

August 4, 2003—Subject: Spirit

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 first selection this week is from —Talks given by JOHN W. Doorly on THE SCIENCE OF THE BIBLE - Volume Three.

The other selection is from John Morgan’s VERBATIM REPORT OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN - Given at a COLWYN BAY SUMMER SCHOOL in 1952.

The Burning Bush

Now we come to a wonderful story: “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian —”he kept his flock, he was a good shepherd’ and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb” (Ex. 3: 1). Moses came to the wilderness, to that state of thought which Mrs. Eddy has defined in this way: “Loneliness; doubt; darkness, Spontaneity of thought and idea; the vestibule in which a material sense of things disappears, and spiritual sense unfolds the great facts of existence” (S. & H. 597: 16-19). Moses could lead the children of Israel through the wilderness and could demonstrate the idea. because he was drawn from the beginning “out of the water,” out of the elements of thought.

“...and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.” They don’t know where mount Horeb is; it is supposed to be the same mountain as mount Sinai, where Moses received the Commandments. They don’t know where it is, because it is only a symbol.

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian:”—the theory is that Moses got his first concept of God as Yahweh from Jethro and it may be so: “and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, —”where a material sense of things disappears and spiritual sense is understood”, —and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed (Ex. 3: 1, 2). The angel of the Lord appeared to him—that is, the true sense of identity which brings translation. “The angel of the Lord appeared unto him... out of the midst of a bush,” and you remember what the tone of Soul as Soul was in the record of creation:

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind” —the grass symbolized the Word, the herb symbolized the Christ, and the fruit tree symbolized Christianity, —”whose seed is in itself, upon the earth, and it was so...” So when Moses thought arrived at Soul as Soul wasn’t it wonderful that “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.”

The fires of the Holy Ghost destroy sin, disease, and death, but they don’t destroy the idea. And this is what Moses saw: “and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” Sometimes we see the destruction of error, we see the tares being burnt up, and we forget that the idea is not consumed.

The Individual Must Become Collective and Universal

“And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (Ex. 3:3). I believe that that is the point at which one either goes on in Christian Science, or stops. You get a sense of God as Mind, and you think, “This is fine; I am beginning to know something.” You even like the development of it in Spirit. And then it becomes definite in your thought in Soul. So you get Mind, Spirit, and Soul, and then the time comes when you must identify your vision with divine Principle, Life, Truth, and Love, and with all that is true. At this point of definite identity many seem to stop.

One of the human things we have to watch is this: you find a number of people who say, “I believe in individuality,” but they confuse it with personality. I am a great individualist, and I believe that the development of Science must be worked out individually, but you cannot have individuality without collectivity, and that eventually becomes universal. You must not mix individuality with personal sense and become “cloistered”. You find people who dread to tell anything; they think that if they tell you anything they give something away. I have often seen cases of people who thought that they were being individual when they were being merely personal. They wanted to do something that they thought was individual, but it was not, because it separated them from others in the wrong way. They became more and more what the American calls a “clam”. You can’t love Christ or Truth unless you are going to identify it with all men. You will generally find that the people who cloister themselves are those who most need to get out among people—even humanly. You can’t have the individual without the collective. If you find that what you think is individuality is separating you from the lovely desire to help your fellow-man, then it isn’t individuality. The individuality of Jesus, which was the most striking demonstration of individuality the world has ever known, made him say, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11: 28). You can’t have the individual without the collective, and you can’t have the collective without the universal, where all thought turns to God.

I have said to you that in lifting up the revelation of the Christ-idea as Science, which Mrs. Eddy has given us, you have got to do three things. Everything starts with your own individual consecration and vision—you don’t start except at that point; I feel that at present that means that each one of us has got to accept the responsibility of loving this idea and living it. Then it must broaden and become collective, and that means that we must all help to drill “the platoons of Christian Science”, that we must begin to give it to the other fellow who can take it. The longing to give it to all mankind must come, and then it must eventually become universal. If you haven’t that longing, that desire to take Science to all mankind, the desire to identify yourself with all that is good, no matter who expresses it, the desire to take Science with the true womanhood sense to every human being, then you just haven’t got a true sense of Science. The time therefore comes when it must not only be individual and collective, but it must also be universal. I know that a lot of you make the mistake of looking to others to see how to develop this idea. It is up to each one of us individually to see how we are going to help the progress of the Christ-idea. The responsibility is on each one of us to ask, “How can I help the other fellow to get it, and how can I take it out into the highways and byways?” If you side-step this issue, then you haven’t turned aside to see “why the bush is not burnt”.

