

A Lecture on Christian Science

Christian Science: The Religion of Reality

Paul A. Harsch, C. S. B. of Toledo, Ohio

On October 19, in the auditorium of Gorton school, Lake Forest, the following lecture was delivered by Mr. Paul A. Harsch C.S.B., of Toledo, Ohio, under the auspices of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Mrs. Ella L. Ferguson, Second Reader of that Church, introduced Mr. Harsch as follows:

"I am happy to have the opportunity of welcoming you as guests of First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Lake Forest, under whose auspices this lecture is being given. There are numerous references in the Bible concerning giving. We read in Matthew that Jesus told the twelve disciples being sent forth to heal, 'freely ye have received, freely give.'"

"Christian Scientists all over the world as so grateful for a better understanding of the reality concerning life, health and happiness, that they feel that the most precious thing they have to offer their fellowman is an opportunity to learn something about the religion which they find so usable."

"Lectures given by members of the Board of Lectureship of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Mass., offer such an opportunity. Our lecturer this evening is a member of this Board."

It gives me great pleasure to present to you Mr. Paul A. Harsch, of Toledo, Ohio, who will tell us about 'Christian Science: The Religion of Reality.'"

The lecturer spoke substantially as follows:

The year 1866 was deeply significant in world history. It brought to mankind the discovery of Christian Science. In these United States it was also rich with promise, for there just had been brought to a close that specific effort of evil to destroy the unity of the states comprising the Union, which we know as the Civil War. The significance of the coincidence of these two events should not be overlooked.

The Civil War years were most critical ones in our history. A New England thinker encouraging his fellows in that trying time wrote impressively. One of his poems may be found in the Christian Science Hymnal. In it he says,

"Of to every man and nation Comes the moment to decide, In the strife of Truth with falsehood, For the good or evil side."

Then, after referring to the fact that evil seems so often in the ascendant while truth is obscured, he declares that

"... behind the dim unknown Standeth God within the shadow, Keeping watch above His own."

It was in that remarkable year of 1866 that the light of divine Truth came to Mary Baker Eddy and illuminating "the dim unknown" disclosed Deity to be indeed an ever-present and available reality, a constant protection and a divine inspiration. God was no longer "in the shadow." He now stood revealed.

The "dim unknown" Revealed

It was in this light that men began to discern more clearly the truth about God and man. Discerning and applying this truth has enabled them in increasing numbers to live more wholesomely, happily, and joyously. It has enabled them to leave behind, as one casts off tattered clothing, those accumulated beliefs which seem to result so often in disease, discord, lack, and limitation. This enabling light of divine Truth was named by its Discoverer Christian Science. We have come together to consider this discovery, which we shall speak of as the religion of reality.

This religion of reality, this divine Science or Christian Science, begins its corrective work at the point of inception of mortal discord. It shows where and how disease and inharmonious originate and how they may be avoided or prevented. But this is not all. If, from ignorance of the truth which Jesus said should make one free, sickness or suffering seems to be in evidence, Christian Science heals these conditions. It is, therefore, a healing and preventive system. It should be stated at once, however, that the healing and preventing of physical ills are by no means the whole of Christian Science or even its most important purpose. The healing of disease is the proof which Christian Science submits that it is the true and absolute plan of salvation for all humanity.

A Universal Boon

Because this is all true, Christian Science may properly be called a universal boon. This is not to claim that sickness is universal and that all mortals are in need of physical healing, though no doubt it will be conceded that all are in need of salvation. Few indeed, however, are

exempt from one or another of those disease-breeding conditions, some of which have already been mentioned and which include fear, envy, distrust, tormenting lack, limitation, the belief of separation, and so on.

Unless the presence of these mental conditions is detected (and frequently they are hidden deep in the subconscious mind) and then destroyed, physical disease may and often does result. We shall consider some of these beliefs, their origin and the necessity for casting them out of consciousness. The process of evicting such unwelcome tenants is explained simply and logically by Christian Science.

