

PASSING FROM LIFE TO LIFE

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Science and Health makes clear to students of Christian Science the universally liberating truth that because Life is spiritual and eternal, man as the expression of Life is an immortal being; death is but another dream within the whole overall dream of mortal existence. Those same students, whilst recognising these absolute truths, may at their present stage of progress think with apprehension about passing on and all it implies. They may keep their dreads hidden, but it must be good to seek definite divine answers.

Staying with the highest we see of the Science revealed in the Gospels, the Apocalypse, and the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, can we not trust that Love's fulfilled and fulfilling plan for the individual will always be in operation and could not suddenly cease? Should we not affirm with all our heart and soul that because Love is Mind, it will care for every detail for us (and for all concerned) with supreme intelligence? Whatever the appearance, none of us can ever find ourselves in a position outside Love or that is not subject to divine control.

Jesus demonstrated all this unmistakably, not only for himself, but for mankind, and that can be an unshakeable rock in thought. Every question we may raise, every doubt we may harbour, every fear we conceal - all are answered within Jesus' life and teaching. He was, as he himself said, "the way, the truth, and the life," and that is cause for ceaseless gratitude.

Even if we shall appear quite alone, the whole panoply of the divine will unflinchingly be embracing us. May our eyes be wide open to perceive this spiritual fact. Jesus knew that in one sense he would be left alone, but he declared with a divinely scientific assurance which proved entirely justified, "yet I am not alone, because my Father is with me." The Psalmist had said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." Mrs Eddy wrote, "Remember, thou canst be brought into no condition, be it ever so severe, where Love has not been before thee and where its tender lesson is not awaiting thee" (My. 149:31-2).

"WHENCE WE CAME"

Jesus said, "I know whence I came, and whither I go," and we must begin with "whence we came" before we consider "Whither we go." So much could be said about this, but a few pointers may be helpful to stimulate further thought.

What justifies us in thinking that we are more than physical beings, born of certain human parents on a particular day, ruled by our genes, and doomed to die and disintegrate? If we look for pointers to an eternal rather than a temporal home for man, one of the first is that none of us believes that we can be definitively summed up by ourselves, let alone anyone else; the only thing that can cognize our innermost identity must be our creative Principle, the Soul of the soul we feel, beyond the ever-changing physical, mental, and emotional picture. Such a creator could only be immortal and could create only an immortal being. In Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality are the lines, "Though inland far we be, Our souls have sight of that immortal sea Which brought us hither."

Jesus showed that there is infinitely more to each one of us than the limited birth-to-death concept usually entertained. We see this memorably in what his Soul-sense discerned of Peter's God-given rocklike identity, as distinct from the opposite picture of an impulsive and ruggedly independent personality which most people took for granted as "him."

What is essentially "us" is not located in the physical. We are unique not because of physical characteristics, but because of a specific and divinely beautiful blend of spiritual qualities with a dynamic source transcending the human. That cannot die with the physical, because it was never *in* the physical. We have no difficulty in accepting that $2+2=4$ never began, although we became *aware* of it at some point in time, and that helps us to accept as logical the pre-existence of our true identity, definite and inerasable from "before the foundation of the world."

Another pointer that we are not "of the earth, earthly" but have the spiritual origin which Jesus constantly stressed is that our sense of purpose goes beyond mere survival or reproducing our kind. We are not content with piling up money and possessions, absorption in physical fitness, amassing human knowledge, wielding personal power, winning fame. Whether raising a family, running a business, creating a work of art, or involved in some

other enterprise, we cherish ideals and values which have their source in the spiritual, in Truth itself, and satisfaction comes through the fruits of the Spirit which follow. We find these ideals taking possession of us, supplying the ideas, the motives, and the methods which bring them to fruition in experience. It is because we are spiritual beings that we find that the spirituality of our motives determines lasting fruitage: if we were not, motives would never affect the outcome of our activities.

We all discover the truth which John Dooley often voiced: it doesn't matter how someone looks or anything of the kind, because the time will come when all that will count will be how much he understands and can demonstrate of the nature of God and man. Our purposeful yearning for greater spiritual understanding of the Truth that lies beyond limited human truth cannot be fulfilled within a mortal life-span. It is ongoing, as Jesus made abundantly clear.

