

You Should Believe

On Easter, we celebrate the Miracle of Miracles, but often we fail to recognize an everyday

By WILL OURSLER

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SHE WAS A WOMAN of middle age, suddenly swamped with fears. Fear of rejection, of growing old, of no longer being loved or needed. Fear of losing two shining emblems of security—her husband and her home.

Senseless jealous rages developed out of this emotional turmoil. She knew her husband had always been faithful, yet now she began to accuse him every time he came in late.

The husband and two grown-up children watched this situation worsen until finally—after an all-night quarrel over a baseless suspicion—the husband said that both he and the children felt that she needed psychiatric treatment.

Their fears only increased her own. If she were mentally ill, she might spend the rest of her life in an institution. She knew her tirades and suspicions were without foundation, yet still the words poured out of her.

Terrified at the thought of clinical treatment, longing for help and afraid to seek it, without faith or perspective to guide her, she packed a bag, slipped out of the house unnoticed, and took a cab to the airport.

As the taxi drove up the airport ramp, she was aware of her own helplessness. She did not even know where she was going. She was whipped, beaten. Only God can help me, she thought. And I don't go to church or even know how to pray.

On the transcontinental plane she boarded, her only idea was to sit by the window, close to the night and the stars, where she could think things out for herself.

But there were only aisle seats left, the stewardess explained. Frustrated, huddled in the aisle seat, she cried quietly to herself, wallowing in self-pity and daubing her eyes with a crumpled little handkerchief.

Then she saw that the elderly man beside her was holding out a large white handkerchief. "You might as well use this," he was saying. "Gives you more crying room."

Gratefully, she took the handkerchief. In a little while, almost without her realizing it, they were talking. Suddenly, she was telling him about her-

self, pouring out her story to this graying man at her side.

He listened attentively, making only occasional mild interjections that seemed to encourage her to go on.

The more she talked, the more answers seemed to come to her, almost out of her own words. There was no difficult, complex problem. It was only herself, only her fears. If she got rid of fear, the senseless rages and suspicion would go. A whole new understanding engulfed her.

All she wanted to do was to get to a telephone to let them know she was all right and that she was going to come home.

After the plane landed, she paused long enough to thank this stranger—for just listening. "Well," he said, "that's part of my job. I'm a religious psychologist. I work in what we call nondirective counseling. You know, if you just help people talk things out with themselves, the whole problem sometimes disappears. I was just having a busman's holiday."

All the way to the phone, the words were turning over in her mind: thank God—thank God!

Was it a miracle that she happened to sit in the aisle seat by this man—of all others? Was it a direct intervening of God in her life?

Does God Intervene for All?

Most of us know of instances that seem almost, if not actually, "miraculous." We know of healings, of sudden successes where none seemed possible or attainable; we know of averted disasters in homes and businesses.

The issue comes then: is it miraculous in the basic, dictionary sense—"an event in the physical world, wrought by superhuman agency"? Or is it merely an accident, a coincidence?

For if miracles do happen, many ask, why don't they happen to all of us?

The answer is—they do.

There are times when we cast our bread upon the waters, and don't realize until years later that it has come back to us long since. There are times when miracles happen to us that only we can know—and we may fail to recognize them.

For instance, a big, gawky kid out of a slum area wanted to be a newspaperman. He had no education, no training. He made it as far as copy boy

on a daily in an Eastern city. Because of his readiness to pitch in and help anybody who needed help, even when he knew nothing about the problem involved, everyone in the city room kidded him mercilessly.

All he prayed for was a break—a chance to be part of a big story. This is the dream and prayer of every copy boy. But for this youth the break came quite literally—when a line snapped in an elevator, and he found himself trapped in the car, along with one of the most famous newspaper reporters in America.

A Career Is Launched

To his amazement, the copy boy discovered that the world-renowned reporter was scared. It was the youth who calmed the man down as they sat waiting in that car for several hours to be rescued.

The idle chatter of that copy boy aimed at easing tensions marked the start of a friendship that not only lasted many years but actually launched the youth on an upward road to success in journalism.

Years later, in a speech, he told of this incident and its importance. "It was like a miracle," he told his listeners, "that the cable had to break at just the instant when he and I were in the car."

"Like" a miracle? Only in those later, grown-up days did this one-time copy boy realize that it was more than "like"—it was, in essence, the answer to all his prayers.

