

January 23, 2006 – Subject: Love.

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 M. Brook.

LOVE as Truth (Chapters 10:1-11:30). Love’s ideal includes all ideas – generic man.

As we understand the universality of Science, we shall recognize all men as ideas in Love’s plan and grant them their status as such, whoever they are.

In this tone as Love as Truth we see the idea spreading farther and farther afield, and the inspiration of that expansion was the sense as universal manhood. Do. you remember that it was in the tone as Truth as Love that we first saw a more universal sense as manhood – in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch?

CHAPTER 10

VERSE 1. “a centurion”, it’s interesting to remember that the first Gentile whom Jesus came in contact with in his healing work was a centurion.

VERSE 2. I always feel that if we can only detect in others what they already reflect of Life, Truth, and Love, we can then lead their thought back to. Principle. And I think that this verse here gives a sense of how Cornelius was reflecting Life, Truth, and Love. He was “one that feared God with all his house”– in other words he had that sense of looking to God, of laying down the mortal concept and turning to God, which Life inspires. He “gave much alms to the people”– in other words, he had a sense of the brotherhood of man, which Truth brings. And he “prayed to God always”– in other words, he had that sense of Love, which consistently acknowledges God’s power and accepts that God is the one universal God.

VERSE 3. “about the ninth hour of the day Cornelius’ thought was resurrected.”

VERSE 4. “Thy prayers and thine alms” – that’s rather interesting, because we saw that Cornelius’ prayers had the tone of Love and that his alms gave the sense of Truth, and we’re considering the tone as Love as Truth.

VERSE 7. There were three as them, you notice. This story is full of symbols as Life, Truth, and Love in various aspects.

VERSE 9. “Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour”-Peter’s thought (like Cornelius’) was lifted up, and it was being resurrected to true manhood. He was beginning to see the spiritual truth about universal man.

VERSES 10-12. Don’t you think that what Peter saw was a symbol of the fourfold calculus of man? That calculus contains the truth about everything, – about man and beast and all things. In the vessel, which Peter saw, were symbols as the fifth and sixth days of creation, – fowls of the air and beasts of the earth, indicating Life and Truth.

Mrs. Eddy says, you remember, “Christianity is again demonstrating the Life that is Truth, and the Truth that is Life” (S. & H. 97:29-30). It seems to me that Peter in his exalted state of thought was going to see that man is universal, – that the calculus of Truth embodies all ideas, and that that constitutes man. The manifestation of God called man isn’t anything to do with a physical body, or with a merely moral sense, but is a spiritual calculus of ideas.

Peter was very hungry when this vision came to him, and I think that it could be interpreted in this way: sometimes we are hungry for spiritual vision and we have a great desire for spiritual things, and we perhaps think that if we closet ourselves with our books and just pore over them, that will feed us, when sometimes that may not be the food we really need; it may be that the food we need is to expand in some direction and to give out what we’ve already got of spiritual vision. I’m sure that Peter had to learn that here, because as a result of this experience he went to the Gentiles for the first time – it hadn’t entered his consciousness to do so until that moment. So when we feel empty and hungry and we think that what we need perhaps is to

go to some talks, or something of that nature, it may be that what we need more is to give of what we already have. They were actually “making ready” for Peter to eat, but the very thing that was really going to feed him was to go out and give of his spiritual riches to others in ways that he had never done before—that was the command which came to him.

I think it’s lovely that it was when Peter was up on the housetop that he became more universal in outlook. Being up on the “housetop” doesn’t mean getting so “metaphysical” that you can’t be understood. The higher you go, the more you can understand the other fellow and meet his needs. Sometimes we’re apt to think that the more spiritually-minded we are, or the more we pursue spiritual things, the more that may cut us off from others. But that isn’t true. The more spiritually uplifted your thought is, the more universal it becomes, because you are getting closer and closer to the one universal source, and so your thought must inevitably become more universal, in the sense of seeing that all ideas everywhere reflect in some measure the facts of Science, because there’s only one Being. As you touch the one plan of Love, you irresistibly begin to see everyone and everything, as part of that one plan – you can’t help it. So Peter’s thought was impelled to be more universal than it had been. He began to see that everyone is within the calculus of man and that no one is outside. Remember, this is the tone of Love as Truth, – universality seen as irresistible Truth.

