaten soul needs to be cured. He has taken up his abode in that part of the world which, according to contracts and laws, he has the right to call his; and often he has not even the time, the wish, or the power to enjoy it. He must serve it and take care of it—he cannot serve it and take care of his own soul. All his power of love is absorbed by these material things, which order him about, which have taken the place of his soul, which have robbed him of all his liberty. The horrible fate of the rich man lies in this double absurdity: in order to have the power to command men he has become the slave of dead things; in order to acquire a part (and such a very small part!) he has lost the whole.

Nothing is ours as long as it is ours alone. Outside of himself man can possess, actually own nothing. The absolute secret of owning other things is to renounce them. Everything is given to him who has refused everything. But he who refuses to grasp for himself, for himself alone, a part of the goods of this world, loses both what he has acquired and everything else. And at the same moment he is incapable of knowing himself, or possessing himself, making himself greater. He has nothing more, not even the things which in appearance belong to him, but to which in reality he belongs; and he has never had his own soul, the one piece of property which is worth possessing. He is the most destitute and despoiled beggar of all the universe. He has nothing. How then can he love others, give to others himself and that which belongs to himself, exercise that loving charity which would conduct him so soon to the Kingdom? He is nothing and he has nothing. He who does not exist cannot change. He who does not possess cannot give. How then can the rich man, who is no longer his own, who has no longer a soul, transform a soul, the only possession of mankind, into something nobler and more precious?

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This question of Christ's, simple like all revelations, expresses the exact meaning of the prophetic threat. The rich man not only loses eternally, but, pulled down by his wealth, loses his life here below, his present soul, the happiness of his present earthly life.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The Spirit of God are two masters who will not tolerate any division or sharing. They are jealous; they insist on having the whole man. And even if he wishes, the man cannot divide himself in two. He must be all here, or all beyond worldly things. For the faithful servant of the spirit, gold is nothing; for him who serves gold, "spirit" is a word without meaning. He who chooses the spirit throws away gold and all the things bought by gold; he who desires gold puts an end to the spirit and renounces all the benefits of the spirit; peace, holiness, love, perfect joy. The first is a poor man who can never use up his infinite wealth; the other is a rich man who can never escape out of his infinite poverty. By the mysterious law of renunciation, the man possesses even that which is not his—the entire universe; through the hard law of perpetual desire, the rich man does not even possess that little which he believes to be his. God gives immensely more than the immensity which He has promised. Mammon takes away even that very little which he promises. He who chooses everything has everything given him; he who wishes a part for himself alone, finds himself at the end with nothing.

When the horrible mystery of wealth is deeply probed, it is easy to see why the masters of men have considered wealth the kingdom of the Demon himself. A thing which is less than everything else is bought by everything else; a thing which is nothing, the actual value of which is nothing, is bought by giving up everything, is secured by exchanging for it the whole of the soul, the whole of life. The most precious thing is exchanged for the most worthless.

And yet even this infernal absurdity has its reason for being, in the economy of the spirit. Man is not naturally and naturally drawn by that nothingness called wealth that he could only be dissuaded from his insensate search for it by putting a price so great, so high, so out of all proportion that the very fact of paying it would be a valid proof of insanity and crime. But not even the conditions of the bargain, the eternal exchanged for the ephemeral, power for servitude, sanctity for damnation, are enough to keep men away from the absurd bargain with the powers of evil. Poor people do not rejoice that they are poor. Their only regret is that they cannot be rich; their souls are contaminated and in peril like those of the wealthy. Almost all of them are involuntarily poor men, who have not known how to make money and yet have lost their spirit; they are only poverty-stricken rich people who have not as yet any cash.

For poverty, voluntarily accepted, joyfully desired, is the only poverty which gives true wealth, spiritual wealth. Absolute poverty frees men for the conquest of the absolute. The Kingdom of Heaven does not promise poor people that they shall become rich, it promises rich people that they shall enter into it when they become freely poor.

TO BE CONTINUED
A WORTHY EXAMPLE
"As I was travelling through Belgium a few years ago," relates a German clergyman, "I found hospitable reception there with one of the wealthiest and noblest families. The father of the house was a member of the Chamber of Assembly-men and a millionaire. After dinner, the lady of the house said to me: "Reverend Father, at seven o'clock we have supper. The house-bell, however, will be rung a quarter of an hour earlier. This need not disturb you, as it is the sign of the Rosary to be said in common by all

the members of the household each night.

