

The Throng and the Touch.

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'Who is it that touched Me?'—Luke viii. 45 (R.V.).

IN treating miracles as acted parables expositors require to exercise much care and a sound judgment. Otherwise they will be led into a habit of allegorizing in a manner which tends to the losing sight of the special truths intended to be taught, and leaves a sense of dissatisfaction, possibly disgust, upon the minds of thoughtful and educated people. This unfortunate method of interpretation is much to be regretted in the case of our Lord's miracles, which are capable of being profitably and interestingly handled without it. All of them, when studied in a natural manner, present certain plain, consolatory, and practically useful lessons, as well as the fundamental and saving truths of the gospel. On these lines we propose to deal with the case of the woman who on her touching our Lord's garments was made whole.

In examining this miracle of mercy, let us first notice the consolation to be directly derived from it in regard to deliverance from temporal ills. To a casual reader it might appear that the cure was encouraging, and afforded comfort only to those placed in exactly like circumstances as herself, who lived about 30 A.D., and were in reach of the Saviour. How, it may be asked by a person now suffering from a serious or incurable malady, can the record of this case help me? The access to Palestine is easy enough, and gladly would I undertake the journey, but there will be found no Saviour for me to touch and be made whole. Instead of deriving consolation from the narrative, it rather proves discouraging and disappointing; it tantalizes me with the mention of blessings entirely out of my power to secure. But after all is this a correct view of the matter? Are we really less favourably situated as to physical benefits than those who resided at Palestine during our Lord's lifetime? Has not the account of this and other miracles of mercy led to men's establishment of hospitals with their attendant advantages for all classes of the community? Admittedly, there are a far larger annual average of persons who recover from diseases, and are relieved of suffering through

medical skill and tender nursing to-day, than throughout the whole of our Lord's earthly ministry.

A sufferer, however, who was tempted to complain, might still further ask, 'Why were not more—in fact all—of the sick healed during our Lord's stay on earth, and in our times too?' This is really to raise the well-worn subject of the philosophy of pain, and, without going very deeply into it, a few simple answers can be readily given. In the present fallen state of man, the healing of all sufferers, or the doing away with all or even a large amount of disease, would be productive of more harm than good. What restraints to morality would thereby be removed! The drunkard and the dissolute, the defilers of the flesh would pursue their vicious courses to an extent too alarming to contemplate. The sober and the pure, except in rare cases, would become the easy victims of enticing and sinful companions. Besides, if there were no suffering, how selfish and unsympathetic, cold-hearted and hard-hearted must all of us become. Few, indeed, stop to think how much we owe to the existence of physical suffering in the present economy. It is through the mystery of pain that we have tender feelings, and are led to kindly offices which tend to make life worth living.

Our Lord, by His miracles of healing the blind, the dumb, the deaf, the sick, the halt, the maimed, taught us that He sympathized with us, and that we should sympathize with each other, and do all in our power to alleviate human suffering. He also taught us that one of the blessings in His kingdom, when fully established, would be freedom from pain, and restoration to perfect health. He has given the world the assurance that He, as the Head of Redeemed Humanity, is Lord over diseases in their various forms and over death itself, and that His followers hereafter will be free from all the ills to which flesh is now heir. This note of comfort is ours equally with that of the woman who was healed of her distressing infirmity.

We are now prepared to consider the teaching of this miracle viewed as an acted parable, and

behold, as in a mirror, the working of Divine grace in the soul. In doing so, let us first observe *the way* in which the woman obtained her physical, no less than her spiritual blessing, and we shall find it full of instruction to ourselves. Consider how she acted. She had doubtless heard of the fame of Christ; that He was a heavenly-sent Teacher and Healer; that all who came under His notice, and within the sphere of His influence, and exhibited faith, were immediately made whole, and received in themselves the thrill of health. Perceiving, then, the law of the kingdom of God that approach to the Saviour in faith leads to the bestowment of Divine favours for body and soul, she came behind the Saviour and touched the tassel which hung over the back of His garments, and was at once made whole. In all this how applicable is the narrative to ourselves, without resorting to fanciful methods of interpretation. We learn that the prime condition for receiving blessings of all kinds in the kingdom of heaven is coming to Christ, coming in the exercise of faith, touching even if it be but, so to speak, the border of His garment.

In the next place, observe *the nature of this woman's faith*, concerning which there has been much discussion. Did she show little or great, weak or strong faith? It is not easy to give a definite answer to such inquiries. For all true faith in its first efforts is in some respects weak, and in some respects strong; in no case is it perfect at any stage. Undoubtedly in the instance before us there was a certain want of intelligence, and the existence of some superstitious feelings. Possibly, too, her shrinking modesty, and desire to avoid the observations of the crowd, might have been in measure the result of defective moral courage. She might have sought to filch a blessing unawares from the Saviour Himself. But despite the lowest estimate which may be formed of her faith, and after all possible deductions that can be made from its worthiness—still she had faith, real genuine faith in the full power of Jesus as the heavenly-endowed Physician to heal all brought within the direct circle of His personal influence. None of the crowd on that occasion exercised such an act of faith as did this poor suffering woman. The rest thronged Christ, but she alone touched Him. Her faith had, according to her knowledge, clearly some elements of strength. Just witness how the woman, weakened through her long and

painful disease, yet was enabled to struggle and wrestle with the crowd until she made her way so as to actually get next to the Saviour, and touch His garment. How implicitly, too, did she believe in His Divine healing power. She was convinced that he could perform His miracles without even word or action. Her faith, though perhaps child-like, was a faith without doubts or fears, a faith without wavering. Such a faith she possessed; though it might not be what we should call a well-instructed faith, yet it was one which the Saviour recognized and rewarded. Judged by orthodox standards, her faith might be called weak; but viewed in the light of its moral accompaniments, it was faith that deserved to be called strong.