The Science of Truth has forever led us forward, and this did not begin at birth. Perceptive parents who frequently observe, for instance, a perfect expression of Love by their very small child cannot accept that the spirituality so touchingly evident began only a few months or years ago; it was not born of "tilling the soil," but was always divinely present before they saw it blossom humanly. Whenever we recognise with joy a spiritual truth, something within us is saying, "That feels absolutely right because I always knew it - that is why I recognise it and feel at home with it." The particular truth falls into place as part of the whole of Truth which we instinctively realize has forever been ours and which we know will continue to unfold to our present stage of understanding.

Another category of experience which leads us to accept that we did not begin at birth but are spiritual beings includes our recognition of what Shakespeare called "...a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough hew them how we will," an appreciation of meaning and beauty appearing in spite of the clumsiness of human manoeuvring. We have glimpses of an overall plan within which a plan evolves for us as individuals. The plan could proceed only from an eternal Mind which knows the end from the beginning, something of which the human mind is not capable. We have all known times when something totally unforeseen has intervened, altering the whole subsequent course of events and weaving a new fabric of meaning which on reflection seems divinely right and natural. There are countless occasions when we do something instinctively without knowing why, but the reason is

revealed as the divine purpose unfolds. Such experiences bring us an inkling of co-existence with the timeless Mind which is Love - an inkling that we are not mortals influenced by Mind, but rather immortal beings moving in accord with Mind. When we discern what have been called "overarching patterns" in our lives, we realize that they are not fully explicable in human terms, but again manifest the Mind surpassing human wisdom and the Love immensely kind in meeting the needs of the individual heart.

We are constantly aware too of a supra-personal Mind uniting us, intelligently relating us in mutual blessing. We cannot believe that this is the result of brain-networks. The human mind and human love can never be sufficient. They cannot deal with the hell of mortal mind. They cannot fully forgive and forget, or overcome fear, pain, and mental distress. The "erring, finite, human mind has an absolute need of something beyond itself for its redemption and healing" (S&H 151:5-7). It is only beyond the frontiers of the human mind that we find and feel at one with omniscient Mind and the Love that dissolves fear with the recognition of its all-encompassing design. And so our home can never be in the human, for we belong to the divine, and nothing less can satisfy us.

A fourth pointer that we are not "of the world," but have an eternal spiritual status, lies in our answer to the question as to what finally governs our lives. Do we believe that we are at the mercy of chance and "fate," physical laws, medical theories, social so called science, economic edicts, political pressures, and -ologies and -isms of every kind? Are we at their mercy only in proportion as we *honour* them? Every time we challenge their authority by trusting higher laws proceeding from the one infinite Principle whose nature is changelessly Life, Truth, and Love, we find that these laws are superior and are ultimately the only laws. Experience repeatedly shows that as we accept them, they bring a harmony into the situation beyond human probability and demonstrate that the human scene is the servant, not the master, of the spiritual and infinite. We arrive at some understanding that there is no immutable and utterly reliable science but spiritual Science.

We are not imprisoned in passing-time nor confined by limitations of space, but are gloriously free to range in the realm of "fetterless Mind," and hence to "foresee and foretell events which concern the universal welfare" (S&H 84:17-18,15-16). To quote Wordsworth once again, "Our destiny, our being's heart and home, Is with infinitude, and only there."

"WHITHER WE GO"

Turning from "whence we came" to "whither we go," we find much that is beyond speculation because of the waymarks established by Jesus and interpreted in our own age in their impersonal Science.

We shall certainly pass from life to life, though life on a different plane. After what Mrs Eddy calls "the momentary belief of dying" (Mis. 42:5-6) has gone from mortal mind, we shall "have but passed the portals of a new belief" (S&H 251:11), still with immense lessons to learn in accepting the truths of immortal Life, but enriched in priceless measure by all we have discovered so far. We shall not be spirits; after the resurrection Jesus said, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (see Luke 24:36-43). We shall still have the belief of a body, "unseen by those who think that they bury the body" (S&H 429:17-18). (see S&H 187: 27-2; Mis.42:10-12). Jesus showed by direct demonstration that we are bound by that belief only in the proportion that we regard it as an intregal part of our real being; finally we shall rise above it through conscious at-one-ment with God, although this "requires time and immense spiritual growth" (Un.43:10-11). What we shall never lose is our unique Soul-created identity, which always shines out beyond and above the limited and changing vehicle which it seems to mortal sense to inhabit. And so we can go forward with a tranquil mind, companioned by ideas of Life and its forever newness, in the sure consciousness of a progressive path ahead and the uninterrupted flow individual being. "O Life divine, that owns each waiting hour" (Mis.389:7).

