

A Lecture on Christian Science

Delivered in I. O. O. F. hall Sunday afternoon by Bliss Knapp, Member of the Board of Lectureship of the Mother Church, Boston

A lecture on Christian Science was delivered to a large and appreciative audience, at the Odd Fellows Hall, by Bliss Knapp, C. S. B. Member of the Board of Lectureship of the Mother Church, The First Church of Christ Scientists in Boston, Mass.

The lecturer was introduced by Prof. Thos. H. Gentle, of the Oregon Normal School, who said in part:

"Truth and error have ever been the two great objects of human interest; the one to be discovered and preserved, the other detected and cast out. From time immemorial man has struggled to know the truth and thereby secure his freedom

"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

"History abounds with the records of the great who from time to time have torn the veil of mist from before man's gaze, and thereby opened up new vistas of hope, of aspiration and opportunity. The roll of these world seers is well nigh endless: Confucius, Moses, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Spencer, Darwin, Haeckel, Washington, Lincoln, Anthony, Eddy, Willard, and toppling far and above this galaxy—the man of Galilee—Jesus.

"Gradually, but certainly, out of the narrow and painful views of life, man is emerging into the full and rounded visions of the perfect day. Round by round he is climbing the ladder which shall finally land him on the heights from which he can correctly survey his kind in all its seemingly varied implications.

"All hail the day when mankind, regardless of color, station, birth, nationality or sex shall find itself in possession of that knowledge which heals and inspires, which gives comfort of body and peace of soul. A crown of glory for those who having seen the light have in turn transmitted its radiant effulgence unto even the least of us.

"Friends, today we are met together to drink afresh at new fountains of inspirations, and to sit in the attitude of learners at the feet of the renowned leader of the Christian Science movement—Mrs. Eddy. It is a great privilege and we deem ourselves most fortunate. Our guest and speaker of the hour is Mr. Bliss Knapp, of Brookline, Mass.

"Sir, we assure you our heartiest good will. You honor us greatly. We shall listen attentively to your words of wisdom."

Mr. Knapp's lecture in full follows:

During many centuries men have grown accustomed to think of religion as a haven of rest to those in sorrow and temptation, but while religion ministers to the mind, it regards the deceased body in helpless compassion. Such helplessness contrasts strongly with the religion of Jesus Christ, who made no distinction between mind and body. He asked, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" He set the standard of religious achievement by healing sickness and sin in the same prayer. It is the purpose of Christian Science to increase the joy of life by restoring to the infinite compassion of Jesus' teachings, the lost element of healing.

The invalid is not frightened at his disease. It is the possible termination of that disease that frightens him. Then his frightened sense finds sweet consolation in the Master's teaching, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." There

followed, too, the explanation, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Two things are therefore needful to save one's life. It is to know God, and also His Son, Jesus Christ. Some believe that Jesus was God and that belief excludes the God and father to whom Jesus, himself prayed. The condition of thought that sets aside Christian healing may not be so much a lack of faith as a complete omission from prayer of any recognition of the God and father to whom Jesus prayed.

Jesus not God

It was the day of the resurrection early in the morning, that Jesus appeared to Mary and sent her with a message, saying, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father and unto my God and your God." Now if Jesus were God, as so many believe, and there is one God, how could God have brethren? But, inasmuch as he recognized himself to be, not God, but the son of God, he could have brethren and could truthfully say, "Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father and unto my God and unto your God." When Jesus was before the tomb of Lazarus, it is recorded that he "lifted up his eyes, and said, Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always." He certainly was not praying to himself on that occasion. Previously he had said to the woman of Samaria at the well, "God is Spirit." When, therefore, the disciples gathered around to examine the spear wound and the nail prints he took occasion to remind them that "Spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." From that the disciples knew that the human form of Jesus was not God. Indeed, to worship a fleshly form would be in conflict with the second commandment of the Decalogue, which forbids the worship of any graven image. Jesus recognized, moreover, that the power he employed was not of himself for he said, I can, of mine own self do nothing: . . . because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Again he said, referring to himself, "The son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."

