

HEAR LECTURE ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

BY GAVIN W. ALLAN, C. S. B.

Many Hear Interesting Lecture at First Church of Christ, Scientist, Monday Evening

Whenever the name Christian Science is mentioned to-day, even to those who know but little about it, thought is turned immediately and naturally to the subject of healing, because "Christian Science" and "healing" have come to be intimately associated in the minds of many. Just as the name of Lincoln and the idea or thought of emancipation have come to be inseparable in the minds of most people, so among an ever growing multitude the terms of Christian Science and healing have become inseparably associated.

Indeed, between the great work of Lincoln and the life-work of Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, there is more than an accidental relationship. Little more than three years after Lincoln had issued the Proclamation of Emancipation, Mary Baker Eddy discovered what has proved to be the Science of Christianity, a Science which is destined to free humanity everywhere from the mental bonds with which mankind has seemed to be encompassed. Regarding this discovery, Mrs. Eddy has written in the Christian Science textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" (p. 226): "The voice of God in behalf of the African slave was still echoing in our land, when the voice of the herald of this new crusade sounded the keynote of universal freedom, asking a fuller acknowledgment of the rights of man as a Son of God, demanding that the fetters of sin, sickness, and death be stricken from the human mind and that its freedom be won, not through human warfare, but with bayonet and blood, but through Christ's divine Science."

Let us consider for a moment some instances of healing, as these are recorded in the early chapters of the Bible. In Genesis 20:17, we read that "Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech;" also in I Kings 13:6, "And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before." These instances of healing in ancient days awaken at least two queries. Briefly stated, they are: What is God? and, What is prayer? Or, if we expanded them somewhat, they might be stated thus: Is God both able and willing to help any one at any time? If so, how may His aid be secured or assured? Is prayer merely our asking or imploring God to do something for us, or does it imply some understanding of the part which God is ever on our side, ever desires our good—some understanding on our part of God's nature,—and an openness or readiness on our part to accept His blessings? Permit me to postpone, for a few moments, the answer to these questions. We shall return to this subject later.

Growing Concept of God
Throughout the Bible there runs as a golden thread the history of men's growing concept of God. You will remember that God was regarded by men of olden time as a being of human form, and having a local habitation: that He was spoken of as a "man of war;" as one who was changeable, repenting of what He had done; as one who could be deterred from His purpose; as a being who could love and hate with apparently equal ease and naturalness. Later, He was thought of as omnipresent; as invisible; as our shepherd; our preserver; our Father, and on up to Christ Jesus' revelation of God as Love. In this respect the Bible is the most human of books. It appeals to us just where we are, for each one of us has been in one or more of the positions indicated along that upward-tending line. Have not we ourselves sometimes thought of God as a being of human form and of human nature, with its injustices and hates? I repeat, the Bible appeals to us just where we are, and, if we are willing to follow, leads us gently on and up to the revelation and demonstration of God as Love.

Old Testament Miracles
During these Old Testament times, when the popular concepts of God seem to us to have been somewhat grotesque, and when the most enlightened of the people seem to have believed God to be capable of both good and evil, there were instances here and there in which the power of God was proved in the protection and preservation of man.

Passing over the wonders wrought in Egypt, the wilderness and Canaan, by Moses, Aaron and Joshua, we have a record of a number of what have been called miracles by Elijah, for example, the staying of the cruise of oil, and meal, and the raising of the widow's son at Zarephath; also miracles by Elisha, the increase of the widow's oil, the raising of the Shunammite's son, and the cure of Naaman's leprosy.

These works were wrought through great faith in God. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, reviewing these wonders of olden times, wrote: "Time would fail me to tell . . . of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, sought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

I think it can be said in all justice and fairness that these works were wrought through faith rather than understanding; through the prophet's faith in his power as a representative of Jehovah, rather than through an understanding of the nature and all-wise of God as unchangeable, divine Love. The fact that their powers were used, on some occasions, to curse as well as to bless seems to indicate that the basis of these works was not scientific, in the strictest sense of that term.

Let us not, however, regard lightly the achievements of these demonstrators of God's power of olden times; rather should we, because of the general lack of enlightenment then existing, esteem them the more highly, and be encouraged the more to emulate their works, seeing we have the assistance of not only a moral and intellectual advancement or enlightenment so generally accepted as belonging to this age, but, what is much more, the life and teachings of Christ Jesus, and Mrs. Eddy's wonderful discovery of the Science of being.

Perfect Healing
But there is Science of healing. This was definitely and adequately proved through the life and works of our Master, Christ Jesus. He did not claim that the power belonged to himself; he said, "The Father . . . doeth the works." They were wrought by an understanding of divine Principle. Sickness was healed; sin was destroyed; death was overcome through his understanding of the omnipresence and omnipotence of God. This Science of healing is predicated upon a beneficent, ever available omnipotence.

Let us look for a moment at some examples of perfect healing. It is recorded in Luke 4:38, 39, that Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought Jesus for her. "And," the record states, "he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her; and immediately she arose and ministered unto them."