“Out of the Midst of the Bush”

“And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.” He didn’t say, “I am going to turn aside and see how it affects me” —he was dealing with fact. “And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush” (Ex. 3: 4) —out of Principle.

The minute you touch Soul as Soul you touch the hem of the Christ, and you hear Principle speak, and it says to you, "I am Life, I am individuality; I am Truth, I am consciousness; I am Love, I am fulfilment," and it translates itself through Soul, Spirit, and Mind.

"And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush" —God didn't do anything of the kind, because God is the "same yesterday, and to day, and forever" (Heb. 13: 8). It means that Moses rose to some realization of the fact that God is Principle, forever interpreting Himself. "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses and he said, Here am I" (Ex. 3: 4). Compare that state of thought with the Adam and Eve state of thought which ran and hid when God called to it. It is a lovely thing when you get to the point where day in and day out you are trying in the deepest sincerity and sanctity to affirm your true selfhood with the absolute desire to lay down all that is unlike that true selfhood, and you can say, "Here am I". Isaiah said the same thing, "Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6: 8).

JOHN * CHAPTER 3

(Verses 1-6)

Verse 1. Nicodemus was, traditionally, one of the three richest men in Jerusalem, and we may suppose that he would represent the mentality that wishes to translate matter substance into spiritual substance.

Verse 2. It is evident that there were the beginnings of resurrection: thought was lifted off a material basis. (See S. and. H. 268:1-9)

Verse 3. "Verily, verily" again —the divine and its correlative, Truth and Spirit. That is, if thought is born of the divine consciousness, one sees everywhere the reflection of Spirit. Thereafter (verses 4-6) Nicodemus failed to follow what Jesus was telling him, because his thought would not go on to Truth and Spirit. Perhaps we, in helping somebody don't seem to take very much notice of their physical condition, and they might say, "Well, don't these Scientists take any notice of the body?" Truth and Spirit is radical, and "that which is born of the flesh is flesh", and doctoring the flesh, or healing the flesh, or listening to what the flesh is saying, is (within limits) no use at all. We must turn to the facts of Spirit, and as we learn to do that with confidence, the flesh has to respond. It just has to; because, what is the flesh? It's the objectification of our misconception of Spirit. It's our ignorance of Spirit, gone solid, and how can we doctor an ignorance, whether it has gone solid or whether it is still fluid in thought? So we have to turn to the spiritual fact, to the Truth.

Spirit and Flesh

When Jesus is telling them, then, that one must be born of water and of the Spirit, it's lifting thought off a material basis. Perhaps that's still a sense of resurrection carried on from the previous tone; it seems to run on for a chapter or two; but we are beginning to see here Jesus translating thought: he is beginning to show that what we look at and think is flesh, —now let me say this carefully, —is truly Spirit; but, —and this is a most delicate point in Science, —that does not mean that we spiritualize matter. It is a question of consciousness. It is never true to say in Science, when we look at a lump of flesh, that this is Spirit, and yet leave it as flesh; because if we really understand what we say, we will transform that flesh and it will become healthy, it will become young, and active, and vital, and everything about it will be less fleshly than it was. If it is not less fleshly than it was, then we are just talking nonsense, —we are trying to say that error is Truth. Let us follow this thought further, in a calm and gentle way.

Translation

Miscellaneous Writings 67:24-6. “Do you believe in translation? If your question refers to language, whereby one expresses the sense of words in one language by equivalent words in another, I do. If you refer to the removal of a person to heaven, without his subjection to death, I modify my affirmative answer. I believe in this removal being possible after all the footsteps requisite have been taken up to the very throne, up to the spiritual sense and fact of divine substance, intelligence, Life, and Love. This translation is not the work of moments; it requires both time and eternity. It means more than mere disappearance to the human sense; it must include also man’s changed appearance and diviner form visible to those beholding him here.”

