

Christian Science, the Religion of the Bible

Lecture by Judge Septimus Hanna, at the Phelan opera house, Monday evening, Feb. 13th. Mayor Smith introduced the speaker as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen: When I first heard that there was to be a lecture given in this opera house on the 13th, I did not suppose at that time that I should be asked to introduce the speaker. I did not think, perhaps, that I might be in a position to hear the treat that I believe I am able to promise you. I take great pleasure in introducing to you tonight Judge Hanna of Colorado Springs.

After the Mayor's introduction, Judge Hanna made a few preliminary remarks and proceeded with his lecture, as follows:

Mr. Mayor and Friends: It is said that brevity is the soul of wit. Believing this to be true, then the introduction by your Honorable Mayor must be considered witty. The remarks by him were certainly very brief, but I am thankful to him for them. I told his Honor this afternoon that I would consider myself safe while in Alliance this time as I would be under his care and would not get out until the first train, which will be in the morning. I notice that you have tacked another letter to my name on the announcement cards displayed in the store windows of the city, and in order that you do not think that I have changed my name when I again stop in your city, I might state that my name is spelled with only one "h" instead of two, as the name of a woman is spelled.

The subject of my lecture indicates fairly well its scope and purpose, "Christian Science, the Religion of the Bible." We do not mean by this that Christian Science is the only religion which claims biblical authority, but are aware that it is one thing to claim scriptural authority in a general way and another thing to prove such authority from the Scriptures.

Before proceeding to this branch of my remarks, however, and acting upon an assumption upon which I am in the habit of acting, namely, that there are more or less present who are not of our faith—some, maybe, who are investigating, but not thoroughly convinced, some who are skeptical as to whether Christian Science is what it purports to be, yet others who have come for the first time to hear the subject publicly presented, I will say that Christian Science has a text book. It is a treatise on healing through the power of God or the Divine Mind. Or, as we claim, it is a thorough exegesis of the Scriptural method of healing all manner of diseases, and of curing all manner of sin through the understanding of God as all-present, all-powerful, all-wise. In short, it is a spiritual interpretation of the Bible.

The author of a book of note and of value is a person of whom people desire to know, therefore I shall refer briefly to the life and character of Mrs. Eddy. It may not be amiss for me to say that for nearly ten years, as former First Reader in the Mother Church in Boston and editor of the official periodicals, I have had opportunities which enable me to speak intelligently of her life and character as well as of her labors and literary attainments.

Speaking from this vantage ground I can truthfully say that, intellectually, she is one of the most alert persons I have ever known; that she labors incessantly and unselfishly for the cause to which she has devoted her life, and that, notwithstanding her years, she performs an amount of labor each day which, if known, would seem incredible, even if done by one yet in the adolescence of life. As to her religious character, I speak my profoundest conviction when I say I believe it to be in accord with the highest standard of Christian living. Yet, notwithstanding her highly spiritual nature, she is withal an intensely practical person. She keeps close watch of current affairs and acquaints herself with the world's doings. She is, moreover, a patriotic citizen. Mrs. Eddy, like all great religious and moral reformers, has been the target for misrepresentations and sometimes malicious attack. The animus of these attacks is so apparent that they have fallen harmless.

There is in Boston a Mother Church having a membership composed of persons residing in almost every part of this country and of other countries. The Mother Church has branch churches and societies to the number of more than one thousand, also situated in nearly every part of this country and of other countries. Some years since the Mother Church adopted a set of church tenets. These became also the tenets of all her branches. They acknowledge the Scriptures to be the

inspired word of God. The acknowledgment of the supremacy and infinity of God. They acknowledge Christ and his divinity, and declare there is but one Christ. They inculcate the omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of God.

The last of these tenets enjoins upon all who subscribe to them the necessity of watching and praying to have in themselves the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, and be merciful, just and pure.

The early records of this church contain the following interesting and significant item: "At a meeting of the Christian Scientist Association, April 19, 1879, on motion of Mrs. Eddy, it was voted to organize a church designed to commemorate the word and works of our Master, which should re-instate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing."

We point to the twenty-eight years intervening history in witness of the correctness of that early declaration. During these years many thousands have been brought out of conditions of sin, sorrow, grief, woe, distress, disease and sickness, who, without the aid of this scientific Christianity, would have remained in abandoned and hopeless conditions. We do not hesitate to say, therefore, as matter of current history, that to a most wonderful and gratifying extent primitive Christianity has been reinstated and its lost element of healing re-established.

