A LECTURE ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

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Natural Development

The demonstration of Christian Science in the healing of the sick and the reconstruction of human thought on lines of right activity is to-day an accomplished and acknowledged fact. Thinking men and women are asking with growing interest, Why is it that Christian Science has gained its present stage of demonstration and developement during the comparatively short period of fifty-four years? It is evident, in this connection, that if the existing systems of religion and medicine had been adequate to meet the needs and to satisfy the desires of mankind, no other system would ever have been necessary or even possible.

Vanishing Theories

It is recorded in the book of Genesis that at a certain time the people of the world decided that they would perpetuate their material sense or material name by building a tower the top of which would reach unto the heavens. The purpose of the builders was to commemorate and perpetuate the majesty and stability of matter, or the accomplishments of material man.

According to the Scripture narative the building of this tower seemed to proceed harmoniously for a time. Then, owing to the great number of people engaged upon the work, and the great diversity of opinions, plans, and tongues, serious interference and conflict were encountered. So great was this interference that confusion ensued, and finally the builders were compelled to leave off the work of building, and they were scattered to the four quarters of the earth.

Some years ago, when the subject of the safe height to which tall buildings might be erected was being considered by the city of New York, one construction engineer voiced wise council to the effect that the safe height to which a tower or building may be erected will be determined by the dimensions of the base. This is excellent and timely counsel when considering the construction of any tower whether it be a material tower of Babel, a tower or religion, of healing, or of political government. If the base of such a tower rests upon matter, or upon human reason from the testimony of the physical senses, it will be a question of short time only before interference, conflict, and confusion will ensue, and the people compelled to leave off their building. The discovered Leader and Founder of Christian Science has written wisely upon this point on page 436 of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures": "Faith should enlarge its borders and strengthen its base by resting upon Spirit instead of matter." Since the physical senses cannot testify either to accuracy or to enduring permanence, it follows that the reasoning of the human mind which is based upon the uncertain testimony of these physical senses cannot furnish a satisfactory basis on which to build either religious, political, or healing systems. On the other hand, if religion, healing, and government are laid in Mind,—in Principal, Truth or God,—they will then reflect the unlimited and inexhaustible resources of infinite Mind, provided always that this Mind is scientifically understood and demonstrated.

Unreality of Evil

Christian Science has been criticised for its declaration that evil and matter are not real. Religion and material medicine, however, have throughout their respective histories been engaged in trying to overcome the afflictions of the one and to escape the limitations of the other, and thus prove their unreality. If evil and sickness be real, the effort to escape their ravages, either through religion or science, would be futile.

Christian Science declares definitely that evil and disease are not real, that they do not and cannot belong to God's creation, that they are without basis in principle or Truth, hence there is neither truth nor reality in them. Christian Science then immediately proceeds to prove their unreality by destroying them in individual consciousness, or through individual healing.

Existing systems of religion and medicine represent and encourage the belief that evil, disease, discord, and death are real; that they belong to the natural order of things. These same systems, then, try to overcome and destroy the evils thus held to be legitimate, and natural. If these evils are legitimate, natural, and real, why try to destroy them? On the other hand, if these discordant manifestations are not real, normal, and legitimate, be the facts presented by Christian Science in regard to the unreality of matter—evil, sickness, discord, death, and destruction—be approached and measured honestly and justly; and above all, with the desire to be consistent not only in conclusions reached, but in premise as well.

The fact that Christian Science heals the sick and reconstructs human thought is evidence in itself that this Science has appeared in response to the world's need, and is a response likewise to the underlying desires of mankind for the attainment of harmony and good.

Underlying Desire for Good

A fundamental desire for harmony and good exists in the consciousness of every person. This desire may be broad and universal, or it may be narrow and limited. If there be no definite idea, however, of what constitutes good, or no definite idea of how harmony and good may be attained, there will be just as many different methods pursued in the attainment of these desirable and essential qualities, as there are persons engaged in such pursuit. In the majority of instances the methods pursued will be those suggested by the physical senses, or by human reason founded upon the testimony of the physical senses. Since, however, neither the physical senses nor human reason based upon these senses can testify to enduring harmony, it naturally follows that tained. The fact remains, none the they cannot be the cause or channel through which harmony is to be attained. The fact remains, none the less a fact, that there exists in every person a fundamental desire to gain harmony and good.

