

A MIRACLE IN BLACK

Rev. C. F. Wimberly, D. D.

The religion of Jesus Christ faces many problems in this age of reckless, thoughtless, pleasure-crazed extravagance. But if we can interpret, in any degree, the signs and movements now in progress, the supreme crux of our day is *humanization*, if such a word is intelligible. To be more exact, it is an effort to eliminate the supernatural, and abandon all the processes, so long believed in as experiences inwrought by the Holy Ghost, such as conviction for sin, repentance, faith, pardon, witness of the Spirit, heart purity, etc. We are handling the most sacred truths of revelation as the surgeon handles his scalpel on diseased tissues, or as the scientist examines the *euglena* under his microscope. All the joyous emotions of the soul are being explained by the new psychology—whatever that may mean. Then, of course, God's word as to revelation, inspiration, and the truth as it is in Christ must, of necessity, come under the same analysis and dissection.

With these preliminary thoughts before us, we shall tell a little story, and would like to offer it for the scalpel of the *intelligencia* who may condescend to read these lines. It is a true story that did not find its way into "True Story Magazine." Furthermore, it is not a story told "on good authority," second or third hand, but one of which this writer has personal knowledge of the facts set forth. We saw, we heard, but we did not comprehend. We want some one who is wise "above that which is written" to explain this story.

The writer was conducting a revival in a large southern city, and was being entertained at the parsonage. At this parsonage there was employed as cook a faithful old darky of the old regime—loyal, devout, and with simple childlike faith. From time to time, Aunt Sophia, as we shall call her, told us of a little black child who "preached." She said so much about this wonderful child that we urged her to bring her to the parsonage, that we might hear her preach. This she did one Sunday evening.

It will be necessary just here to give the readers a history of this little black tot, or "pickaninny," as they are better known. A very young colored girl became a mother, a thing not uncommon among those people who know little except the law of primitive instinct. This little black waif was left with an old colored woman living next door to Aunt Sophia, the minister's cook. The child was left, with promises to pay for her support, but the mother disappeared and left this old darkey with the burden of this illegitimate child, and her mother was never heard of again.

At our invitation, the old auntie brought the child to the parsonage, two other ministers being present. We asked the old woman the child's age. "Dat chile am 'xactly two years and nine months ole, kas I had 'er eber sence she am bon."

Close scrutiny revealed the fact that the old woman spoke the truth; she could not have been older. Just little black child, that normally could not have talked very distinctly, much less carry on a conversation. We have known bright white children that could scarcely articulate at that age. Little "Ruby" spoke her words as distinctly as an adult. Then her guardian said: "Ruby,

de white gemine want ter hyar ye preach fur 'em." Until that moment the child had not spoken a word, but sat in the corner with her hands folded. She arose and walked to the center of the room, and began: "Dear friends, I am going to preach to you from the fourteenth chapter of John." She did not read this wonderful chapter, but she literally *preached* it, and with emphasis, her black eyes shining, looking us straight in the eyes, and stamping her little feet. Her body seemed transfigured, as she quoted down through the chapter—most of it. Readers, keep in mind she was but two years and nine months old.

When she came to a stop, she said: "Now, everybody sing," and she began one of those lifting negro spirituals, as her little body swayed in perfect rhythm. Then she began again: "I am now going to preach to you the twenty-third Psalm." And she delivered it in the same enthusiastic manner, quoting it accurately, and swinging her arms in graceful gestures. Two or three other Bible lessons were *preached* in the same way.

All hands then asked her questions. "Ruby, who taught you how to preach?" She would reply with all her powers, "Jesus told me how." "Where did you learn so much Bible, Ruby?" "Jesus learned it to me."

The next move was to question the old auntie as to her teaching Ruby. She replied in explosive language: "Na suh, I ain't tellin' that chile nothin'—I do' know dat Bible myself. Dat air chile, she scares me." "Are you sure," we ask her, "that you have not been teaching her to do this preaching?" and she denied it vehemently.

