

November 14, 2005 – 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 – TALKS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES by Peggy M. Brook.

SOUL (Chapters 3:1-4:37)

Fundamental spiritual identity, the fact of Soul, irresistibly demonstrates itself under all circumstances.

SOUL as LIFE (Chapter 3: 1-26). The fundamental identity of Soul brings to light (demonstrates) man's eternal individuality.

Through the realization that every man's fundamental identity is in the divine plan "before Abraham was," we prove the active, vital, living presence of true individuality.

Here in this tone of Soul we have the first instance of individual healing in the Acts, and it comes through the realization that fundamental spiritual identity is a vital, ever-present reality. None of us can ever get away from our fundamental spiritual identity. Christianity is always taking every idea back to its Principle, and Soul in Christianity means that our fundamental spiritual identity is the only thing we ever return to. Mortal mind's argument is that people may improve for a bit, but that they lapse again; or it says that certain people are incurably allergic to certain things, and so forth. But if we ever do go back, it is only to our spiritual identity - that's all we can ever return to, Soul is changeless and therefore, our fundamental identity is changeless. So if mortal mind says that there is a reversal, "agree with thine adversary" in the sense of knowing that all you can ever return to is your fundamental spiritual identity. That is true practically, if we love Science; whatever the experience, it can only take us closer to our Principle, back to Principle. That was true of Jesus at the crucifixion - it set him forward, not back, because he got nearer to Principle as a result of it. Of course, the absolute truth

is that man, as the idea of Principle, can never leave his Principle. But in human experience, Soul translates every happening into a blessing, which shows us more of Truth; what we have to remember is that it was our understanding of the Truth, which exposed the error in the first place. There is only God. Mortal mind never has the initiative; in reality there is no such thing as mortal mind, and so everything leads back to God inevitably. “All roads lead to God,” you might say. There is only God going on, and so everything leads us back to God if we love Science and feel the reality of it.

CHAPTER 3

VERSE 1. “the ninth hour” - that’s rather wonderful, because “nine,” or 3 X 3, seems to symbolize here the multiplication of identity, which is the abundance of identity manifesting itself, the spontaneity of identity manifesting itself, and that’s exactly what happened in this incident, which has the tone of Soul as Life.

VERSE 2. “a certain man lame from his mother’s womb”— that would seem to indicate that what the apostles had to see was the identity of this man had never been born into matter, or why should it mention “from his mother’s womb”? The apostles had to see that this man had never been born into matter and had never lived for a certain number of years in matter, because his identity had always been in Life. “Therefore his identity was in eternity, in nowness, in the “open firmament of heaven”— it had never been in a material womb. So Peter and John identified this man as living in Life, – in the spontaneity of nowness, with all the movement and individuality of Life.

“To ask alms” – the true sense of asking alms is the prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” which is the fifth statement of the Lord’s Prayer.

VERSES 2-4. I always imagine that this man was a bit apathetic, because he had got into the habit of lying daily at this gate. Day in and day out, he was in the same old place waiting for alms – I think that he had just got used to it and it had become his life. And then when Peter and John came along and didn’t give him anything, but said, “Look on us!” that must have roused him somewhat. It startled him and woke something up in him. Peter and John were inspired to

make this definite statement and to see that man had to expect something more than alms. Mrs. Eddy says, "If it becomes necessary to startle mortal mind to break its dream of suffering, vehemently tell your patient that he must awake. Turn his gaze" - this is what Peter and John were doing - "from the false evidence of the senses to the harmonious facts of Soul and immortal being" (S. & H. 420:28-32).

It was the, scientific fact of Soul as Life operating – not Peter and John as persons – which turned this man's thought away from the evidence of the senses. So Mrs. Eddy says that you've sometimes got to startle mortal mind, and you can startle mortal mind by doing all sorts of things – it all depends what Principle tells you to do!

