

**January 9, 2006 – Subject: Life.**

**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 – Talks on the Book of Acts by Peggy Brook.

**LIFE as Life** (Chapter 6: 1-7). Life demonstrates the coincidence of the human and the divine. If we adhere steadfastly to divine inspiration, it will always show us the way in the human.

In this tone of Life we find the beginning of the multiplication of the idea, and it's very clear to see here how side by side with the multiplication of the Christ-idea comes the divine inspiration which shows us the right way in the human, the right human footsteps to take. The apostles had to dwell consistently and continually with the divine inspiration of Life, and let that inspiration guide them irresistibly as to the particular human footsteps to take. In an understanding of Life we always find this wonderful coincidence of the human and the divine. There is only one infinite Life - Principle expresses itself as one infinite Life - and we're indivisible from it. As we become conscious of our being as ideas of that one Life, we must know irresistibly how to live right here and now, in what we call human experience, the right steps to take, and so forth.

At this point in the story it seems that the apostles were faced with having to make some kind of human arrangement to take care of a problem, which had arisen. Anybody who is going forward in the vanguard of a great idea like Christianity, for instance, is faced at some point or another with the question of organization. It is natural that it should be dealt with in the tone of Life, because Mrs. Eddy says, "Organization and time have nothing to do with Life" (S. & H. 249: 19-20), and the way that the disciples worked out this question was not through what would generally be called organization, in the sense of a hard-and-fast set-up. They appointed seven men to take

care of the situation that had arisen, and the Commentaries say that these seven men must not be confused with the deacons whom Paul later appointed. These seven men were chosen to look after a particular need at a particular time. It wasn't a permanent organization in any way, but a temporary measure to serve the immediate need.

The Commentaries say that the record of the appointment of these seven is not chronological. It's just introduced by the words "in those days," but it could have happened at any time, and the appointment of these men was probably carried on for many years. So you see how interesting it is that it should come in the tone of Life. The appointment might have been made at the beginning of the story of Acts, immediately after Jesus left them, or it might have been made later, but Luke was spiritually-minded and he was writing in an orderly way, and so it had to be mentioned at this particular point. He may not have known the "Christianity order," as we call it, and as we think of it today as Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Life, Truth, and Love. But those are only names, which Mrs. Eddy used to identify spiritual tones, which have been operating throughout eternity. The Science of Christianity is not just an invented symbolism: it's Truth itself. Because Luke was recording Truth, from a certain standpoint, he had to record it according to the order of what we call Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Life, Truth, and Love. So when he came to the question of organization, – or rather, to the question of how not to organize, – he couldn't do anything else but bring it in at this point, because he was working in an orderly sequence. He may not have thought of it as having to do with the specific concept of God as Life, but the incident has the great spiritual tone, which we know today as Life.

## CHAPTER 6

VERSE 1. "The disciples" -this is the place where the word "disciple" is used for the first time in Acts. The Century Bible edition of Acts makes a statement about it which is most interesting when you remember that we are dealing so much in these verses with the coincidence of the divine with the human; it says, "It was a term redolent of the earthly ministry of Jesus" (page 184).

“The Grecians”-these Grecians were Greek-speaking settlers in Jerusalem, known as Hellenists. The Commentaries say that there were two classes of believers in Jerusalem,-“the original followers of Jesus, perhaps Galileans or natives of the city who spoke Hebrew (i.e. Aramaic), and Greek-speaking foreigners settled or temporarily residing in proximity to the Temple” (Moffatt New Testament Commentary on Acts, page 51).

VERSE 2. “The twelve” – this is the only place in the book of Acts where this term occurs. It symbolizes the true government of the idea as the number of disciples multiplied. The twelve wouldn’t come down and “serve tables,” because they knew that if they went on understanding the “twelve” of true government, the situation would be taken care of humanly as well. They saw that they couldn’t afford to let their vision drop to the point of getting embroiled in a lot of detail.

VERSES 2-4. Those disciples were so awake; because they said, in effect, “No, we’re not going to come down and lose our vision by taking on a lot of detailed work.” The authorities seem a bit confused as to what the “daily ministrations” meant, but once again you can take it either literally or symbolically. If you take it symbolically, it has rather a lovely meaning, because those apostles were going forward spiritually but at the same time there was the necessity to care for those who were being widowed away from mortality, just as today there are many who are going ahead with the big, forward, progressive vision of Science, whilst at the same time there is a great necessity for simple instruction in the fundamentals of Christian Science. It isn’t everybody’s job to present the fundamentals to beginners, for instance, because some people have to go forward and perhaps give a higher sense of Science. No one can ever say what someone else’s job is, though, because it’s always an individual matter.