"In the evening, however, I gladly was disturbed by the house-bell and entered the dining-room to say the Rosary with the good people.

"There I saw the father of the house, noble, wealthy man that he was, kneeling beside a chair on the floor; at another chair knelt the lady of the house. The sons were kneeling beside the house chaplain, the daughters with the instructress. In addition to these, there knelt two servants and all the maid-servants of the house excepting one, who had to prepare supper. The chaplain led in saying the Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. All the others—though so different from one another in their standing in the world—devoutly answered the prayers in common, like children with equal rights of the one common Father in heaven and the one Mother on earth—the Catholic Church. I, too, knelt down and prayed along. What I experienced thereby in my soul, I cannot describe. Suffice it to say I said a good Rosary; I prayed fervently for my parishioners, and thought at the same time: "If I knew that in some families of my parish every evening, or at least every winter evening, prayers were said in common and with such devotion as in this house, I believe I should be the happiest of pastors."

—(Translated from the Vergeismeinlich.)

PRAYER AND VISION

Prayer has been called the open door for great souls. Prayer gives us a vision of the immortal life, for in all its various forms it is above all a communion with God. Indeed, men of prayer are apt to be men of vision, for they know how to lift themselves above the sordid quests and narrow pursuits of smaller minds to serene contemplation of the highest truths. If men were deprived of the gift and power of prayer, they would at once be cut off, and cut off effectively from the source of highest spiritual power. What the electric current is to the vast machinery that must transport huge loads over many miles, that communion with God in prayer is to the man who must confront some spiritual task which seems impossible of achievement. But we have all known the missionary, who was a man of prayer, influencing the hardest hearts and breaking down the will of the sinner grown gray in iniquity. To ascribe this success in the spiritual order to hypnotism or to the magic power of words, or to the subconscious influence of long buried emotions, were supreme folly. Those who know the sinful heart of man and who realize the deadening effect of years of sin on his soul, do not ascribe these miracles of the moral order to vapid eloquence or to the verbal gymnastics of a fiery exhorter. They ascribe them to the power of fervent and persevering prayer of petition.

It was the power that came to them in the prayer that enabled the greatest heroes of history to beat down adversity, to see ever the silver lining to the dark cloud, and to keep their eyes fixed on the vision that beckoned them on to larger work and larger conquests for the good of their brethren. Moses on the mountain, the Crusaders before the gates of the Holy City, Francis Xavier opening kingdoms to the sweet name of Christ, Father Marquette voyaging down the Mississippi, all looked forward to the help promised by Christ to those who humbly pray. While the aspirations and desires of those who disbelieve in prayer are confined to the narrow limits of sense and time, the man of prayer rises above little human philosophies to the eternal source of strength and power. We have seen that some of the greatest achievements of genius and wisdom, some of the mightiest deeds of heroism, were wrought by souls uplifted and inspired by communion with Him who is the source of all blessings.

Without the aid of prayer man stumbles through darkness. The discoveries of science do not lend him the same assurance of the supreme value of human life that is born of faith and prayer. It is not derogatory to man to acknowledge God's supremacy by prayer. This act of submission really redounds to his honor and glory. For light and grace are given him to beat down egotistic clamorings, and courage to preserve his self-respect and independence in the face of a lower public opinion.

The cry of the populace of Old Rome when faith in the gods had died away was "panem et circenses," comforts and amusement. We know the dire results for the proud Empire when the longings of men went out only to those things that pass away. The words of the Divine Master to the arch-tempter that "man liveth not by bread alone" find a grim realization.

And so in these days of social upheaval and strange questionings, of new philosophies and of pseudo-scientific investigations, it would be a social disaster to spread the teaching that prayer of petition to God is unavailing. Not in the multitude of new laws and in the establishment of countless committees of safety, not in loosening the old props of the social order and incultating disregard of the first duty of every rational creature towards God, lies the way of national peace and prosperity.—The Monitor.

Jesus is enclosed in the 'tabernacle, that we may always find Him.—Golden Sands.



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