

May 01, 2006 – Subject: Adam and Fallen Man.

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: THE BIBLE FOR EVERYMAN by Rosalie Maas.

ADAM AND EVE

THE Bible (especially in the Gospels) embodies a wealth of illustration of how thought which is intelligently attuned to what might be called spiritual laws of harmony can readjust all that is out of tune in human life. No one can deny what a desperate lack there is of that class of thought and also that there is the greatest possible need for it in individual, national, and world affairs. But in order for thought to be in scientific accord with that which is fundamental reality, it is surely not strange that it must be prepared to investigate carefully and humbly the definite spiritual values symbolized in the Bible; they are symbolized there in such a way that they can be understood and proved practical.

The Days of Creation Summarized

In the foregoing chapter we considered very briefly the eternal facts summarized in universally appreciable symbols at the beginning of Genesis. The story of the days of creation – days measured in terms of thought, not of hours – reveals the light of intelligent ideas; the firmament of separation from everything unlike them; the dry land of definiteness; the sun, moon, and stars of ideas forever in operation; the birds and fishes of uplifted and multiplied ideas; man, aware of dominion; and rest in the full perfection of being. In the thirty-four verses which open the Bible we have the basic “scale” of the Scriptures, composed of seven individual notes, here struck in an ascending order, but later used in countless combinations, all designed to educate and inspire the student of essential truth.

The Sequel is a Contrast

What follows immediately on the majestically simple story of the days of creation is quite a different story, telling of a questionable God (called the Lord God) and a wretched man. The God of this second record is so far removed from the intelligent creative Principle of the first record, and the sinner of the second from the man of the first, that it would be absurd to consider the second record as an expansion of the first. It must have been placed where it was to afford an obvious contrast at every step. The second story was written hundreds of years before the first, but deliberately made to follow it by the prophetic writers; when they formed the sacred writings of their nation into a whole, they placed their story of the days of creation at the beginning, as a compass to guide the reader through the whole Bible. It is as if they next thought, "We have stated the true facts of the case as best we can; now let's give the opposing theory a chance to construct its view of the situation. After that the reader can decide for himself."

So we now have for our consideration a scrupulously accurate and logical analysis of the distorted view of God and man, – that is, the distorted view of the first record, – which obtains almost universally and which has molded the material universe as we know it. This embraces a mist of misrepresentation over everything; man made of the dust of the ground; man confined in a body and with animal propensities; man incomplete in himself; man disillusioned in his search for happiness; man guilty and victimized; and man without hope of ever attaining perfection. No wonder Isaiah wrote, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

The Exposure of a Fraud

One of the thorny questions of the ages is the nature and origin of evil. This second record in Genesis, placed side by side with the first and contradicting it at every stage, like a constantly faulty working out of the same sum in arithmetic, shows that like any mistake in arithmetic, evil is a misconception of fact; it has no principle of its own and therefore no permanence. Of course, it would only be foolish and cruel to underestimate the enormous and tragic hold it has on men's minds in its multifarious forms. If a misconception goes undetected, we are undoubtedly its deluded and suffering victims.

But the second record exposes for all time the gigantic fraud practiced on every one of us by thousands and thousands of years of accumulated misrepresentations. This fraud robs us of our divine right to be man in possession of dominion, health, and happiness.

But once we recognize the fraud for what it is, we can bit by bit stop being defrauded. Jesus demonstrated the truth of this throughout his earthly career. Just as it is a matter of course for us to take reasonable precautions against being burgled, so we urgently need the habit of watching that we are not constantly deluded in every detail by the time-honored mesmerism described in the second record. When his disciples failed to heal the epileptic boy, Jesus said, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." By "prayer" he meant conscientiously pondering the basic spiritual facts first presented in the days of creation; and by "fasting" he meant constantly rejecting the mistaken notions set out in the false record of creation and repeated in our lives. Without that intelligent twofold process we have no hope of helping ourselves or our fellows to a less chaotic way of life. If we try to retain our misconceptions whilst trying to grasp the spiritual, or if we airily deny the existence of those misconceptions, we fail.

A Mist Waters the Ground

The second or false account of creation begins by stating that there had been no rain upon the earth, but "there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground."

This mist symbolizes the incessant uprising of misconceptions of fundamental truth. They impose themselves on our thinking and make us lose sight of the facts symbolized in the story of the days of creation. Primarily, they contradict the great truth of the first day, in which God said, "Let there be light," and there was light-this symbolizes that the divine intelligence is forever revealing ideas which banish the darkness of fear and ignorance in our thinking. The false record presupposes the power of an opposing so-called intelligence to "cast on" for us its lying stitches and knit them up in our mentality. Thus reason is befooled- into accepting a distortion of the real facts, just as a child allows a mistake to enter its calculations in arithmetic,

although the mistake itself has no underlying intelligence to create it or support it.