Christian Science teaches that God is in truth Almighty. If He is Almighty then surely He is correctly defined by the other terms: Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Supreme and Infinite. He who is all powerful is always all powerful. He who is omnipresent is never absent. He who is all wise is never less than that, could not be by the very necessity of His all wisdom.

Objection is sometimes made that Christian Science is heterodox because, as the objectors claim, it declares against God's personality.

The Christian Science definition of God does not describe a more impersonal God, as that term is commonly used and understood, than does the orthodox definition as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith. This definition is substantially accepted by all churches calling themselves Evangelical. I quote it almost in full:

"There is one living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, most loving, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. * * * God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of himself, and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient. * * * He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things. * * * His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain."

Words could not define a more impersonal God, if we accept words at their ordinary meaning. If we give to the words quoted from the Confession of Faith their ordinary and rational meaning, we could not imagine a better definition of an impersonal God. May I not fairly and honestly ask: How can we think of a God who is "infinite" as being composed of flesh, blood, and bones, with all the infirmities and limitations pertaining thereto? How can we thus think of a God who is "Spirit"? How can we thus think of a God who is "eternal"? How can we thus think of a God who is "Almighty"? How can we thus think of a God who is without "body, parts, or passions"? I submit these questions in no spirit of captious criticism, but by way of sincere and earnest inquiry.

The Methodist Episcopal church adopts substantially the Westminster definition, but leaves out the word "passions"; thus describing God as being "without 'body or parts.'" And yet our orthodox ministerial friends—including those of the Methodist church—oppose Christian Science largely upon the ground that, as they claim, it teaches that God is not a person. It remains for our orthodox friends, not for Christian Scientists, to explain how a God who is "infinite," who is "Spirit," who is "eternal," who is "without a body, parts or passions," can be a person in the ordinary sense of the term, or a merely "big man," as he is so commonly understood to be.

The definition above quoted is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church of the United States; and, as I have said, has been substantially adopted by all the orthodox Christian churches. It does not appear in what is called the Shorter

Catechism. The book from which I quote bears date 1906, so that it stands as authority now.

I do not hesitate to say that the Christian Science definition of God is even more personal, in the correct sense of the term, than is that of the orthodox churches as set forth in their creeds or articles of faith. In evidence of this I quote briefly from the Christian Science text-book. (The lecturer here read from pages 116 and 330 of Science and Health.)

The assertion of God's presence and power runs through the Old Testament. How could words express a more impersonal Being, viewed from the standpoint of mere anthropomorphism than the following from the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm: "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. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me."

Jesus' plain words are of themselves sufficient to settle any question as to God's anthropomorphism. He distinctly declares God to be spirit. (It is wrongly translated in the old version as "a spirit") and adds that those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. While John, the beloved disciple, as distinctly says, "God is love."

In further corroboration of the true conception of God and His power and presence in His universe and in His world, I desire to call attention to another definition of God given by the Psalmist, in the 139th Psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." This is either mere abstract poetical sentiment or else it is a declaration of eternal truth, a definition of the eternal God. We accept it as the latter.

We believe in just such a God as the Psalmist here sings of. A God who possesses the power to forgive and who does forgive all the iniquities of His children, a God who possesses the power to heal and who does heal all the diseases of His children, who redeemeth their life from destruction, who crowneth themselves eternally with loving kindness and tender mercies. I cite this definition of God, not because it stands alone; we find just such conceptions running all through the Scriptures if we look for them. Have we sufficiently looked for them? Have we been generally taught of such a God? On the contrary, have we not been too generally taught of a God who so far from forgiving all the iniquities of His children, has provided a means and place of eternal punishment for such of them as fail to live up to a prescribed course of conduct? A God who so far from healing all the diseases of His children, sends disease upon them in order to chasten and make them better? This manifestly was not David's conception of God. If it was, his own plain words falsify that conception.

In immediate connection with the 139th Psalm I now call your attention to a part of the New Testament record which we consider as fundamental Christian doctrine or teaching. I refer to the great commandment given by Jesus to his disciples, called by some Bible commentators his Great Commission to the Twelve. If it is true that this part of the Bible is fundamental Christian doctrine or teaching then surely those who desire to live Christian lives cannot too much study and view things from the standpoint of our limited mortal senses, we may well be astonished at the words which I now quote as they are recorded in the 14th chapter of John, 12th verse: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also." Plain words. I do not see how words could be plainer.

It seems to be only a question as to whether we shall accept them or reject them. We might well suppose that when Jesus had made so startling a declaration he would have ceased. We might well suppose that when he had in terms of such solemnity and plainness declared that those who believe on him should do the great works that he did, he would have reached the utmost limit of mankind's hopes and expectations and possibilities. But he did not stop there. He went further and uttered these yet more astonishing words: "And greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father."

