

The little apple tree seemed more alive tonight. John stooped nearer. It was putting forth a bloom, the courageous little thing. The front gate clicked—a neighbor, probably. He was lonely.

A moment later and he held Elsie fast in his arms. "I'm never going away again John," she sobbed. Life had settled her. The little apple tree lifted its head higher. Under the spreading branches of the big tree it was going to be, little children would gambol and shout at their play.—Sheila O'Neill, in The Magnificent.

THE STORY OF CHRIST

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THE BLIND SEE

Men cannot live without three things, bread, health and hope. Deprived of everything else men can—raging and cursing—go on living. But if they have not at least these three, they hasten to summon death, because without them life is but death. It is death with suffering added, an aggravated, embittered, envenomed death, without even the anesthetic of insensibility. Hunger is the wasting away of the body; pain makes the body hateful; despair—not to expect anything better, a relief, an alleviation—takes the savor out of everything, takes away every reason to be, and every reason to live. There are men who do not kill themselves because suicide is an action.

He who wishes to draw men to him must give them bread, health and hope. He must feed them, heal them and give them faith in a more beautiful life.

Jesus gives this faith. To those who followed Him into the wilderness and upon the mountains, He distributed material and spiritual bread. He was not willing to transform stones into loaves, but He made the real loaves of bread sufficient for thousands. And the stones which men carry in their breasts He changed into loving hearts.

And He did not reject the sick. Jesus is no self-tormentor, no flagellant. He does not believe that pain is necessary to conquer evil. Evil is evil and must be driven away, but pain also is evil. Sorrow of the soul is enough for salvation; why should the body suffer also, needlessly? The old Jews thought of sickness as a punishment; Christians believe it above all as an aid to conversion.

But Jesus does not believe in vengeance taken on the innocent, and does not expect that true salvation can be won by ulcers or by hair shirts. Render unto the body that which is the body's due, and unto the soul that which is the soul's. He likes the friendly supper-table; He does not refuse good old wine; and He does not perfume His head and on His feet. Jesus can fast many days; He can be satisfied with a bit of bread, with half of a broiled fish; and He can sleep on the ground with His head on a stone; but till it is unavoidable He does not seek out want, hunger and suffering. Health seems to Him a good thing and the innocent pleasure of dining with friends; a cup of wine drunk in good company, the fragrance of a vase of nard, seem good and acceptable to Him also when such things cause no suffering to others.

If a sick man accosts Him, He cures him. Jesus comes not to deny life, but to affirm it, to institute a happier and more perfect life. He does not purposely seek to wound the sick. His mission is to drive away spiritual suffering, to bring spiritual joy. But if, by the way, it happens to Him to drive out also suffering of the flesh, to quiet pain, to restore, along with the health of the soul, the health also of the body, He cannot refuse to do it. He shows Himself adverse to it, for the most part, because His mission is to drive away spiritual suffering, to bring spiritual joy. But if, by the way, it happens to Him to drive out also suffering of the flesh, to quiet pain, to restore, along with the health of the soul, the health also of the body, He cannot refuse to do it. He shows Himself adverse to it, for the most part, because His mission is to drive away spiritual suffering, to bring spiritual joy. But if, by the way, it happens to Him to drive out also suffering of the flesh, to quiet pain, to restore, along with the health of the soul, the health also of the body, He cannot refuse to do it.

When, on the road trodden by men of health, there come towards Him groups of lepers, repellent, disfigured, horrible lepers, and when He sees that swollen lividness, the scaly skin showing through the torn clothes, that scabby, spotted, cracked skin, the withered, wrinkled skin which deforms the mouth, half-closes the eyes, and puffs up the hands; wretched, suffering ghosts, shunned by every one, separated from every one, disgusting to every one, who are thankful if they have a little bread, a saucer for their water, the roof of an old shed for a hiding-place; when painfully bringing out the words through their swollen, ulcerated lips they beg him, whom they know to be powerful in word and deed, beg Him, their only hope in their despair, for health, for a cure, for a miracle, how could Jesus shun them, as other men did, and ignore their prayer?