We need never doubt that Truth will still be true and dynamically making us aware of itself, still as pure and uncompromising, still insisting on the exchange of false concepts for higher, purer spiritual conceptions. The grace and inspiration of ideas will still come to meet our particular real need. And we can be confident that wherever we are, we shall not be isolated or redundant, but shall have a specifically vital part to play within the plan of Love. We are bound to be surrounded by symbols of Love which meet the heart's desires, for Love is an ever-flowing fount which cannot be stanchd. Moreover, we shall always be in living and loving relationship with those on the same spiritual path, whether apparently here or hereafter and whether or not beyond the reach of mere human communication.

The same one great Principle will be changelessly in charge, above every limited human concept and all the so-called barriers of time and space. How

could any of these truths become invalid, since they were not born of earth and are forever independent of human conditions and beliefs? The Science of being is not confined to one plane of existence; it is transcendent, timeless, ever-operative Truth, whose nature is Love.

Realizing that real blessings flow from an inexhaustible source of spiritual revelation which is not contingent on human circumstances, we can cultivate a rich gratitude for all the outpouring of good with which we have already been blessed and an equally rich expectation and assurance of the true blessings which will unfold for us and also for those we love.

A NEW PHASE

The human mind has an entrenched belief that passing on is preceded by a decreasing ability to "cope" and by suffering and pain. It is easy to grant this belief house-room in the basement of our thinking, instead of expelling it with "practical, operative Christian Science" (Mis. 207:5-6). "Every mortal at some period, here or hereafter, must grapple with and overcome the mortal belief in a power opposed to God" (S&H 569:3-5).

All the arguments for a downhill course are invalidated by the laws of Life, laws of enablement to the individual to be about his Father's business in every way that is really needed. Maybe we have not thought very thoroughly about spiritual substance and energy, but have relied on a belief of physical health, and then suddenly we are confronted by the need to embrace these important ideas. We see as never before that we are not here merely to keep the physical show on the road, but to feel continually the spirit of our life-purpose and respond to its impulsions. Life itself inspires us and gives us the ability to respond. "It is the spirit that quickeneth," and nothing else finally does.

As we respond to the movements of the Spirit within us, we are acting under spiritual law and are sustained by that law. We feel "the divine energy of Spirit, bringing us into newness of life and recognizing no mortal nor material power as able to destroy" (S&H 249:6-8). When we realize "that spiritual energies can neither wear out nor can so-called material law trespass upon God-given powers and resources, we are able to rest in Truth, refreshed by the assurances of immortality, opposed to mortality" (S&H 387:9-12).

If we are no longer "rushing around smartly" (Mis.230:12), we can still accomplish much, even though this is not appreciated by thought which

measures only physical strength. Many who live in confined surroundings nevertheless enjoy "conception unconfined" (S&H 323: 11-12), and their active reflection of Truth "reaches over continent and ocean" (S&H 559: 9). They recognise that they are "able to impart truth, health, and happiness" (My. 165:20-21), and that this is the work which the Father has given them to do. Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."

There are those who feel some shame that they can no longer handle all their affairs with the quick human competence on which they used to rely, but rightly regarded this is a vital opportunity to let belief in human sufficiency yield to a diviner sense that "our sufficiency is of God." The wisdom that comes from letting Mind illuminate is far in advance of human wisdom; the love that comes from accepting that Love itself is reflected in love plentifully exceeds the best of love on a limited basis. And so a new phase of experience opens up as we see that while of ourselves we can do nothing, as the reflection of Life, Truth, and Love we are entitled to progress and achievement and fulfilment at every stage, regardless of the outward circumstances.

Some people dislike increasing dependence on others, which they feel they can never repay, but again it is an opportunity, in this case to discover more intimately the brotherhood of man in the divine family to which we all belong. Accepting wholeheartedly what another gives is fruitful for both giver and receiver; it brings a special closeness and an appreciation of spiritual interdependence perhaps not previously felt. The gratitude of true acceptance is the essence of repayment.

