

THE AUTHOR HIMSELF of all miracles and mighty works, when He called His disciples to learn His teaching, clearly showed what those true and specially chosen followers ought chiefly to learn from Him, saying: “Come and learn of Me,” – not chiefly to cast out devils by the power of heaven, not to cleanse the lepers, not to give sight to the blind, not to raise the dead: for even though I do these things by some of My servants, yet man’s estate cannot insert itself into the praises of God, nor can a minister and servant gather hereby any portion for himself there where is the glory of Deity alone – but do ye, says He, learn this of Me, “for I am meek and lowly of heart.”

For this it is which it is possible for all men generally to learn and practice, but the working of miracles and signs is not always necessary, nor good for all, nor granted to all. Humility therefore is the mistress of all virtues, it is the surest foundation of the heavenly building, it is the special and splendid gift of the Savior. For he can perform all the miracles which Christ wrought, without danger of being puffed up, who follows the gentle Lord not in the grandeur of His miracles, but in the virtues of patience and humility. But he who aims at commanding unclean spirits, or bestowing gifts of healing, or showing some wonderful miracle to the people, even though when he is showing off he invokes the name of Christ, yet he is far from Christ, because in his pride of heart he does not follow his humble Teacher. For when He was returning to the Father, He prepared, so to speak, His will and left this to His disciples: “A new commandment,” said He, “give I unto you that ye love one an-

other; as I have loved you, so do ye also love one another:” and at once He subjoined: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” He says not: “if ye do signs and miracles in the same way,” but “if ye have love one to another;” and this it is certain that none but the meek and humble can keep.

Wherefore our predecessors never reckoned those as good monks or free from the fault of vainglory, who professed themselves exorcists among men, and proclaimed with boastful ostentation among admiring crowds the grace which they had either obtained or which they claimed. But in vain, for “he who trusteth in lies feedeth the winds: and the same runneth after birds that fly away.” [Prov. 10:4] For without doubt that will happen to them which we find in Proverbs: “As the winds and clouds and rain are very clear so are these who boast of a fictitious gift.” [25:14] And so if any one does any of these things in our presence, he ought to meet with commendation from us not from admiration of his miracles, but from the beauty of his life, nor should we ask whether the devils are subject to him, but whether he possesses those features of love which the Apostle describes.

St John Cassian, *Second Conference of Abbot Nesteros*, ch. VII, NPNE, Second Series, Vol. XI, p. 448

AN OLD MAN WAS ASKED, “How is it that there are men who say, ‘We have seen a vision of angels?’” and the old man said, “Blessed is he who seeth his sins continually.”

Paradise of the Holy Fathers, tr. Budge, Vol. II, p. 112, #473

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