And the epileptics, who writhe in the dust, their faces twisted in a set spasm, the froth on their lips; those possessed of devils who howl among the ruined tombs, evil dogs

of the night, disconsolate; the paralytics, trunks which have just alytically leaning left to suffer, dead bodies inhabited by an imprisoned and suppliant soul; and the blind, the awful blind, shut up from their birth in the night—foretaste of the blackness of the tomb—stumbling in the midst of the fortunate men who go their way freely, the terrified blind, who walk with their heads held high, their eyes staring, as if the light could reach them from the depths of the infinite, the blind, for whom the world is only a series of more or less harsh surfaces, among which they grope; the blind, eternally alone, who know the sun only by its warmth, by the heat of their bodies! How could Jesus answer "No" to such wretchedness?

THE ANSWER TO JOHN

Jesus heals the sick, but He is in no way like a wizard or an exorcist. He has no recourse to incantation, to amulets, to smoke, veils and mystery. He does not call to His aid the powers of Heaven or Hell. For Him a word is enough, a strong cry, a gentle accent, a caress. His will is enough, and the faith of the petitioner. To them all He puts the question: "Dost thou believe I can do this?" and when the cure is accomplished, "Go, thy faith hath made thee whole." For Jesus the miracle is the union of two wills for good, the living contact between the faith of the healer and the faith of the one healed. "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence, to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this scyamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Those who have no faith, not even as much as the thousandth part of a grain of mustard seed, cannot have this power, and that Jesus is an impostor.

In the Gospels the miracles are called by three names: "Dunamis"—forces; "Terata"—miracles; "Semeis"—signs. They are signs for those who remember the prophecies of the Messiah; they are "miracles" for those who look for proof that Christ is the Messiah; but for Jesus and in Jesus there are only "Dunamis," mighty works, victorious lightning flashes from a superhuman power. The healings of Jesus are two-fold; they are healings not only of bodies but of souls, and it is soul-sickness which Jesus wishes especially to heal, so that the Kingdom of Heaven may be founded also on the earth.

Most sickness is two-fold, mental and physical, and lends itself with singular exactitude to metaphors and allegory. Jesus cured the maimed, the halt, the fevered, a man with the dropsy, a woman with an issue of blood. He healed also a sword-wound—Malchus' ear struck off by Peter on the night of Gethsemane—this only in order that His law "do good to those who wrong you" might be observed to the very last. But Jesus healed more often those possessed by devils, the paralytics, the lepers, the blind, the deaf-mutes. The old name for mental diseases is possession by devils; even Professor Aristotle believed in possession by devils. It was believed that lunatics, epileptics, hysterical patients, were invaded by malignant spirits. The contradictory and often merely verbal explanations of the moderns does not invalidate the fact that demoniacs, in many cases, are such in the real sense of the word. This learned and popular explanation lent itself admirably to that allegorical and figurative teaching of which Jesus was so fond. He wished to found the Kingdom of God and supplant that of Satan. It was part of His mission to drive out demons. The difference between bodily disorders and actual malign obsessions was of no importance: between stolidly infirmities and spiritual infirmities there is a parallelism of nomenclature, based on real affinity. There is a likeness between the maniac and the epileptic, between the paralytic and the stolid, the vile and the leprous, the blind and he who cannot see the truth, the deaf and he who will not listen to the truth, the cured and the resurrected.

When John, shut up in prison, sent two disciples to ask Jesus if He were the awaited prophet, or whether they should await another, Jesus answered them, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Jesus did not separate the gospel from miraculous cures. They are similar deeds; by that answer he meant that he had cured bodies in order that the souls might be better disposed to receive the gospel.

Those who did not see the light of the sun can now see the light of truth; those who did not hear even the words of men can now hear the words of God; those who were possessed of Satan are freed from Satan; those who were foul and ulcerated are clean as children; those who could not move, who were strengthless and shrunken, now follow my footsteps; those who were dead to the life of the soul have risen at a word from me, and the poor, after the Good News, are richer than the wealthy. These are my credentials, my letters proving my legitimacy.

