

FREE LECTURE ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

By Richard J. Davis

Looking back over centuries of religious belief, emerging gradually but continuously out of age-old superstitions, nature worship, mythology, and heathenism, we perceive an ever-present effort on the part of mankind to reach out for a more spiritual and satisfying concept of Deity. Strange and false beliefs, it is true, men have for long periods adopted and followed, but ever in what seems to be an ascending scale these have been dropped for others, perhaps just a little better or a bit more logical. Would it not seem, therefore, that there is inherent in man a divine impulse to seek his God, and that he will not cease until he finds Him?

It is clear that what we term education and progress is wholly a process of enlightenment. All that means advancement in the world to-day for the race has come about as the result of thinking—progressive thought and revelation of ideas. Our Puritan forefathers were limited in thought to candles for light and to crude fireplaces for heat. They did not know enough to have better, but intelligence gave to men a progressive unfolding of oil, gas, and finally electric light, and there has been equally advancing invention in the realm of heating. This all came about through an illumined sense primarily, and solely because the very nature of mind is to reveal itself. These things happening in the realm of human thought seem to be leading the race step by step out of the crude and primitive, into the atmosphere of pure spiritual revelation.

The same advancing progress may be observed in what we call religion—man's unfolding concept of God. Indeed it may be said that the law of progress is divine and that man is under that eternal law of continuous unfolding. The poet Whittier has beautifully expressed this idea in the lines,

Step by step, since time began,
We see the steady gain of man.

Is Religion Scientific?

To-day we find the whole world stirred by what is termed the conflict between religion and science. But is there a conflict? For years critics have contested our use of the word Science as applied to religion. Theologians have declared that religion cannot be a science, and scientists have maintained that science cannot be a religion. Let us see. What is the definition of science in the ordinary accepted use of that word? "Knowledge; knowledge of principles or facts; accepted knowledge which has been systematized and formulated with reference to the discovery of general truths or the operation of general laws." If it be not formulated and systematized with reference to general truths and the operation of law, without certainty, yes, without truth?

We declare, therefore, that Christian Science is scientific because it is the knowledge of the divine Principle and facts of being (and I use this word fact advisedly); that it is science or systematized knowledge of all Truth, based upon the divine laws of being. Moreover, we declare that in order to be a science at all, it must be demonstrable and provable. Not everything, therefore, in the realm of theory, speculation, belief, or experiment, even though it be called science, can lawfully be entitled to the term.

What then, think you, should a religion be, in this day of reason, in order to claim the attention and respect of thinking men and women? First, I believe you will say, it must be scientific—based upon actual fact or truth. That is, its concept of God must be reasonable, rational, and logical. Second, it must be practical. To be of any use, it must offer a sensible and actual solution of the everyday problems of human beings. In other words, it must be a common sense religion. It should be able to prove its truth and availability in actual practice.

In order to be sure, to be absolutely convinced, no one should accept statements regarding a religion that will not stand the test of reason, that cannot be proved and found wholly satisfactory. Fundamentally, neither I nor any one else can tell you what to believe about God. I may present for your consideration certain premises regarding Deity, but you alone can and should determine for yourself their truth and whether you care to accept them. Indeed, I am not engaged in the business of converting you to the teachings of Christian Science. If there is any conversion to be done, you will do it yourself, because the facts regarding Christian Science appeal to you as altogether logical and reasonable. In that way you will accept Christian Science not because you believe it, but because you understand it, which is a vastly different point of view.

Interpretation of the Scriptures
It is not difficult to understand the present-day tendency to criticize the Bible, and indeed to disprove all or much that it declares. I can appreciate and sympathize with the attitude that many people hold to-day regarding the Scriptures. They are puzzled and perplexed at what seem to them contradictory and unreasonable statements and situations. Many are assiduously engaged in trying to disprove the divinity of Christ and the miracles of the Old and New Testaments. But because the so-called miracle does not conform to the human sense of things it is to be wholly ignored and set aside? Why, it may be asked, all this effort to disprove the reality and operation of spiritual power?