The account of the events after her healing shows what hopeful elements there were in her faith. Our Lord, who knew what was in man, and understood the latent capacities for good or evil in those who approached Him, saw that her faith was capable of being educated and elevated. He perceived that her faith, which had proved sufficient to obtain temporal mercies, if a little further instructed, would be capable of receiving spiritual mercies. Hence our Lord asked, 'Who touched Me?' Whereupon the woman openly confessed Him before the assembled crowd. Having passed through this trying ordeal, her faith now became an exact example to us in days when miracles have long ceased, concerning the method in which spiritual blessings are to be secured. The words now addressed by Jesus, 'Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole of thy plague; go in peace,' belong without any forced application to all who exercise like faith to that of this woman, who, on the occasion before us, proved herself a true daughter of Abraham.

Having thus passed in a simple and natural manner to the higher teaching of this miracle, we can now without a strained construction, or one which would offend the most sensitive or severe critic, refer to some of the minor points in the narrative which are capable of spiritual application. For instance, the failure of all the physicians previously consulted by the woman may be well used as an illustration both of the folly of seeking remedies for spiritual diseases from merely earthly teachers and by human methods, and also of the wisdom on the part of the sinner or backslider turning forthwith in simple faith to the Saviour as

the one never-failing and always available Physician of the soul.

In conclusion, we would remember that our faith in these days of religious enlightenment ought to be more instructed than that of this woman whose case we have been considering. For, as we have seen, it is one of the laws of the kingdom of God

that we are to act according to our light. But though this should be the case, still it is to be feared that few of us equal in regard to its moral accompaniments the faith exhibited either by the Syrophœnician woman, or the woman who was healed by touching our Lord's garments on His way to raise Jairus' daughter.

The Unity of Deuteronomy.

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II.

5. THE principal consideration which led Steuernagel to his new partition of Deuteronomy, was the interchange of 'thou' and 'ye' in addressing Israel.

(a) All that Steuernagel himself asserts regarding this interchange, is as follows:—(a) 'For instance, in 5¹⁻²⁸ Israel is addressed in the 2nd plur., only in the Decalogue 5⁶⁻¹⁸ in the 2nd sing. Similarly, in 12¹⁻¹² we find the 2nd plur., in 12^{13ff.} the 2nd sing.' (*Dt*, 1898, p. iii.). This is simply the statement of a fact, it is no argument, and when he adds that in chap. 28 the 2nd sing., and in chap. 29 the 2nd plur. is employed, this is not even an accurate statement of fact, for from 28⁶² onwards there is a preference for the 2nd plur., and to this usage 29^{1b} attaches itself. (β) In his dissertation *Der Rahmen des Dt* (1894, p. 4) he remarks, 'This interchange seems to be no fortuitous one, for one observes that the narrative portions regularly contain the plural form of address, whereas in the other portions down to 9^{7a} the people is almost uniformly addressed in the singular number. Where, on the other hand, in these sections there is a change of number, this is the case for the most part in sentences of a formal character (6^{1-3. 17f. 81}) or in sentences whose omission does not disturb the context (6^{14 7^{5. 7. 8a. 25a}}). Only from 10¹² onwards is the state of the case different as regards this change of number.' In *Dt* (1898, p. 37) he calls the section 10^{12-11³²} 'transitions to the communication of the law,' and merely adds, 'In these there is a network of singular and plural elements interwoven with one another.' Why, then, has he based upon this change of number the judgment that in *Dt* 5 ff. a document

Sg and a document Pl are combined? Because this change of number appears to him to be no fortuitous one. And why? Because in the narrative sections of *Dt* 5-11 the plural is preferred, whereas in the other portions down to 9^{7a} the singular is mostly employed. But may not this circumstance be connected with deeper reasons? May not the change of number be due to syntactical laws and psychological motives? Steuernagel has not put this preliminary question, but I have done so, having, in connexion with another syntactical investigation, examined also this change of number. Not only have I put the preliminary question, but I have found the answer to it.

(b) First of all, I investigated this change of number *in the Book of Dt itself*. The result is as follows:—

(a) The transition from the 2nd *sing.* to the 2nd *plur.* appears to be in *Dt* traceable to the following considerations. Above all, it is to be observed that the collective notion 'Israel' could be construed with a singular before it and a plural after it, like other collectives (see my *Syntax*, § 346 d). In this way, apart from 'behold . . . you' (1^{8 4⁵ 11²⁶}; cf. my *Syntax*, § 344 g, 348 n) we may explain the sing. 'hear' (שמע) before 'O Israel' with the subsequent 'your' (4^{1 5¹ 20³ †}). The same consideration accounts for the sing. 'take heed' (שמעו) and the 'you,' etc. (24^{8ab. 9ab 25^{17ab}}). Nay, this collective character of the word 'Israel' has a still wider scope. It involves at least the abstract possibility that the word may be replaced by 'thou' or 'ye,' and if anyone should propose to explain in this way some of the