As Mrs. Eddy's discovery was essentially Christian it could have had its origin only in the Christ, Truth. Hence a seeker for more light through this avenue very naturally asks himself in the very beginning: "What do I know about the Christ?"

"What is meant by the Christ-Understanding?" "Is the Christ-consciousness ever with me?" In simple words, "What is the Christ?" Suppose then we take a short journey at once in quest of an answer to this age-old question—What is Christ, Truth?

"Thou art the Christ"

Two of the Gospel writers tell us that it was in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi that Peter, one day in a conversation amongst Jesus and his disciples, said to the Master, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." When and what were the conditions under which this declaration was made?

In Jesus' time Caesarea Philippi was a Roman resort town situated on the southern flank of the Lebanon range and not far from the spot where the Jordan River bursts out of the face of a great cliff which rises high above the floor of the valley, in a gushing, sparkling stream. Quickly it breaks into a hundred rivulets amongst the rocks and boulders at the foot of the cliff and then converging, reaches a small body of water known as Lake Merom. Some miles farther on it flows into the Sea of Galilee.

There is an old tradition to the effect that after Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, finding how it "pleased the Jews," he determined to destroy Jesus as well. A cohort of soldiers was sent to make the arrest. Learning of this, Jesus and his disciples quickly left their homes and journeyed north up the Jordan valley until they had reached a point outside the jurisdiction of Herod. Here they were safe from arrest. They then spent some days in that area, and no doubt talked much of the work which Jesus had done, how he had healed the sick, comforted the sorrowing, and in various ways demonstrated his knowledge of God and man.

Peter's Enlarging Vision

It was at the close of these talks that Peter affirmed his conviction that Jesus was indeed the Christ, "the Son of the living God." Peter must have perceived, certainly to some degree, that Jesus knew that God is eternal Life. We, too, are aware of this now more fully than Peter could possibly have been. Peter perceived something more—that Jesus was proving, in all the works which he did, that he recognized man to be the infinite and eternal expression of Life and that man could never be separated from Life.

Peter also perceived that Jesus knew that God is Spirit. Happily we too are conscious now in increasing measure of this eternal fact. Peter's perception was not confined to this, however, because he must have seen that Jesus was proving, in all he did, that man is the expression of Spirit and, therefore, spiritual, eternal, and indestructible. Thanks to the light shed upon infinite being by Christian Science, we, too, humans, are perceiving in a greater degree than ever before that man must be, that he is, spiritual.

Of course, the world was told nineteen hundred years ago that God is Spirit. Jesus said it to the woman at the well at Sychar and his words were preserved for posterity. Mankind has known of that declaration and the words which followed it, namely, that "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Then, too, John, the beloved disciple, assured humanity that God is Love. And Love is Life itself. This was many years ago, but no one has disputed these declarations, though it was not until the last century that mortals were given that clear knowledge of Deity they can now possess. It is this knowledge that enables them to perceive scientifically and therefore provably what Life and Love and Spirit really are.

Establishing Man's Dominion

Furthermore we know now, thanks to Christian Science, that man is indeed what Peter was dimly perceiving and what Jesus was proving. We know what John really meant when he said, "Now are we the sons of God." We know now that when the writer of the first chapter of Genesis said God made man in His own image and likeness he must have seen, even though dimly, that Spirit's creation could never be other than spiritual.

During this hour, then, let us think only of man as these individuals thought of him. Let us insist upon the fact that man is indeed spiritual, eternal, and indestructible. This is the reality, no matter what the physical evidence may appear to be. If we will do this for the brief period of this discussion, we will indeed be planting our feet on the solid rock of the Christ, Truth. Seeing ourselves and others in this light will aid greatly in establishing that dominion over the beliefs of mortal mind which so frequently and persistently assail mortals. It may be necessary at times to insist upon the reality very vigorously and emphatically. This, however, is one of the very best ways in which to rout the insistent arguments of mortal mind.

In the absolute sense, as Christian Science reveals, there is then but one fact to consider: that Spirit, God, is All and that man is the expression

of Spirit and therefore spiritual; that there is no intelligence or substance in matter; that any argument to the contrary is a suggestion of the so-called evil one or mortal mind, which must be rejected and cast out of thought; that by doing this freedom is established and man's birthright of dominion realized.