We found out some further mysteries about Ruby. Nearly every morning she would bound out of bed, and call to her auntie and say: "Jesus give me some more Bible last night," then get out onto the floor and deliver it. She would then beg until the old woman would get a Bible and find it to see if it was right, as the chapters and verse would always be given. Sometimes she would have difficulty in finding it, but when she did it was always correct. Ruby never missed the reference. Several times those in the room gave her pieces of money, and she took it over and gave it to the old woman, and said: "God will bless you, and I will pray for you." God will bless you, and I will pray for you—think of it—*two years and nine months old*.

Mention was then made about a dream the child had a few nights before. "Tell the white folks yer dream, Ruby," said the auntie. This is what Ruby told us: "Dreamed that Jesus gave me three brooms, and said, 'Sweep clean, Ruby, for I am coming soon.' I told Jesus I would sweep clean."

A few nights before this interview, the negroes had a lodge gathering in a hall not far away, and they asked to have this little child come and speak for them. The old lady said she asked her what she was going to tell them, and the child said she did not know. They went to the hall; Ruby sat in a chair in a corner with her head bowed to her lap until her name was called. She went at once to the platform and began her speech. She told them: "You will find my sermon in some chapter in Leviticus," (naming the chapter). It was God saying: "You are my people, and I will be your God, and you shall love and serve me, and I will bless you." She then delivered the same message for us. There was no possible way for this to have been faked, and nothing short of a strange, unexplainable mystery, that this little black child could do what she did. We do not believe a white child can be

found in this land who could even be taught—at such an age—to do what this illegitimate waif did. Explain it, somebody.

We were told by Ruby's foster mother that she never played with other children of her own age; she would go with the old woman, who cooked for a white family, and sit out on the back steps all day long and amuse herself, but made no trouble for any one. She never asked for anything, but took what was given her, ate it, and said nothing.

Let us pause a moment, for argument, and say that she had been taught all this extraordinary manifestation. Who taught her? Was it this old illiterate cook—a woman who worked every day in a kitchen with, perhaps, one-half day off each week, and Sunday evenings. How could she find the time, if such a scheme should enter her mind? Then let us assume that she was taught, coached, trained to repeat and preach those messages from God's word. *Even then, you have a miracle beyond the ken of human mind to fathom*. It is a miracle for which there is no human explanation. We challenge any white family who may read these lines to train their own children or grandchildren, two years and nine months old, to stand out on the floor and recite the fourteenth chapter of John, or any other chapter. Let them try to teach one of such an age to quote it correctly, and say any of the things this little black child said.

No, it cannot be done. At that age they are only beginning to prattle little words, and many cannot do that with clear articulation. They might be taught to chatter some Mother Goose rhymes, and they will not get very far with them, either. Let every parent test their own children—all of whom, of course, are unusually bright at the age of little Ruby; teach them to stand out on the floor and recite correctly large parts of several chapters of the Bible, and see how far they will get. We contend that Ruby was a miracle, viewed from any angle.

So in this age of materialism when every fact of things sacred is being reduced to human interpretation, we find here an exemplification of the words of the Psalmist: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou hast ordained strength, because of thine enemies." Yes, enemies that seek to explain God, explain Revelation, Salvation and the Blood Atonement, as coming from folklore, traditions and heathen mythologies. The blatant, blaspheming infidel who spurns God and ridicules the Bible, is not in a class with the well-paid, high-salaried teacher or preacher who eats the bread of the church, and with the pretence of higher scholarship, quietly and suavely cuts the spinal cord of our faith by raising doubts as to the truth of it all, destroying our faith by humanizing the whole structure.

But back to the little negro girl. We want some scholastic to come forward and explain little Ruby and tell us how it happened. Give us the *rationale*—that is the big word, I think. Some may say to the writer, "Well, what do you say or think about it?" This writer has no explanation, other than the words given by Ruby herself: "Jesus told me. Jesus learned me to preach."

"Music is the art of heaven that was brought to earth that will return to heaven!"
—Wesleyan Methodist.

Resignation is the name of the angel who carries most of our soul's burdens.—J. L. Basford.