I've often found that if I really pray earnestly to know what to say and do in a case of healing, I'm sometimes quite surprised at the answer that comes. It isn't always the voicing of a lot of metaphysical statements, which is needed. Sometimes it comes to you to do something which you may feel is just a human impulse, but which is nevertheless the way the Christ needs to be expressed in a particular situation. If you let your spiritual sense guide you spontaneously, – if you let Soul operate as Life, – you will accept what comes to you to do in an individual case. For instance, I remember that a long time ago I was helping somebody and it suddenly came to me to ring up this person. At first I thought to myself, "I don't want to be one of these practitioners who rings up all the time to find out how everything is going," but then I thought, "No, I'm not ringing up for that reason; I just feel that it would be right to ring up – I'm sure of it." So I rang up that girl and we said a couple of words to one another; I don't know that anything very metaphysical was said, but I learnt a long time afterwards that at that point there was a change in the whole condition and it began to clear up. It was a contact which seemed to be merely human, but Principle impelled me to make it, and I've often found that if I'm awake, Principle impels me to do something which might seem to be the outcome of a mere human impulse, but if I'm sure it's of Principle, then I know it's the right step to take.

VERSE 6. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" – we shall find healing "in the name of Jesus Christ" taking place again and again in the Acts. What does that phrase mean? It really means that the apostles were identifying their spiritual authority with

the same divine power which enabled Jesus Christ to demonstrate his dominion at all times and under all circumstances. You see, what must have been uppermost in those apostles' thoughts was Jesus' crowning demonstration over death, because it was unique. Jesus had told them that he would rise again on the third day, and he had done this, and they had all witnessed it. Naturally it coloured their whole thought. What Jesus proved was that man's spiritual identity is deathless and that this life is spiritual identity and not in a material body. This he proved beyond a shadow of doubt. He said, in effect, "Take what you call my body and hang it on the cross and do what you like to it, and I'll show you that that isn't me. Moreover, I can reproduce that human concept, because it's just the outcome of thought, it's just a mental proposition."

Humanly speaking, what Jesus had in common with us was this belief of a material body; he walked about on two legs just as we do, and he had two arms, and so forth. He let them take that proposition and do what they liked with it; he proved that it wasn't the real man. It's so helpful and comforting to remember that if you're struggling with the belief of a bad heart, or of poison, or of some physical disease, because a doctor would have said that Jesus' heart had stopped and that the nails in his hands would produce poisoning, and so on, but Jesus showed that that body was not him, – it was just a mortal mind concept. Materia medica says that the heart gives life, and it would have said that Jesus' heart had stopped beating, and yet Jesus was still alive! Jesus proved that man can't stop, because man is spiritual and is not in anything, – not in a body, – but exists now in eternal Life. Jesus proved that his identity was spiritual, and that he lived in Life, – that he had never been born into matter and had never lived in matter. We can prove that just as Jesus did. If we don't see the point of this proof, which Jesus gave of his identity being spiritual and therefore eternal and untouchable, then this amazing proof is in vain so far as we're concerned. So we must see that Jesus' resurrection proved that the material body is not the man of God's creating.

If we read one or two of Mrs. Eddy's statements about Jesus' demonstration over death, I think that it will help us to understand more of what is meant by the words, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." See how this passage teems with the