Reality Defined

Christian Science is, therefore, in the fullest sense, the religion of reality, and in discussing it we necessarily consider that the real is as opposed to those things which are too often accepted as real but which are, as a matter of fact, unreal, untrue, and insubstantial. This, then, is the teaching of Christian Science concerning reality. It teaches that reality is Life, God, immortal, indestructible, and eternal. It teaches that reality is divine Love, God, which never falters, fears, or changes. It teaches that reality is Truth, God, and can include no element of falsity. It teaches that reality is Mind, God, and that Mind must ever express itself in boundless and unfailing intelligence. Principle, too, it teaches, is reality, God, inexhaustible and ever available. Principle, it teaches, is the only source of good and the source only of good. Summing it all up, Christian Science declares that reality is God, Himself, very God, made manifest to humans as Life, Truth, Love, Mind, and Principle, as Soul and Spirit.

Because we are thus glimpsing even in some degree this reality of all things our lips should be willingly and joyously praising the Father of all and at all times. We might use the very words of Peter when on another occasion he stood on the mount of transfiguration declaring to his associates, James and John, "It is good for us to be here." Or we might say with the Psalmist, "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph;" then we could well add what priceless knowledge it is to be assured that good alone is real, that Life alone is the fact, that Truth can never be altered, and that Love is ever about us, caring for and protecting against all arguments of evil. Surely one must agree that this is glimpsing the real.

The interval between the year of 1866 when, as we have already seen, the healing Christ first appeared to Mary Baker Eddy and when the people of these United States had begun to awaken to a more earnest desire to perceive the reality about God and man, and this present year constitutes a lapse of just a little over three quarters of a century. Yet it is a fact that during that extraordinarily brief period the thinking of a large group of humans has experienced a remarkable transformation, a transformation so profound and so radical that few as yet perceive its full significance and still fewer recognize its source.

Effect of Changed Thinking

This altered thinking cuts very deep into the heart of accepted theory and practice along almost all material lines. This change in thinking, we are convinced, has stemmed from an improved concept of the real and of man's responsibility to his fellow man. This in turn is the result of a better understanding of creation and of the one and only perfect creator and the ensuing inevitable realization that, at least in part, all men are, in their true spiritual nature, sons of God and therefore endowed with the rights and privileges of such sonship. Dimly yet, as through a mist, but nevertheless with a growing degree of clarity, mortals in rapidly increasing numbers are becoming conscious that man cannot possibly be two beings at the same time. They are seeing that he is not material at one moment and spiritual the next, or perhaps a strange admixture of both matter and Spirit now. They are seeing with a clearer vision than before that man does express divine qualities and these qualities are real, undying, indestructible. Consequently they are seeing that this real man must be, and is, clothed with the dominion and authority of the son of a royal Father.

The inevitable consequence of this more accurate and therefore more spiritual thinking is that there is growing in human consciousness slowly, painfully, but surely the conviction that the spiritual universe alone is real and that man is spiritual. It is this conviction which is producing the changing thought of humanity. It is not being argued here that mortals in the mass have followed this line of reasoning and accepted these conclusions and are acting in accordance with them. Our only claim is that many thinkers are unashamedly conscious that their long-accepted concepts are no longer tenable. They realize that the old foundations are crumbling. Oftentimes they feel themselves swept away as by some fierce flood with no rescue in sight.

But, notwithstanding this state of semiconfusion and uncertainty, the conviction of man's indivisible relationship with the Father grows. Openings in the clouds of material sense occur more frequently and glimpses of the real are obtained more often and for longer periods. As this conviction becomes stronger it takes hold of the individual, as truth always must, and becomes a more controlling influence in his entire thinking, and consequently in all his human relationships. It is this vital force which we now declare to be operating in human consciousness more powerfully and visibly than ever before in human history.