If you take this incident symbolically, it’s interesting to notice that there were seven men appointed; you could take it that there had to be a sense of the days of creation and the synonymous terms for God given to those widowed from mortality. Those who are widdowing themselves away from materiality need the milk of the Word. Mrs. Eddy says, “To those who are athirst for the life-giving waters of a

true divinity, it saith tenderly, 'Come and drink'; and if you are babes in Christ, leave the meat and take the unadulterated milk of the Word, until you grow to apprehend the pure spirituality of Truth" (No. V:8-13). So you could interpret it that there was a body of people needing the unadulterated milk of the Word and that the situation had to be taken care of intelligently.

If you take the incident literally, you see that the apostles recognized that if they stopped going forward with the inspiration of the idea and started to organize and to come down to working out on a human plane what should be done about these widows, that wouldn't be the right step for them. They had to go forward spiritually, and they knew that if they did, then because of the coincidence of the divine with the human which Life brings, they would see the way humanly, as well as divinely, – they would see the method of Life, the way of Life. Mrs. Eddy brings in this sense of coincidence with Life when she writes, "John saw the human and divine coincidence, shown in the man Jesus, as divinity embracing humanity in Life and its demonstration, – reducing to human perception and understanding the Life which is God" (S. & H. 561:16-20). Mrs. Eddy also says of Jesus, "Through the magnitude of his human life, he demonstrated the divine Life" (S. & H. 54:1-3). Life always shows us how to demonstrate the coincidence of the divine with the human. I'm sure that that is because when you come to understand the synonym Life, you have to lay down the mortal concept of yourself and of everybody, and spiritual reality has to become living to you, – has to become everything to you. When it is everything to you, when it lives for you, then it lives in your so-called human life too, and it shows you the right method, the right way, always.

I know that from my own experience; I sometimes grope about for a long time trying to work out a situation humanly and to see what I should do, and I know that when I have conscientiously turned away from human ways and means and given myself "continually to prayer" and to lifting up my thought to the spiritual fact involved, and consciously feeling the reality of it, then invariably I've seen the right thing to do. In connection with the development of the Christ-idea as Science, I know that that is the only way that one can organize, if you call it organizing, it's really just seeing the best way of meeting a

temporary need. But if you start to come down, you can't see the right step to take. You remember that the story of Nehemiah building the wall had the tone of Life, and Mr. Doorly said, "That one Life, always means infinite progression, infinite going forward, and infinite exaltation, it never means retrogression or coming down." You must never let your thought drop down into organization as an end in itself, and it's so easy to do so if you don't watch.

Luke seems to lay great stress in Acts on the fact that these apostles kept together without an organization. It was because of the common Principle, which they all loved that they did keep together. Luke never records anything about organization except this incident of appointing seven people to look after a particular need, and the Commentators are all surprised at it, too. And I find that when I get into conversation with casual acquaintances today, and I happen to tell them something of what we are doing, the thing that always amazes them is the fact that we have no organization. They, all say, "But how do you manage to keep together?" It seems an extraordinary thing to the human mind that we can keep together without a central organization. But the reason why we can is that we're all endeavoring to fulfill our individuality according to Principle. If everyone is a "lively stone" fulfilling his God-given individuality, he'll find himself at one with every other individuality in the realm of Life. It will be a wonderful thing if we can continue to demonstrate this unity, but really it's perfectly natural; if we're all loving and understanding the same impersonal Principle, then we must always find ourselves at one in its infinite reflection of Life, Truth, and Love.

I'm sure that we shall always have a sense of unity and understand one another, if we're really faithful to Science. Mr. Doorly elucidated the fundamentals of universal Science, which Mrs. Eddy revealed, and it's on the basis of those fundamentals, which are common to all of us, that there is irresistible unity. If a student in Australia, or a student in Switzerland, or in any part of the world, lets the impersonal understanding of Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, and Love come to him and the impersonal understanding of the Word, the Christ, Christianity, and Science, he will find that he is imbibing a common language based on fundamental reality, such as musicians and mathematicians have; this is so much vaster, though, for spiritual

values embrace the fundamentals of all sciences. Surely these values are what Leibniz was seeking when he demanded fundamental “root-notions of reality,” so that all men could work their problems out from a common basis?