sense of Soul and Life: “The resurrection of the great demonstrator of God’s power was the proof of his final triumph over body and matter, and gave full evidence of divine Science, – evidence so important to mortals. The belief that man has existence or mind separate from God is a dying error” – conversely, man’s existence as indivisible from God identifies him with the Life that is eternal. “This error Jesus met with divine Science and proved its nothingness. Because of the wondrous glory which God bestowed on His anointed, temptation, sin, sickness, and death had no terror for Jesus. Let men think they had killed the body! Afterwards he would show it to them unchanged.” His identity was not in that body they could kill it, they could do what they liked with it, and it would make no difference, because his life was in Soul and therefore unchanged no matter what they did. “This demonstrates in Christian Science the true man is governed by God – by good, not evil – and is therefore not mortal but an immortal.” If only we would see that and stop trying to change our mortality into immortality, what a difference it would make! If only we would see that our identity is in Life, – Life outside of the body! “Jesus had taught his disciples the Science of this proof. He was here to enable them to test his still uncomprehended saying, ‘He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.’” I think that that statement of Jesus’ has a lot to do with “in the name of Jesus Christ,” because it might be paraphrased, “He who understands what I’m doing, what I’m proving, will be able to prove the same things.” If we really understand the nature of Jesus’ demonstration, then that same power which enabled Jesus to make that demonstration will use us. “They must understand more fully his Life-principle by casting out error, healing the sick, and raising the dead, even as they did understand it after his bodily departure” (S. & H. 42:15-2).

Through his demonstration over death, Jesus proved that his identity, was outside of the body, – that his life was not material and couldn’t possibly be; his Life was in Soul and therefore he could show himself unchanged after the crucifixion. Mrs. Eddy says, “Jesus could have withdrawn himself from his enemies. He had power to lay down a human sense of life for his spiritual identity in the likeness of the divine”; – notice the sense of Life and Soul there – “but he allowed men to attempt the destruction of the mortal body in order that he

might furnish the proof of immortal life. Nothing could kill this Life of man. Jesus could give his temporal life into his enemies' hands; but when his earth-mission was accomplished, his spiritual life, indestructible and eternal, was found forever the same" – The changeless identity of Soul. "He knew that matter had no life, and that real Life is God; therefore he could no more be separated from his spiritual Life than God could be extinguished. His consummate example was for the salvation of us all, but only through doing the works which he did and taught others to do" (S. & H. 51:6-21).

So this phrase, "in the name of Jesus Christ," implies that the apostles understood that Jesus' demonstration proved that man's identity is not in a material body, but in Soul, and therefore that his life is not at the mercy of whatever this material body is manifesting or saying, but is safe in Soul. Don't you think that those disciples must have realized that fact about this man who was lame from his mother's womb? They must have thought, "What a lie that this man was never, born into matter. Jesus proved that man does not live in matter," and this was so natural to Peter and John that they could say to this man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" – in other words, "by reason of the nature of the demonstration which Jesus Christ made" – "rise up and walk."

VERSE 7. "Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" – I love that "immediately." I wish that healing was always immediate. It was the spontaneity of Life, the identification of Life at that split second, which the apostles were proving here. They proved that there is no mortal history and therefore no time, and we shall experience quick healings when, we too really see that.

VERSE 8. This gives a wonderful sense of what Mrs. Eddy meant when she said, "The sinless joy, – the perfect harmony and immortality of Life, possessing unlimited divine beauty and goodness without a single bodily pleasure or pain, – constitutes the only veritable, indestructible man, whose being is spiritual" (S & H. 76:22-26). Those lovely words, "walking, and leaping, and praising God," give such a sense of well-being, – abundance of wellbeing. It wasn't just a little demonstration, so that instead of lying at the gate the man sat in a chair at the gate, or something of the kind; it was a case of

him seeing the perfection of true identity and expressing it immediately in a vital, active way.