Viewed from a material angle, the Bible may indeed seem to be unreasonable and contradictory, but it is clear to be seen that the approach to God and a satisfactory interpretation of Scripture can only be made through spiritual reasoning. If all the words and happenings of the Bible are to be interpreted materially,

no reasonable explanation will be found. Paul expressed it exactly when he said, "The natural [the ordinary mortal] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Christian Scientists "take the inspired Word of the Bible" as their guide (Science and Health, p. 497), but they will tell you that it did not become inspired until they gained an inspired and demonstrable concept of God. Then the Bible came to them an open book. I might say to you that the Bible teaches that God is the sole creator. I believe this to be a true statement, but some of you may not accept it coming from the Bible. Let me say, however, my friends, reason it out—reason why there is one cause and creator, and you will find that it is not only true, but coincides with spiritual revelation in the Bible. Indeed, it may be said that all truth coincides with the inspired Word of the Scriptures. Obviously, the Bible as a whole cannot be accepted literally and only spiritual inspiration can unlock and reveal the truth within its pages. Our friends who are busy disproving the Bible on a literal basis should reverse their efforts. If they would prove the reality and aliveness of God, the acts and sayings of the Master, Christ Jesus, would no longer be mysterious but wholly natural and in accordance with law.

The Right Attitude

The Science of Truth has always existed and will always exist, regardless of so-called mortal opinion and judgment. As a science, however, it does demand intelligent and thoughtful consideration from all thinking men and women. In this connection, may I call to your attention a fallacy which sometimes seems to be entertained, that because it is a science it is therefore difficult to understand. Nothing could be farther from the fact. God is not difficult to understand. Truth is not obscure. It is error that cannot be understood. Indeed the mark of ignorance is on its brow. Its very name is darkness. Is it conceivable that God would make Himself obscure and hide His face from us? Truth is natural and easy of perception but much may depend upon our mental attitude. I ask you therefore to consider this—the value of a receptive state of mind in investigating Christian Science, or any subject, in fact. Let us suppose, for instance, a child approaches the subject of geography in an attitude of resistance and negation. Maybe he is declaring all the time how hard it is to understand. He may even intemperately declare that he just does not like it. What will that state of thinking do? Will it aid the boy's perception of geography? Will it make it any easier? Not at all. On the contrary, he has unwittingly erected a lot of mental hurdles and obstructions that will have to be cleared away before he can understand and appreciate the subject of geography. Now this also applies to Christian Science and shows the value of an open-minded, affirmative, and tolerant approach without the slightest fear that you are unable to perceive this glorious Truth. Take this little book, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," little in size, but oh, how great in revelation, you who are honestly seeking the light. Take it, and in childlike humility turn to God for a moment in prayer. Say to Him, "Give me light, O God; give me understanding; enlighten Thou my eyes." Then commence to read and study. At once you will find yourself interested. You will find yourself saying, Why, that is what I have sometimes thought vaguely, but have never heard it clearly expressed in just that way. Let me say, too, that you will perhaps find statements that may not seem clear, at first. Never mind, read on. No science was ever grasped fully at one, two, three, or a hundred readings. This is the Science of infinity, and you will study it for many years to come. Going on in this way, with your thought turned ever toward the light, God will reveal His divine nature more and more to you.

Having habitually thought along material lines, it is not to be expected that one can immediately change his whole basis of thinking. We have to form new habits, learn to think spiritually. And this takes time. The thought habits of the individual are strange and surprisingly uncontrolled. To think about God, to reason out spiritual facts from premise to conclusion should not be difficult. But watch, study your thinking, and you may be amazed to discover how little dominion you have. How near can you hew to the line of clear, direct reasoning without running off the track? Who has not discovered by watching, that his thought, like the nimble chamois, is jumping from crag to crag, uncontrolled and unrestrained. Or again, that he cannot keep awake and think about God. What dominion have you there?

Now Christian Science declares that all may think, and think freely about God, because there is just one Mind, the divine, intelligent, and self-existent Cause of the universe,—and that Mind is the Mind of man, of all mankind. Let us consider in the light of reason what Christian Science teaches regarding God and His creation.

God and His Creation

First of all, it is obvious that we, every one of us here, exist. We are conscious of our identity or entity. We are aware, too, that there is a creation, an infinite creation or universe, and this universe, including our own identity, is the effect of an intelligent, self-existent cause. Reason tells us, too, that there can be but one universe. Indeed the very word universe indicates one. We are positively aware that this universe reveals intelligence. Indeed, only an intelligent cause could have evolved it. This infinite, divine Cause, we, in Christian Science, understand to be Mind,—one Mind only, infinite and all-inclusive. Christian Science lays its special emphasis on the oneness of Being,—one God, one Cause, and one creation. Following along

the line of reason it is clear that if God is Mind, absolutely immeasurable Mind, that He must also be Truth, since Truth is in its very nature mental. Obviously, too, if all Truth is mental, God must be infinite Spirit. As John has said, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Spiritual reasoning unfolds logically all the essential elements of God's nature and shows how beautifully they coincide one with the other. For instance, Mind, being self-existent and eternal, is the animating, divine force of all creation or being, logically then infinite Life,—our very life, strength, being, and action. Christian Science also reveals God as Soul, as divine Principle, the law of all being, governing the universe, including man, in perfect harmony. In accord with Scripture, and yet wholly in line with reason, we know that the only God there is, must be a God who is infinite Love, embodying only the attributes of goodness, tenderness, mercy, and righteousness.

