

January 16, 2006 – Subject: Truth.

Dear Friends: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from: A TALK ON THE BOOK OF ACTS by Peggy Brook.

ACTS 8: 9-11

TRUTH as Truth (Chapter 8:9-25). There is only one Truth, and it establishes itself in spite of all dangerous resemblances.

If we hold to Truth, we needn't worry about what extravagant claims or deeds the anti-Christ may put forward, because Truth is its own witness and cannot be turned aside. Truth is.

“Here we have the story of Simon the sorcerer, who really represents the anti-Christ. He was trying to pose as the Christ, as Truth. The apostles' had previously met opposition only from the Jews, but now they began to meet it from other quarters, – from various world systems. The Century Bible edition of Acts say:

Simon seems to have won the name of being the incarnation of the highest personal potency emanating from God, and so to have occupied among the Samaritans very much the place which their religion assigned to the coming Messiah (John iv. 25). Indeed it is possible that Simon, after his first formal adhesion to the name of Jesus the Messiah, boldly claimed to be himself the true Messiah (page 210).

VERSES 9-11.

Moffatt's Commentary on Acts says:-

Rival miracles often mark the contest between a new and an old religion. Nor must it be forgotten that preachers of truth and disciples of error are both wont to claim to be gifted with supernatural powers. Thus, when Moses confronts the magicians of Egypt, both sides are able to work wonders; and Jesus himself warned his disciples

that their enemies would show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect (page 71).

Mrs. Eddy writes, “What the prophets of Jehovah did, the worshippers of Baal failed to do; yet artifice and delusion claimed that they could equal the work of wisdom. Science only can explain the incredible good and evil elements now coming to the surface. Mortals must find refuge in Truth in order to escape the error of these latter days... Between Christian Science and all forms of superstition a great gulf is fixed, as impassable as that between Dives and Lazarus” (S. & H. 83:2-9, 22-25).

Simon was a sorcerer who claimed to do the works of Truth, and of course we have the same phenomenon today when such people as hypnotists claim to do the works that Christ, Truth, accomplishes. But remember that Mrs. Eddy says, “Science only can explain...” We may see healing accomplished in all kinds of ways, but the question is, “What is the statement behind the proof?” In Christianity we’re always tracing proof back to statement. The statement behind our proof is Science. Truth, operates through divine system, and you remember that the essential structure of the sixth day of creation is the reflection of the “seven” and the “four”; so when the consciousness of spiritual Truth produces healing, there lies behind it the infinite intelligent operation of divine system, just as the whole system of arithmetic lies behind an arithmetical fact introduced into an arithmetic problem. It seems to me that the touchstone in all these cases is, “What is the statement of Truth which lies behind the healing? Does it lead back to a clear statement of Truth?” I don’t mean just words, but the absolute fundamental facts of Truth, which lie behind the phenomena of healing. Also we have to ask ourselves, “Does it heal spiritually and morally, as well as physically?” That’s the test. “Does it measure up to the standard of Truth, which always has that threefold witness, – spiritual, moral and physical?” Truth is a whole, and it is “the light of the world.” Jesus said of this light, “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house,” – it brings light to every level and state of thought. If we see that, it gives us a touchstone. “Rival miracles” are all right if they’re done spiritually and in the name of God, but if

they're done through magic or sorcery they don't really get one anywhere.

Somebody told me recently that he saw one of these hypnotists on the stage doing amazing things, and so he paid him a fee and asked him to come back to his home and tell him how he did it; he said, "Tell me from A to Z about hypnotism." Then this hypnotist said, "Well, there's nothing to tell you. The most important thing is to persuade people that you have this hypnotic power. When you've done that, it's more than half the battle. If I go into a room and nobody knows that I'm a hypnotist, they don't take much notice of me, but if I'm introduced as a hypnotist, they all say, 'Oh yes, you can tell! Look at his eyes! Extraordinary! If I can convince people that I have this hypnotic power, I've more than half hypnotized them. It's the build-up that counts.'" And it's so interesting; too, to find that at these hypnotists' shows the people who are real thinkers can't be hypnotized. Someone was telling me the other day that he went to a dinner where there were a great many people, and a hypnotist was engaged to entertain them. This fellow had no success at all in hypnotizing those people, except with one man. The guests at the dinner were all very pleased with themselves, because they felt that they had dominion over their thinking. The hypnotist was most apologetic about his failure but I think that he had done them a very good turn, because he had given them all courage. Some people get frightened that they might be hypnotized, but if you have dominion over your thinking and if you understand that Truth is the rock, you can't be hypnotized, either by this maternal existence, which is trying to hypnotize us all the time, or by those who call themselves hypnotists.

Truth is a two-edged sword, and so it enables us to detect what is true and what is not true, – to detect what measures up to the standard of Truth and what is just a dangerous resemblance to Truth. Truth establishes us on the rock, and nothing can budge us from it. If we love Truth, we shall never be fooled, because the standard of Truth just won't allow us to be fooled.