"Because I go unto the Father," as he here says, "and lo, I am with you

the very sentence in which occur the words relating to preaching. Yet we have been taught to believe that while a part of this commandment was intended for all times and all peoples, another part was intended only for a particular time and a particular people. In other words, that the part relating to preaching the gospel was to be handed down to all the nations of the world, until the heathen nations should be converted to the Christian religion. But that the part relating to healing the sick and doing the other works mentioned was intended only for the time of Jesus and his disciples. Or, in yet other words, the theoretical part was to be perpetuated, but the practical part, the doing of the work, was to be relegated to the dead ages of the past, left away back beside the sea of Galilee. Christian Scientists cannot agree to this attempt to cut out or make obsolete this part of the great commandment. Had they no other authority than this which I have quoted, they would feel compelled to maintain that this commandment has not been fully complied with, and shall not be fully complied with, until the sick are healed and the other works mentioned therein accomplished, in accordance with the teachings and methods of the founder of the Christian religion. But they are not compelled to rest upon this alone. This commandment is substantially reiterated in the other gospels. I shall not now stop to notice these particularly, but I do desire to call your attention to another commandment which Jesus gave to his disciples, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. After his crucifixion, and just before his ascension, he gave to those disciples a final commandment which is recorded at the close of the book of Matthew. I ask your attention to its plainness as well as to its sweeping character:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

This language is plain and unqualified. If we accept it for what it distinctly says we must conclude that it embraces all of that first great commandment, as well as all of any commandment or instructions given by Jesus to his disciples. Without wishing to criticize or condemn the views of others, I must frankly say that I do not see how any one can read these plain words and give them a moment's thought and continue longer to think or to say or believe that any part of the first commandment or of any commandment ever given by Jesus to his disciples was to be put aside or to become obsolete. Especially so when we consider the closing words of the final commandment. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

In direct connection with Jesus' first great commandment and his final commandment, I desire to call your attention to one more declaration made by the Founder of the Christian religion—and it will be observed that with the exception of the 139th Psalm I have quoted exclusively from the teachings of the Founder of the Christian religion, and this ought to be good authority for all professing Christians.

When we think of all the great works that Jesus did during his earthly career, how he overcame and destroyed all kinds of sin, how he healed all manner of sickness and disease, how he raised the dead, how he walked the waves and stilled the tempest, and how he did many other wonderful works, I say, when we think of this, and view things from the standpoint of our limited mortal senses, we may well be astonished at the words which I now quote as they are recorded in the 14th chapter of John, 12th verse: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also." Plain words. I do not see how words could be plainer.

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always, even unto the end of the world," as he says at the close of his final commandment. If these words are true, we must believe that the Christ power and the Christ spirit were never withdrawn from this world. Jesus went unto the Father, into a better understanding of the divine law whereby he did his mighty works upon the earth, and by virtue of which those who believe on him were to do not only the works that he did, but greater. Here, I say, is Jesus' great commandment to his disciples. Christian Scientists are not responsible for it, Mrs. Eddy did not write it. It stood unrepealed, unchanged, unmodified, long ages before her birth, long ages before the birth of anyone claiming the name of Christian Science today. We are not responsible for it, but we are responsible, together with all other professing Christians, for either accepting or rejecting these plain teachings.

Again, in Mark 16th we read: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Jesus read from the Prophet Isaiah the following concerning his mission:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

This is a clear and comprehensive declaration of the mission of the Christ. We see from what has been quoted that this mission, in its mighty entirety, was passed on to Jesus' disciples, by them to be handed down to all nations. There is no escape from this conclusion when we group together the sayings of the Master, and give them their plain and unmistakable meaning.

It is a matter of history that for three hundred years after the inauguration of the Christian era the sick were healed by the early Christians without resort to material means or remedies. Gibbon, in his history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, treats elaborately of this subject under the head of the early Christians. He cites instances of persons, some of them well known Romans high in official authority, who were healed of diseases pronounced incurable by the then physicians, through the ministrations of the early Christians. In this he does not stand alone; he is corroborated by other authentic historians. Then there are the writings of the early Christian Fathers, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, as they are called; they wrote exhaustively upon this subject, going into minute details as to the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead by the early Christians. Their writings constitute a library of themselves. They are yet extant. I am the possessor of a set of them and have read them with much interest and profit in the connection here mentioned. It is matter of church history also that a number of the Christian sects in their earlier church life, were believers in the efficacy of prayer alone to heal the sick, and practiced such prayer. This is true of the Waldenses, of the Moravians, of the Huguenots, of the Friends or Quakers, of the Baptists, and of the Methodists. According to the life of Martin Luther, he was a believer in the power of prayer to heal sickness and more or less practiced it. According to the life of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, he for many years was a firm believer in the direct power of God to heal the sick, through the efficacy of prayer, and practiced it not only for himself, but for others.