Jesus, Healer and Liberator, is not what the bad faith of His modern enemies wish to imagine Him, in order to gild once more their comfortable paganism and to protect it against asceticism. "He is the God," they say, "of the sick, the weak, the dirty, the wretched, the strengthless, the servants." But all that Christ does is to give health, strength, purity, wealth, and liberty. He draws near to the sick precisely in order to drive away their sickness; to the weak to lift them out of their weakness; to the dirty in order to cleanse them; to slaves in order to free them. He does not love the sick only because they are sick. He loves health, just as the men of antiquity did, and He loves it so greatly that He longs to give it back to those who have lost it. Jesus is the prophet of happiness, the promiser of life, of life that is worthier to be lived. The miracles are only pledges of His promise.

TALITHA CUMI

"The dead shall arise!" This is one of the signs which are to suffice for John the Baptist in prison. To the good sinner, to the hard-working Martha, Jesus said: "Arise, and the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." The resurrection is a rebirth in faith, immortality is the permanent affirmation of this faith.

The Evangelists know three resurrections, historical events narrated with a sober but explicit statement of the evidence. Jesus raised up three who were dead: a young lad, a little girl, and a friend.

He was entering Nain, "the beautiful" set on a little hill some miles from Nazareth, and met a funeral procession. They were carrying to the grave the young son of a widow. She had lost her husband a short time before; this son alone had been left to her; now they were carrying away the son in turn for burial. Jesus saw the mother weeping among the women, and smothered grief of mothers which is so profoundly moving. She had only two men in all the world who loved her; the first one was dead, the second was now dead; one after the other, both of them disappeared. She was left alone, a woman alone without a man. Without a husband, without a son, without a help, a prop, a comfort. Gone the love that was a memory of youth, gone the love that was hope for declining years. Gone both these poor, simple loves. A husband can console his wife for the loss of their son; a son can make up for the loss of a husband. If only one had been left! Now her lips were never to know another kiss.

Jesus had compassion on this mother; her grief was like an accusation. "Weep not," he said. He went to the side of the cataleptic and touched him. The boy was lying there stretched out, wrapped in his shroud, but with his face uncovered, set in the stern paleness of the dead. The bearers halted; all were silent; even the mother, startled, was quiet.

"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. He "delivered" him because he was now hers. Jesus had taken him from the land of death to give him back to her who could not live without him, that a mother might cease from weeping.

Another day as he was returning from Gadara, a father fell at His feet. His only little daughter lay at the point of death. The man's name was Jairus, and although he was a leader at the Synagogue he believed in Jesus. They went along together. When they were half-way, a servant met them, saying, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Fear not; believe only, and she shall be made whole." And when He came into the house He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her; but He said, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth." And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called saying, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again, and she rose straightway; and He commanded to give her meat. She was not a visible spirit, a ghost, but a living body, awakened a little weak, ready for a new day after feverish dreams.

TO BE CONTINUED GENTLENESS

Of all the gifts to be prayed for, next to grace, tact and gentleness in manner, are the most desirable. A brusque, shy, curt manner, a cold indifference, a snappish petulance, a brutal appearance of stolidity, antagonize and wound and rob even really kind actions of half their value. It is worth while to do a kind thing gracefully and tactfully. There is a certain propriety of demeanor which never makes a mistake, which guards the feeling of a loved one, as carefully as a mother cherishes her little delicate child. In time, such tact becomes natural, and one who has it makes others happy without trying to do so.—Exchange.



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What is there which should lead us to conclude that prayer is not a mode appointed by the Ruler of the universe for obtaining His good and greatest gifts in the same manner as bodily exertion is requisite for

acquiring a supply of temporal advantages.—Hatherley. Begin and end the day with private prayer; read the Scriptures often and seriously; be attentive to the public worship of God.—Hale.

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