In the early years of our western land, when there still remained what was known as the prairie country, travelers were at times treated to an unusual and interesting sight. Frequently one might see acres and acres of fertile land from which sprang a luxuriant growth of golden sunflowers. The traveler accustomed to finding "sermons in stones" might have noticed that these sunflowers stood always with their faces toward the sun. In the morning their faces were upraised to the rising sun; then, turning slowly during the day, evening found them with their faces toward the west still facing the sun. It might have been that heavy, black storm clouds hung over the face of the sun, yet the flowers always stood with their faces turned in the direction of the light.

In after years, when the benificent teachings of Christian Science began to unfold the eternal realities of being, these flowers were to me an illustration of how mankind have always stood with their faces turned toward God, whether they have known it or not,—thus evincing an underlying, fundamental desire for harmony and goodness, because of a lack of education or instruction in pure Christianity, the human or mortal mind has accepted its own misconceptions of God, its own misinterpretations of man, and its own misstatements of Spirit or Substance as real. Out of the abysmal depths of this unreality has risen a mist or a thick black cloud of false knowledge.

Thus mankind have found themselves the innocent victims of a misconceived existence, expressing itself in sin, sickness, sorrow, and death. It is the mission and province of Christian Science to clear away and to destroy these misconceptions concerning God, these misinterpretations relating to man, and these misstatements about Substance together with the sin, sickness, sorrow, death, and destruction which follow in the wake of this misconceived existence. It is the further happy mission and province of Christian Science to restore to mankind the true reflection or image and likeness of God, and the true understanding of the nature and character of Causation.

The Herald

In the marvelous revelation to John on the Island of Patmos, recorded so clearly in the Apocalypse, the Christ, Truth, is represented as saying "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." In view of the continued attitude of mankind with their faces toward God, in view of the continual reaching out toward the light of the Christ-truth, it is not surprising that, in the fulfillment of the purpose of infinite Mind, the dawn of that day should break which had appeared to prophets of old as a possibility of the future. It is not surprising nor strange then, that there should be found in the Preface of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" (p. vii), which is the textbook of Christian Science, written by Mary Baker Eddy, the voice of a herald crying: "The time for thinkers has come. Truth, independent of doctrines and time-honored systems, knocks at the portal of humanity. Contentment with the past and the cold conventionality of materialism are crumbling away. Ignorance of God is no longer the stepping-stone to faith. The only guarantee of progress is a right apprehension of Deity, whom to know aright is life eternal." On page 497 of this same textbook the following definition of God appears: "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Good, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love." This definition of God is exact, scientific, Christian and is in accord with the definitions of God found throughout the Scriptures.

Scientific Basis

Since God, as the Scriptures declares, is Spirit, Life, Truth, Love, an important inquiry presents itself: How will that person who is holding in consciousness a humanly personal or corporeal sense of God be able to recognize and avail himself of the power and presence of God, the one Causation, in any and all emergencies and needs? Is it possible for such a person to enjoy the presence and power of God without being able to recognize and identify the nature or character of true Causation, or God? Since, however, a false sense of God must sooner or later be exchanged for a true idea of God in exactly the same manner that the false sense of all things must be exchanged sooner or later for their true sense,—as in the passing away of "the first heaven and the first earth,"—why should not that person who is holding a false concept of God begin immediately here and now to gain a true understanding of the nature or character of Causation, or God? No commandment of God in the decalogue of Moses says, Thou shalt not know; and no commandment in the decalogue of Mind declares, Thou shalt not understand. On the contrary, that first great commandment enunciated by Moses and later emphasized by Jesus declares, specifically: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and surely it is the province of Mind to know. Indeed, it is difficult to see how it would be possible for one to love and to obey God without being able to identify the nature or character of Deity.

