

READERS' QUESTIONS

Miscellaneous Questions

SICKNESS AND PAIN VS. COSMIC LAW

QUESTION: If it is true that sickness and pain are the result of our own misdeeds, then is it not interfering with cosmic law to try to heal the sick and remove pain?

Answer: In reply to a similar question Max Heindel gave this paraphrased reply: Such a question reveals an attitude of mind that is extremely deplorable. One might as well ask if it is right to try to save one's self if drowning, for falling in the water is also an effect of some self-generated cause. Certainly it is our duty to call for qualified help when in sickness or distress, or to attempt to cure the ills from which we suffer. We should be doing decidedly wrong if we allowed our physical instrument to suffer or deteriorate for lack of proper care or attention. It is the most valuable instrument that we possess and unless we use it circumspectly and care for it to the best of our ability, we are amenable to the law of cause and effect for that neglect.

Such a question as this reveals an altogether erroneous conception of the law of cause and effect. It is our duty to try to rise above adverse conditions instead of allowing them to dominate our lives. If we endeavor to direct our lives aright, we shall always be able to modify, if not to altogether change, conditions and make them what we will instead of sitting down and supinely waiting for adverse circumstances to pass by, simply because we ourselves have brought them into being. The very fact that we have made them ought to fire us with courage and energy to unmake them, or to overcome them as quickly as possible.

THE BARREN FIG TREE

Question: I do not understand why Christ Jesus destroyed the barren fig tree, an account of which is given in the Bible. Will you please explain?

Answer: The fig is a symbol of generation. The Christ was teaching His disciples the dire results of the misuse of the creative force and illustrated its withering, degrading effect on mankind in the destruction of the physical form of the fig tree, which symbolizes the human body. What the Christ really did was to release the life force in the tree, whereupon its physical form began to wither—to disintegrate. In so doing he gave a concrete example of the way in which the misuse of the creative force (life force) ultimately brings on some kind of disease which in time releases the spirit (life force) from the body that then disintegrates (withers).

CHANGES IN RELIGION

Question: Why have there been changes in the religions of the world? If one religion were true, why should it not be satisfactory for all ages?

Answer: In Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (13:11), he says: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things," and his message is so plain and clear that it cannot be misconstrued when applied to the individual. Yet there is a broader application implied, the application to all mankind in the process of its evolution. One often speaks of the childhood of a race or the infancy of a people, meaning in its early stages of growth.

In one of His last meetings with His disciples before His betrayal and subsequent crucifixion and resurrection Christ says, "I have yet many things

to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now.” Who will venture to deny that He has been giving us the message from that time to this through the multitudinous voices of nature, yet, “We have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, neither do we understand.” Sometimes we have to be knocked down, so to speak, by the truth before we see it and recognize it as such.

Literature, art, music, invention, and religion have evolved side by side with the development of man. They are all expressions of his inner consciousness, and by a careful analysis of any representative of its period, its time in the world’s history may be determined.

So religion has evolved side by side with man and thus it must ever continue to do or it will be cast aside as the out-grown garments of a growing child.

POWER OVER THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Question: How is it that some men, as mentioned in the Bible, are able to control the various members of the animal kingdom? Also what was the source of the power of St. Francis, who was able to communicate with the birds?

Answer: Man possesses power over the animals in exactly the same degree that he possesses mastery over his own inner nature, that is, over his desire body and mind.

There is a certain correlation between the desire body of the animal and that of man, the lower phases of man’s desire body being symbolized by savage beasts. When man has mastered his desire body (spiritualized it) he has mastered fear within himself, and likewise he has mastered fear of things without. Then the group spirit of the animal recognizes man’s power for good, that he is no longer inimical to its charges. Hence, through the power of instinct it instructs them to obey.

The ability to commune with birds, and other

animals as well, comes through spiritual development. This alone enables man to contact the group spirit of the animal, and by this contact to hold communication with its charges.

MANNER OF BAPTISM

Question: To be baptized right should one be sprinkled with water while he is a babe or be immersed completely in water when grown up, as Christ and His Apostles received it?

Answer: The rite of baptism is symbolical, and therefore it does not actually matter whether a person be sprinkled or immersed. In *Gleanings of a Mystic* Max Heindel writes the following:



St Francis Preaching to the Birds

“When a person is admitted to the church, which is a *spiritual* institution where love and brotherhood are the main-springs of action, it is appropriate to carry him *under the waters* of baptism in symbol of the beautiful condition of childlike innocence and love which prevailed when mankind dwelt *under the mist* in that bygone period. At that time eyes of infant man had not yet been opened to the *material* advantages of this world. The little child which is brought up into the church has not yet become aware of the allurements of life either, and others obligate themselves to guide it to lead a holy life according to the best of their

ability, because experience gained since the Flood has taught us that the broad way of the world is strewn with pain, sorrow, and disappointment; that only by following the straight and narrow way can we escape death and enter into life everlasting.

Thus we see that... the sacrament of baptism... is to remind us of the blessings attendant upon those who are members of a *brotherhood* where self-seeking is put into the background and where service to others is the keynote and mainspring of action.” □

Fresco (detail), Benozzo Gozzoli, Choir Chapel, Museo Comunale di San Francesco, Montefalco, Photo-Antonio Quattrone