Truth's Irresistible Advance

Centuries of slow and intermittent progress have brought us at last to this period of global unrest. Let us look back for a moment over the three quarters of a century since the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science found the priceless truth of man's real being and began her teaching that Mind is all and matter nothing. What was the state of consciousness in our own United States in that year of 1866? What, at that period, seemed a vast and terrible war had just been concluded. African slavery in this country had been

legally abolished. One of the most significant strides humanity had made in its progress out of darkness into reality—its recognition of the truth about man—had been taken.

Coincident with this great forward step, other links in the chain of mortals' enslavement were broken. Religious, social, and economic theories and practices long held, and in some instances even more deadening and destructive than physical slavery, began to lose their hold.

God's law of unfolding good, always in operation, was being more clearly seen and understood. The forward steps we are taking today are the inevitable result of the operation of this law. Not that evil ever results in good, but rather that evil pushed to its extreme limit destroys itself, and the reality—the good, the true, and the everlasting—becomes more apparent to mortals as the mists of personal sense fade away.

Again, truth, irresistible in its advance, has brought mankind to this new crisis. Again we are deep in the throes of a mighty contest, the great battle of mortal mind to retain its hold on humanity. It is the battle of wrong against right, of error against Truth, of human hate against divine Love, the battle which can have but one ultimate result, namely, the complete destruction of the so-called forces of evil. This battle will be concluded only when the reality of all things is brought to light and it is found that "man does stand as God's own child, the image of His love" (Christian Science Hymnal, No. 51).

Mental Doors Must Be Open

It is only when consciousness is opened to let in the sunlight of divine understanding, that is, Christian Science, that the eternal reality of being is discerned. It is in this light that the false beliefs which have so long imprisoned many mortals begin to disappear. They fall away, as it were, just as the barnacles that cling so tenaciously to the hull of the ship that has been long at sea drop off when the ship sails into fresh, sweet water. That Christian Science understood and applied does this is the substance of this discussion. Two brief quotations from the Christian Science textbook are here presented in support of our position.

In the Preface of the textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," the author, Mary aket Eddy, says (p. vii), "Contentment with the past and the cold conventionalism of materialism are crumbling away." It may require courage and understanding to march forward joyously when so many long-cherished beliefs seem to be crumbling away. But at such times it is only necessary to remember that nothing real, good, lasting, true, substantial can crumble away or disappear. It is only the false, the unreal, the unworthy, the base, and useless that are thus disappearing. These latter are always the trouble-producing elements, whether we realize it at the time or not. We should never allow blinding tears of regret to obscure our vision and prevent us from seeing the good which is certain to result from the crumbling away of the false and the untrue.

A statement in the Christian Science textbook is of particular significance here (pp. 323, 324): "Willingness to become as a little child, and to leave the old for the new, renders thought receptive of the advanced idea. Gladness to leave the false landmarks and joy to see them disappear,—this disposition helps to precipitate the ultimate harmony." "To become as a little child"—what humility and confidence this requires! Difficult as this step may seem to be at times, it is always possible. For there is a peculiarly indefinable something in human consciousness which renders such a step easier perhaps than at first glimpses seems possible.

An Immortal and Indestructible Quality

What is this something, this difficult-to-define quality or condition in human consciousness? It is an immortal, an indestructible, eternal something possessed by every individual on earth, lying deep in the heart of all humanly. It is a vital, vigorous germ demanding light and air and the opportunity to grow and express. It is a deathless germ of desire possessed by every individual, to know more about himself, his creator, and the creation of which he believes himself to be an integral part. It is the seed of desire for a larger knowledge of his true selfhood, his real being. It swells within the breast of every mortal, ever ready to burst forth at the slightest opportunity.

Responding to this inner urge, many are constantly asking whether this human experience is the ultimate. Or is it, perhaps, they ask, a preliminary stage for something more real and important? Others, and these in increasing numbers, are putting the question in more concrete form. They say: May it not be true that my present existence is the real? Am I not at this very moment the eternal and inextinguishable expression of a perfect creator? May it not be true that I am only prevented from realizing this fact because of my own false, erroneous, or defective thinking? Am I not in the fullest, truest sense now, and may I not become conscious of that fact by refusing to entertain any longer, believe, or be governed by, the futilities to which I seem to have been in bondage for so long a time?