We cannot expect miracles to come stamped and labeled. Extraordinary miracles are recorded at some of the world's great religious shrines, but there is another kind of everyday "miracle" that does not seem extraordinary—unless you know all the facts. It is a smooth working out of God's law in our lives, as we allow that law to work by permitting the Holy Spirit to flow through us. When we are one with this Spirit, we experience the miraculous—not when we strain, not when we plead for special favors, but only when we relax, when we allow the Lord to work through us.

The evidence also indicates that we can block the channels by hate, resentments, fears, grudges—all the negative factors. Miracles do not take root in such uncompromising soil.

The answer comes when we know it can come, when we know that God in His love wanted only the best for each of His children—and when we do



The distraught woman, unwilling to seek clinical help and afraid to turn to her family, packed a bag and went to the airport. She boarded a plane, not knowing or caring about its destination. Was it coincidence that she happened to sit next to a religious psychologist?

in Miracles!

kind of miracle—one that happens to all of us, if we let it

not block His infinite love with our petty hate.

Those who are not used to miraculous experiences think of them as coincidences. Those who know about them through many personal experiences accept them as a part of the miraculous character of God's universe.

What kind of miracles happen? The answer is: many kinds—big and small, obscure and world-proclaimed, of minor or tremendous importance in our lives. All can be the miraculous working out of the Divine order.

Some time ago, while preparing a series of articles on religious healing, I included the story of a little girl who had been deaf and dumb from birth but had recovered her speech and hearing at a shrine in Canada. Shortly before the story was to appear, I was informed that the story was in error; little Mary Alicia James had not been healed and still could not speak.

My information had been that the healing had happened 10 years before, when Mary Alicia was only four years old. Alarmed, I put in a person-to-person call to either of the parents. Over the long-distance phone, I heard a voice state that the parents were not in and that they were not expected for some hours.

A possibility suddenly crossed my thoughts. I asked the operator to inquire if anyone else were there. I could hear the answer, "There's only me." "Ask her," I said, "who 'me' is."

Then I heard the voice of this once-speechless child. "I'm Mary Alicia," she said.

The operator wanted to know if she should try to reach the parents later.

There was no need.

The Stuff of Miracles Is Around Us

When we open our eyes and minds to the meaning in what we see, hear, and experience, we may discover new dimension in the "casual and coincidental"—like the check that arrives in the nick of time, the chance meeting that gives us the information needed for an important project, or the strong hunch that guides us to a right decision.

"I find the most remarkable coincidences happen to me," one lady put it, "as long as I keep praying. When I stop—they stop."

We live our daily lives in the climate of miracles—in the trust of a child, the tenderness of a loving

wife or husband, and in all the countless other human relationships that often are miracles in themselves. In all these things, the stuff of miracles is all around us, and we need only to become aware of its presence to experience the good that is God in our lives.

Two sisters born in Europe were separated during World War II. For 20 years each thought the other dead, yet each prayed that she would learn the story of what happened to the other.

The Improbable Happens

One day, registering at a hotel in an American city, the older sister was startled when the desk clerk told her, "But you don't have to register again, Madam. You registered an hour ago."

The woman explained that this was not the case; she had just arrived from the railroad station. The desk clerk called in the bellhop, who agreed that he had taken this lady and her luggage to a room on the second floor.

A suspicion came to the woman. She was only a year older than her sister—they now were both in their late 30s and could certainly look alike.

She asked to see the name she supposedly had signed, but did not recognize it at all. Then she noticed the "Mrs." on the register.

She raced up the stairs and knocked on the door. It seemed hours before someone answered. There before her she saw a woman of almost the same age and features as herself.

Neither spoke, yet in that instant both knew. The sisters were in each other's arms, laughing, crying, trying to talk.

It was only later that they realized that they were wearing similar outfits—brown tweed suits, each with a bright yellow scarf.

Why did it happen just this way?

The sisters knew only that love and faith which had never wavered had brought them together again at last.

The miracle awaits us, awaits our awareness. We seek, and the answer comes. Today—tomorrow—or a year from now. But it will come only as our understanding and our gratitude deepen.

The answer is warm and overwhelming. The outside world may call it coincidence, but it does not matter what the world may say.

In our hearts, we know.