BLINDNESS

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Lesson: John 9:1-11

The plight of the man described in our lesson was, indeed, sad. From his birth, we read, he was unable to see the light of day. Such a physical affliction is incomprehensible to anyone save those who are sightless. Perhaps being born blind is less a catastrophe than for one who has seen once and then lost this sense. Yet the joy experienced by the man miraculously cured by the Lord must have been beyond description.

The account given in John, however, involves more than just a miracle. The disciples began by asking the Lord who had caused the blindness, the man or his parents. It was their understanding that such an affliction was the result of some sin. Such a misconception is as common today as then. How often we find others, or even ourselves, associating calamity in life with trespasses. A revengeful Jehovah punishing the Children of Israel for their misdeeds still lingers in our thoughts when we are struck with misfortune.

The method in which the Lord performed the miracle has puzzled many, too. "He spat on the sound and made clay of the spittle. He anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay and said unto him 'Go wash in the Pool of Siloam'." When the blind man went and did as requested he returned seeing. The Lord could simply have touched the sightless eyes and healed them, but He did not and the meaning of His actions remained secret until the spiritual sense of this passage was made known. We are told "to open the eyes of the blind is to instruct those who are yet in the ignorance of truths, but who, nevertheless, desire them. These are signified by the Gentiles. Similar things are signified by the Lord's healing the blind" (AE 152) "The ground stands for the church where the Word is, the clay stands for the ultimate Divine being formed. To anoint the eyes of the blind with clay means to give thereby the understanding of truth. The Pool of Siloam also signifies the Word in the letter and to be washed therein is to be purified from falsities and evils" (AE 239).

It is important to understand that there are different kinds of blindness in the eye of the understanding. We can have an abundance of knowledges in our memory but fail to see the truth in our understanding because of intervening falsities. However, few would deny that the whole of education both formally and through adult experiences is a gradual opening of the mind to see more clearly—as if passing from total blindness to an increasing brilliance of light in the mind.

A child, for example, is totally blind to concepts that require rational insights. No amount of instruction can provide a ten-year-old with any light on the subject of the laws of Divine Providence, for example. Education, experience and the growing mind combine to open up new worlds.

There are limitations to everyone's mental sight that can *never* be overcome. For example, no *man* will ever know what it is like to view life through feminine eyes. The skilled and talented artist views life quite differently from others. The state of marriage opens eyes to see life in a different light than those in the unmarried state.

The blindness spoken of in our lesson refers to an entirely *different* kind of vision. The Lord was speaking of a new light that comes only from heaven. The Gospels speak of the blindness to this light that everyone is afflicted with from birth, just as the man who was healed was born blind. The Lord beseeches us to recognize that we are still born in a spiritual blindness that only He, God, can cure; and unless we are willing to symbolically follow the dictates of the Lord, given to the sightless man in our lesson, our spiritual blindness can never be cured. When clay, the simple, but genuine teachings of the letter of the Word, is applied to sightless eyes, and an effort toward reformation begun, signified by the cleansing in the Pool of Siloam, then the blinding falsities in one's life can be removed. The result is the miracle of regeneration and with it spiritual sight that surpasses all description. *Amen.*