

THE ROMANCE OF THE WAY

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MARY LAMOREAUX BURNELL

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By

MARY LAMOREAUX BURNELL

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everything, the path, however simple it may have been and through whatever commonplace form of experience, has assumed the hues of the rainbow in retrospection.

So in looking over the account of the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus and his discipleship relation to Origen, we find the most simple, natural, and beautiful account that might be found in anyone's experience, and possibly in every one's experience who comes to an establishment in that position from which he may know that he has attained a measure of light sufficient to have transported him from the material world into a real world of Spiritual verities.

So I thought to read to you a few sentences of this account, that you may follow with your mind, feeling in sympathy with the position and the circumstances which attended upon the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus and his brother, who came to instruction and sat at the feet of the great teacher, Origen.

*And from the very first day of his receiving us (which day was, in truth, the first day to me, and the most precious of all days, if I may so speak, since then for the first time the true sun began to rise upon me), while we like some wild creatures of the fields, or like fish, or some sort of birds that had fallen into the toils or nets, and were endeavoring to slip out again and escape, were bent on leaving him, and making off for [our home].

That is perhaps the first stage, one might say, in the reception of the doctrine of truth: that one feels like flying away. In personal observation, we have found that people are sometimes almost frenzied with the attempt to escape when the instruction is first given to them; for they feel that it has a new beat to it, and the rhythm of it strikes

upon some chord within them with which they are not familiar; and in many instances it hurts, it jangles, it is not in harmony with the false tones to which they have become accustomed. I have seen people in the presence of instruction faint away. I have seen them fall from their chairs while listening to a particular interpretation of Scripture. So new seemed this interpretation that it struck upon their minds like a flash of lightning, like a bolt.

And in history, we have innumerable cases, instances of the first shock of inspiration, the first shock of the new mind, the blasting of all former intelligence and the crippling of life as it has stultified up to the present instant; shattering it, as idols have been shattered by the presence of a spoken word, shivered to pieces and scattered about the floor. So are the minds and the hearts and the souls of the people who are to receive the doctrine, when first they come into the presence of it.

And if it does not take this effect, to be pronounced enough to bring about the pain and the actual physical shattering, it is at least depicted as in this case, where the two brothers felt impelled to make their escape. If they could only get away when they were listening to the wonderful words!

Jesus was familiar with that in His account of where the banquet was spread and no one would come, for all had things to attend, associations to carry out, duties and responsibilities to fulfil. Therefore, a notable instance of postponement.

And in every one's experience--which is the combination of his mind and his body as they work together, set in this supposed world--there is always a tendency to postpone; so that one has to be very watchful to see what it is that is creeping in, to be the next move to hinder in the path. For these things come in the way as obstacles, not necessarily draped in black, not looking ominous and formidable

and threatening, but looking most enticing--veritable Circes to enthrall the heart. And they are postponements, for the truth can wait. It has waited for ages; it will continue to wait.

But how about the one who has put himself in that relationship to truth by which it must wait upon him? How about him? There is nothing to worry about; for waiting upon the Lord is good. There is no dire disaster in it; as though one were forever to postpone the light. For in every life-experience there will come the day when the sun will rise and the new world be shown and experienced, lived in. If one knew the glory of that moment, if one knew the fortune awaiting, if one knew the value of the true life, he in himself would not desire postponement, but would bend every effort to grasp immediately that which might be obtained. For Patanjali has made this assertion: that in the case of the hotly impetuous, liberation comes quickly. It is instantly brought about in the case of those who

are engaged wholeheartedly in the search, and love that above all things else.

Now, in this account, while the two young men wished very much to make their escape, it is stated that Origen went on with wonderful words, pronouncing arguments, making great and noble statements:

Declaring that those only live a life truly worthy of reasonable creatures who aim at living an upright life, and who seek to know first of all themselves.

And after that, who seek to know that which is truly good.

Now, not only for a single day did he declare these truths and encourage the youths to study the Self and to find out realities, but day after day, continually:

We were pierced by his [arguments] as with an arrow from the very first

occasion of our hearing him...though we still wavered and debated.