VERSES 13-16. You can either take that three-fold message as symbolizing the analyzing, uncovering, and annihilating of Peter’s false sense of manhood, or from another angle you can take it as symbolizing that Peter had to understand the three degrees which Mrs. Eddy elucidates on pages 115 and 116 of her textbook. The voice first said to Peter, “Kill, and eat”; in other words, “Kill your physical concept of man, your sense of man as a physical entity, and take in the true concept of man as a calculus of ideas.” The second time, the voice said, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” There, it seems to me, Peter had to see that he couldn’t despise moral qualities, second-degree qualities, because when seen, in their right light they represent the cleansing of the mortal concept of man so that something of the divine concept shines through. He mustn’t despise those good qualities that were in

evidence all around him, – in the Gentiles as well as in the Jews, – because those qualities represented some measure of the disappearance of evil beliefs and the appearing of the divine. The third time, the vessel was received up again into heaven, indicating that the only true man, the only real man, is the man who has never left heaven – the spiritual idea of God.

So first of all, before he went to Cornelius the Gentile, Peter had to see that man isn't a physical proposition; and then he had to see that all there is to moral qualities, – to humanity, honesty, faith, and so forth, – is some measure of the divine cleansing away ignorance and shining through; he had to take those qualities back to their source in Principle. And then he had to see that the only reality is that third degree of spiritual consciousness, which shows that this calculus of manhood is in and of divine Principle, and that there is nothing going on but the operation of Principle and its infinite idea; there is nothing to anyone or anything but God's idea.

You know, this story symbolizes in some degree what we're trying to do in our publication, Ideas of Today; our thought has expanded to discern the manifestation of Principle in all kinds of different spheres, and we're seeing that wherever there's genuine good appearing in human appearance, wherever there's any light shining through, that is something God has cleansed, some measure of Truth's appearing. And we're trying to trace this appearing back to the one Principle, and thus show the oneness of being and the universal nature as Truth.

The collective sense which comes out in this story is most interesting; for instance, Cornelius was inspired at the same time as Peter, and when you consider that we're in the tone as Love as Truth, that's so natural, because Love as Truth means that the universal plan of Love is coming to all men everywhere – irresistibly. It's really nothing to do with us – it looks as if we go out and convert people, but all we've got to convert is our own sense of manhood, and we've got to convert it into the true sense as man. The ideas of God are reflected everywhere, and what we've got to do is to recognize these ideas of God. So, it isn't so much a question of taking Truth out to people as to drawing Truth out of people – it is already there. And if we can see that more and more, as we are trying to do with Ideas of Today

and as I think we are all trying to do with our own individual lives, we shall find that Truth is universal, and we shall see how impersonal it is and that it is nothing to do with ourselves as persons.

Peter saw the truth about the sixth day as creation when he saw this great sheet let down from heaven “knit at the four corners,” – the calculus as Truth; he saw that man is idea, – “the compound idea of God, including all right ideas” (S. & H. 475:14-15). He saw that “All of God’s creatures, moving in the harmony of Science, are harmless, useful, indestructible” (S. & H. 514:28-30). He also saw this, and it’s another extract from Mrs. Eddy’s commentary on the sixth day: “The substance, Life, intelligence, Truth, and Love, which constitute Deity, are reflected by His creation; and when we subordinate the false testimony of the corporeal senses to the facts as Science, we shall see this true likeness and reflection everywhere” (S. & H. 516:4-8). That’s what we’re doing: we’re subordinating the false testimony of the corporeal senses, which says that man is mortal, and we’re seeing that the fact in Science is that man is God’s idea. Whatever God is, man is, by reflection. We’re seeing one infinite man – not lots of separate human beings dotted about, but one infinite man. We’re all “members one as another,” and that was symbolized by all those beasts and birds contained in the one great sheet. Mrs. Eddy says, again in her comments on the sixth day, “The world believes in many persons; but if God is personal, there is but one person, because there is but one God. His personality can only be reflected, not transmitted. God has countless ideas, and they all have one Principle and parentage. The rich in spirit help the poor in one grand brotherhood, all having the same Principle, or Father. All the varied expressions of God reflect health, holiness, immortality-infinite Life, Truth, and Love” (S. & H. 517:15-19; 518:15-17,21-23).

So in this tone as Love as Truth, the universal sense as brotherhood is coming to light, and we’re seeing that “infinite space is peopled with God’s ideas, reflecting Him in countless spiritual forms” (S. & H. 503:15-17). That’s man, the one man.

VERSE 19. “Behold, three men seek thee” – the “three” of Life, Truth, and Love is always seeking you, always calling to you – to recognize this one infinite man.

VERSE 20. Remember that Peter was on the housetop and had seen this vision of the one universal man, but he didn't yet know what that vision was going to lead him to, or bring to him. He was again told, "Arise," but this time he was told, "and get thee down"; the Christ both lifts us up and also enables us to come down to meet every type of thought.

VERSE 23. "Then called he them in, and lodged them" – Peter at once took these "three men" into his consciousness; he accepted the universal sense as relationship which an understanding of Life, Truth, and Love brings.

