

**Our Father Answers Every Call**  
Charles W. Ferris, C.S.B.  
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In preparing for our meeting today, I thought of a very provocative statement from Unity of Good. Here's what it says: "Jesus accepted the one fact whereby alone the rule of life can be demonstrated,— namely, that there is no death." (Un 55:1)

My first reaction was: I don't want to start with something like that. I want something positive. But Mrs. Eddy does emphasize that this is the one fact by which the rule of life can be demonstrated, namely that there is no death.

What do we mean when we say: there is no death? Doesn't it mean that life is continually expressed in all of its infinite number of ways? For instance, life is expressed in continuing and buoyant health. Life is expressed in continuing joy, continuing love, continuing intelligence, continuing abundance. To human sense, this doesn't seem to be the case. It seems that everything comes to an end. But is this true of genuine good? Jesus didn't think so. He shocked his listeners when he made this bold statement, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." (John 8:51) He'd just been telling the Jews that God was his Father. They rejected this. But when he told them, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death," they felt they had him. They said to him, "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead; and the prophets. And thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead, and the prophets are dead. Whom makest thou thyself?"

Jesus put the responsibility right back on God. He said, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing. It is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say that he is your God. Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad."

This was more than the Jews could take. They said to him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

Jesus used the present tense verb. He didn't say, before Abraham was, I was. He said, before Abraham was, I *am*. He eliminated the element of time. He saw his true being as timeless. Not divided into past, present and future. Jesus identified himself with his true selfhood, the everpresent Christ. He said Abraham saw this eternal Christ identity, also, and rejoiced to see it.

How does all this relate to Clifton House and to the theme, "Our Father Answers Every Call?" It relates in this way: the same eternal Christ identity that Jesus expressed is the identity we're working to realize for ourselves, to realize for a patient at Clifton House, for the workers at Clifton House, for everyone supporting the activity of Clifton House. How do we realize this Christ identity? We call on the Father. We call on divine Mind to give us the spiritual ideas that replace the mortal view.

One mortal view we need to replace is the false belief that our identity depends on a material, temporal body. If we're going to demonstrate health and permanence, don't we need to have a different concept of body than the material view? Paul talks about being absent from the body and present with the Lord. Does this mean we should think of ourselves as not having a body at all? No, Paul referred to being absent from the material *concept* of body. What is the right concept of body? Mrs. Eddy speaks of the higher view of body in the textbook. She says, "Rightly understood, instead of possessing a sentient, material form, man has a sensationless body." (280:25) What is this sensationless body like? It's perfect. It's harmonious. It's eternal. Your body is your consciousness. Consciousness is made up of ideas. So your body is the embodiment of the ideas you think. Here are a few of the ideas that your true body includes: action, form, color, beauty, comfort, usefulness, intelligence, and purpose, to name just a few. What we see as the material body, hints of these ideas or qualities. For instance, what we see as our hand or our foot has a perfect spiritual idea behind it. The so-called human body is a counterfeit, a misconception of the perfect spiritual idea. It's a belief that the body is

matter and flesh. How would Jesus have seen the body? Take the case of the man with the withered hand. Did Jesus see withered flesh? He saw the *belief* in withered flesh. He saw it as a belief that had to be corrected. If there's an error in a mathematical equation, the mathematician sees the error. But he sees it as an error, not the truth, because he knows what is true. Jesus knew what was true about the man's hand. Did Jesus see a perfect human hand? Did he see this as ultimate reality? No. Jesus had to look beyond the human appearance, whether it was favorable or unfavorable. He had to see what was eternally true about the man. Otherwise, he would have been staying at a material level of thought. That level is always inaccurate, regardless of what the material senses are saying. Mrs. Eddy warns us that we cannot stay at the material level of thought. She writes, "It is as necessary for a health illusion, as for an illusion of sickness, to be instructed out of itself into the understanding of what constitutes health." (S&H 297:8)

If Jesus was seeing the spiritual idea of perfection which the hand was counterfeiting, why didn't the material hand disappear? Because the man's belief had to improve further before that could occur. The belief of a withered hand is an abnormal, restricted concept. The belief of a healthy hand comes closer to the spiritual idea behind it. It's what our Leader calls "an improved belief." She explains it this way: "An improved belief is one step out of error, and aids in taking the next step and in understanding the situation in Christian Science." (S&H 296:28) An example of an improved belief would be to expect health to be normal and continuous. This is one step out of the error that health is dependent on material conditions and can deteriorate. As we accept this improved belief, we're able to understand better the spiritual reality behind the improved belief. But whether we're talking about a *healthy* human body or an *unhealthy* human body, we're talking about belief and not fact. To achieve the dominion that Jesus had, we need to go beyond both the health illusion and the illusion of sickness. We need to see the body as it really is.