"A CLEAN HEART"

Many feel sadness shadowing thought as they look back and regret what they did or failed to do. They long for "a clean heart" before the transition to another sphere of consciousness. We should none of us put off facing the challenge, "The human history needs to be revised, and the material record expunged" (Ret. 22:1-2). Moral questions can be properly resolved only on a higher scientific plane of reasoning. "Progress is the maturing conception of divine Love" (My. 181:8-9). Spiritual progress makes us repent of what we did or left undone, because it shows us that it was alien to our real aspirations and went against the grain of our God-given individuality. We can

then discern the divine impulses which were infallibly at work beneath the surface, bringing us fairer, kinder, more vigorous vision and the spiritualization of motives. As we bathe in the cleansing flow of absolute Truth, unaffected by mortal dreams of a "sinning past," we can repudiate the false witnesses and truly forgive ourselves and others. We can acknowledge also that spiritual fruitage alone has resulted for all concerned. "To understand good, one must discern the nothingness of evil, and consecrate one's life anew" (Mis.109: 26-27). "Wait, and love more for every hate, and fear No ill, - since God is good, and loss is gain" (Mis.389:16-17). To heed this is the highest form of restitution we can make in the timeless "now" of Science, where it is never "too late."

"NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE, BE DONE"

One individual may feel at some point that he has finished his work here, and that the time has come to move on. Another may urgently feel that such a time has not come and that he has important tasks yet to accomplish. Some are tempted to anguish that those they love will suffer much grief and loss and stress without their presence; others believe that those they love will be better off without the burden they feel they impose, and weariness may bid them choose a destination which seems more desirable than their present position. But whatever the human inclination, each of us must strive to set aside the would-be mesmeric influence of limited personal judgments, and seek in the here and now to be alertly obedient to Principle alone. Ultimately we have to leave the field to God and echo in deep humility Jesus' prayer, "not my will, but Thine, be done." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee," and such a mind is not malpractised out of its appropriate sphere of existence. The plan of Love for each individual has perfect timing, perfect wisdom, and does not involve failure or deprivation. As we let thought become more exalted, we understand this more clearly and give free scope to its implications.

At some time there comes the imperative demand which came to Jesus - to entrust those we love, more completely than ever before, to the workings of the spiritual and infinite. In sacred communion with God, Jesus prayed, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me...and now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world...Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

Divine Principle, Love has the final responsibility. It transcends, by far, the best personal care, and there is no deficiency in its full commitment to each one for inspiration, achievement, and fulfilment.

When Jesus went ahead to accomplish his earth-mission, he showed his disciples ^{but} ~~and~~ they too would be carried forward. He was not leaving them in any way bereft. "I will not leave you comfortless...Peace I leave with you" And he left them above all with the promise that with his going away something better than his personal presence would come to them - the Comforter, which Mrs Eddy saw "to be Divine Science," the Science of all he had taught and demonstrated. They would realise that they had direct individual access to the Mind of Christ, which had been *his* sole source of inspiration. The fullness of universal Science would be theirs to enjoy.

Regret that we shall not see the human working out for those we love dissolves in the certainty that their spiritual identity, which Love has made so distinct to us, will care for the details of the human unfolding of the plan of Love. The *substance* of the picture is the spiritual individuality and its divine destiny. This is where Jesus rested his thought about his disciples, and his love for every one of them continued to sustain and bless them after he had passed from their physical knowledge.

RE-INTERPRETATION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF SCIENCE

Suffering is part and parcel of the mortal dream and no more fully explicable than any dream. It has no part in Truth and Love. Mortal mind tries to condition us to stay in sorrow with extremes of the dream-experience, trying vainly to puzzle them out, but as with all dreams the only escape is to wake and let thought be exalted to the higher altitude where Truth abides. Then we can reason clearly from that viewpoint and arrive at pure and satisfying conclusions. When Mrs Eddy interprets the momentous symbols of the Apocalypse which deal with "the sum total of human misery," she repeatedly uses words to do with the lifting of thought. (see S&H 574: 3 to 575: 6).