"certain brethren... accompanied him" – in verse 12 of the next chapter Peter says, "these six brethren accompanied me," and that symbolizes that he took with him his true sense as manhood.

VERSES 25, 26. Throughout Acts and the Epistles there is this wonderful sense of nobody being superior, and of everybody seeing that it was God alone who was operating. Nobody wanted to be worshipped or to be thought important, because everybody was much to intent an doing his job to bother about what other people thought about him, or whether he was more important than somebody else, or what his position was. It was Christianity, the one infinite man, which was impelling the apostles, and so they didn't care a bit about themselves as persons – they couldn't. In Christianity you learn to take all good back to God and all evil back to animal magnetism.

VERSE 28. Mrs. Eddy says, and remember that we're considering Love as Truth: "With one Father, even God, the whole family of man would be brethren; and with one Mind and that God, or good, the brotherhood of man would consist of Love and Truth, and have unity of Principle and spiritual power which constitute divine Science" (S. & H. 469:30-5). The "brotherhood of man would consist of Love and Truth," – would consist of a sense of the one infinite plan of Love, manifesting itself in one infinite ideal or Christ. This understanding of scientific oneness would certainly bring a demonstration of Principle and spiritual power, which would be humanly astounding but divinely natural.

I am sure that as this sense of the one infinite man becomes real and vital to us, it's going to enable us to accomplish the most wonderful things for humanity. It doesn't matter how small and insignificant you seem to be as a person, it doesn't matter if you're not known at all, – because what you are spiritually as God's idea is the most powerful thing in all the world. When you come to think of it, it was amazing that that little band of apostles, hardly known by anyone in their time, was the nucleus of a world-embracing Christianity. Well, today too we may be a small bunch of people and nobody may know much about us, but that doesn't matter at all, and it's in quietness that great ideas grow. I feel that it's of the utmost importance that we're beginning to catch a glimpse of this one infinite man, because it's completely revolutionary. I often think to myself, "Do you realize that when we say that there's One infinite man we are touching something that is revolutionary from a human point of view?" It's perfectly natural from God's point of view and from our point of view as God's image and likeness, but revolutionary to the world.

VERSE 29. "came I unto you without gainsaying" – a wonderful spontaneity! Notice that verse 33 shows that Cornelius also had this sense – "immediately therefore I sent to thee."

VERSE 30. It's interesting that Cornelius should have been fasting and that Peter was hungry; they were both eager for a new vision, and they must have felt that it was about to burst upon them.

VERSES 30-33. Cornelius recognized the power of God. We are sometimes so surprised when we find some individual recognizing the power of God and going forward with spiritual sense, when, in our ignorance, we didn't think that that individual thought anything about God or knew anything about God! But when we understand universal man, we're bound to see God manifest everywhere and to hear all kinds of people putting the things of God into words. Today they may not use the term "God," because it is associated with so much mysticism and superstition, but they speak rather of "fundamental values," "the nature of reality," or something of the kind.

VERSES 34, 35. Peter had seen the one infinite man.

VERSES 37, 38. Here we find a little seven-fold sequence in the order of the Word, - “that word... which was published throughout all Judaea,” the creative Word, the sense of Mind; “and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached” – it went to all pure thought, all thought touched by Spirit; “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth” – Jesus was identified by Soul – “with the Holy Ghost and with power” – he was identified with the power of Principle; “who went about doing good” – that enabled him to go about and multiply good to all men; “healing all that were oppressed of the devil” – there’s the one of Truth, which is always to do with the health, or wholeness, of man; “for God was with him” – because he was one with Love. You find these little instances of the four orders time and time again in Acts.

VERSES 44-48. I think that Mrs. Eddy is here saying the same thing as Peter: “God is universal; confined to no spot, defined by no dogma, appropriated by no sect.” Not more to one than to all, is God demonstrable as divine Life, Truth, and Love; and His people are they that reflect Him-that reflect Love; (Mis. 150:25-29). She also says, “Christian Science is not only the acme of Science, but the crown of Christianity. It is universal. It appeals to man as man; to the whole and not to a portion; to man physically, as well as spiritually, and to all mankind” (Mis. 252:17-21).

CHAPTER 11

VERSES 1-17. Peter here told the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem exactly what had happened and how he hadn’t been able to resist the impulsion of Love as Truth. This question of circumcision or uncircumcision comes in again and again and particularly after Paul’s first missionary journey, when he had been to the Gentiles and had converted a great many of them. The officials at Jerusalem felt that unless a man had been circumcised according to a certain ritual he couldn’t receive the Holy Ghost, just as today some people believe that unless you belong to a church or do certain material things you’re not spiritually-minded or you’re not putting your all into the spiritual. But we’re seeing today more than ever, as I’m sure you’ll agree, that the idea of Science is inorganic, and that it doesn’t demand adherence to any material rite, or any material organization,

or in anything material at all; it only demands that every man recognize his inherent spiritual nature and be true to it.

