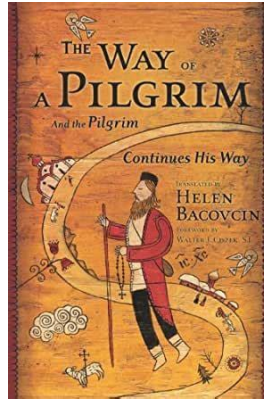


A Lesson from *The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way*

Translated by Helen Bacovcin



“...The Pilgrim... is a simple Russian peasant... [who] has lost both his material possessions and his family; he has no home of his own and a handicap prevents him from earning a living so he wanders from one end of his vast country to another.... **[he] is deeply in love with his God and never tires of communicating with Him... he knows how absolutely wonderful God is in His love and mercy to all His children but especially to those who unconditionally open their hearts to Him.**”

Preface, p xiii-xiv

“For two days it rained and the road was so muddy that I could hardly pull my feet out of the mud; and I walked through the steppes for fifteen versts [a Russian measure of linear distance equivalent to about two thirds of a mile] without seeing any settlements. And then at least by evening I saw a courtyard close to the road and I thought happily, I will ask for lodging her, and tomorrow, God willing, the weather will be better.

I came into the court and saw a drunken old man in a soldier’s overcoat sitting on a mound. I greeted him and asked, “Is there someone here I can ask for lodging?”

“No one but I can give you permission,” shouted the man. “I am in charge here. This is a post office station and I am the postmaster.”

“Then may I please spend the night here, sir?” I asked.

“...you can sleep here. I am a good man and will even give you a glass of vodka.”

“I do not drink,” I said.

“Well, then at least have supper with us.”

So we sat down to the table; the postmaster, a young cook, who also had had enough to drink, and I. During the course of the meal they abused and reproached one another and even hit one another. But finally the postmaster went to sleep in the storage room and the cook began to wash the dishes and to clean up the kitchen, but as she worked she continued to abuse the old man.

I sat there for a while and then I thought that it might take some time before she finished, so I said to her, "Where can I sleep, madam" I am very tired from the road."

"I will prepare your bed," she said, and she placed two benches together by the front window, covered them with a piece of felt, and gave me a pillow. I lay down, closed my eyes, and rested in silence.

For a long time the cook bustled about, but finally she finished, shut off the light, and came toward me. **Suddenly, the whole front window – the frame, glass, and splinters of wood – flew and came crashing down so that the whole house shook, and outside the window was heard painful moaning and screaming. The woman jumped to the center of the room in fright and then fell down on the floor unconscious.** Utterly shocked, I jumped up, thinking that the earth had opened up under me. **And then I saw two coachmen bring in a man who was covered with blood beyond recognition and my horror increased.**

The man they brought in was a courier who was coming to the station for a change of horses. His coachmen had missed the gate and the path leading to the house and with a drawbar knocked out the window and overturned the carriage into a ditch by the house. The courier fell and cut his head on a sharp stake which supported the mound. When they brought him in, he asked for water and wine to clean his wound. Then he drank a glass of wine and shouted an order for the horses.

Answer These Questions:

When the horse rode into the window, was that a 'bad' thing to happen or a 'good' thing? What makes you think so?

Couldn't our all-knowing, all-powerful God have seen that this was going to happen and prevented it from happening? Why wouldn't he do this?

I was standing by him and said to him, "Sir, how can you possibly travel with such a wound?"

"The courier may never be sick," he answered and ran out.

The coachmen pulled the cook, who was unconscious, close to the stove, covered her with a blanket, and said, "She is in a state of shock but she will come to." And the postmaster took another drink and went back to sleep.

I was left alone.

Soon the woman got up all distraught; she walked back and forth in the house and then she went out. I said a prayer and, as I was completely exhausted, just before dawn I fell asleep.

In the morning I parted with the postmaster and went on my way. As I walked I prayed with faith, hope and thanksgiving to the Father of all blessings, who had protected me from danger which was so close.

Answer These Questions:

How often are we blessed by God to be saved from our own destruction or a serious accident– do we remember to give thanks to God like the pilgrim? Or are we like the delivery clerk, just rushing from one thing to the next with hardly a thought about God?

Six years after this incident took place, I was passing by a convent and stopped to pray in the church. After the Liturgy the Mother Superior invited me for some tea, but when some unexpected guests came, she went with them and left me with the sisters. The humble nun who poured my tea aroused my curiosity and I asked her, “Have you been in this monastery very long, sister?”

“Five years,” she answered. “I was mentally disturbed when I was brought here, but God had mercy on me and healed me and then Mother Superior received me into the community and gave me the veil.”
[tonsured me a nun.]

“What caused your mental disturbance?” I asked.

“Fear. I worked at a station and one night there was a terrible accident there as horses ran into the house and knocked out a window. That shock which I experienced that night caused me to lose my senses, and then for a whole year my parents took me from one holy shrine to another but it was here in this convent that I obtained healing.”

When I heard all of this, I was filled with joy and I praised God, who ordains all things in wisdom.”

Answer These Questions:

Remember when the horse rode into the window and you were trying to decide whether it was a ‘good’ thing or a ‘bad’ thing to happen? Is your opinion still the same? Why or why not?

Do you think the Pilgrim or the nun consider the accident that happened to be ‘bad’? Do you think the mail courier and postmaster have the same opinion? What is the difference between the 2 groups of people?

How often do we judge a situation as ‘bad’, and we could not possibly know the entire story of God’s intentions? What will we do from now on when something happens that we consider to be a ‘bad’ thing? [Give glory to God for everything – we have no idea what has changed in someone’s life because of something that has happened, including things we think are ‘bad’ such as illness or some other event we consider a tragedy!]