Another example of perfect healing is seen in Jesus' treatment of sin, as recorded in John 8:3-11. The story is, no doubt, familiar to every one here. The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman taken in adultery. Do you think they brought her to Jesus in order that she might be healed? Did they even expect that he would vindicate their stoning her? Never! They sought only to lead Jesus into a trap in order that they might have a charge against him. What did Jesus do? The record states that "Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard not." But they continued asking, and, in reply to their insisting upon an answer, he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground." And the woman's accusers, being convicted by their own consciences, stole quietly away one by one. When Jesus saw that none of her accusers had followed up their condemnation by stoning her, he delivered that unutterably compassionate and healing judgment, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." Was this mere pardon? Was this simply cleaning the slate, as it were, of past errors that the offender might be free to continue as before? No, it was, "Sin no more." Could you have had a woman returning to her former life of sin? Never! She was healed.

A further example of perfect healing, in this instance the overcoming of death, is set forth in John 11:38-44. We read that Lazarus had died. His sisters sent for Jesus, who came four days later. On his arrival he tested to some extent the faith of those who had gathered about the tomb, by his command to roll away the stone. When they had done this, then is recorded Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me;" his prayer of affirmation, "I knew that thou hearest me always;" and, following that (remembering that he himself told us, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"), may we not call it his prayer of expectation? "Lazarus, come forth." And, Lazarus having come forth, "And, Lazarus having Jesus commanded them to "loose him, and let him go." I wonder how many felt that the only loosing necessary was the undoing of his cloth bands. I wonder if any there felt the need for the loosing of mental bands. Jesus' work in this respect had been done, and I like to think he called upon each one present to "loose him,"—separate him from the false mental pictures they had entertained of him during the past few days.

In all of these instances I have cited it is readily seen that the mission of Christ is to relieve and release the victim of sin or sickness, never to condemn him; that this is accomplished by condemning the error and not the man; and that Jesus knew enough of error's nothingness to condemn it as nothing and not as something.

The method of healing here illustrated did not hinge solely to Jesus, neither was it confined within or limited to his age, his locality, or his person. He taught it to others. He gathered around him at least two groups of students,—the twelve and the seventy. He taught them; he commanded them to heal; he sent them out with specific instructions to heal the sick, and on their return commended their healing work. Nor were such healing works confined to his immediate disciples, or to their pupils; for history records that the healing of the sick was a familiar and recognized activity of the Christian church throughout the first three centuries of its existence, and the New Testament records the raising of the dead by those who had not been under Jesus' personal instruction. This ministry of healing, however, as an activity of the early church, noticeably declined during the third century and was lost, and for over sixteen centuries there existed little tangible evidence that any such Science of healing had ever been taught and demonstrated on this planet.

Discovery
But the human need was great, and the longing for freedom proportionately great. Necessity, which has ever driven the human race to seek and to find relief from its limitations, was at work and succeeded in this as in many other branches of endeavor.

Let us trace its steps. Many a time has it occurred that a news item in a city paper, concerning one of the residents of the city, has passed unnoticed or unremembered. But seldom, indeed, does it occur that such a notice is more widely known, and the possibilities with which it was fraught more clearly seen, a half century later. Yet that is just what has taken place concerning an item which appeared fifty-nine years ago. The Reporter, a newspaper of Lynn, Massachusetts, of Saturday, February 3, 1866, contained a news item concern-

ing Mrs. Eddy which stated: that she fell upon the icy street on the evening of Thursday, February 1, and was severely injured; that the doctor who was called found her injuries to be internal and of a severe nature, and that she was removed to her home the following day, though in a very critical condition. After the doctor's departure on Friday she refused to take his medicine and, as she later expressed it, lifted her heart to God. It was natural that a woman who had been, from her very childhood, deeply religious should in her extremity turn to God. "In childhood," she tells us in Science and Health (p. 359), "she often listened with joy to these words, falling from the lips of her saintly mother, 'God is able to raise you up from sickness;' and she pondered the meaning of that Scripture she so often quotes: 'And these signs shall follow them that believe; . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.'"

On the Sunday following she called for her Bible and began reading the account of the healing, by Jesus, of the palsied man, and as she read a great spiritual experience was hers, the realization then and there of the power of God. In that moment all pain vanished. She rose from her bed, dressed, and walked into the parlor where her clergyman and a few friends were sitting,—friends who had withdrawn but a few moments before from what they supposed was her death chamber. In that moment Mrs. Eddy did more than experience a cure; she received a revelation for she had been fitting herself all her life. But to be healed herself was not enough. She must know the Science of this healing in order that others might be healed. For three years, Mrs. Eddy says, she "sought the solution of this problem of Mind-healing, searched the Scriptures and read little else, kept aloof from society, and devoted time and energies to discovering a positive rule" (Science and Health, p. 109). She discovered the longest Science of healing, and submitted it to the very broadest practical tests in the healing of disease, every kind for nine years before writing the Christian Science textbook.

