

## A Higher and More Practical Christianity

Thank you very much, Mrs. Cook. I'm always very moved when I think of the dedication and love that are involved in maintaining a facility like Daystar. I think of the many people who are giving metaphysical and financial support. I think of the Board, the staff, the nurses and the consecration of the patients working to demonstrate the healing power of Christian Science. So I'm very grateful to be able to take part in this meeting and consider ways to make the work that we all do more effective.

In thinking about this subject of a higher and more practical Christianity I recall what a businessman said to me once, "I want to know more about the rules of Christian Science." He's successful in his work and no doubt he's used to following certain definite procedures. I'm sure he wanted to know how he could be more systematic in Christian Science.

I've thought a lot about his question since then. We do want to know how to get even more effective results.

Mrs. Eddy felt the same way. She looked for definite rules. She tells us this in the textbook. She says, "Our Master healed the sick, practised Christian healing, and taught the generalities of its

divine Principle to his students; but he left no definite rule for demonstrating this Principle of healing and preventing disease. This rule remained to be discovered in Christian Science." (S&H 147:24)

Why do we have this special emphasis in Christian Science on spiritual healing? Why is it so important? If you're sick, healing is very important to you! But why is it important to heal through *spiritual* means? Most people seem content to use ordinary material means.

We could give several reasons. We might say we use spiritual means because we feel they're more dependable and there's no risk of harmful side effects like medical treatment often has. We could say that spiritual means are always available. They're as close as our own thinking. We use spiritual means because they uplift us. We feel close to God, close to the source of our being. We feel comforted. We feel a firm foundation for our life.

These are all good reasons. But there's an even more important reason. Spiritual healing verifies the truth about you as God's expression, as an individual consciousness, including all the attributes of God. In spiritual healing you're not trying to adjust a physical body. You're replacing a

mistaken material concept of the body with a truthful view of the body. The rules for healing all help us to accept this truthful view. Rules are information. They correct the misinformation that gets us into trouble.

Each of you here as dedicated Christian Scientists have applied these rules and you've felt your unity with divine Love and Life and Spirit. You've had those wonderful times when Love's qualities took the place of hatred and resentment. You've felt spiritual harmony taking the place of sickness and pain. You've felt the inspiration of Soul lifting you out of depression or hopelessness. You've seen the abundance of Spirit take the place of lack or limitation. Through your prayer and spiritualized thinking, you've broken through false beliefs that would try to obscure God's reality from you. You've proved these beliefs to be falsehoods by finding the substance of reality in their place.

Think of what it would be like to have this awareness of God's reality at all times! Christ Jesus had this continual awareness. That's why he's our example. He was able to see the spiritual substance of health in place of paralysis, leprosy, blindness, deafness, deformity -- even death itself. He saw spiritual abundance in providing food and money to pay his taxes. Maybe his solutions seem unusual to

us today, but they did show his ability to see beyond conventional material beliefs of limitation.

Jesus had to overcome hatred, too. Of course, he had many close relationships -- his disciples, his family, the family of Martha and Mary and Lazarus. He felt the affection of multitudes of people. But he also ran into bitter resistance and hostility. Just think of the enormous amount of love he had to have in order to continue his mission in spite of the world's hostility! We can never be grateful enough for the sacrifice he made on our behalf. His enormous love diffused the hatred that put him on the cross and he proved for us that Life cannot be extinguished.

Jesus gave us many rules to help us. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with these rules. Each one is designed to expand our thought about ourselves, to help us understand our totally spiritual nature. Jesus didn't explain it that way at the time. In fact he told his disciples he had many things to tell them, but they could not bear them now. (See John 16:12) The Comforter, Christian Science, would give this ultimate spiritual significance.

For instance he gave this rule in the Sermon on the Mount, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." (Matt. 6:25) People

have challenged such statements of Jesus as being impractical and unrealistic. And if we were to take this literally, we could run into a lot of trouble. The supermarkets would probably close and we might get pretty hungry. The clothing stores wouldn't do so well either. Even the nurses at Daystar might not have much to do in caring for their patients.

Of course, this is absurd and most people understand that Jesus means take no *anxious* thought about the body. The Revised English Bible brings this out. It quotes him as saying: "I tell you not to be anxious about food and drink to keep you alive and about clothes to cover your body." Jesus was assuring them that God would supply their needs. This is a basic, Christian concept. Trust God. Christians have practiced this trust through the centuries with great benefit.