Still they felt this stroke of something that went to the heart. Finally, it seemed that they were caught as by a power. It seemed to them that they were embraced with a great love. Finally, that they had no power to draw themselves away; as though they were under some spell of magic; and all because the arguments suitable for reasonable creatures were being presented, with this explanation:

That of all creatures that move upon the earth, there is not any who has attained to the position such as man sustains, by which rationality is received and is appropriated and is comprehended and is in order and is a necessity, and is the means of escape from lower forms of life, as though it were the ladder which men climb from the physical world to the Spiritual world--that faculty residing in man alone.

As they listened to instruction, it seemed to them that the great teacher took them by the hand and walked with them, as a father would hold a child by the hand. And he took them through all kinds of troubles. And whatever their problems, whatever their mental problems, whatever their physical difficulties, he took them by the hand and led them through. And they came finally to feel that a great love had been born in their hearts.

And when they undertook to describe their teacher, at first they thought they could do it by words, and they began to say, He is a man who is a great example. Then they withdrew those words, thinking it best not to say, He is a great example; for that did not describe him. But better than that, they said, He is one who follows in the words of his instruction that proclaim what a perfect example is. So they saw that their teacher was to them the embodiment of his doctrine, and that his doctrine

was felt and lived. It was a living reality, while they imbibed the true words. But in such reality did they receive the word, that they willingly cast off the word in favor of that which they had imbibed through the word.

Isaiah announced the light which came to him upon the path, and how it appeared to him; and what it seemed was the attitude of the world under the doctrine of truth. He announced his vision in these words:

*And though the Lord
give you the bread of
adversity, and the
water of affliction-----

That is, whatever the path may be, whatever the course one travels, whether pleasant or unpleasant; whether through trials and the shadow of death and dark places and torture and mental discouragement, or through the contrary, the lights and joys that are known to those who set out upon the path:

*Isaiah 20: 20,21

And though the Lord
give you the bread of
adversity, and the
water of affliction,
yet shall not thy
teachers be removed
into a corner any more,
but thine eyes shall
see thy teachers:

And thine ears shall
hear a word behind thee,
saying, This is the way,
walk ye in it, when ye
turn to the right hand,
and when ye turn to the
left.

As in the case of individuals, so with nations, so with civilizations, so with various periods of the world's history: there are ripening moments when revelation must come through. As in the darkest clouds, there is the time when the sun must pierce, when the clouds must rift, when the light must shine through.

The mark of individual development is the discovery of a teacher. They put it this way, in the ancient times:

One's development is marked by his power to demonstrate a teacher. If he is able to demonstrate a teacher, he has then ripened his mind to the place where it can objectify itself, and that light objectified is to him the sage.

Now, in the account of this world told in the illustration of the dream, wherever the account has been given by the many mystics, philosophers, sages, and Scriptures of the world, the question always arises: How is one to know, when he is dreaming, that he is merely dreaming? What is to bring him, while he is in the dream, the light that will deliver to him the knowledge that it is only a dream? How is the fiction to be worked over, or prepared or designed to produce in the dream the ability to deliver one out of the dream? And the account has always been like this: While in the dream one must dream of a sage.

But if one were dreaming at night, and he dreamed all the time of grocery stores and

houses and business houses and streets and rivers and oceans, and his dream was a conglomerate of objects, he would receive no touch, no impulse from the dream sufficient or of the nature to arouse in him that which would lead him, like a silver thread, from the labyrinth, out to the world of light. Therefore, when he is dreaming of grocery stores and churches and schoolhouses and buildings, and of people rushing about through their various occupations, he must dream also of a teacher, of a sage, of an illumined being, of one whose mouth speaks a language not familiar to the bricks that compose the buildings, to the stones that lie upon the streets to the drops of water in the streams, to the summits of the mountains--a language foreign to all creation.

The Psalmist writes:

*The law of thy mouth
is better unto me than
thousands of gold and
silver.

*Psalm 119: 72,103

How sweet are thy words
unto my taste! yea,
sweeter than honey to
my mouth!

