

May 08, 2006 – Subject: Mortals and Immortals.

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.

Man Put into the Garden of Eden

So far this false record has exposed, first, the lie that material belief is an intelligent cause; the only creative power, is God. Secondly, it has exposed the lie of a permanent mixture of good and evil; the sole reality is substantial good. The third section into which the false record falls begins with the putting of man into the garden of Eden to till it and look after it. This picture of man confined in a garden which he has to keep going is a symbol of mortal man living within the confines of a material body which he has to see to and care for. Mortals are slaves to their bodies. From their earliest years they take an enormous interest in them – looking at them and discussing them and displaying them to the best advantage; consulting them at every moment of the day as to their consciousness of pain or painlessness, hunger or satiety; and judging them by fashionable and racial standards of physical beauty.

The third day of the true record symbolized that there is a “dry land” of definite spiritual identity for each one of us, and that it is a living and growing thing, bearing fruit. The opposite of this is the corporeal mortal. Our bodies claim to be the real “us.” Yet there can be no “dry land” of definiteness about mortal selfhood. It is one thing at one moment and to one person and under certain circumstances and quite a different thing at another moment and to another person and under other circumstances.

Isaiah expresses beautifully the marring of spiritual identity in his description of the vineyard of the Lord: “My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower

in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” Jesus uses the same symbol in his parable of the householder demanding fruit from his vineyard: when he sends servants with this demand for fruit, the husband men kill them, and finally kill even the son of the owner and plan to seize the vineyard for themselves—mortal selfhood tries to usurp spiritual identity. But when the owner comes, he “miserably destroys” the husband men and lets out the vineyard to those who will render the fruits in their seasons, – who will cultivate their God-given selves. How could the selfhood defined for each one of us by the infinite identity be less than beautiful and fruitful in every way? And yet we try to thrust it aside at every turn, to our own loss, and we accept a very poor substitute.

John records that Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” and adds that it was not understood at the time that “he spake of the temple of his body.” When Jesus resurrected his body in the tomb, he proved that the real man is not confined by a material, body and that he doesn’t think spiritually with his brain. He proved that his conscious divine identity was never dead and that it was this, which restored his body to normality. Jesus did not get rid of his body (as he did when he ascended) until he had proved that it was unassailable even by extreme physical suffering. The Bible certainly does not demand that we become ascetics. Paul writes, “I beseech you... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We are only asked to translate our sense of body into an infinitely higher and more satisfying one - the individual embodiment of specific spiritual ideas. This is bound to reproduce itself in our physical, bodies, because as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

When the Lord God has put man into the garden of Eden, he tells him that he may eat of all the trees of the garden, but that if he eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he will die. As corporeal mortals we necessarily absorb the evidence of the five physical senses, and it makes us acutely aware of pain or transient pleasure, and yet the notion of sin and penalty is at the same time foisted on

us. We are punished for doing what it is all too likely that we do. But if we want to stop eating of those trees of the garden and paying the penalty for it, we can obey the Psalmist's demand, "O taste and see that the Lord is good" – we can use our spiritual senses constantly to enjoy the beauty of spiritual ideas. The Bible is full of the expression of this beauty. So if we turn away from the contemplation of corporeality, – if we become "absent from the body," and "present with, the Lord," – we lose nothing. Rather we gain the unalloyed satisfaction of beholding and enjoying eternal beauty, far surpassing the greatest loveliness of the world of the senses. The grace and beauty of flowers, for instance, in form, color, expression, and poise, is but a hint of the lasting definiteness and joyousness of the beauty of spiritual ideas in operation.

The Lord, God, also comments at this point that man needs "an help meet for him" he needs some extraneous satisfaction. He is dissatisfied with, his own little personal identity and has the urge to possess materially. We can identify ourselves in thought with all the good there is, but if we seek satisfaction through merely physical channels, even the sweets we seem to find, eventually lose their savor and begin to taste of the dust. In I:Kings 21 we read of how Ahab was covetous of Naboth's vineyard and was persuaded by his wife, Jezebel to resort to treacherous murder in order to have it for himself, but he couldn't even enjoy it when he did get it through these means.

All the animals are next brought to Adam to be named by him. This symbolizes the unreasoning passions which are attendant upon the possession of a body and which we find defined in our mortal makeup. Paul wrote, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." These animal qualities are the strong impulses always ready to spring into action, putting us off our balance and making us do what we wouldn't otherwise dream of doing. Under the sway of some violent physical excitement, any crime is possible. But the Bible points to the sinlessness of spiritual man, who has no desire nor means to sin, because he is infinitely satisfied: the Psalmist says, for instance, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!

therefore the children of men... shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.”