To these stirrings of consciousness, these deep and vital queries, Christian Science answers positively and emphatically, "Yes." The presence in human consciousness of the truths presented by Christian Science on these vital points, explains the reason why in so many instances the germs of desire so long latent and so long denied an opportunity to develop are at last bursting out of their long confinement.

It is in the sunlight of this new understanding, this light of divine Science, that we now pursue our investigation of God and man. This divine or Christian Science is now an acknowledged, widely recognized, and largely accepted religion. Hence a word about religion per se may be

included here. Just what is religion? We do not ask for a dictionary definition of the word, but seek rather for a clear and simple one that will take us to the very heart of the word at once.

Religion Defined

Religion basically is that which concerns our true being. This, of course, is the very root of it all. Hence genuine religion must include all that relates to true being, and conversely must exclude all that falsely claims or pretends to be a part of true being. Anything calling itself religion, in order to establish its right to that name must begin at a point of absoluteness, that is, from the basis of one absolute principle, and must then continue logically to an incontestable conclusion, be irrevocable at any stage of its development. This, of course, is pure science. It is also pure and absolute religion.

The teaching of Jesus was pure science. His every statement, his every act, was supported by demonstration—by proof. It was also pure and absolute religion, for it dealt only and always with that which concerned the true being of those to whom he ministered. His teaching was Christian, because it was Messianic, that is, it—the teaching—was the Saviour, that which saved and healed. Any religious teaching to be scientific must follow this method of Jesus—it must submit proof. To be Christian it must also be Messianic, healing, saving. These should be the true tests of any religious teaching that claims for itself a divine origin.

Here a slight digression will serve to clarify the foregoing and at the same time explain an important point in the teaching of Christian Science. In the chapter in her textbook bearing the significant title "Science of Being," Mrs. Eddy, in simple and direct words, removes once and for all any question in regard to the relationship between Jesus and the Christ. These are her own words (p. 332): "Jesus was born of Mary. Christ is the true idea of good, the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness." A few lines farther on she says, "Jesus demonstrated Christ; he proved that Christ is the divine idea of God—the Holy Ghost, or Comforter, revealing the divine Principle, Love, and leading into all truth."

Again in the same chapter (p. 334) she points out that while Jesus, the human man, disappeared to the material senses at the time of his ascension, "the spiritual self, or Christ, continues to exist in the eternal order of divine Science, taking away the sins of the world, as the Christ has always done, even before the human Jesus was incarnate to mortal eyes." Because Jesus manifested the Christ so perfectly he has been rightfully accorded the title "the Christ." This Christ—manifestation or expression of God is the Messiah, Immanuel, or God with us.

Divine Method of Salvation

Once having felt the comforting presence of the Christ, one can never again be quite satisfied or whole or complete without it. Striving ever to remain in this Christ-light, as he journeys along the highway leading from sense to Spirit, the faithful and conscientious Christian Scientist finds his pathway less arduous. It is true, of course, that an ever-busy mortal mind places many obstacles in his way. The unreality of these obstacles is quickly seen in the bright sunshine of the Christ-truth and they are easily surmounted. Then the real comes quickly into view. The miracle to sense has occurred. Mrs. Eddy describes the process thus (Science and Health, p. 264): "As mortals gain more correct views of God and man, multitudinous objects of creation, which before were invisible, will become visible."

When this Christ-light or divine understanding has been gained, there is no longer any question in the thought of the searcher for divine Truth, in regard both to his human and divine status. But he quickly realizes that the newly found light gleams brightly or seems to fade away in exact proportion to the effort he puts forth to exclude from his thinking everything which is unlike the Christ-truth. Failure to exclude such thoughts means a greater effort to reject them later. But to exclude or reject them, or both, is an indispensable condition of his advance toward the realm of the real and his eventual realization of his true being.