Such are the words that may flow from the mouth of the sage that is dreamed into the dream. And when one listens to those words of instruction, he may not know that it is the song within his own heart that he hears, he may not know that it is the God within him shouting to heaven. He may think--for it is a part of the dream--that someone else is talking to him. And that is the way it should be. Not only should it be that way, that every being should have a teacher talk to him, as though the teacher were a different being who has fortunately come into his life, to deliver a new language, a new message, and a new Spiritual action; but this should be carried still further, so that one may objectify also a Lord, by which he would be quite willing to say, O Lord, I address thee as though thou wert another being. For in the dream, if one exalts duality

and delivers it over to an Almighty Being, he has safeguarded that idea of dualism; so that it may not be a fleeting, diversified, variegating influence in his life, but establish for him an Absolute Being who is quite capable of absorbing the idea of duality, even to the extent of absorbing him who dreams, that there may be established a perfect identity.

The wise understand this trick of mind, which is a trick of the dream; by which exaltation of ideas and delivering them over to a Supreme Being, as one dreams and as one thinks--for thinking is dreaming--he is really emancipating and delivering his ideas from chaos to absolute unity.

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PART II: THE OPEN SKY

The impulse of the Spiritual life should not be learned, as though it were a doctrine about the spiritual impulse, but it should be learned as though one acquired actual understanding of the impulse itself. One may readily see the difference between a doctrine about something, a piece of culture about something, an education about something, an announcement about it, and the thing itself. So the perfect impulse of Spiritual life should be understood in itself, and not through the medium of any philosophy.

In order to accomplish this, one has to perfect his philosophy, he has to perfect his rationality, he has to perfect his thinking. And when he has absolutely perfected it, he has escaped it. As has been stated concerning the perfect body: if one is in a state of absolute health, he does not think about his body. If the organs of the body function perfectly, he does not think about them. He is not

aware of the fact that he is breathing or that his heart is beating. He is not conscious of the process of digestion. It is all unselfconscious. So when the doctrine is perfect, it is like this: like a vanishment; like an excellence that does not assert itself; like an innocence. For all perfection is innocent. All health is innocent. All true-mindedness is innocent. All true personality is innocent. Everything that is true and absolute and real is innocent, unselfconscious.

People wish to escape their problems. They wonder how they are to make their way from their difficulties into some easier place. There is a law which governs this escape from matter and from its problems, its difficulties, its obstacles, its various contrivances that snap down upon one like traps. There is a way to escape. That way is not through thinking and planning about the difficulty; not by turning one's step away from it or toward it; not by measuring distances in the world of thought; not by contemplating

how one is to better or advance his actions or his means. But it is through an innocent work.

It seems like such indirection that one might not hope to find the way thereto. The indirection consists in an abandonment of oneself; as though one were to say, I do not exist; I am not here as a personality; I am not here as an arrangement of the qualities, emotions, sensibilities, senses, organisms. I am not here as such a being. I am here as the absolute truth. I am here as life. I am here as reality, truth, Spirit, intelligence. If I am here as intelligence, there are no dark problems before me. There are no enigmas to snare and to stampede the mind. There are no riddles to be solved. If I am intelligence, I know all things, and everything is dissolved before me through insight.

As the Psalmist* said: The proud have forged lies against me. Then he hastens, in his

*Cf. Psalm 119:69

meditation, to declare, But I have stood by the precepts. Then he says again, My enemies have attacked me. And again he hastens, in his meditation, to declare, I have stood by the precepts. The proud, he adds, have dug pits about me. But he hastens to repeat, I have stood by the precepts. And finally he declares in all innocence, not at all egotistically as it might sound; quite innocently he says, I am wiser than my enemies; I am wiser than all those about me. For I have kept the commandments and I understand the judgments of God, and I have stood by the precepts. Therefore I fear nothing.

Now, the precepts are the announcements of truth. They are the law in my mouth. They are the honey, the sweetness upon the tongue. They are that which waits in the presence of things that would, if it were possible, obliterate all signs of Spiritual life and action. In the presence of that, I stand by the precepts.