VERSE 5. One of the Commentaries points out that there were three Hellenists, three Hebrews, and a proselyte, which is considered significant, because every type of thought that was interested in Christianity at that time was represented. That gives a truly collective sense, which Christianity always brings.

VERSE 7. I think that’s lovely, because if you do what your inspiration tells you to do in the way of some temporary kind of organization, or some method of helping those who are taking their first footsteps in “Science, then the result will always be great multiplication and expansion. I’ve read quite a bit lately about the steps which Mrs. Eddy took when she opened and later closed her college, and when she dissolved her first church and later built The Mother Church, and whenever she took the human footsteps which seemed to come to her through the inspiration of Life, the result was always tremendous multiplication of the idea and a great sense of growth. It’s so interesting to read these words in the resolution on closing her college, which may or may not have been dictated by Mrs. Eddy, but which must have met with her approval: “The fundamental principle for growth in Christian Science is spiritual formation first, last, and always, while in human growth material organization is first” (Ret. 49:11-13). I feel that should be written on our hearts. We’ve got to realize it more and more.

It isn’t the outward form of organization, which is the trouble and which kills the idea, but it’s the beliefs that go to make up organization. You may believe that you’re not organizing anything, but it often happens that you suddenly detect in your thought the elements of organization in the most subtle disguises, and you realize of something, “If I let that grow, that would be organization.” One has to remember that it isn’t only a question of some people wanting to organize, but also a question of others wanting to be organized; some people always want someone else to tell them what to do, and others always want to tell them, but that isn’t all there is to the belief of organization. Basically it’s, a belief that you’re material, and

that you've got to get better and better and, work your way up to perfection, whereas if you start straight out from God as spiritual idea, you're not organized – you're bound to operate systematically, because God is Principle, but you're not materially organized.

All these beliefs of limitation and of organic life in any form are all part of the belief of organization. Time plays a great part in organization. The physical body lives in time – it begins with birth and goes on till death. But if we start to reckon ourselves spiritually from God, we've got everything that God has, and so we don't need anybody else to tell us how to go, what to do, how to do it, what to say, or anything of the kind. If we will lift our thought to the inspiration of Life, to God, we shall always know the way we should always know the method, we will always realize the coincidence of the divine with the human in our own lives. As those lives become greater and greater and more like God or good, they will inevitably attract others, but not as inferiors – instead we shall have the sense of all being equal ideas of one inorganic Principle. That's a wonderful conception, you know – to realize that every man can become “a king and a priest unto God” in his own right. In that state of affairs there's no one person bossing everybody else, but all are “gathered together in my name” and Principle is “in the midst of them.” The one requisite is to love the Christ-idea with all your heart and all your soul. If you love it, you'll understand it. It isn't a question of not being able to understand it because you feel, “I'm not clever enough.” If you love, it, you will understand it, just as if you love music you understand it, and if you love mathematics you understand it, and if you love an individual you understand him. It's love that comes first and the understanding comes as a result of that love. I feel that sense is so important for us today. Mr. Doorly used to say so often, “You've got to love this idea more than yourself.” If you love this idea more than yourself, you'll be used by God, you'll be used in fellowship with your fellow men, and you'll be used with power. I'm sure of it!

Life is uplifted, inorganic, and spontaneous. At every split second Life is expressing itself in new and fresh forms: it's always scintillatingly new! It knows no sacrosanct organization, though it may impel a temporary form of organization to take care of a need of the moment, as we've seen in this incident in Acts.

All these incidents in the book of Acts are so pertinent to us today, aren't they? I'm sure that if we go away and ponder this story of Acts in our own individual way, it will make every one of us into more of a "lively stone" than ever before. These apostles never counted the cost, and they lived Truth-they just couldn't help it. So if we feel the impulsion of Life, Truth, and Love, then we too shall not be able to help living Truth. Every one of us here today is going to feel that impulsion, I'm certain, because I have felt very consciously that every one who has come to this talk has come because God has brought him, and I feel that I've come because God has brought me, too. So we're all going to be touched by this spirit of Life, Truth, and Love.

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