An instance is related where he restored himself to health almost immediately from a severe fever which had hung upon him for several days by asking God's direct help, and by revolving in his mind and contemplating some of the very scriptural passages to which I have called your attention. It is also matter of record in connection with the Methodist Episcopal church that when the bishops of that denomination are ordained they are instructed, among other things, to heal the sick, not as educated physicians, nor with drugs and medicines, but by virtue of their office.

Does this plain Biblical authority, with its corroborative history, both sacred and secular, count for nothing now? Has it no meaning for use today? Had it no meaning for those preceding us? Have we a right to wipe it all out, or to declare it obsolete? Let us think a moment. If the contention to which I have referred was true, namely, that a part of Jesus' great commandment has become obsolete, then it is mere dead letter and each of us would have a right at pleasure to take pen and ink and blot it

out. We surely have the same right to blot it out physically that we have to blot it out mentally. Christian Scientists do not admit this right nor seek to exercise it.

JESUS HEALING THE SICK.

A few words as to Jesus' healing of the sick. Often when he healed a sick person he said to him in substance: "Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you." When he healed the man sick of the palsy he said to him: "My son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." He evidently recognized a connection between some kind of sin this man had been committing and the sickness which was upon him, but he did not denounce the poor fellow because he was sick as the result of his sins; he made no threats of eternal punishment toward him, nor did he pronounce upon him a verdict of incurability or of death. He did nothing to frighten, but everything to encourage him. He bade him be of good cheer, and at the same time he pronounced his sins forgiven, he declared his sickness healed, and told him to arise, take up his bed and go into his house, which he did. In recognizing the fact that sin was the cause of much of the sickness of his time, to say the least, Jesus was only recognizing that of which we are bound to take notice today, if we take notice of anything. Had we the power now, and did we exercise it, to remove from the world all the sickness and disease, the sorrow, grief, woe, suffering and death resulting from some kind of sinful, or wrongful, or foolish living, we would thereby almost literally have verified the possibility of doing the works that Jesus said must be done by those who believe on him. Take the great sin, the stupendous folly, of intemperance, the excessive use of intoxicating liquors; had we the power this moment to remove from the world all the sickness, disease, sorrow, grief, woe, suffering, poverty and death resulting from this one form of sinful or foolish living, we would thereby almost have transformed this earth into a paradise. I refer to these because they stand out conspicuously. We know them to be prolific sources of many kinds of sickness and all the consequences thereof. There are other causes of a mental character such as mental worry or stress, anxiety, discouragement and melancholia, with their long train of physical disorders which our human wisdom is pleased to call physical diseases. Take the business world; how many men and women become sick, and how many die as the result of business worry and disappointment and discouragement and defeat, and how many seek to escape from their sufferings through suicide.

The Christian Scientist, in his analysis of the causes of sickness, goes further and tells you that there are yet other causes, mental in origin, such as anger and malice and hatred and jealousy, and the spirit of revenge and kindred mental qualities. We know that people sometimes get sick and sometimes die in fits of passion. These other qualities harbored are not less harmful, and if they be not overcome, sooner or later manifest themselves in the form of so-called physical diseases. Having thus briefly referred to the causes of sickness and its consequences, what shall we say of the real remedy therefor? Can we hope for final and radical healing of sickness and disease resulting directly or indirectly from the causes referred to, through any power or efficacy contained in inanimate drugs? Can the drug enter human thought and regulate wrong conditions there? Can it destroy wrong mental appetites and desires? If it could do this it would be both powerful and intelligent. If it could really heal under such circumstances it would be the very god that some honest people believe it to be. And what shall we say of surgery? Can the surgeon's knife cut out wrong mental conditions or remove wrong appetites and passions? The utmost that is claimed for it is that it may in some cases remove the physical effects of these. In saying this, I wish to cast no reflections upon the professions of medicine and surgery. From their standpoint they are doing the best they can. Their purpose is right, for it is to alleviate human suffering and stay the ravages of diseases; but allowing to these professions all the credit to which they can possibly be entitled, the question recurs, and to those who are at all awakened to this great question, keeps recurring, and like Banquo's ghost, will not down at their bidding, can inert drugs and medicines or the surgeon's knife really heal diseases which are the result of wrong thoughts, wrong mental conditions, or wrong habits of thinking?

In speaking of sin and its consequences