

## The Christian Year The Ministry of Miracles

(Second Sunday after Epiphany)

OUR Gospel lesson to-day is the story of the marriage at Cana, and of the first miracle.

We are teachers of a religion in which the miraculous is a fixed and ineradicable constituent. Ingenious linguistic efforts are constantly being put forward by theologians and metaphysicians to define or reduce the boundary line between the natural and the supernatural or miraculous. It may, indeed, be admitted that there is no such thing in reality as a supernatural, if the "hidden mysteries" of life were properly understood, provided that such admission does not involve a denial of those incidents in the Scripture record which to the plain, ordinary man can only be thought of as miracles. Much of the advanced thought of our day is only camouflage and "dust in the eyes" to the great populous constituency which the Church is to lead and instruct in matters religious. We had better call a miracle by its own name rather than deny its wonder by explaining it away.

The purpose of miracles in the life of Christ was to counteract for all time the imminent danger to which mankind is constantly exposed by the prevalence of uniform law which forms a sort of screen or barrier between intelligent observation—the method of science—and the recognition of the sovereignty and love of a personal God. The orderly sequence of nature's laws, "The glory and perfection of creation" tends to blind the sight to the presence and power of the Creator. Bishop Gore defines miracle as "an event in physical nature which makes *unmistakably plain* the presence and direct action of God working for a moral end." Miracle is a protest against men's blindness. Jesus was in living contact with the creative force of the universe; and just as He came to give new life to the soul by His recreative grace and power, so did He, when occasion required, exercise that creative force in the realm of nature.

The words used for miracle in the New Testament are signs, wonders, works and powers. "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee." It was not a sign in the sense that He wished to convince, as if by magical demonstration, people who were unwilling to believe in Him. He repudiated this motive and refused every challenge to exercise His power in that way. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." His signs were ameliorative, moral and didactic; to show the spirit and character of the true life in the new life, and to direct attention to the fact that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

The turning of water into wine was a symbol of the new life in Him by which that which before was lived on the plane of the natural should ever after have the rich, invigorating tonic quality of Heavenly grace and purpose; all human motives and desires were to be transformed by the new leaven of Christian love. Faith and obedience on the part of the disciples at the marriage feast is the perennial assurance to us that Christ can fill all our needs if we will put our whole trust in Him. "Whatever He saith unto you, do it."

The praying heart makes the willing hand.

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In that worthiest of all struggles—the struggle for self-mastery and goodness—we are far less patient with ourselves than God is with us.—Holland.

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Faith is an act of the will; and if we suppose that we shall come to believe in God and in Christ as the result of external forces which compel belief we shall not believe at all.—R. W. Dale.

## THE PASSING OF BISHOP COURTNEY

THE death of the Right Rev. Frederick Courtney occurred on Dec. 29th at New York. He was the Rector Emeritus of St. James' Church, New York, the former Bishop of Nova Scotia, and one of the most widely known churchmen on this continent.

Bishop Courtney was born in Plymouth, England, 81 years ago, the son of the Rev. Septimus Courtney, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. He was educated at Christ's Hospital and at King's College, Cambridge. He came to America in 1876, as assistant rector of St. James' Church, Chicago, and later was appointed Rector of St. Paul's Church, Boston. In 1888 he was chosen Bishop of Nova Scotia and served there for sixteen years, when the illness of his wife caused him to resign. In 1904 he became Rector of St. James' Church, New York, for eleven years.

In 1865, the year following his ordination to



Courtesy of Mission World  
THE LATE RT. REV. F. W. COURTNEY, D.D.  
(BISHOP OF NOVA SCOTIA 1888-1904.)

the priesthood, he married Caroline Louisa, daughter of Philip Nairn, of Warren House, Northamptonshire. Five children were born of the union, all of whom survive their father. Mrs. Courtney died in September, 1909, in England. The children are Miss Courtney, Walter, Charles, Basil and Harold Courtney. Of the sons, Harold is an officer in the Royal Artillery, and Basil is in business in New York.

In the death of the Bishop, the sorrow which is felt throughout the diocese of Nova Scotia will be fully shared by churchmen in many different parts of the world. Possessed of great gifts as a preacher, the Church loses in him one who exercised, through these, a remarkable influence. None of those in the great congregation which greeted him in the Cathedral of All Saints, upon the occasion of his last visit to Halifax, and of the memorial service held for men fallen in the war, will ever forget the "homegoing" eloquence of his masterly sermon. His distinguished presence contributed to his pulpit power—he looked a very prince of the Church, and so, in mind and soul, as well as in outward aspect, he was.

(Continued on page 24.)

## What Men Are Saying

"WE have to face not only the evils directly caused by the war—the destruction of homes, the unsettling of industrial habits, the peril of morals, and the lessening of man power, but also conditions which the war revealed as existing where least suspected or imagined. If these conditions are to be met by the Church which is especially responsible for the task, that task must be entered upon with the whole hearted zeal that is born of full faith in Christ as a present living Power, able to work the miracle of reconstruction, which is impossible without Him. It means reconstruction of the individual first—the personal religion of the individual. There is often enough faith to bring a man to church, but not enough to control his besetting sin; enough faith to make a man support his church financially, but not enough to make it a power in his business or civic life. The old standards are in danger if not rightly upheld and truly presented. The opportunity is as great as the responsibility and presents itself to Britain and her allies with impelling force. As we have fought a clean fight for the cause of justice and right, it is ours now to stand by these. It is ours to-day to prove that the Truth as it is in Christ, is the only thing that can save the world and make reconstruction possible and efficient and satisfactory and permanent."

—ARCHBISHOP WORRELL.

"Let us, brethren beloved, enter upon this new year with God. Let us resolve to walk throughout it with Him. Let us face the gigantic problems of repatriation, readjustment, and reconstruction with His sought-for strength and counsel, and let us sound at the very beginning of it, with all its untried paths of duty and opportunity opening before us, our note of supreme confidence in Him, the essence of that optimism that will not down, the heart of the hope so sure and steadfast which links us with the Power from on High."

—BISHOP SWEENEY.

"It is the simple truth to say that the Canadian Chaplain Service is a united church, and the striking success which it has achieved may fairly be claimed as a powerful testimony to the value of unity. In only one respect is the denominational distinction observed, viz., in the celebration of the Holy Communion, when an Anglican must be the celebrant at an Anglican service, and a Presbyterian at a Presbyterian service."

—DR. HERBERT SYMONDS.

"Before the war the principles on which the nation's life was founded were to many abstract things somewhere in the clouds. They are so no longer for they have been bedewed with the blood of our hero sons and made concrete by the gaps in hundreds of thousands of homes. And dare we fail them now? Dare we hold lightly those principles for which the bravest and best of our sons laid down their lives?"

The great debt to Almighty God must never be forgotten and each individual must lift his heart in prayer for his fellows as well as for himself and in thanksgiving for the goodness of God."

—DEAN LLWYD.

"Once more the Christ-Child is revealed to us in His life-giving joyfulness. Once more upon the path of human life and duty bursts the joy of a fresh beginning. If ever there was a Christmas when every man, woman and child should come to Bethlehem, with the offering of a heart's devoted love, it is this. As that roll of honour at the entrance of the Church tells us, there are homes among you on whom the shadow of a deeper sacrifice has fallen. Let the sorrowing hearts remember that their loved ones now taste the true and everlasting peace. Of them, it may be said, as it was said of Valiant for Truth in Pilgrim's Progress, "They passed through the river and all the trumpets sounded for them on the other side."

—CANON (LT.-COL.) F. G. SCOTT, D.S.O.

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