But what about the higher and more practical Christianity that Mrs. Eddy says "stands at the door of this age, knocking for admission?" (S&H 224:24) Trusting God is helpful, but what will make this trust even more effective? Wouldn't it be really to see God as pure Spirit, infinite and everywhere present, and to see man as a spiritual consciousness forever reflecting every idea that divine Mind conceives?

Here's how Mrs. Eddy puts this rule of Jesus into more metaphysical terms. She writes, "Look away from the body into Truth and Love, the Principle of all happiness, harmony, and immortality." (S&H 260:2) How faithful are we in looking away from the body and looking to God as the Principle or source of our happiness, harmony and immortality? A woman told me the other day she was about to go out to a concert. She looked in the mirror and thought to herself: "I look pretty good." She'd been having trouble with her eating and she saw she'd regained some of the weight she'd lost. During the evening it occurred to her what she'd done. She'd turned away from the spiritual view of herself that had brought about her healing. Does this mean we're not supposed to be grateful for improved physical conditions or for an attractive appearance? Not at all. But we need to back up our gratitude, as this woman did, with the perception of what body truly is -- the radiant reflection of God's nature. Develop this higher view of body. The textbook tells us we can. It says, "The crude creations of mortal thought must finally give place to the glorious forms which we sometimes behold in the camera of divine Mind, when the mental picture is spiritual and eternal." (S&H

264:3) <sup>Keep</sup> ~~Continue~~ looking for these more glorious forms.

When I was studying the many references where Mrs. Eddy speaks of rules, I was interested to see that she uses the word rule in <sup>a broad sense in</sup> ~~both~~ the singular and the plural <sup>for specific applications.</sup> according to the need. For instance, she uses the word rule in the <sup>broad sense</sup> ~~singular~~ in the passage I quoted earlier that Jesus "left no definite rule for demonstrating this Principle of healing and preventing disease. This rule remained to be discovered in Christian Science." ~~She uses the singular word rule in this way in a number of places.~~ What is the rule that remained to be discovered in Christian Science? Wouldn't it be to reverse material thinking and see the fact of perfect God and perfect man, wholly spiritual, with no opposite or opposing power? A rule is a guide for action. But a rule is also a dividing line between the true and the false. A line of demarcation between the real and the unreal. The rule in Christian Science rules out error or the unreal.

Mrs. Eddy uses the word *rules* in the plural to show us specific ways that we divide the real from the unreal. With both Jesus and Mrs. Eddy the rules lead us to understand our true spiritual being more clearly. Take Jesus' rule, "Don't be anxious about food and drink." Doesn't this rule

point to the ultimate fact that we are spiritual and complete, an infinite, compound idea of God, nourished fully and forever by divine Mind? Even though Jesus didn't state these absolute spiritual facts, he had to know them. Otherwise, how could he have been so convinced of God's total provision for the human need? How could he have overcome material laws of limitation in feeding the multitude unless he knew that man was already spiritual and complete? This understanding was evident when he healed physical disease without any material means? He had to see ultimate spiritual perfection to offset the evidence of the so-called material senses.

Jesus gave rules to cover just about every kind of human situation: faithfulness in marriage, attitudes in prayer, forgiving our enemies, dividing an inheritance. It's intriguing to take the various rules that Jesus set forth and see how they lead us to our higher, perfect spiritual being. For instance, he said don't be angry with your brother. This can open up all kinds of spiritual truths. Ask yourself questions. Why should I avoid anger against someone? Isn't it because I'd deprive myself of the peace and the happiness that God has given me? Isn't it also because I have a mission to bring intelligent solutions to troubled situations? And

isn't it because love is the very nature of my being as the expression of God who is infinite Love? These are a few of the metaphysical reasons for rejecting anger. You can come up with many more, and each one will elevate your concept of yourself and the dominion God has given you. When you think this way, what happens to the offense that caused the anger? I don't know what will happen to it. But God knows, and Principle will bring about the solution for the offender and the offended in a way that will be most progressive for everyone.