What are some of the eternal, spiritual facts about body? One fact would be that the true body always expresses power and strength. The human view of power and strength is related to muscles. But muscles as matter are not the real source of strength. Mrs. Eddy makes this plain where she says, "Muscles are not self-acting. If mind does not move them, they are motionless." (S&H 199:8) Here she's speaking of mind with a small "m". In other words, muscles as matter can't do anything unless there's a mentality directing them. Then she presents the spiritual fact regarding power and strength. "Hence, the great fact that Mind, (that is, God), alone enlarges and empowers man through its mandate by reason of its demand for and supply of power."

God commands all the action of the body. God also supplies the power to perform that action. Does this mean we should give up all physical exercise? No, that would be abnormal. The material body, as we see it, is a limited, inaccurate view of the real body. The so-called material body has a spiritual original that it's mis-portraying. The more we can see the spiritual original, the more we're able to throw off beliefs of weakness and limitation. As we do throw off these false beliefs, we don't lose our sense of body. We elevate it. We clarify it. You'll always have a body. God has formed your body as the expression of Himself, the expression of Life and Love and Soul. This body is idea not matter. It's unlimited in its power.

Another spiritual fact about body is that it always expresses usefulness. We see this hinted in the human body in all the things we do that are useful, --writing, speaking, driving, cleaning, building, repairing, reading, walking, even playing. If these useful activities are performed by our present sense of body, think how much more useful the body is when the limited beliefs of matter are eliminated.

One belief about the body is that it includes various organs: lungs, heart, stomach, and so forth. To human sense, these organs are useful for the body to function effectively. However, physical organs are not the true body. They're counterfeits of spiritual ideas. A spiritual idea is not a physical organ. A spiritual idea is not a spiritual organ. An organ implies a limited part of the body. A spiritual idea is not limited. It's

infinite. So a spiritual idea extends its usefulness to the entire range of our identity. Take the heart as an example. The Bible speaks of the heart in many places. It generally identifies it as a mental attitude, not a physical organ. Listen to how the Psalms speak of heart in its higher meaning. They connect heart with praise. "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart." (Ps. 9:1) Heart is connected with courage. "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart." (Ps. 31:24) Heart is connected with joy. "For our heart shall rejoice in Him." (Ps. 33:21) Heart is steadfast. "My heart is fixed, O God. My heart is fixed." (Ps. 57:7) Heart is related to purity. "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." (Ps. 73:1)

Affection, courage, joy, steadfastness, purity —all of these describe the spiritual idea of heart that is counterfeited by the material organ. In its true meaning heart is not a small portion of man. It's an infinite idea. It represents qualities that pervade our entire consciousness. Matter does not produce or support spiritual qualities. But spiritual qualities will free us from limiting, material beliefs about heart or any other organ. The material body, as we see it, including its so-called organs, serves a useful purpose at our present point of understanding. We perpetuate and extend its usefulness by replacing the false material beliefs about it with the spiritual ideas that lie behind the counterfeit appearance.

In addition to expressing usefulness, the body expresses beauty. True beauty is a mental, not a physical, quality. I've always loved Mrs. Eddy's statement, "One marvels that a friend can ever seem less than beautiful." (S&H 248:4) Spiritual qualities outweigh limited material concepts. They show forth the continuing beauty of man. Beauty emanates from God. The textbook affirms this: "Immortal mind feeds the body with supernal freshness and fairness, supplying it with beautiful images of thought and destroying the woes of sense which each day brings to a nearer tomb." (248:8) God's beautiful images of thought will continue to appear as our true body. As they do so, the woes of sense disappear.

Your body is a spiritual idea, expressing God's qualities. This fact gives you dominion over the temporal illusion we call a physical body. As a spiritual idea your body cannot deteriorate. It can't develop unwanted growths. True body represents your distinct identity and individuality. It expresses God in an indispensable way. Your individual expression is infinitely important and necessary. A false, physical concept of body cannot reduce your identity to a temporary, insignificant, fleshly form.

If the body is a perfect, spiritual idea, does that mean we don't have to give attention to the care and healing of our present so-called material body? No, Christian Science is deeply compassionate. Its purpose is to free mankind from all suffering and limitation. It does this by replacing every form of mortal belief with the Truth. Healing in Christian Science brings forth the evidence of divine Life. There is no more important activity than that. We'll continue replacing false beliefs about body until the true body, or embodiment of God's qualities, shines forth exclusively.