Woman Taken Out of Man and Approached by the Serpent

The inevitable outcome of man encased in a body and given animal instincts and feeling dissatisfied is that he regards himself as an incomplete being. So we next hear of the Lord God hypnotizing Adam into a “deep sleep,” and then removing one of his ribs, – something inherently part of him. Out of this rib he makes a woman, whom he brings to the man in order that they may be one in flesh. In the first record of creation we read that God created man in His own image and created him male and female; if God, to be complete, must include both manhood and womanhood, both fatherhood and motherhood, then man, to be God’s image and likeness, must logically also include both masculine and feminine qualities and therefore be complete in himself. It is only natural to desire completeness, but for that sense of completeness to be a permanent happiness it must be found in the individual. In that way he can always draw upon it, and he is not radically dependent upon external barriers against his own helplessness and loneliness. Nothing, which is not part of individual consciousness, can be lasting, because it may be lost through accident, change, decay, or death. Marriage, for instance, can never be the final answer to the search for completeness, although for most people it may be a good stepping-stone; both Jesus and Paul indicated this. All happy and productive relationships are only “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” which is the achievement of completeness in every individual, – through the intelligence and strength of manhood, and the tenderness and service of womanhood. When our own manhood creates spiritual ideas by reflection, and our own womanhood responds by accepting them, then we can face every situation with the certainty of being able to work it out, and so behold the fruit of our own individual spiritual marriage.

The fourth day of creation introduced the sun, the moon, and the stars as a symbol of the universal relationship of ideas, all operating

according to their Principle. John in Revelation uses this same symbol when he declares that he saw “a Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;” what a wonderful association of spiritual affection (“a woman”) with unfailing harmony, and in that association lies the only hope of reuniting the cracking relationships – between men and women, parents and children, capital and labor, nation and nation – unhappily so prevalent in the world. Right relationship begins with the individual; it has a shaky foundation if the individual is still lying hypnotized in the “deep sleep” of belief in his own deficiency.

In the Book of Judges it is related how the Philistine lords said to Delilah, the wife of Samson, “Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him.” Samson deceived Delilah three times, but finally she drove his patience to such extremities that he revealed to her the secret of his strength, – the fact that a razor had never passed over his head. Delilah then proceeded to do to Samson exactly what the Lord God did to Adam in the false record: “she made him sleep upon her knees.” Then she got a man to shave off “the seven locks of his head,” – to rob him of his sense of completeness, -and his strength went from him so that the Philistines could put out his eyes, bind him with fetters, and make him grind in the prison house.

Just as the appearance of the Woman clothed with the sun was followed in Revelation 12 by the appearance of a great red dragon, who tried and failed to impede her in every way, so this fourth part of the false record follows the picture of falsified relationship with the introduction of the serpent, who is in this case to be victorious. The serpent, “more subtle than any beast of the field, “says to the woman, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” The serpent symbolizes every suggestion, which insinuates to us that perhaps all is not for the best in the fundamental ordering of things. These cunningly subtle suggestions creep into our minds when the “deep sleep” has robbed us of our “whole armor of God.” They come arrayed with all innocence and they exude a superficial reasonableness. The result is that, like Eve, we listen to the serpent’s misleading suggestions, heed its implanted doubts, and reckon as

if the infinite were a pettifogging official of some outmoded institution, depriving us of our rights.

The serpent has no fundamental principle behind its pronouncements – all it has is what power of suggestion we choose to allow it. The purpose of these suggestions is a malicious and deadly poisoning of our minds against spiritual facts. Jacob, speaking prophetically of Dan, one of his sons, said, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward” – a good picture of the insidious designs of the serpent, always devising new and more hideous methods of infiltration. Until those hidden methods of accomplishing evil are exposed and held in check there can be no peace from the serpent’s machinations. That which exposes them and renders them powerless is the action of the divine Principle of the universe, which makes its intentions clear to the obedient servant of this Principle.

Man and Woman Eat of the Tree

Adam and Eve, disabled by their personal deficiencies and thereby with their resistance to the serpent’s subtlety weakened, now proceed to be inveigled by the serpent into eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent lies to Eve and tells her that God has forbidden them to eat of the tree because he knows that when they do their eyes will be opened and they will be “as gods, knowing good and evil” Eve thereupon decides that to eat of the tree will have desirable results and so she eats of it and gets her husband to do the same. The outcome is that they know that they are naked – that is the only “eye-opener” they have, and it so disillusiones them that they hide from their Maker.