The crew of a ship whose engines have broken down, faced with huge seas and drifting towards rocks, are aware only of a terrifying situation, but when they send out an SOS and are winched to safety aboard a helicopter, the danger which appeared over-whelming is past. The Christ lifts us again and again on the wings of inspiration out of belief in a suffering picture in which we seem engulfed, and brings us to a place of consciousness divinely

prepared: there we find our fears resolved in a spiritual transformation through absolute Truth. "If it were not so, I would have told you," said the faithful Jesus. And just as high above the helicopter and its rescue mission were clear blue skies beyond the clouded atmosphere of earth, so "over and above [the human experience] are eternal sunshine and joy unspeakable" (Mis. 279:7-8) in divine Science.

But even if the dream seems at times real and grievous to a suffering sense, the travail it reflects is not pointless but "portentous" (S&H 562:28). As "truth urges upon mortals its resisted claims" (S&H 223:29-30), we are compelled to accept the challenge and wrestle constructively with such beliefs as finality, parting, disappointment, despair, as well as with myriad so-called laws of matter clamouring for attention. But "experience is victor, never the vanquished" (Mis.339:6). An individual's consistent reaching out to Truth is never wasted because he passes on; that spiritual seeking inevitably bears its good fruit, and his "joys and means of advancing will be proportionately increased" (Mis 42:19-20).

Mrs Eddy wrote, "The transition from our lower sense of Life to a new and higher sense thereof, even though it be through the door named death, yields a clearer and nearer sense of Life to those who have utilized the present, and are ripe for the harvest-home" (Mis 84:28-1). We have Jesus' deep assurance that an entirely positive birth is going on with the woman in us all: a "man" of strong new spiritual conviction is being born, so that anguish will be quite forgotten in pure joy (see John 16:20-22).

The eye may see the sun set in stormy skies or in calm and peace, as we may see one individual pass on tempestuously and another serenely; but this is only according to the personal senses, and just as the sun never sets, so our friends are embraced in "the nightless radiance of divine Life...Coming and going belong to mortal consciousness" (Un. 61:11-12, 2-3).

The most sublime answer to questions of suffering lies in the passion and resurrection of Jesus, and we should value as priceless the revelation he bequeathed through the Gospel which the beloved John was eventually ready to write.

Jesus was aware that to the disciples his trial and crucifixion would seem devastating and deeply painful; in spite of all they had been taught and all they had assimilated, they could be overtaken by a sense of the failure of what they had trusted and searing sorrow that the ideals of Love which they had seen exemplified by their Master would seem quite ineffectual. He made

it as clear to them as he could beforehand that such an interpretation of the events would be a total misconception, for all that would be going on beneath the surface appearance would be *the fulfilment of the plan of Love*. This plan had become ever more real and specific to him as he continually dwelt with all its implications; he allowed it to transfigure his entire consciousness until "the prince of this world" could no longer influence his conclusions in any direction. He was then completely prepared to go forward, with the assurance that that which had been initiated by Mind would be consummated by Love.

What unfolded was an everlasting victory, whereby Life showed the belief of death to have no sting, Truth proved the collective hostility of worldly power to be without the authority it claimed, and Love brought to nothing the machinations of malice, betrayal, and barbarity. At the resurrection the bewildered despair of the disciples was exchanged for the joy of re-interpretation: he whom they believed dead was radiantly alive, still the self-same Jesus; he whom they had thought defenceless before the forces of this world had proved the potency of spiritual Truth; and he who had seemed forsaken "in his highest demonstration" (S&H 50:15) had been cared for by infinite Love. To abide in Love had not been foolish and impractical, for Love had met every need with the complete embrace of divine wisdom. And so there was "full compensation in the law of Love" (S&H 574:19) for the students loyal to Truth. But the vital point is this: the re-interpretation which came to them is the gift of Science to every one of us; and in proportion as we respond, it does "heal humanity's sore heart" (Po. 22:15).

As we allow this re-interpretation, we too can look in Science from the standpoint of spiritual understanding. We can see that our loved ones have not met the dead end we dreaded, but to spiritual sense are more alive than ever. Disease has not triumphed - the individual we may be sorrowing over has awakened to the fact that he has *not* died and so was *not* overmastered by a particular condition (see Mis. 58:1-9); he is still on a path of progress, with Truth becoming ever clearer and Love rending veil after veil of the needless fear which clouded vision and hid the workings of the Christ. We discover too that we are not irreversibly parted, but together in a new way, at a deeper level, with a sweeter tenderness and even richer fruits of the Spirit. Instead of wondering sadly if those we love are "all right," we can *know* that they are and can see and share in some measure what they are experiencing through Truth and Love.