Motherhood of God

The concept of God as Father has long been familiar to men, but Christian Science, distinct from all other religions, reveals the Motherhood of Deity,—that being One, He includes within Himself all the qualities and attributes of both Father and Mother.

The practical usefulness of this understanding of God's Motherhood is illustrated in the experience of a sailor during the war. Stationed abroad, his duty demanded that he live constantly on a mine-layer, operating in the North Sea, at that time infested with submarines. The ship was entirely loaded with mines and other explosives. In fact, depth bombs were stored directly above the place where he slept. About him there seemed to be every element of destruction and the possibility of disaster. Yet this man, a Scientist, on retiring to his berth, realized, in absolute confidence, the ever-presence of his Mother, God,—the ministering tenderness of a Love that protects and shields from all harm, even as the bird protects her young under the shadow of her wings. With every sense of security and safety, tucked into bed, and surrounded by divine Love, "as one whom his mother comforteth," this sailor was able to fall asleep each night in peace and serenity. And so it is with all God's children. The Mother-love of God is ever here to save and sustain. Tonight, my friends, no matter what fear may be trying to torment or frighten you,—fear of lack, fear of disease, fear of sin,—remember that you may rest serene and safe on the bosom of your Father-Mother God, undisturbed and unharmed, in the consciousness of that Love which is infinite.

There is nothing supernatural about God in Christian Science. Our God is natural, near, and friendly. We should accustom ourselves to thinking of Him in this way, which makes Him tangible, actual, and readily available. To have a superstitious, awesome sense of Deity is to build up in thought the idea of separation, a far-away God. The poet Tennyson has said, "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." This is the God we know in Christian Science. Many people have to admit that God has never been a very vital thing in their lives. He may have been the object of respect and veneration and occasionally considered in time of special need. It is not surprising, therefore, that the human mind does not readily adjust itself to the idea of absolutely radical reliance on God in all affairs. Nevertheless, the all-power, all-presence, all-action of God is a divine and irrefutable fact. Indeed, I may say not one of us would be able to leave this church and return home if there was not a God,—a divine, infinite power and force to take us there.

Man, God's Image

And man, what is man as understood in Christian Science? We declare that man is the divine idea or concept of God, spiritually conceived and eternally held in Mind as idea,—man, the idea of infinite good; man, the idea of infinite Love; man, the idea of infinite and unending Life. Since God is Mind, man, His divine image, must logically be divinely mental, since effect must be like its cause. What then constitutes the divine man, this mental being? Thoughts, pure thoughts, which can have their being only in God. Now a thought or idea cannot wander away and stray from the Mind in which it has its being. So man, God's divine idea, is forever inseparable from the Mind in which he exists and has his being. In other words, Christian Science declares that there is an eternal unity between God and man.

Let us see how this divine unity operates in actual practice. Suppose, for instance, that the so-called law of heredity has put upon an individual the cruel belief that he is constitutionally weak, lacking in strength, vigor, and vitality; that he has no force or energy and is easily fatigued. What are strength, vigor, vitality, and power? Are they material? Did any one ever see them? No, they are wholly qualities of Mind. And how much of strength and power is there? Is it not infinite and immeasurable? And where is all this power and strength? Does it reside in some place, and does man have to go somewhere to get it? Not at all! Man, God's image and likeness, is not separated from strength, energy, and power. They are his very being. He is himself the very manifestation and expression of infinite strength and power. Man is the very manifestation of God. Man is God's witness, the proof and evidence that there is a God, a Principle which is infinite Life.

Is it conceivable that an imperfect thought could emanate from an infinitely perfect Mind? No, reason tells us that this cannot be. Cause being perfect, so is effect, and Christian Science declares, in accord with the Scriptures, that God created man in His Mind's own image, in the image of Mind created He him. Inevitably, therefore, we see man as spiritual, the exact and perfect image or reflection.

It is important to note here, that man is not a partial image, but the whole and complete reflection of likeness of God. Now this has for every one a real and practical value. For instance, if you are the full and complete image of Mind, called man, do you not reflect all the intelligence and Mind there is? If you are the complete image of Truth, do you not reflect all the Truth there is; if you are the complete image of the God who is Love, do you not now, in this hour, reflect all the Love there is?