The serpent is always insinuating to us that we cannot enjoy a full and interesting and adventurous life by thinking in terms of spiritual facts. It virtually denies that those truths can win and hold our affection permanently. It suggests that we are happier if we absorb ourselves in a chaotic life of good and evil intermixed, – a life apart from infinite Life. So we cut adrift from that in which we fundamentally “live, and move, and have our being,” and our restlessness makes us sail off into treacherous waters. We do this only because we fail to realize

what the Psalmist expressed: “in thy presence [the presence of abundant ideas] is fullness of joy.”

Like the prodigal son in Jesus’ parable, we imagine that we are deprived of happiness in the present, separated from it by time and space, and so we too leave our Father’s house for a far country. And yet we soon find only emptiness, and like the prodigal we return once more to the Father, who heaps abundance upon us, – abundance which could always have been ours if we had been content to find it fully expressed in the “here and now” which is true being.

The mortal is always trying to inflate his own importance to impossible dimensions. For instance, it is told in Acts 12 of how Herod was struck dead by an angel “because he gave not God the glory” and set himself up as a god. Jesus, on the other hand, was always subordinating his human self and his human yearnings to his divine sonship – “not my will, but thine, be done” – and the result was greater, not less, glory of individual achievement. Both Judas in his betrayal of Jesus, and Paul in his persecution of the early Christians, tried to “kick against the pricks” and found it unrewarding. They were both asserting their “free will,” but that kind of free will is as if “two” should decide to have the right to be interchangeable with “three” because of the boredom of always being “two.”

The fifth day of creation, through the symbol of the birds and fishes, emphasized rising above the burdens of material existence, and, also the sense of multiplication, but here we have the taking on of the burden of material existence, and the ensuing conviction of barrenness.

When Adam and Eve realized the nakedness of mortality, – that it is a disappointing sham; – they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. Mortal belief is tireless in its efforts to cover-up its basic poverty by theories and codes of living which make a good show of being water-tight and securely respectable. It tries to give the appearance of continuity and to prevent its emptiness from becoming apparent. A rich young ruler once asked Jesus, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is,

God, and he went on to enumerate some of Moses' commandments. The young man answered, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth;" he had clothed himself with moral respectability all his life, and yet it was merely a superficial goodness. The story goes on: "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." We cling tenaciously to the mortal world and its various organizations, instead of exchanging mortal beliefs for the abundance of spiritual ideas and using them with compassion to bring genuine riches to the poor in spirit. The leaves of the tree of life are "for the healing of the nations," and not for temporarily disguising their poverty. The rich young ruler was like a would-be mathematician who covers up a mistake instead of eradicating it.

Fallen Man is Cursed

When mortal man has elected to bring about his own downfall, there is nothing left to him but to make his uncertain way through the complex jungle of a hostile world, pursued by curses and victimized by the general perversity of things. This is what we hear of in the next portion of the story, and it is a complete opposite of the sixth day of creation, which describes man's dominion over all the earth.

This section opens with the Lord God calling to Adam and asking, "Where art thou?" Adam replies, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid; because I was naked; and I hid myself." That "voice in the garden" is the voice of conscience; in mortal man the engrained feeling of guilt and fear is the basic element of consciousness. But think of Jesus' healing of the man sick of the palsy – the first thing Jesus said to him was, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Hidebound theological belief immediately called this blasphemy, and yet Jesus was asserting the essential fact of manhood, which is unfallen, which has never been in subjection to sin. Again, when Jesus saw the man born blind, his disciples asked him, "who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus' reply was, "Neither hath this man sinned,

nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

The Lord God now carries his cross-examination a stage further by asking Adam, “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” Adam then blames the woman whom the Lord God has given him – he puts his sin two removes from himself, and thereby takes refuge in self-justification. “Qui s’excuse s’accuse.” Today we would say, “I’m just made that way,” and shrug our shoulders, but, self-justification is a blind alley, as Job found out.

The woman is then questioned as to what she has done, and she answers, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” She has the wisdom to see her sin as a victory of the serpent. The Lord God then curses the serpent and institutes a perpetual warfare between the “woman” and the “serpent;” such warfare is constantly illustrated, in the Bible – for instance, in the story of Daniel in the lions’ den, where Daniel’s purity and faithfulness rendered harmless the cunning malice leveled against him. Judas, too, played the “serpent” to Jesus’ patient “woman.”