The human mind thinks of death as a black wall awaiting us all, but as

anyone comes up to it with Life-inspired eyes (and he can do so now in thought), it loses its substance and crumbles into the dust it always was, to reveal the vista which always lay beyond. The human mind also conjures up a giant named Disease, claiming to crush men's spirits finally and drive them to the wall; but again this power proves mythical, not mighty, unable to destroy or even touch the present spiritual truth of man. Did not Jesus light the way for us all when after the resurrection he showed his disciples the nail-prints in his hands and the spear-wound in his side - evidence of what we would regard as terrible violence - and made it clear that to him it had never been real? The wounds were healed so that he could act as he needed, but that was not of primary importance. The outstanding point was that the brutality had not penetrated his conscious well-being to evoke a mental or physical reaction of pain as *he went ahead in fulfillment of Love's plan*. The cruelty had had no power to harm or kill because only the spiritual was occupying his thought. Life was not in the body to be damaged, but safe in Soul; Truth was not in matter to be mocked, but in the ever-lasting strength of Spirit; Love was above the reach of human hatred as it uninterruptedly radiated to all its atmosphere of blessing.

As we follow these pointers and meekly yield to their divinity, we shall have a new basis of interpretation from which our reasoning can flow. Fear alone, we shall begin to acknowledge, produce the suffering which seemed at times so intense, fear of evil forces overriding Life, Truth, and Love. But such a scenario is impossible in Science, for Life, Truth, and Love constitute the invincible Principle, unshakeably enthroned. "Fear never stopped being and its action" (S&H 151:18).

THE SPIRITUAL CONTINUITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

What grounds are there for believing that we shall meet again those we love? Love is for most people the sweetest and deepest thing they know on earth, and sometimes we stand back in awe at the workings of Love in our own lives, bringing us together with those who inspire, uphold, and bless us in especially fruitful ways. Those workings cannot cease because we enter a new experience and come into the same state of consciousness as those who have previously left this earthly scene. (see Mis.42:12-16). The divinely natural operation of Principle transcends the here and hereafter and partakes of the nature of eternal law; no one can pass beyond the embrace of such a law.

However deep our initial sense of loss after someone's passing, it is met and outspanned by the even greater depth of infinite Love. That amplitude awaits us whenever we accept it into our hearts. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you...ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Reflecting on this shows that it is present spiritual unity which we should be concerned with and enjoy. St. Ignatius, who lived in the first and second centuries AD, is said to have written this: "Not as the world givest givest Thou, O lover of souls; that Thou givest, Thou takest not away. For what is Thine is ours always if we are Thine, and Life is eternal, and Love is immortal, and death is only an horizon; and the horizon is nothing, save the limit of our sight."

In this age we may put this beautiful statement in a more spiritually scientific idiom: "All our best and closest companionships have been part and parcel of Principle's demonstration of itself. This being so, they cannot be interrupted or interfered with, but must forever continue and forever unfold Principle's purpose for them. . . 'What God hath joined together, no man *can* put asunder.' God never joined together two material bodies. Principle could only join together one of its ways of expressing itself with another of its ways of expressing itself, and the interweave is sustained and maintained by that very Principle... [The understanding of this] can relieve us here and now from any sense of separation from those we love, and through this we shall learn how not to *wait* for a reunion, but instead find here and now a deeper unity than ever before" ("*Without a parable. . .*" by Clifford & Rosalie Stamp, No. 7, pages 26-27, 28).

The beloved disciple certainly did not wait for a reunion with Jesus. They were constant spiritual companions as John lived with all that Jesus had taught and demonstrated, until at last he grew into that altitude of mind which enabled him to present the Science of it in his matchless Gospel. His need for the right human companion in the important work which lay before him was foreseen by Jesus when he looked down from the cross and with all the graciousness of Love told his mother and John that they would find in each other the mutual inspiration, support, and focus for affection perfectly adapted for their spiritual progress.

Does the love we feel for those who have passed on reach them, and does their love reach us? The answer is "Yes" because there can be no boundaries to the love which reflects Love and the purely spiritual blessing

it imparts. The affection we send out from the heart cannot be ineffectual in the universe of Love, and that universe surrounds us as the only reality. There is no cut-off point for a loving relationship. It is held forever in the orbit of Love and cannot drift off into oblivion.