What part does God play in applying these spiritual facts regarding the body? Does our Father answer only when we specifically call on him? The Bible tells us we can call on God. It says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble" (Ps 50:15) "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord. Call upon his name." (Ps. 105:1) "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." (Ps. 145:18)

How did Jesus feel about calling on God? Remember what he said at the tomb of Lazarus: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou has sent me?" (John 11:41)

Jesus didn't feel that God would respond only when he called. He said God was hearing him always. For Jesus, God was the very substance of his life. God couldn't stop being God. Therefore, life could not be interrupted. This is what Jesus understood when he raised Lazarus. Mrs. Eddy brings this out where she writes, "Jesus restored Lazarus by the understanding that Lazarus had never died, not by an admission that his body had died and then lived again." (S&H 75:13) Jesus had to look beyond the material evidence to

see Lazarus as the eternal, spiritual idea of God. This is how Jesus had to see Lazarus. But what about the view of *himself*? Could he see himself as a mortal turning to God, eternal Spirit, to somehow improve a mortal condition? No, Jesus had to see himself turning to God as God's beloved idea. Only by seeing himself this way could he see Lazarus or any of the others he healed as spiritual ideas rather than material mortals.

Mrs. Eddy explains this point further where she continues, "Had Jesus believed that Lazarus had lived or died in his body, the Master would have stood on the same plane of belief as those who buried the body, and he could not have resuscitated it." Jesus was not operating from a material plane of belief. He stated plainly: God had sent him. What would God, divine Mind, send? A material mortal? No, a divine idea. This is all that God could impart. Jesus saw himself as God's divine idea. Think of the confidence this gave him in his healing work. Think of the confidence this spiritual identification gives us. We don't want to see ourselves as mortals, trying to think spiritual thoughts. How much better to identify ourselves as the idea of God and able to think from this spiritual standpoint.

What happens to the body when we do identify ourselves as an idea of God and operate from that level? Listen to Mrs. Eddy's answer: "Become conscious for a single moment that Life and intelligence are purely spiritual,— neither in nor of matter,— and the body will then utter no complaints." (S&H 14:12) The body will then utter no complaints. How does this work? How does spiritual thought affect a material body? The answer is: it doesn't affect a material body. The concept that the body is material is a false belief. The body is not material. Even what we regard humanly as the body is not material. It's a mental objectification. When our consciousness is imbued with the divine influence, a number of things happen to correct the false beliefs about the body: fear is removed; false medical theories are set aside; universal beliefs of sickness are neutralized; harmful influences such as envy, self-seeking, pressure or sorrow are eliminated. The false belief disappears and only the fact of spiritual harmony remains.

I'm sure each one of you has experienced holy moments when only God and His idea are real to you. At that point you aren't *seeking* God's help. You've gone beyond that. You've risen above a sense of need. At that moment you feel complete. You feel spiritually at peace. Healing has occurred. But when we don't have that spiritual feeling, when we continue to have a sense of need, we turn to God for help. It isn't to get God to do something He has not already done. Divine Principle is constant. God's creation is complete and infinite and good right now. Our prayer is to spiritualize our thought until we can see this and be at peace.

Mrs. Eddy's has written, "Prayer cannot change the Science of being, but it tends to bring us into harmony with it." (S&H 2:15) Prayer doesn't change God. It doesn't change your real being. It makes you aware of your real being. Then whatever seems to deny the divine nature disappears from lack of witness. We call it healing. But it's really seeing our true eternal nature more clearly.

Christian Science elevates our concept of God so beautifully. It shows that God is not a power that allows His creation to get into trouble and then responds when we seek His help. This is a false theological view. Mrs. Eddy exposes this view. She writes, "Popular theology makes God tributary to man, coming at human call; whereas the reverse is true in Science." (Un 13:3) God doesn't wait for us to call on Him. Actually, God is constantly calling to us to accept His goodness and to express His nature in our thinking and in our living.

Mrs. Eddy wrote a number of letters to branch churches. Many are reprinted in her book, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany*. I didn't find a letter written to Clifton House. But I did find a letter to The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Duluth, Minnesota. It could just as well apply to Clifton House and the theme of our meeting today. She sent this message to the church in Duluth: "Here let His promise be verified: "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (My 186:20)

Clifton House has a mission to fulfill. It's the same mission that you and I have. That's to respond to God's call to each of us to be what He has created us to be. Then we find our needs are already met. But even more, we find the Life that is God and the power to share its eternal, infinite nature in healing for those around us.

Thank you all for responding to our Father's call.