God's Healing Nature

In the face of so much popular misconception about what God really is, Jesus found it exceedingly difficult to get the people to accept the truth about him. It was necessary to avoid, in so far as possible, any statement about God that would be open to doubt or controversy. He endeavored therefore to portray a right apprehension of God by making the people familiar with the effect of divine power on humanity. The popular belief prevailed then as now, that God sends sickness to discipline mortals and bring them to God. But when Jesus portrayed the nature of God as He actually is, it had the effect of healing the sick in every case and thereby proved, in a manner that admitted of no doubt or controversy, that sickness is no part of God's nature. Another popular belief adhered to then as now was that God knows, or at least permits, sin. That, too, was disposed of by showing the effect divine power had in cleansing sinners even as light always dispels darkness. Moreover people believed then as now that God takes away our loved ones for some inscrutable purpose: and this belief has undoubtedly thrust more people into infidelity and agnosticism than have ever been rescued therefrom. But when Jesus de-

clared the truth about God as He actually is, it destroyed death and the grave, and thereby proved the nature of God to be Life. "For I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

People could see physical changes wrought by Jesus readily and in a manner that admitted of no doubt. But a natural question to follow is this,—Could it be taught to others? It is said that no one really understands a thing for himself, until he can teach it to another. That Jesus made disciples who could repeat his healing ministry was the proof that the healing power could be taught to others and that he understood it. Indeed the early Christians proved the same thing by continuing these works of healing for 300 years after the time of Jesus. Even so the Christian Scientist is today perpetuating that healing ministry just to the degree that he gains a correct understanding of Him "whom to know to know aright is life eternal,"—an understanding of the God and Father to whom Jesus prayed.

Healing Law

The first man in Bible history to know God well enough to heal sickness and sin was Moses, and it came about by his recognition that the divine power operates through law. Before that he knew God only as the great "I am," but that was not sufficient to win confidence in himself as the messenger of God. The necessity for him to speak the truth about God so convincingly that the people would actually believe what he said, was the occasion for God to reveal His healing nature by two distinct signs. The first was with the rod by which was proved the divine supremacy over personified evil. The second was the healing of leprosy. Perhaps those two were selected because none but the power of God has ever been known to destroy leprosy and sin. But that exhibition of divine power over sickness and sin revealed to Moses the existence of a well defined law of healing which enabled him, thereafter, to employ the divine power, guided by the intelligence of a well defined law, in healing leprosy and serpent bites. It revealed to him the existence of certain facts concerning the healing nature of God in which no variation has ever been perceived. It marked the existence of an unchanging law of healing with which human beings had been hitherto unacquainted. It revealed something so definite and tangible about the nature of God that the people believed him just as God said they would.

God Is Truth

Now that which Moses saw in the healing power of God was the Truth; whereupon he declared, "Thou art a God of truth." David later declared in the psalms, "Thy law is the truth." And Jesus indicated the intimate relation that exists between Truth and the healing law, when he said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That is, a knowledge of God, not as a human form, but as Truth has a healing effect. Mrs. Eddy has therefore accepted that scriptural definition that God is Truth, and also its intimate relation to law; for she has written in Science and Health, "Not personal intercommunion but divine law is the communicator of truth, health, and harmony to earth and humanity."

It is true that every system of religion known to men claims to be the promulgation of revealed truth;

but that which differentiates the demonstrable revelation of Jesus Christ from all others is its power to give life and to restore health. It is the life-giving power in Christian truth which makes it demonstrable in healing sickness and sin. One school of philosophers has propounded the theory that truth is two-fold; that there is one truth called reason, and another truth called revelation, but that revelation has no law and is lacking in a reasonable explanation. The result is agnosticism. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches there is but one Truth and this Truth is God. It teaches moreover that divine Truth is expressed through law which may be understood and demonstrated in Christian healing. This teaching reconciles reason and revelation in the oneness of Truth.