VERSES 15-17. Peter says that he remembered that Jesus said, “John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” He saw that at one stage there has to be a working-up sense, – there has to be what we might call today a form of organization, – but that when one begins to understand how to work out from God, from divine Principle, Life, Truth, and Love (which is what the baptism of the Holy Ghost means), then one begins to realize that every man can work out from that same standpoint.

When this teaching is seen as Science, then it’s a question of working out from the standpoint of our true selfhood, as ideas of divine Principle, rather than a laborious working-up process. Years and years of plodding aren’t necessarily needed in order to get to where we seem to be now in the understanding of Science. The time element is going out of the picture. That reminds me of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, in which those who only, started work at the eleventh hour were given the same wages as those who had started early and worked all through the day. It’s not a question of personal merit, but of split-second realization of our true being. Paul, for instance, was at the same level as the other apostles – and more advanced than many of them-and yet the others had been taught by Jesus! Paul had been believing in God before, of course, though his sense of God had made him persecute the Christians.

VERSE 19. Now they come to Antioch, which was a busy city, the centre of much coming and going, and so was more “in the world” than Jerusalem. It’s rather interesting to read what the Moffatt Commentary says about it:

Now the scene shifts to what afterwards became the second capital of the Faith and the centre of a more extensive evangelization. Antioch was the chief city of the Hellenic east; . . . Its Jewish inhabitants were numerous and influential, and there were many proselytes. Unlike Jerusalem, Antioch was a busy centre of commerce within easy reach of the sea and in touch with the cities of Cappadocia, Syria, and Arabia. . . most of the missionaries preached only to the Jews, but on reaching Antioch some Cyprians and Cyrenians proclaimed Christ to the Gentiles, as Peter had

done to Cornelius. This would not imply that they founded a body of Gentile believers, but that they told their heathen friends about Jesus (pages 98-99).

VERSES 20, 21. Peter had started the ball rolling by seeing this one universal sense of manhood, and now others were following suit—they were speaking to the Grecians. So the idea was spreading farther and farther afield.

VERSES 22-24. It's lovely that Barnabas was chosen to go and consolidate the situation, and it is said that when he went to these various cities he didn't criticize what the people there had done, or say "You must organize this," or "You must do such-and-such," but he just "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." All the authorities say that the great thing that Barnabas emphasized was, "It doesn't matter about all these rules and regulations; the only thing that matters is that you stick to the spiritual, and if you do that, you'll be all right." And that's why his name means "son of exhortation" as well as "son of consolation"; he exhorted and inspired others wherever he went. He is such a lovable character, and all that you read about him gives a wonderfully comforting and warm sense.

VERSES 25, 26. Barnabas went to seek Saul at Tarsus, and that really was a very generous thing to do, because Paul was the man who eventually eclipsed Barnabas in his mission to the Gentiles – it is said that he was such a strong character that he overshadowed Barnabas. But Barnabas knew that Paul was the man for the job and he didn't care about himself – none of those apostles did; all he cared about was the job, and so he had the greatness to go and fetch Saul from Tarsus and say, "Come and help in the work at Antioch." Barnabas knew that.

Paul did things differently from himself and that Paul would eclipse him, but he felt that it was right that Paul should be called in, so that the Word of God would prosper and multiply.

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch"— I think that it is rather lovely that this should come into the tone of Love as Truth, because "Christians" surely means those who embrace the standard of Truth, who accept the. Christ, – who see that the plan of

Love manifests itself in the ideal of Truth and who stick to that. Love as Truth is the forever acceptance of the Christ.

VERSES 27, 28. This prophet Agabus is only mentioned at one other point in Acts, and that is when he comes to try to dissuade Paul from going up to Jerusalem, because he says that he'll be bound and imprisoned there. Here he prophesies that there will be a dearth. Once Truth had gone out to the Gentiles, there seemed to be this great dearth. When you suddenly become conscious of the wonderful truth about man, you do sometimes become aware of your own famined sense, and I think that men were beginning to see that in that day. Truth had woken them up to their need for Love.

VERSES 29, 30. There are no vacuums in Love, and so that belief of a vacuum was filled. The disciples had this wonderful sense of true brotherhood, this wonderful sense of the one man, infinite man, and if you really have that, then there isn't anything lacking, – there isn't any vacuum that can't be filled with that sense of the ever-presence of the one infinite man, the exact and perfect calculation which satisfies every situation.

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