It is perfectly obvious that in this state of true being this real and perfect man cannot die nor can he be subject to those discordant conditions we call disease, decay, and dissolution. As a closer mental approach to this real condition is made, it is entirely logical to assume that the mortal experience should be hampered less by material limitations. It is then quite as logical a deduction to make that mortals should forever lack a complete sense of ease and should experience disease from time to time, unless and until they recognize the eternal fact that diseaseless perfection exists in the divine Mind alone and is reflected eternally by its ideas and by naught else.

Mrs. Eddy's Vision

Mrs. Eddy must have seen this very clearly or she could not have declared so emphatically as she does in Science and Health that to heal the sick one must "insist vehemently on the great fact which covers the whole ground, that God, Spirit, is all, and that there is none beside Him" (Science and Health, p. 421). It was this realization which healed her. She had suffered much and long from personal sense; physical pain and mental suffering had been her lot.

Then on that day in 1866, after many years of earnest prayer and striving for an understanding of reality, the answer came. It brought a measure of healing too, that vision of the redemptive Christ, but it brought something more, more important to her, to you, and to me than the healing. It brought a vision

of a pathway leading out of the mist of personal sense which had so long blinded her and still blinds you and me. It was a pathway she followed faithfully for more than forty years. She indeed "kept the faith," and for that you and I should rejoice.

Healing and illumination both came to Mrs. Eddy when she saw that it was only her own false and mistaken sense of a sick material body which had to be changed. It was then she saw that all belief of physicality, corporeality, materiality had to be put under foot and resolutely kept there. When she saw this and put that vision into practice, in other words, used the truth she had discerned, she found freedom and light.

We, too, mortals, may follow her example. We, too, may insist that God is Spirit, immortal, impersonal, immutable, filling all space and leaving no space to be filled by anything inferior. We, too, may insist that Spirit, God, is forever made manifest by His equally immortal, impersonal, and immutable but ever-present Christ. We, too, may insist upon the unchanging and unchangeable fact that that impersonal Christ is ever present, at our side, yours and mine, revealing to us the eternal fact about ourselves, that we indeed are the sons of God now.

The Prayer of Affirmation

We will be aided in maintaining this position of scientific, that is, accurate, thinking if we will more frequently pray the prayer of affirmation, insisting that we are indeed the sons of God and endowed with His fullness. We may thank divine Life that we are indeed His children; that hence we must, in reality, express only those qualities which manifest Life. Vigor, vitality, health, joy, peace, poise are surely expressions of Life, and consequently God's ideas. His children, must reflect and express these qualities. Disease, discord, decay are no part of Life and have no part in God's creation, His children.

Similarly, we may thank the Father-Mother Mind that we are indeed expressions of an all-intelligent being, Mind, and therefore must reflect only that which expresses Mind. Intelligence, wisdom, and far-seeing vision must be properties of Mind and therefore be reflected by Mind's offspring. This, one may affirm, and such affirmation brings the one so declaring his oneness with the Father into a consciously closer relationship with Him. Such affirmation is prayer; it is a prayer that heals and saves. It is at least an indication that the one reaching out to divine Love for help, no matter what the need may be, is beginning to realize his true nature, that he is indeed the man of God's creating.

"The scientific statement of being"

If, then, to these affirmative declarations the seeker for an understanding of the real will add the words of our Leader, Mrs. Eddy, as they are found in the Christian Science textbook in what is known as "the scientific statement of being" (p. 468), he will be praying most effectively, for he will declare with her: "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual."

Everyone who hears this message is in reality such a man. To this real man, this man who is made in the image of the one perfect Mind, it can be accurately and truthfully said: "You are the finished, complete, and all-inclusive idea of Mind. You can lack nothing now or ever in the way of health, vigor, joy, peace, supply, for all these things are a part of your infinite completeness. Whatever is necessary to your well-being, whatever enables you to manifest greater completeness, is already this completeness, you declare it to be the reality about yourself. You refuse to accept any falsehood, any argument of mortal mind that this is not the fact about you. You are complete, whole, the reflection of the one and only creator, the infinite Father-Mother God, which was, and is, and ever will be, complete, one, indivisible, inseparable from His perfect creation, man."

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