

November 13, 2006 – Subject: Soul and Body.

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 Richard Claude Haw.

MAN'S PRESENT IMMORTALITY

The mesmeric belief that everybody must “pass on” in order to reach immortality is contrary to the theology of Christ Jesus and of Christian Science. Jesus taught and proved, through his raising of others and of himself, that death including its preliminaries called disease, decay, or disaster is illegitimate and is to be overcome. To Jesus, ascension, not resurrection, was the ultimate goal. Can we aim at anything less than supplanting the death process? The Bible states, “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Jesus himself prayed unequivocally, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

People hold diverse views of the possibility, and even the desirability, of eternal life. Materialists look with foreboding on the prospect of what to them would be a boring existence, in an endless sweetness and light,— or life without sensual pleasures. Some people don't believe there's anything beyond the grave. But Christian Science reveals eternal life, not in terms of an indefinite extension of mere existence but as a glorious adventure, wherein man lives to express the fullness of God's eternal attributes and qualities, forever unfolding in infinite variety, bliss, joy, beauty, goodness, and fulfillment.

How can we reach this conscious awareness of man's present immortality? Certainly not through the natural sciences' researches into the origin of material life (organized matter), nor through any theological illusions of an Adamic creation of mortals who must die in order to reach heaven or hell.

Paul gives us the clue in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he urges his readers to enter deeply into the new life they have learned as Christians: “That ye put off... the old man... and be renewed in the

spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Or, as J. B. Phillips expresses it in his vivid paraphrase: “Do not live any longer the futile lives of gentiles. For they live in a world of shadows, and are cut off from the life of God through their deliberate ignorance of mind and sheer hardness of heart... No, what you learned was to fling off the dirty clothes of the old way of living, which were rotted through and through with lust’s illusions, and, with yourselves mentally and spiritually remade, to put on the clean fresh clothes of the new life which was made by God’s design for righteousness and the holiness which is no illusion.”

Inasmuch as our bodies represent the outward manifestation of our present consciousness of identity and reality, it stands to reason that as we spiritualize and purify thought and action through consecrated prayer and study of the Bible and of Science and Health by Mary Baker Eddy, our bodies will respond with an improved sense of health and life. Such changes indicate in a humanly comprehensible way a better perception of already existing reality – man’s perfection, spirituality, and immortality in the very image of God. Mrs. Eddy writes in Miscellany, “You can never demonstrate spirituality until you declare yourself to be immortal and understand that you are so.”

If we are immortal now, there’s no need for passing on (a euphemism for dying), though humanly there’s always a need for waking up to the eternal facts of harmonious, immortal being. God is infinite Life and is forever expressing Himself through His flawless, eternal creation.

In Unity of Good, Mrs. Eddy writes: “Resurrection from the dead (that is, from the belief in death) must come to all sooner or later, and they who have part in this resurrection are they upon whom the second death has no power. The sweet and sacred sense of the permanence of man’s unity with his Maker can illumine our present being with a continual presence and power of good, opening wide the portal from death into Life, and when this Life shall appear ‘we shall be like Him,’ and we shall go to the Father, not through death, but through Life, not through error, but through Truth.”

Man and the universe subsist solely by virtue of the fact that God, divine Life, is constantly manifesting Himself everywhere, and man is His eternal reflection. We read in Psalms: “For with thee is the fountain of

life: in thy light shall we see light.” We become conscious of the divinely reflected light and life in proportion as we exemplify the spiritual qualities Christ Jesus embodied and faithfully follow his example. He proved that life is the all-powerful activity of God, good, expressing Himself in the divine ideas that constitute man’s true being. The activity of divine Love is reflected in love, in the perfect expression of Truth, in the manifestation of Principle’s imperative law of good, in the power and activity of Spirit, in the harmonious functioning of Soul, in the ever-unfolding of Mind’s intelligent ideas expressed through man.

The real man is the complete expression of all the divine qualities and attributes. He never loses his recognizable spiritual individuality and identity in death. Jesus showed this when he talked with Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration. These two prophets had appeared on earth centuries before, and they were recognized by both Jesus and the disciples.

How comforting to remember this when those dear to us disappear to human sight! Neither they nor we can ever be separated from Life, God. God’s radiant, eternal, vital qualities constitute true being, and those who have left the human scene continue to express these qualities, because God is doing the expressing and man is ever reflecting Him in indestructible individuality.

Sometimes we can understand spiritual truths more clearly with the help of an analogy, and when someone dear to us passes from human sight, I find it helpful consider the analogy of music. Isn’t the real man a veritable symphony of Soul’s beautiful qualities? Although a musical composition may be written on a musical score, the paper is never part of the music any more than the mortal body is an intrinsic part of man. Even if the sheet music is burned or destroyed, the symphony isn’t touched and remains unchanged. It still has all its essential qualities: its structure, its harmony, its melody, its beauty, its uniqueness and character. Its existence is indestructible, and its harmonies can still be mentally perceived, individuals should wake up from the dream or illusion of death to a new and higher experience and consciousness in proportion to the lessons learned here of man’s eternal identity, which is never born into matter, never lives in it, and never dies out of it. The love, integrity, vitality, intelligence – the beautiful qualities, the Christliness – expressed by man are inseparable from eternal individuality, and

nothing can ever harm them, because God expresses them in man forever. Man’s function and purpose is to reflect God’s glory in ever-unfolding, limitless being, to exult in eternal, harmonious life, to be what God is causing him to be.

The clear understanding of spiritual existence, the consciousness of divine Love’s absolute allness, embracing man in eternal life, has on occasion restored those who have appeared to “pass on,” through the prayerful, clear conviction of the allness of divine Life and Love. Paul asked, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” Such demonstrations are progressive human steps in the ultimate awakening Christian Science must bring to all humanity as to man’s present status of immortality. But we cannot allow our thought to rest on the illusive step of “passing on” to immortality – nor even on that rung of the ladder called resurrection – if we are ever to ascend in the footsteps of our Master, Christ Jesus. Mrs. Eddy writes: “Life is eternal. We should find this out, and begin the demonstration thereof.” (Science and Health)

Man is the undying expression of eternal Life, God, and there is no time when any other state existed, exists, or ever will exist. There is only the eternal now of God’s – Life’s – allness.

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