It is admitted without any argument that a person who is holding they cannot be the cause or channel in consciousness a false sense of the relation of numbers—a false sense that two and two make five—will immediately run into difficulty and discord as a result of such false sense. It is also recognized that this discord and distress will continue just so long as the false sense remained with the individual. The only way that such a person can effectually escape the discords in question would be by gaining a true understanding of the relation of numbers, or from the science of numbers. It is not, however, so readily recognized nor admitted outside of Christian Science, that a person who is holding a false sense of God, that is, a false sense of Causation, will likewise run immediately into discords—will run into sin, sickness, death—as the result of such false beliefs, being erroneous, can Neither is it recognized outside of Christian Science that these discordant conditions will continue just so long as a false sense of God is held in consciousness. It must be recognized, however, that both of these false beliefs, being erroneous, can lead only in the direction of discord and distress. False beliefs, or false concepts, relating to God, will necessarily lead into untold misery, since the idea of God which is held in consciousness, being fundamental in its nature, enters into and must necessarily affect and determine every activity of the individual.

Restorative Definitions

Christian Science, in this connection, unfolds certain fundamental and primary ideas. One such primary idea is this: Mankind is conscious at least of existence. This consciousness of existence indicates and implies Mind. In fact, without Mind, there could be no consciousness, hence no consciousness of existence. When speaking of Mind in Christian Science let it be understood that it is not the limited, human sense of mind which is referred to, nor the sense of mind which is supposed to be synonymous with the human brain and supposed to be located within the human skull, but is that Mind which is infinite in its nature and character, infinite in its being, resource, capacity, wisdom, power, identity. This Mind, then, without which, as we have seen, there can be no consciousness of existence and hence no existence, must be the creator of all that exists,—this Mind must be that which we mean, or ought to mean, when we think of or say, "God." In fact, it would be impossible to concede of God except as all-wise or as infinite Mind. As it likewise would be impossible to think of any place where Mind is not, it follows naturally and inevitably that God, who is infinite Mind, is incorporeal, everywhere present, and intelligently active as Mind. Here we come to the point where Moses stood at the burning bush; and the voice of enlightened consciousness, as the voice of Mind or God, declares to-day as it declared to Moses of old, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

In this realization of the nature and character of God, one becomes conscious of a peace which the world, or which a material sense of God, can never give. When one thus has understood in Christian Science the omnipresence of God as infinite Mind, he will not again, at least in the same degree as he may have done in the past, suffer through discouragement, depression, or fear that he may possibly be separated from God.

Graven and Mental Images

In considering the nature or character of God, one may view with commiseration the worshiper of idols who bows down to a graven stone image, and say to such a worshiper: My friend, do you know that it is wrong for you to bow down to a stone image? Do you not know that such conduct is blasphemous and unworthy? Suppose the worshiper of idols should say in reply: My brother, what can tell me causes me to fear that I may not be worshiping aright. I will no longer worship this graven stone image, but will worship your God. Tell me what your God is, and where He is to be found, in order that I may worship your God. Suppose he is told in reply that God is in Heaven; that heaven is a place afar-off, and that after a period of transition called death he may be permitted to enter heaven and there see and know Spirit, God. Might not the worshiper of idols be justified, or at least, might he not be pardoned if he then says, My brother, it seems to me that your God is only the same as my god, except that yours is afar-off where He cannot be seen; that while I am worshiping my graven stone image here, you are holding in thought and worshiping a mental image of your God who is in a far-off heaven. And besides all this, you have shown me in your good Book the place where it is written: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." From this, does it not seem, my brother, that the mental image or likeness of God which you hold in consciousness and to which you pray must be just as erroneous as the graven stone image which I worship, and to which I pray? This man has not received anything that will unfold to him the nature or character of true Causation or God. He is still a worshiper of idols.

God, Good

Now, suppose, as indicating the nature or character of God, you were to say to this worshiper of idols, My friend, do you remember the day you were roaming among the hills and found a stricken deer? You were about to end its existence merely to gratify an impulse to destroy, when something in the circumstance caused you to withold your hand, and instead you bound up its wounds in such a manner that it was able to go away in the hills. You proceed to tell him that which caused him to withhold his hand and to bind up the wounds of the deer was mercy, tenderness, compassion. These you explain to him, are qualities of Love. And you tell him that God is Love, and that Love is God.

Again you recall to his memory

(Continued on Page Six)

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