But some one may say, Yes, I like this explanation of man. I like to be told that man is spiritual, but somehow or other it seems just a little vague. It gives me a kind of uncertain sense of my identity. If I see and declare myself to be spiritual shall I not lose my individuality? Not at all. What is it that gives you your individuality, your distinction as an entity? Is it not what you think? Is it not your thoughts that make you distinct and individual? Certainly it is not a matter body. Christian Science declares that you will never lose your identity, but, on the contrary, will be ever more conscious of your distinct, divine individuality of God's idea or spiritual concept. Through all eternity, your divine mental identity remains permanent and immutable. Now this is a helpful thing to see, because it gives one a definite and certain sense of existence. Man's spiritual selfhood could never be lost, and yet all must admit that matter is most ephemeral and transitory—here to-day and gone tomorrow. If this be so, why the tenacity of humans to hold on to it? Why not let go and grasp that which is ours right now, our eternal, spiritual selfhood?

Christian Science does not annihilate creation because it declares that all is spiritual and that there is no matter. Creation is definite. Not infrequently people come to us and say, "If you will tell me satisfactorily how I came to be in this condition of materiality, I'll accept Christian Science." This attitude is not unlike a drowning man asking how he came to be in the water. The important thing to us is that we can learn the way out of materiality, instead of wasting our time speculating how we got in. Recognizing the whole thing as a state of self-deception, Christian Science declares that the first step out is to see man's absolute spirituality and perfection, in other words, that he is not in matter or materiality.

Belief in Evil

And having said this, some one may be thinking, Oh, yes, you Christian Scientists do not believe in evil. You declare evil to be unreal. Yes, that is the stand we take. We not only declare but know evil to be unreal, a fraudulent delusion imposed upon the race. What would people have us do? It is a curious perversion of the human mind, that if I were to say, as I inevitably must, that Christian Science declares there is no disease, there is no death, there are some in this audience who would find themselves more or less resenting what I say and ready to challenge my statements. And yet, I ask you in all sincerity, would you not be grateful to have disease and death proved unreal? That is exactly what every one of you is trying to do—get rid of the whole outrageous and illegitimate imposition. Is there any one who would willingly become the devil's advocate?

Have you ever analyzed this thing called evil, penetrated this great delusion? If asked, practically every one here would declare himself a monotheist. He would assert that he believes in one infinite God and no other. Yet belief in evil is dualism, not monotheism. To find a cause for evil is to find an origin. If such an origin existed, this would definitely establish evil's eternal reality and the race would be helpless and hopeless. If error finds its origin in the one God, then God has within Himself the elements of His own self-destruction and the provision for man's eternal suffering and damnation. My friends, if this were true, the universe would have been reduced to chaos long since.

Belief in the power of evil, or to put it another way, belief in an existent evil power, is devil worship, no matter how we look at it. This may not be a very pleasant thing to contemplate, and possibly we have not considered it from that angle, but the fact, nevertheless, remains that we, who call ourselves monotheists and Christian people, in so far as we give power to evil, believe in evil forces, acknowledge their reality and ability to destroy us, are devil worshippers. In other words, we have something before us besides the one infinite God. What, it may be asked, are the beliefs in keeping of horseshoes, fear to walk under a ladder, or to sit with thirteen at the table, but the perpetuation, in modern times, of devil worship, fear of an existent evil power. The savage goes to his witch doctor or priest who gives him a charm or potion to keep away the evil spirits. The educated and so-called intelligent man goes to the physician who gives him a pill or a potion. Or maybe he vaccinates him, or puts something evil, a serum, in his body to make him immune from more evil outside his body. Is the difference so very great? Fundamentally, the state of mind, the thinking, is just the same. What is there? Fear, fear, conscious or unconscious belief in devil or evil, instead of a conscious perception of the infinite aliveness of the one God.

Materia Medica

Recently I was told of a young man, who, in much physical distress, sent for the doctor. "Oh, doctor," he said, "I'm feeling awfully bad."
"Well, never mind," said the doctor. "I'll fix you up. Here you are,—a pill for your head, a tablet for your indigestion, and another pill for your nerves."

"But, doctor," said the patient, "how will the little beggars know where to go when they are inside?" Ah, that is it! That is the great question! Wonderful, educated pills, just like a troupe of trained seals, they go exactly where you tell them to go.

May I say here, that Christian Scientists have the highest respect for and appreciation of the efforts of the medical profession to relieve distress and suffering. But Christ Jesus, the most successful physician the world

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