In Mrs Eddy's words in a poem, "Beyond the shadow, infinite appear Life, Love divine, - Where mortal yearnings come not, sighs are stilled, And home and peace and hearts are found and filled, Thine, ever thine" (Mis. 386:2-6).

Since the ultimate reality of every relationship is spiritual, perfect, and timeless, we are never allowed to stay back with a relationship as we knew it; we cannot remain with the image on the fading photograph. By the law of Life everyone goes forward and there is no going back. Moreover, we are all contemporary ideas in the Science of being.

The limited human concept of an individual, however endearing, is not good enough to be true, because of those very limitations; the final truth can only be what Mind knows and is "altogether lovely" to Love. But all that is lovely in our concept is transfigured, not lost.

This is made most memorably clear in the Gospel account of the meeting between Jesus and Mary Magdalene after the resurrection (see John 20:14-18). When Jesus voiced her name with the wealth of divine affection which we can only imagine, Mary joyfully recognised her Master, but he immediately told her not to cling to her previous picturing; she must share in his resurrection by rising to a more spiritual concept of him and of herself as the shining forth of Truth, Life, and Love. Indeed he showed her that they were on the same purposeful path to ascension. There is no evading the truths illustrated in this precious record, and they will expand in our thought as we accept them.

"HE SHALL NEVER SEE DEATH"

Jesus said, "if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" - never be conscious of death as a reality, either for himself or anyone else, because his consciousness will be filled with the truth of Life unceasingly expressing itself. *Science and Health* complements and develops this ideal in an important passage (598:23-30) by showing the possibility of bridging over "with life discerned spiritually the interval of death." This involves being "in

the full consciousness of [man's] immortality and eternal harmony, where sin, sickness, and death are unknown." Mrs Eddy states that this arises from an "exalted view, obtained and retained when the Science of being is understood." Jesus demonstrated this very bridging over when he took on for mankind the whole belief of death to show that it has no inherent power. He was not conscious of death because he was so vividly aware of being inseparable from Life and Truth and Love.

The Science of being makes it plain that man is not a corporeal creature with a personal, mortal, organic life, but rather an individualization of the one infinite Life. "His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while he was hidden in the sepulchre, whereas he was alive, demonstrating...the power of Spirit to overrule mortal, material sense" (S&H 44:28-31). There was no interruption, let alone cessation, of vitality. He was actively moving on in the truest sense, responding to the new calls which Life was making upon him.

Similarly, the disciples thought that Jesus had fallen into final unconsciousness, whereas all he had relinquished was the belief that consciousness resides in the physical - he gave up the *belief* of consciousness for the *truth* of consciousness. It is dramatically evident that he was fully conscious in the tomb, for through his inspired reflection of the Truth that knows neither disease nor error he "met and mastered on the basis of Christian Science, the power of Mind over matter, all the claims of medicine, surgery, and hygiene" (S&H 44:10-12). He was not absorbed into some Nirvana, but dynamically at one with the divine consciousness. Even though we may imagine that we have a personal consciousness lodged in the physical which terminates at death, the truth is that we are part of the one infinite indivisible spiritual consciousness. When we wake from sleep, we do not fear that unconsciousness will overtake us, and we shall come to regard it as quite natural that consciousness at one with Truth cannot be interrupted. "The divine understanding reigns, is *all*, and there is no other consciousness" (S&H 536:8-9). As we assimilate the tremendous meaning of this, we shall look forward to an increasing sense of dominion and spiritual well-being.

The idea of the divine Mother conveys inseparability to most people better than any other human symbol. There seems nothing more comforting than closeness to that Love which appears to reach out and enfold us in the unity of Mother-and-child, precluding fear of a malicious power or cruel fate. It is obvious that Jesus was immensely reassured and strengthened by his conviction of being loved "before the foundation of the world." He above

all others felt the depth and breadth and height of eternal Love, but again he did not passively take refuge against a power to be feared. He was so actively at one with the whole spirit of Love that he could harbour no hate for those who crucified him. He saw that they could only be part of the complete fulfilment of Love's plan for the entire course of events; they could have "no power at all against [him,] except it were given [them] from above."