VERSE 10. “The Beautiful gate of the temple” – I like the gate being called, “Beautiful”, because it gives a sense of joy, – of the joy and the beauty of Soul. It’s interesting to realize that that man had apparently never before gone on into the true temple – he had stayed outside at the “Beautiful” gate and had never gone through that gate; Mrs. Eddy’s definition of “temple” reads, in part: “Body; the idea of Life, substance, and intelligence: the superstructure of Truth; the shrine of Love” (S. & H. 595:7-9). That temple, or true body, is not a corporeal thing, not a bodily organization or an organization of people: it is entirely a spiritual thing. Here Soul as Life operated through Peter and John to enable this man to see his true identity as spontaneous in Life, – never born into matter, never living in matter, – so he entered the true temple, the true sense of body. “and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him” – I’m trying hard these days not to be “filled with wonder and amazement” when someone gets healed quickly, because it’s divinely natural, and the more we can see that it’s natural the more these so-called miracles will take place. When one feels that one hasn’t had anything at all to do with a healing, because God has done it; one usually isn’t filled with such wonder and amazement and it does seem perfectly natural. Mrs. Eddy says, “It was the consummate naturalness of Truth in the mind of Jesus that made his healing easy and instantaneous. Jesus regarded good as the normal state of man and evil as the abnormal; holiness, life, and health as the better representatives of God than sin, disease, and death” (Mis. 200:1-6). The consummate naturalness of Truth in the mind of Jesus! If we could see that it was natural to be well, natural to be healthy, natural to be happy, natural to have dominion, natural to love, and so forth, those things would come to us so much more easily. It’s Science, which is going to let us see that, too, because Science is exact and Science is harmony and there’s no penalty in Science. Sometimes if you’ve been healthy for a very long time, you begin to wonder what might happen to you! Or if things have been going swimmingly, or well and happily, you’re apt to think, “This is too good to last!” That’s just superstition, and if we accept Science, there’s got to be good; because good is exactness, harmony, perfection, and if we are working from Science we should

expect these things, and we shouldn't be "filled with wonder and amazement" at them. Glorifying in the goodness of God as supremely natural is a lovely thing to do, and it's something we've all got to learn.

VERSE 12. Peter saw that it wasn't they themselves as persons who had brought about the healing, and therefore that it wasn't extraordinary at all. Mrs. Eddy writes, "A demonstration of the facts of Soul in Jesus' way resolves the dark visions of material sense into harmony and immortality" (S. & H.428:3-6). That is just what had taken place a "demonstration of the facts of Soul in Jesus' way." What had been demonstrated was the fundamental identity of this man as being in Life not in the body.

Verse 13. "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers" – that gives me a sense of Soul as Life, a sense that God has always been the one eternal God, changless and absolutely definite, but that He has always defined Himself to individuals in various ways throughout all ages.

VERSES 14,15. We have just seen how spiritual sense identifies man aright in Life, and here is a case of the opposite – lack of spiritual sense failed to identify Jesus aright as the Prince of Life, and instead chose a murderer, the counterfeit of life.

VERSES 17, 18. If only the Jews had discerned through spiritual sense, what their prophets really meant, they would have identified Jesus and his demonstration aright, but they based their sense of the Messiah on matter and on an earthly sense of kingship and so they identified Jesus wrongly.

VERSE 19. "the times of refreshing" – the Century Bible says that those "times of refreshing" were seasons of revival, like Pentecost. That is lovely, because Soul as Life, shows that you can take on your spiritual identity now – you haven't got to go through a long period of repentance. Repentance involves changing your mind at this moment, and getting to your spiritual identity: it doesn't mean long suffering to get back to God, because at this split second you can repent and receive at once that wonderful sense of revival. Mrs. Eddy says, "If you believe in and practice wrong knowingly, you can at once change your course and do right. Matter can make no

opposition to right endeavors against sin or sickness, for matter is inert, mindless” (S. & H. 253:18-21).

Your fundamental, spiritual identity is sinless throughout eternity. Therefore if you have identified wrongly and made a mistake, which is all that sin consists of, see it as animal magnetism and not as any part of your identity; then it has no consequences for you and you realize the everpresence of your true identity and the non-existence of sin. That isn't just an easy way out if you've made a mistake, because sin has to be seen as a nonentity scientifically and specifically.

VERSES 20, 21. That really means that when they were ready to receive a fresh influx of light, it would come. At every stage, whatever is necessary for our spiritual growth will come to us.