The mist can never for one moment stop the light from shining, nor prevent it from breaking through intermittently; but if we let it, it hides from us the presence and power of the light, and keeps us in obscurity, apathetically putting up with the creations of the mist as if they were established facts. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

The purpose of the mist was to irrigate the dry ground, and so cause things to live and grow in it. Thinking which is based merely on what the physical senses announce is always building itself up before our eyes, as both cause and effect. It acts on itself and reacts to itself. For instance, it acts on you, and says, perhaps, "You have a cold," and you react; "Yes, so I have." The mist has thus created a condition for you and implanted it in your mind. It has dictated the character of your circumstances. The whole complexion of your existence may be thus altered, and in entirely undesirable ways, yet the monstrous tyranny of the mist goes for the most part unchallenged. But, instead of blindly submitting to its tyranny, we have the divine right to enter our protest against its pronouncements, knowing that the only creative power is the light of ideas. Ideas are quite apart from belief based on the testimony of the physical senses, which is always temporary, changeful, and uncertain; an idea is that which is perfect, eternal, and indestructible, and what else can possibly be regarded as absolute fact? Any other so-called creative power has only as much power as we give it – usually we give it as much as it asks for. Once we admit that it can bring conditions into existence, we admit that those conditions can develop and establish themselves along their own lines. Thus do we allow the formation of formidable mountains out of non-existent molehills. That is the simple fact about the vast conglomeration of apparently solid evils which throng our world; and yet because of the crushing weight of centuries of false education, this simple fact has to be faithfully proved in specific instances in the teeth of opposition. It demands consistent effort to make material belief surrender its claims.

Elisha was once with a school of prophets who were cutting down trees in order to make a new dwelling-place for themselves (II Kings,

6), and as one of them was felling, his axe dropped into the water. He was especially worried about this, because it was a borrowed axe – a symbol indicating that a mortal is not master of his own fate. When a mortal tries to improve his lot, any accident may impede his efforts, because so many factors are beyond his control. But Elisha asked him where it had fallen, cut off a stick and threw it in at that very place, and made the iron float, so that the man was able to rescue it. Elisha had refused to dignify unintelligent material belief as law, and he had handled specifically the fear that man is powerless to deal with conditions forced upon him by his own lack of alertness. It seemed like a miracle, but Elisha was really just introducing a higher law, which dispelled the helplessness induced by the mist masquerading as law.

As Isaiah says, “come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” Otherwise, there is no sure way of going forward, and all our judgments are unsound, watered by the mist which goes up from the earth.

Man Made of the Dust of the Ground

The second stage of the false record tells how the Lord God made man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. This false God also placed before man’s eyes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is the lie that man is inherently both a spiritual and material being. Man as we know him is certainly a fantastic contradiction living in a world of contrasts. For instance, he may be willing to die for an ideal at one moment, indicating that he is a spiritual being, and at another he may be blown up in an explosion, indicating his materiality. Great poets may be cut off in their prime; the most beautiful flowers may suddenly be blighted. Man born of human parents is bound to be a mixture of good and evil, and he starts off on an existence full of these opposites. However good he is, he may suffer the most terrible misfortunes; and if he has good fortune, his fear that it is too good to last is frequently confirmed. Finally, he returns to the dust from which he was made. So this delusion of the mingling of opposites permeates our whole existence, making us see in ourselves and in every condition a mixture of good and evil, both equally real.

What is the remedy? The only hope of permanent improvement is to turn to the fundamental substantial fact, as symbolized in the second day of creation. There we are told of a firmament to separate absolute reality from “the things that are seen”. A creative intelligence which is purely good cannot produce a hybrid creation. Habakkuk said of God, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” Therefore the sole reality of being is spiritual man, living in a universe where nothing but good can come his way. In our present state of existence such a conception may seem hopelessly transcendental, and yet it is the only logical conclusion, and the Bible emphasizes throughout that to turn to the spiritual with pure desire for substantial good results in improved human conditions. Without that pure desire there is no lasting improvement, but the desire for more Godlikeness brings the human nearer to the divine fact. Take, for instance, the story of Naaman the leper in II Kings,5. Naaman was a highly successful general, a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. A “little maid” from Israel whom the Syrians had captured said that Naaman could be cured if he were with the Hebrew prophet, Elisha. The “little maid” in us all is that which is willing to turn to the spiritual, and so eventually Naaman agreed to go. Elisha sent a message to Naaman when he arrived near his house, and merely told him to go and wash seven times in Jordan. Naaman was furiously angry, as he had expected a great fuss to be made of him, and a spectacular healing to be effected before his eyes; at first he refused to obey the command, but when he was persuaded to do so on account of the simple thing that was asked of him, “his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” He was forced to see that it is no good looking for improved matter, because the very thing we need to rid ourselves of is the material; this we do by “washing seven times” in, the perfection of the spiritual, symbolized in the seven days of creation, which tell the ordered story of reality.

Jesus made the same point when he said to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” – the realm of perfection in operation. “Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” – Nicodemus took Jesus quite literally. Jesus answered, “Except a man be born

of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”— Elisha had made Naaman face this very issue. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Jesus went on to say that this rebirth comes about quite naturally. It is not the happening of a moment, and it is not a matter of putting new wine into old bottles; it comes about because of the purely spiritual origin of man, and involves a constant process of purification from the “old man,” made of the dust of the ground. That is how we make practical use of the “firmament.”

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