When one comes into this world, he cannot say, I came from the north; he cannot say, I came from the south, nor from a northeasterly direction nor from a southeasterly direction; for he knows not from whence he came. The ordinary mortal cannot give any account of the way over which he has traveled. He is like a piece of thistle-down tossed in the wind, blowing hither and yon, sometimes reckless and careless, sometimes trying, like the gnat, to withstand the force of the wind. When he comes into court, as the gnat did, as it is told in the story--he appeared before the great Solomon to have his wrongs righted. And his adversary, he who had wronged him, was the wind. Solomon said, Bring them both in and let us have a hearing. And when the wind came in, the gnat could not remain to present his case. And so men are blown in this world; they cannot stand before any court of justice. The vicissitudes are too rancorous and too tortuous, and they drive away even the possibility of redress.

Then what is man? So the Psalmist has asked the question: What is man? And from the standpoint of appearances he is less than nothing, less than the vanity of vanities in which he dreams. Unless something may be summoned within him of the nature of reality, he has no hold, he has no stand, he has no rights. There is no court in which he can present himself, unless there be in him something of the nature of the judge himself, and his realm, his impulses, his judgments and determinations. If there resides in man something of the nature of Him before whom he comes to present his case, then being akin and belonging to the same world, they may come together and adjudicate their matters and determine what the rights of man may be.

First of all, therefore, as Origen taught his student, first of all find out what is within yourself. Come to know that which is yourself. And after that come to know what is truly good. A wonderful goal to set up before a student, but

a goal to which he has no leading, he has no guidance, unless the teacher take him by the hand and carry him over the difficult places. And as was said in this particular instance, the great teacher seemed to reach down his hand and lift them up, as though they had been submerged, to draw them out of the waters of despondency and ignorance and darkness. And Isaiah has repeated the words: For I, the Lord thy God, will take thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, for I will help thee. For there is that leadership which inspires within the heart the greatest devotion, most wonderful love, an addiction to truth, a persuasion that cannot be escaped, a magnetism from which one cannot be torn. And that all is the impulse which springs from the heart, and is due to that heart-contact which is called understanding.

As a preface to the recent novel published by Wassermann, these words introduce the*book:

*Faber, or The Lost Years,
by Jacob Wassermann

Due to an incomplete understanding of love, the world since the war has seemed to settle into hysteria, delinquencies, degeneracy. And the keynote of it all is a misunderstanding of love. As though love were something smeared over; as though love were a coating; as though it were a grease paint; as though it were a make-up; as though it were something to be worn on the outside; as though it were a demeanor.

A misunderstanding of love is the cause of all that is not fit and is not true and noble and is not the output of man's highest and noblest nature. Then reversing this, the understanding of love would mean the elevation of the race, the uplift of deportment, the perfection of all forms of existence. For the understanding of love is the understanding of the heart--the heart that is deep as the soul; the heart that is deeper than thinking, deeper than feeling; deep as God Himself, the depth of the Almighty Absolute.

And the great sages have said if one is able to penetrate to that depth and to come to the heart, and to strike upon the true impulse of life, he will be able to master all forms of education. There will not be anything that he cannot know. Even if it is the history of a stone that has rolled down from some mountain top and worn itself down to a pebble, he may know its entire history, if he have the understanding of love.

How masterful are the precepts, how mighty these precepts, if one were to know them!

It is the open sky that lets down the dew. If one were to spread sheets over the grass, making tents over the grass, the dew would not fall beneath the tents. The dew will not fall if there is not an open sky. So there will be no nourishment in anyone's life, no moisture to propagate the growth, to nurture the life, unless the mind and the heart is opened to the great sky, with nothing between, that one may breathe the great breath

of the open expanse of almighty understanding. For life is a great canopy over the head of man, and it is the canopy over his heart, and it is the only thing that should be. Nothing should exist betwixt man, his heart, his soul, and the absolute truth which is his life.

And when he has thrown his heart wide to the great principle of life, to absolute love itself, he will find all his affairs, that grow like grass under his feet, touched with that wonderful life-giving dew of immortality. Sometimes it was put like this: that the cup is inverted, which holds immortality for man, inverted by the seven rishis who sit upon its rim--turned over, that immortality, like a liquid, may pour out upon man and bless him with its crystalline dew and satisfy him with manna from heaven.

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