The curse on the woman is that she shall bring forth children in sorrow. This is reflected in the birth pangs of all progressive ideas; the pioneer always has a bitter fight before his new idea is accepted. That which is to be the cornerstone of a new structure is still rejected by the builders. Just so in ourselves, we resist spiritual ideas as applying to ourselves and as necessarily displacing old beliefs, and so their birth in our thought is attended by pain. The first chapter of Luke tells of how Zacharias suffered because he wouldn’t accept that his own womanhood (his wife) could possibly bring forth a son for him. And so whenever we resist progress we bring forth our “children” in sorrow.

The curse on Adam is that the prospect before him is nothing but blood, sweat, and tears, and finally extinction. Mortal man is to a large extent in subjection to the forces of nature, and condemned for the most part to drudgery, to a ceaseless, unrewarding struggle for existence. As the disciples said, “we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.” But Jesus could say, “My yoke is easy,

and my burden is light.” Manhood as Jesus demonstrated it was a matter of dominion: “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”

The third chapter of Genesis ends with the Lord God ensuring that man shall never be redeemed; he drives man out of Eden in case he shall eat of the tree of life. This is indeed a God made after mortal man’s image, and a jealous mortal at that, willing to render his creation “strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Here again Jesus acted and healed on quite different assumptions, saying for instance, “he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those thing; that please him.”

Adam and Eve next bring forth Cain and Abel, but Abel, the better of the two, is slain by the worse. Cain (which means “spear”) is a “tiller of the ground,” a gross materialist, whereas Abel is a “keeper of sheep,” a man with his eye on his thoughts. Cain offers to the Lord God the fruit of the ground, – a parade of his gross materialism, – whereas Abel offers some of the firstlings of his flock, – the gift of his own thinking. Cain thereupon slays Abel. Today it is the brute force of the physical, which the materialist parades, and his envy of the independent thinker makes him liquidate him as a nuisance. The well-meaning idealist cannot stand up against an enemy armed with bombs and untroubled by scruples, so the world is an arena for power politics, with the weaker going to the wall. The only thing that can stand against physical power is scientific understanding of the spiritual, because that is based on fundamental universal power. Isaiah wrote, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

When the Lord God discovers Cain’s crime and is met with a rude repudiation of responsibility, he sentences him to become a fugitive and a vagabond. Cain says that this punishment is more than he can bear, because he is sure to be killed. The Lord God then forbids anyone to kill Cain; mortal man is a perversion of the real man, and so it is bound to return eventually to its own nothingness. It condemns itself, and therefore the poor mortal does not need our condemnation.

Cain Excluded, But Enoch Translated

The final scene of the Adam drama finds Cain going out from the presence of the Lord and dwelling in the land of Nod, which means “wandering.” So the seventh stage of the false record is exclusion, instead of the seventh day consciousness of complete perfection. Mortal man is “beyond the pale,” cut off from the perfection of the spiritual universe and doomed to wander in mortality, but only until he sees that material existence is doomed to extinction and he recovers his connection with the divine. Then the end of the wrong road becomes the beginning of the road back home.

Adam and Eve have another child to replace Abel, and this is Seth, who is to be in the direct line to Jesus, whose mission it was to show us how to set about working our individual passages home – not haphazardly, but in an ordered and intelligent way. Finally, Enoch is translated – he “walked with God: and he was not; for God “took him.” Enoch’s transition from the human to the divine came about perfectly naturally, as Jesus’ ascension did, because he had victoriously taken all the intervening steps.

The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the new hope that is given us in exchange for the ashes of despair. It describes how a certain man fell among thieves and was stripped of his clothes, wounded, and left half dead – this is the state to which the false record reduces us. A priest and a Levite (representing the outworn notion of man as a miserable sinner deserving only of suffering) passed him by on the other side; but a certain Samaritan” came where he was:” – the Psalmist said, “if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there” – “and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” Mortal man is restored to the right path, because at the heart of things is the divine motherhood, shepherding us back to the one fold, – the spiritual universe. As Paul says, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

A Summary

The false record, then, is a masterpiece which lays bare the methods which belief adopts in order to get itself accepted as truth. It asserts:-

1. That it has power to pull the wool over our eyes, to impose misconceptions on us.
2. That it is a confusion of good and evil.
3. That we are kept acutely aware of it through our five physical senses.
4. That we have no adequate power of defense against it.
5. That we should use material means to deal with it, though these bring only disillusion.
6. That we need expect nothing but blood and sweat and tears.
7. That we might as well give up hope and resign ourselves to it. Yet beneath the tones of the false record may forever be heard the true tones of the first account of creation, producing with divine clarity against the temporary background of discords that the light of ideas is purely good, definite, powerful, ever-present, victorious, and "altogether lovely."

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