We won’t strain out gnats and swallow camels, because we cannot work out life’s problem in a day. We never need to feel a sense of frustration, or a compulsion to see these things as all-in-all. It is neither wise nor the demand of Science; but here’s a lovely hint of what we are going to see, —that translation is the work of “both time and eternity”. That is to say, we have to start translating now, in what we call time, and that will fulfill itself by giving us not merely a more spiritual sense of existence, but a more spiritual actual existence, “visible to those beholding him here.” I think that’s marvellous. It answers the illusion that spiritualization is solely something in thought. Spiritualization is not solely something in thought, because human thought and human body are one, and if thought is truly spiritualized the body and the attitude to life must also reflect that spiritualization, else thought is not honestly spiritualized. (See S. and H. 167:32-5)

There is another side to that picture which is perhaps more comforting. I may say that my aunt Matilda is much sweeter and easier to get on with now than she used to be ten years ago. Actually, is it her, or have I altered? Somewhere between her and me there has been a translation, —”man’s changed appearance and diviner form visible to those beholding him here”. Now that’s true about everybody it should be said about us all that we are a little sweeter or nicer or better in some way than we were a few years ago; and that is the beginnings of translation.

What brings it about? Well, these things are the fruits of the Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit are The effects of Truth, one infinite Truth which is the diviner ideal dwelling in God, and not knowing anything about us as a mortal, but which is always calculating itself in terms of the fruits of the Spirit, in terms of loveliness, friendliness, unselfishness, —every desirable quality. That is the Son of God translating itself in terms of the Son of man. Let me say once again that this may be a perplexing point to some of us; if you find anything perplexing in Science, leave it until growth and experience interpret it to you.

INTERVAL

Let us consider some of the details of the Nicodemus story again, beginning at verse 3. S. and H.274:9-11. “Ideas, are born of Spirit, and are not mere inferences drawn from material premises.”If you are born of the Spirit, that development which comes to you called an improved human belief is not an inference or deduction from material premises. It’s not a case of, My sore is getting better.” It’s a case of, “Thank God, I’m seeing a little more of Truth than I saw yesterday. Nothing ever happens from “the lower end.” Nothing happens from the darkness; it’s just negation, there’s nothing there. The new birth depends on and proceeds from Truth and Spirit.

Verse 4. Apparently Nicodemus wasn’t prepared to take that step over, —that pass over, —when he asked if a man can be born again from his mother’s womb. As with us, it just means that he wasn’t prepared to lay down the mortal at that point.

To him, to be born again was a development from a material premise, but truly it means to be born of the matrix of Truth and Love. There isn't any other womb. Those of you who have given thought to this arrangement of symbols on a chart which we call the matrix will appreciate that that is what we are born of, —we are always in it. The matrix is “the seal of Deity”, and man “has the impress of heaven.” (See S. and H. 511:11, 12.) It is a word symbol of the womb of the divine Mother. But if you have not been able to devote time and thought and study to the matrix and these symbols, it doesn't matter: accept what you can accept with joy, and the rest of it will look after itself; but don't feel despondent if some of it doesn't make sense to you... There are bound to be states and stages of thought. Born of the matrix: “conceived and born, of Truth and Love” (S. and H. 465:14).

Verse 5. “of water” —of the elements of thought; “and, of the Spirit” —and of divine qualities. I feel that that means that we require both “thought tending spiritually upward”, and the understanding of divine fact. The water and the Spirit; the Word and the Christ.

Verse 6. That is, it must be ‘nay nay’ and ‘yea yea’ for true calculation.

Science and Health 556:9-18. “Jesus reasoned on this subject radically, and controlled sickness, sin, and death, on the basis of his spirituality. Understanding the nothingness of material things, he spoke of flesh and Spirit as the two opposites, —as error and Truth; not contributing in any way to each other's happiness and existence. Jesus knew, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing”.

“There is neither a present nor an eternal co-partnership between error and Truth, between flesh and Spirit.” The marginal heading is “Irreconcilable differences.” There is in reality no point of contact between Truth and error, between Spirit and flesh. The only point of contact which they appear to have is in what we call human consciousness, which is a mistaken premise; but they have in fact no point of contact whatever. That is why “a healing” takes place in human consciousness. A healing doesn't take place in Spirit because Spirit doesn't need healing; nor does it take place in matter, because matter is just a mistake anyhow. It takes place in human consciousness, which is the name we give to disappearance of ignorance. Jesus is showing, in this tone of Spirit and Truth, that one does not attain to Truth by trying to spiritualize matter, but by laying matter aside.

Verses 7, 8. That's lovely. As we sit quietly and start thinking things out with Truth, something begins to happen. We are calm and comforted and something is mended, or healed, or restored, or forgiven; we don't know how it comes about, nor what effect the Truth will have universally; we can not tell “whence it cometh and whither it goeth,” and that is because we have been loving Truth. If we love Truth, Truth operates through spirit as a corrective, as an ameliorative, as a comforter, as a renewer.

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