True Worship

Some may feel they have lost their God in thinking of Him as Truth; but Jesus declared in all earnestness that "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." That may be clarified by another of Jesus' sayings: "None is good save one, that is God." Now the spirit of law of infinite good is goodness, and the true worshippers can worship infinite good only through goodness. For example: No one goes directly to the basic meaning of mathematics. He must go by way of its rules or laws. The simple law that two and two are four mediates between the basic meaning of mathematics and the prospective student. Even so no one can go directly to infinite good. He must go by way of goodness, which is the law or attribute of infinite good. That is, he must worship infinite good in the understanding of goodness. Mrs. Eddy has said in Science and Health, "A pure affection takes form in goodness." Then as one entertains an affection for others that is pure and constant, it takes form in goodness, which is an attribute of God. In this simple process he comprehends the law of goodness, and in the understanding of it he reaches to the actual recognition of infinite good. In the same spiritual understanding of divine law shall one worship the God and Father who is Spirit and Truth.

God Is Principle

As the nature of God continued to unfold before the vision of St. John, it was revealed to him that "God is love." Paul described the intimate relation that exists between Love and Truth when he said, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Other scriptural names used to define the nature of God are Soul and Mind. Christian Science accepts all those descriptive definitions of deity and adds one more. Since there is a divine law to express the healing, it is reasonable to suppose it must have a Principle. That is, the nature of God must include Principle as a descriptive definition. But far from expressing any of the coldness of an inanimate law, the divine Principle comprehends all intelligence, gentleness, peace and power to heal and save mankind through law.

If one were to stand at the base of the great pyramid and gaze in wonder at its vast dimensions, he could not see its whole structure from that single viewpoint. He must see it from the north and the south, the east and the west. He must explore its passages and chambers within. Not until he had seen it from every angle, and learned the meaning of its structure and design, could it be said that he had actually seen the pyramid. In like manner the various scriptural names which are em-

ployed to define the nature of God are all essential to a complete understanding of Him.

True Intelligence

The Christian Scientist becomes familiar with God's ways in a most practical manner. Jesus referred to God as "my God and your God." He is therefore my Mind and your Mind. The practical operation of that was proved to me when I was a student in the elementary schools. For a month I was troubled with a difficulty that may be described in the words of Paul, "The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." With me it was a difficulty in answering my school problems correctly. Though I might know the correct answer, I would invariably say the wrong thing. Instead of excusing that on the basis of stupidity, Paul saw in such conditions the warring of the fleshy mind, and so did my parents who were Christian Scientists. My mother proceeded to heal me of that difficulty according to the teachings of Christian Science. With wonderful patience she explained to me, in language I could easily understand, the reason why children go to school. It is not so much to assimilate a large mass of facts as it is to develop certain faculties; such for example as perception, reason, memory and application. Then she explained to me that they are faculties of the divine Mind, and as such must be reflected through all alike. It concedes the right to every one to achieve the mental might of a genius. Inasmuch as God is my Mind and my intelligence, it was my right and duty to claim and exercise that intelligence which knows all that is necessary to know. So clear was my relation to divine intelligence established, that I ceased to limit my mental capacity by the size of a brain. Its scope was broadened to that larger view of divine intelligence which transcends brain. The explanation was continued until I could realize to a degree my true relation to God who is the only Mind and intelligence. When I could realize this, it became a reality to me, with the result that I was completely healed of the difficulty. The truth about God, and my relation to Him had set me free. Therein is the proof that no human intelligence has any validity if contrary to the divine faculties; and such of the human faculties as are valid, must derive their validity from the divine.

Mind Of Christ

We have no record in the four gospels that Jesus ever permitted himself to be deceived or taken advantage of in any way. Had he been victimized, it would have been by reason of a lack of intelligence. But he claimed and exercised the divine intelligence that knows all that is necessary to know, and thereby set the standard for all mankind. It was the mind which was in Christ Jesus that enabled him to heal the sick, even when they were absent from him, as in the cases of the centurion's servant and the Syro-phenician's daughter. It was the Mind which was in Christ Jesus that enabled him to heal leprosy and raise the dead, even to the raising of himself from the tomb. It was this Mind which constituted his divinity, and enabled him to say, "I and my Father are one," and also the correlative statement, "My Father is greater than I." It was the divine Mind which was in Christ Jesus that enabled him to say, "Before Abraham was, I am," and, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We are more over enjoined by the scriptures to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The Comforter

Before Jesus went away he promised us another Comforter. That no misconception might arise, he took the precaution to explain the nature of this promised Comforter. It should not be a man, nor a person, but rather the impersonal "Spirit of truth." He explained further that the "Spirit of truth" would lead mankind into all truth, even to