

HEALTH NEEDS GOD— MAN AID—SERMON

Relationship Between Religion
and Health Discussed by
Winnetka Minister

Editor's Note: At the Winnetka Congregational church last Sunday morning the Rev. James Austin Richards preached a sermon on "Law and Mystery and God" with some special reference to the question of the relationship that exists between religion and health. In response to a great many requests that have come to him he now furnishes parts of the sermon for publication.

The text was the story Jesus told. "So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how."

By REV. J. A. RICHARDS

"There were some things that that farmer did know. He knew that if he wanted a crop there had to be seed and the seed had to be sown, cast upon the ground. Of course he also knew the advantage of preparing the soil, of weeding it after the crop had sprouted and of seeing that it did not get too dry. But with all this knowledge there was also mystery. Days and nights went by in which the farmer did nothing about his crop. He slept and rose and went about other things and meanwhile it grew, he knew not how.

Like Kingdom of God

"All this, says Jesus, is like the Kingdom of God. He does not say the casting of the seed and the tilling of the soil are like the Kingdom of God and the rest is not. He does not say that the mysterious growth that comes from within is like the Kingdom of God and the rest is not. Not a bit of it. The whole process is like the Kingdom of God. It is all religious. It is all divine. The Kingdom of God is like both these things working together. There is the outward arrangement of circumstance. There is the inward pressure of the life of the seed. The law and the mystery are both of God.

"We all see this in connection with plant life, but we are prone to forget it elsewhere. As a result our religious lives go hopping on one foot when they ought to be striding forward on two. How do we think about the universe? There was a time when it was almost all mystery. Nobody undertook to explain anything. The very idea of cause and effect, which is one of the most useful instruments of the modern mind, had not yet been born. The wind was a mystery and a spirit. The fire was a mystery, before which the soul of man might bow in utmost adoration. The stars in their mystery and their beauty declared the glory of God.

"For long years men rose and slept and went about their work and these wonders took place they knew not how. But then came the day of law. The wind became a thing of thermo-dynamics and wise men could prophesy its course. The fire became a matter of chemistry that a high school student could understand. The stars were measured and their courses plotted and their very chemical composition analyzed in the spectroscope. Then men said: 'The mystery is gone. The basis of religion has disappeared. God was useful in the past, but we do not need Him any longer.'

Religion on the Run?

"This did not come about all at once. When first the law of cause and effect became a ready tool of the mind, men found it useful in little areas of life and said wherever it worked out they had an area with all mystery gone. They said, 'God is not here. God is in the gaps between such areas as these.' But then the areas grew and field was joined to field as little states are built into great kingdoms. Religion was on the run till now multitudes say that it has been chased clear outside the universe altogether. Science has filled all

the gaps and has explained everything without God.

"Here we are close to the roots and the agony and much of the religious stress of our time. Here we see why so much of religion has become sick and pale and defensive when it ought to be marching through the earth like a victorious army with fife and drums and banner.

"Of course it is easy to answer that science has not filled all the gaps. Reverent scientists would be the very first to make that correction for us. But this is not an adequate answer, for the process of filling up the gaps is steadily going forward. More gaps are full today than were yesterday and more will be filled tomorrow than are full today. This still leaves religion retreating and afraid and a scared religion is hardly better than none at all.

Evolution Ties Up Mysteries

"We are wise and brave again only when we clearly understand that we are dealing here with a false dilemma. Just as false as it would be for the farmer to say that because the seed grows, he knows not how, he does not need the soil and the sunshine and the rain; or for him to say because the soil and the sunshine and the rain are helpful, he does not need the seed. Let science fill all the gaps. Let science discover the characteristic behavior of everything. Let science write the law of cause and effect in every nook and corner of the universe. Mystery is still here, and here in more monumental form. There is the mystery why any given cause is connected with any given effect. There is the mystery why gravity attracts instead of repels. Why there are only three primary colors. Why is there any such thing as a law of cause and effect? It is a simple truth well worth our memory that when we do what we call, 'explaining' something, all that we do or really can do is to link one mystery to another. It is queer, although I hope a passing tendency of the modern mind, to think that if only we make the mystery big enough, we have abolished it. You would not like a fire department that tried to put out fires that way. And of course the queerest popular manifestation of this at present is the assumption that evolution explains the universe without God. What evolution really does is to tie a whole lot of little mysteries into one vast mystery.