Science offers a yet higher symbol - that of the indissoluble unity of Principle and idea. Jesus voiced this in the words "I and my Father are one," and Mrs Eddy put it, "Principle and its idea is one" (S&H 465:17) - the "is" is important. We lose the sense of "clinging on for dear life" as we realize that we are one with Principle's unlaboured harmony. When we are conscious of the unfailing operation of Principle, as we are in the realm of arithmetic, fear dissolves.

We misunderstand the nature of Principle if we think that *it* could remain, but its individual spiritual expression could disappear into the ocean of oblivion. Nothing Jesus taught supports such a conclusion; he said of those who follow him, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish...and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." If a man could be extinguished even for a moment, Principle would be unexpressed - an impossibility in Science. Man seen in Science as spiritual idea has his inalienable place. $2+2=4$ may be written on a scruffy piece of paper which gets torn to shreds, but still the idea lives on, safe, needed and always present in the principle of arithmetic. Similarly, man cannot be wiped out even for an instant, because he is continuously part and parcel of the omni-action of Principle. "Withdraw God, divine Principle, from man and the universe, and man and the universe would no longer exist. But annihilate matter, and man and the universe would remain the forever fact...and the evidence of the immortality of man and the cosmos is sustained by the intelligent divine Principle, Love" (My. 226:14-20).

In proportion as we occupy thought with these supreme truths, we shall bring them into our experience - that is the scientific promise.

The small frame of reference to which much of human thinking has accustomed itself melts to disclose the higher, deeper, vaster, and far more wonderful spiritual immensity of Truth itself. The illusion of "the straight line from birth to death" yields to the unbroken circle of spiritual being. "The scene shifts into light" (S&H 513:10) - the light of ever-present Life, never tied down to matter or human concepts and always in consonance with Love.

As we ponder these issues in the light of the highest we see at any stage of consciousness, we shall enjoy our present experience more than ever, less fettered by mortal fears and more prepared to take on the challenge of today without procrastination. We shall have a new sense of freedom, certainty, and belovedness, upheld by a firm conviction of spiritual continuity and the deathless omni-action of Being.

In *Miscellaneous Writings* is the question, "If one has died of consumption, and he has no remembrance of that disease or dream, does that disease have any more power over him?" Mrs Eddy's answer is as follows: "Waking from a dream, one learns its *unreality*; then it has no power over one. Waking from the dream of death, proves to him who thought he died that it was a dream, and that he did not die; then he learns that consumption did not kill him. When the belief in the power of disease is destroyed, disease cannot return" (Mis. 58: 4-9).

The world said of Jesus that his "teachings were false, and that all evidence of their correctness was destroyed by his death" (S&H 50:22-24). The world from its own blinkered viewpoint may deride as "sincere but misguided" a Christian Scientist's convictions because of his passing on, while someone from a narrow moral and safely detached vantage-point may inwardly censure him for giving up too easily. But that very individual is saying something like this from his new position: "I'm not dead - I'm going ahead! And Christian Science is just as much an inspiration to me as it ever was. Indeed more so, because I am learning the unreality not only of death but also of disease as a killer. I can see so much more clearly that I was not battling with a disease in *matter*, but with a *belief* in disease, which actually had no destructive ability. Looking back, I can see that if disease hasn't killed me now, it was not killing me then - I was seduced by the carnal mind into supposing that it was. I now feel immensely encouraged to get on with tackling all the other beliefs which seem to enslave us but which have no Principle to support them."

We do not have to die to ponder the implications of all this. We do not have to wait to accept that disease is a dream, but can increasingly assimilate this truth. If something is not going to prove a giant rampant, it is not a giant now, and the realization of this helps to break the dream.

THE CHRISTLY ANSWER TO EUTHANASIA

Whenever the subject of euthanasia comes up, I recall an incident of many years ago. I went to be with a friend who had been labelled "terminally ill." She was asleep, but I sat beside her bed for two hours thinking about infinite Life and Love embracing her. I remember feeling that if we love someone, we often want to show it by giving them a surprise and that this must be true of divine Love in a much deeper way. Next morning her brother told me she had passed on in her sleep and that the doctor had said that she had been saved several weeks of suffering. That incident sowed the seed of a conviction that as we draw nearer to divine Love, we shall be more and more certain that it could not produce, let alone prolong, pain and that we can trust it to care for the situation without the need to resort to drastic material means. We shall not pray that someone should live or die, but rise to a higher and holier recognition of the ever-present truth of Life.