VERSES 22, 23. This doesn't mean that every man who doesn't hear Jesus will be destroyed. The word “soul” here is best translated as “sense” (Mis. 75:15-21), and what Peter means is that material sense never does hear the prophet – it doesn't hear, or identify, spiritual Truth. Spiritual sense hears and receives the divine inspiration always, but material sense never does, and so material sense is inevitably destroyed. You don't have to make material sense better: material sense is destroyed, because it has no place in Soul and it has no life or continuity.

VERSE 25. The promise was given to the children of Israel, to the Jews, but they didn't accept it. Here in the tone of Soul as Life, Peter is saying that the promise is to every man who has spiritual sense: the Jewish people thought of themselves as the chosen people, but Peter was implying that spiritual identity isn't in certain classes or types of people. We're not chosen because of our personal character, but every man is chosen because every man has spiritual identity. To everyone who is conscious of his spiritual identity the promise is fulfilled; the promise isn't ever to any particular body of people, but to spiritual sense, which really means to all men, because all men have spiritual sense.

As we go along, we shall see how these apostles tried first of all to give the gospel to the Jews, – to the people who should have accepted it, the great people who to some extent had glimpsed the

spiritual idea. But time and again the apostles felt that they must leave them and go to the Gentiles, because, I suppose, the Jews were satisfied with what they had. In the tone of Soul you so often find what is called “spiritual wickedness in high places” and I think that that is because it is a false sense of identity, – pride instead of the meekness of Soul, and a false sense of superiority, whereas Soul resurrects every man to his true spiritual identity. Man doesn’t have to maintain this true spiritual identity through outward show; he has it because it is true about him and he doesn’t have to draw everyone’s attention to it. In recognizing his identity as being of God, he has the meekness of Soul and the balance of Soul.

Paul always went first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles if he was rejected by the Jews. He went to the Jews hopefully to begin with, but towards the end of his life he went mainly to the Gentiles. He felt that the Jewish knowledge of their Scriptures should pave the way well, but it very often didn’t. Today some of us go to those who already know something of the spiritual idea through their religion, but there are others of us who go to those who don’t profess any religion, because they feel that they make more headway with that type of thought. It’s a completely individual choice, and it doesn’t matter in the least if what we do is different from what others do. If we let Life, Truth, and Love guide us; our way will always contribute to everyone else’s mission. Every one of us gives a different sense of the picture, and every sense of it is vital. If individually we are all “lively stones,” then collectively we shall contribute to a right universal picture. If anyone of us falls out, the picture is incomplete. So don’t think that the picture is all right without you being active. Remember, the picture is essentially an individual, collective, and universal one; it is dependent on the operation of Principle as Life, Truth, and Love; Mind as Life, Truth, and Love; and so on with all the synonymous terms in this Christianity order.

The Divine Impulsion

We must stop thinking of ourselves as persons and see that are all ideas operating in one infinite plan, – a scientific plan, a plan of Love. If we do that, our thought will be liberated from the narrow confines and the mortal limitations, which we place on ourselves. We shall find ourselves being impelled by the essential nature of

that plan, – by Life, Truth, and Love. We shall find ourselves reflecting the divine initiative of Life; the rocklike, trenchant, stable sense of Truth; and the universal, warm, appreciative, comforting, lovely sense of Love. What we shall be able to do will be amazing if we see that our activity is not us, but Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Life, Truth, and Love forever in operation. That always has been and always will be going on. It’s been tried and proved, and so it’s safe and absolutely foundational.

I’m sure that what is going to happen to us this week is that we’re going to feel the implusion of Life, Truth, and Love more clearly than we have ever felt it before. We shan’t be able to help it. It was impelling every single act of these apostles, but that impulsion wasn’t just a thing of so many thousand years ago – it’s a thing of now and forever. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away,” and that is true of any inspired writing, and so as we touch the spiritual tones that lie behind the Acts we shall see that they are operative in our own lives today. We’re going to find that and we’re surely going to accept this challenge of Acts and do the works that the apostles did.

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