"But even where the mystery seems to be less, that is not dispensing with God, or the making of God any less worshipful. Who is the great man, the worthy man, the man that you trust and admire and like to have around? Is it the man who is always a mystery? Is it the man of pure caprice, whose conduct you can never forecast; the man who does one thing in a certain situation today and another thing in the same situation tomorrow, who is truthful now and a liar ten minutes hence; honorable about this month's bills and dishonorable about the next's; kind and friendly on occasions and harsh and bitter at other times? Is it this man, or is it the man of whom you say, 'I always know where I can find him,' the man whose conduct and attitudes you can confidently predict, who meets identical situations in the same way, who is truthful both when it is pleasant and when it is unpleasant, honorable both when it is advantageous and when it is expensive, kind and friendly not sometimes, but always and everywhere? Which is the greater man? To ask the question is to answer it.

Discovering God

"So, too, with God. Men talk easily of 'reducing' God to law. The very word begs the question. To learn the laws of the universe is nothing more or less than to discover the trustworthy habits of God, to learn that He is not capricious, but faithful, reliable, worthy of our trust, good to have around.

"There is mystery enough left! He who says he has learned God altogether is merely parading the fact that he is an ignoramus. He who has not time and place where he must bow in silence before the infinite mystery is only one percent wise. But he who thinks to learn the laws of the world, reduces God, debases or exiles Him, is doing himself an equal wrong. The farmer runs his farm. There is much that he does not understand, and that is of God, but God is equally in all that he understands the best. Not only has science not lessened the ultimate mystery, but where it seems to have lessened some of the nearer mysteries it has in no way dispensed with God.

"All this applies to the relation of God and health. In few places have we suffered more from imagining a false dilemma. If the farmer's crop

could talk instead of being merely talked about, it would say something like this: 'My healthy growth is due to two things. It comes from two directions. It is due to the soil and the sun and the rain and the planting and the tilling. It comes from without, inward. It is due also to something inside, to this mystery of life. It comes from within, outward. Both things are necessary. Both are divine. Both are of God.'

Source of "Healing Sects"

"Now that seems to me to be precisely the situation in the matter of growing a healthy human body. We too frequently fall into a false dilemma. We say 'either or' when we ought to be saying 'both and.' The Church has done just this, and, strangely enough, in choosing which horn of the dilemma to stand by, it has elected just the one that we least expect. It has been tricked into saying, 'The soil and the farming are the only things needful. All health comes from without inward.' That is why in the last fifty years we have had so great a growth of healing sects. But some have gone to the opposite extreme. They have been tricked into saying, 'The mysterious inner life is all that the farmer needs for his crop. All health comes from within outwards.' Surely neither position is any more correct in the matter of growing a healthy body than it is correct in the matter of running a farm. Both deny God. Both send us hopping on one foot when we ought to be striding on two.

Prayer is Essential

"I look for the day when it will be the normal thing for Christian people to stop choosing one or the other of these and to reach for them both. When there is sickness in my house I do not want a physician—and in Winnetka I seldom have to have one—who is not a man of prayer, but it is even more essential that I pray, and it is most essential that the sick one pray. When health is poor or good health is needing to be made better there is too much in the experience of the devout, there is too much in reverent psychology and medicine, there is too much in the fundamental teaching of the Christian faith for me not to want prayer, that mysterious inner mingling of my life with the coterminous life of God. There is many a man and woman weak and sick and miserable in body solely because they expect all health to come from without inward and who will never be well again until they know the healing that comes from within.

"But God also works from without inward. The laws of the universe are the laws of God. It seems as blasphemous to deny the God outside of me, as it would be to deny the God within me. God works not only through the seed. He works also through the soil. This is all His World. Just as in growing a crop of wheat I need the life of the seed that comes from within outward and the influence of soil and sun and rain that move from without inward, so in growing a healthy human body I want God's help in both these ways. To want anything less is a partial denial of God. To seek anything less is to deprive one's self of God."