What is this Science of healing? Upon what is it based? Our Master said of his demonstration of this Science: "I can of mine own self do nothing;" "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." It then, God is the basis, foundation, Principle, of this Science of healing, it is important, it is essential to an understanding of the subject, that we learn the nature and character of God. No one had revealed God as fully as did our Master, Christ Jesus. He frequently spoke of what God knows, for example, "God knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him;" "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Our Master taught that God knows,—knows each of His children intimately. God must, therefore, be Mind, divine Mind, omnipresent, divine Mind, who knows all that is true about Himself and each of His children.

Jesus defined God as Spirit, and the Psalmist, praising God for His all-seeing providence, sang: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." Now, if these definitions are true, that God is Mind, Spirit, omnipresent, that is, everywhere present at all times, then God never has been, is not now, and never will be located in, or confined to, some particular spot, whether that be a temple on earth or a throne in the clouds; neither could He ever have been, nor is He now of human or any other finite form, that is, cannot be corporated, we commonly understand and use, that term.

Jesus further defined God as good; good, without any least trace of, or any consciousness of evil; "of purer eyes than to behold evil."

There is another word or name which has helped many of us toward a better understanding of God, and for this term we have to thank the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science. Because God is the only Cause, the only creator, everywhere present and everywhere available, Mrs. Eddy has given us the word Principle, or divine Principle, as a synonym for God, a term which indicates both the nearness and greatness of God, and which has helped us to understand the availability of God to meet our needs.

But there is yet a name which defines God to us more fully and endearingly than all the rest; the name used in the epistle of the beloved disciple when he said, "God is love." Is not our God infinitely tender as well as mighty, merciful as well as just, loving as well as intelligent? Does He not cherish, nourish, and protect, as well as create, His divine idea, man? He therefore possesses those qualities we usually think of as feminine, as well as those we call masculine, so that we may rightly regard Him as expressing Motherhood as well as Fatherhood, and consistently say, as we have learned in Christian Science, "Our Father—Mother God." Does not our highest concept of parenthood include an unchanging affection, and exclude the possibility of dispersive suffering and distress? We shall therefore be mentally hospitable to the following definition from the Christian Science textbook (p. 140): "The Christian Science God is universal, eternal, divine Love, which changeth not and causeth no evil, disease, nor death."

Keeping clearly in mind these descriptions or definitions of God, let us turn our attention to the first account of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis. There may be some here who do not know that there are two separate and dissimilar accounts of creation in the opening chapters of the Bible. If so, when you go home will you look over the first two chapters of Genesis? In the light of what you hear tonight they will make interesting reading. In the first, or spiritual account, you will find that God was the creator, man was made in God's image, and all that God made was "very good." In the second account you will find that Jehovah, or the Lord God, was the creator, man was made from dust, and woman from a rib, and the creation was not highly satisfactory. Please do not think that I am referring to any new or uncommon version of the Bible. Not at all.

I am referring to the Bible I used in the Presbyterian church, the Bible you are using in the Methodist, or the Congregational, the Baptist or Anglican churches. Christian Scientists use the very same Bible, that is, the Authorized, or King James Version.

In the first account of creation you will notice that everything God made was good, like Himself. You will notice that the tenth, twelfth, eighteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-fifth verses of the first chapter close with these words, "And God saw that it was good," and the thirty-first verse sums it all up thus, "And God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good." And this good creation included man made in God's image and likeness.

Now, it is a fact well-known to every one of us that we have not always thought of man as here described,—the perfect image and likeness of God. But, before going further with our definition of man, let me relate an incident which may be illuminating. This incident occurred in our Sunday School. The subject of the lesson that day was "Man," and the teacher, singling out two of her scholars, said: "Suppose you two boys were sitting on the east side of a large lake watching sunset. I should like the first boy to describe the sunset, describing what he sees, and only what he sees. The second boy, we will suppose, is a student. We shall ask him to describe the sunset, not from the standpoint of what he sees alone, but from the standpoint of what he knows actually takes place. Then the first boy describing what appeared to occur, said: 'A small white ball went west in the sky, and as it got nearer the earth it got bigger and redder, and sank slowly into the lake.' The second boy, the one who was supposed to know what had actually taken place, said: 'The sun isn't a small ball, it is a million times bigger than the earth. It didn't go west; it didn't get nearer the earth; it didn't sink into the lake, for it is millions of miles away from the earth.'"

You will notice that the second boy's description was largely made up of "didn't's." He was denying or destroying the false assertions that had been made to the class by the first pupil. Had these false assertions not been made it is quite probable that his description would have been more positive.

"Now," said the teacher, "I should like the same two boys to describe man, and in just the same way." The first boy, dealing wholly with appearances, said: "Man is a two-legged animal that wears clothes." The second said: "Man is not just a body; man thinks, he expresses intelligence, wisdom." (Continued on page 3)

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