This is the first instance in Acts of the way in which Truth exposes dangerous resemblances and anything that isn't genuine. We shall

see that aspect of Truth at work again with Elymas the sorcerer and with the woman who had the spirit of divination.

VERSES 12-16. They had received the Word of God and they had been baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” and so they had a sense of the Word and the Christ, but it was necessary for Peter and John to give them the Holy Ghost, – to tell them of Christianity. They were at the same point that we’re at today; we have some sense of the Word, and some sense of the Christ, and now we’re beginning to feel the spirit of Christianity, – of Life, Truth, and Love.

VERSE 17. You remember that Mrs. Eddy says that hands in the Bible stand for spiritual power. (See S. & H. 38:10-12, 15-18.) So this verse symbolizes that as soon as the understanding of Life, Truth, and Love began to dawn on them, they had power. That’s true for all of us. In proportion as we understand divine Life, Truth, and Love, we have power. There’s no limit to the demonstration of good through understanding divine Life, Truth, and Love.

VERSES 18-20. Mrs. Eddy says, “Christian Science may be sold in the shambles. Many are bidding for it, -but are not willing to pay the price” (Mis. 269:25-26). She also writes, “Is it not “professional reputation and emolument rather than the dignity of God’s laws, which many leaders seek?” (S. & H. 236:6-7). Christian Science can’t be bought with money. You can’t buy Truth with money; the price of Truth is loving Truth, that’s all-loving Truth more than yourself. As Mr. Doorly said, “You’ve got to love this idea more than yourself.” It sounds simple, but it’s the price you have to pay for Truth. If you Love Truth more than yourself, then Truth uses you with power. Many of us are not willing to stop loving our little ruts or comfortable matter; if we really love Truth, it will take us out of those ruts, but at the same time it will establish us on un-shakable spiritual foundations and leaven our whole experience. It’s a case of “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...”

Mrs. Eddy says also, “In Latin the word rendered disciple signifies student; and the word indicates that the power of healing was not a supernatural gift to those learners, but the result of their cultivated spiritual understanding of the divine Science, which their master demonstrated by healing the sick and sinning” (S. & H. 271:11-16).

Peter and John and Philip had worked for their understanding. They were on the rock of Truth, but they had swum through deep waters to get to it and they'd stuck to it. When Simon saw them doing miracles, he thought, "This is wonderful! I'd like to be able to do that." And he thought that he could buy the power with his money; he thought that he could get it materially, but he couldn't, and nobody can. The real worker sticks through evil or through good report, and Peter and John and Philip had done that and they had a standard which they had worked for. Now, it's true that everyone is the son of God, and so there's no fixed rule as to how long or how short a time it takes you to recognize it; it's the fact right now, and everyone of us could rise up with power right now, if we gave ourselves to it. At the same time, however, as Mr. Doorly often used to say, "Jesus was the Son of God divinely, but humanly he made himself the Son of God"; in other words, from a human standpoint, we've got to work out our salvation.

Simon wanted this gift of being able to inspire people, which was what Peter and John had when they gave them the Holy Ghost, - they were really explaining to them the nature of power, the nature of Life, Truth, and Love, so that they were empowered by it themselves, -but Simon wanted it because he wanted to be a big shot and to impress people: So Peter and John said, "No, it can't be done that way! It comes through honest toil." Something had evidently touched Simon's thought when he saw all the miracles which the apostles did, but he couldn't make the grade, because it meant loving Truth more than himself and apparently he was not prepared to do that at that time-although sooner or later we all have to come to that point.

VERSE 21. "thy heart is not right in the sight of God" -remember the sixth Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." That's not a vague and empty promise: it's absolutely true, and being pure in heart means loving Truth more than yourself.

These words also remind me of some lines which Mrs. Eddy quotes,

Thou must be true thyself, if thou the truth would'st teach;
Thy heart must overflow, if thou another's heart would'st reach
(Mis. 98: 27-29)

That's really what Peter was pointing out... It's a challenge to us all, but it's inescapable. Mr. Doorly once said, "Only the holiest desire can give you an understanding of Life, Truth, and Love," and how true that is. It's a consciousness which is absolutely definite, but which cannot be gained except through spiritual sense.

Mrs. Eddy says, "The best sermon ever preached is Truth practiced and demonstrated by the destruction of sin, sickness, and death" (S. & H. 201:1-3). She also writes, "Living a true life, casting out evil, healing the sick, and preaching the gospel of Truth, -these are the ends of Christianity" (No. 12:18-20). Truth is a whole, so you can't talk Truth and not live Truth- you've got to let it use you physically, morally, and in every way. Of course, when I say these things, I'm saying them for myself as much as for everyone else.

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