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis A. Vollman, 803 Cherry street, entertained 12 guests at dinner and bunco Tuesday, February 2, at their home on Cherry street, for their son, John, in celebration of his birthday.

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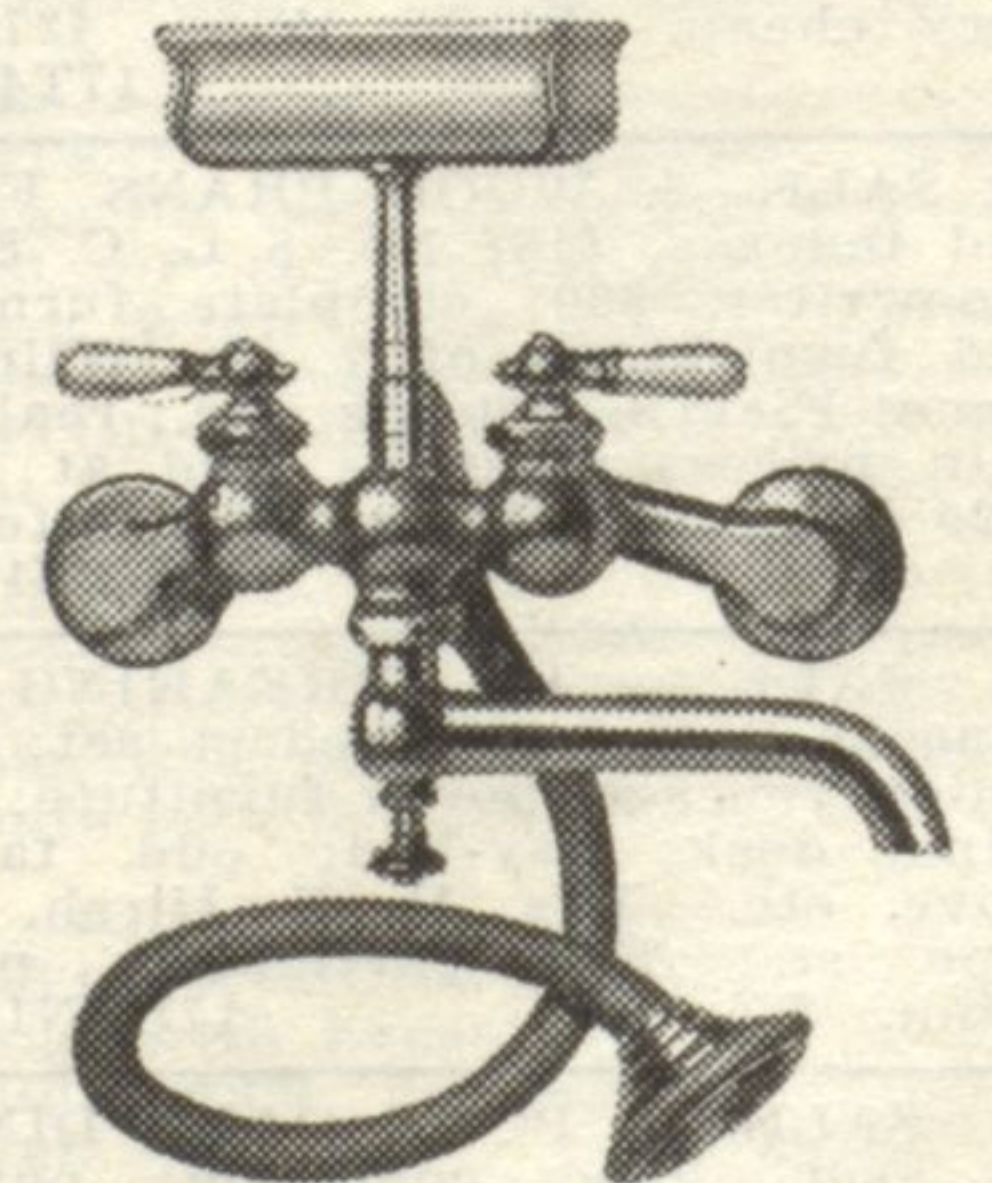
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