It's interesting in considering this subject of rules: There's no set pattern. Maybe this is why Mrs. Eddy put a By-law in the Church Manual entitled, Formulas Forbidden. (Manual 43:5) Rules aren't just a set of words or a mechanical procedure.. Each situation is strictly individual. It requires an original, spontaneous application of thought. If I were answering my friend the businessman today, I'd probably to say to him that rules give us guidelines, but the power lies in understanding the substance behind the rules and the spiritual goal they help us reach.

I have to think here of the familiar story of the Prodigal Son. The older brother followed all the rules, but he didn't get the substance of them. The younger brother broke all the rules, but he learned

the substance of them. He learned them the hard way and eventually we all have to learn the substance of God's rules. Christian Science helps us learn them through prayer and study and deep thinking. Then we can cut down on the suffering part and have more fun while we're learning them, too.

In regard to physical healing, Jesus stated an important rule when Jairus, the synagogue ruler, came asking help for his daughter who was dying. Jesus said, "Be not afraid, only believe." (Mark 5:36) Mrs. Eddy cites this rule in the textbook under the heading Mental Treatment Illustrated. She writes, "Christian Scientific practice begins with Christ's keynote of harmony, "Be not afraid!" (S&H 410:29) And she adds, "Always begin your treatment by allaying the fear of patients." (S&H 411:27) Why is it so important to counteract fear? Because the only reality of any disease is the false belief in it. Disease does not exist. Man is spiritual and perfect now. Fear is the acceptance of the false belief. At times we may think to ourselves, "I'm not afraid of such and such a disease." Maybe we view it as minor or something that naturally goes away. But Mrs. Eddy is speaking here of Christian Scientific practice. She tells us, "Fear, which is an element of all disease, must be cast out to readjust

the balance for God." (S&H 392:5) We cannot ignore this rule. Human bravado is not Christian practice. But understanding why we don't need to be afraid is Christian practice.

What are some of the reasons that we can reject fear of disease? If we're going to readjust the balance for God, as Mrs. Eddy says, we might start out by seeing God as the universal divine Mind, the only Mind. This Mind is the source of all our thoughts, so there's no place where fearful thoughts could come from. Since God is infinite Mind, He's too intelligent to allow anything imperfect or destructible. We might also see that because divine Mind is our creator, rather than a mortal parent, we can't inherit any congenital problems. We are not mortals thinking spiritual ideas. We are the compound idea itself, conscious of all that this Mind includes. As an idea we exist independent of time. So we never began in a mortal state that would be subject to disease or aging or mortality in any form.

We also might want to clear out some other so-called producers of fear. What about the material evidence of the disease or the argument that many other people have had the disease? What about the medical theories, diagnoses and prognoses? Aren't

all of these trying to take God out of the balance and put another power in place of God.

Jesus gave one rule that he said stood out above all the rest. It was a quotation from the Old Testament. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matt. 22:37) What does it mean to love God so completely? Does it mean we have to forsake all the people and things in our life that we cherish? No. It means that we have to elevate everything in our life and see everything as the emanation of God, Spirit. It means we must absolutely desire nothing that doesn't reflect the Life, the Truth, the Love that are God? This may seem like a tall order, but it's actually what we want to gain more than anything else.

Everything that God gives is good. Why wouldn't we want health that expresses the eternality and buoyancy of divine Life? Why wouldn't we want a consciousness that sees only what is real and truthful? Why wouldn't we want relationships based on the unselfishness and the constancy of divine Love? What would prevent us from accepting these?

Isn't it the deceptiveness of what we call the carnal mind, --that is, the supposition of a mind other than the divine Mind?

*Saying that everything is material?*

this deception? By paying attention to the rules given in the Bible and in Christian Science and deepening our understanding of them. Each one points to the ~~true~~<sup>spiritual</sup> concept of ourselves.

Look for these rules. You'll find them on practically every page of the textbook. I thought I'd try to pick some examples. I was practically overwhelmed! I didn't realize how *many* rules there are. Here are just a few. "Decide quickly as to the proper treatment of error." "The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, -- receptive to Truth and Love." "If we would open their prison doors for the sick, we must first learn to bind up the broken-hearted." "In order to cure his patient, the metaphysician must first cast moral evils out of himself and thus attain the spiritual freedom which will enable him to cast physical evils out of his patient." "Stand porter at the door of thought." "Judge not the future advancement of Christian Science by the steps already taken, lest you yourself be condemned for failing to take the first step." "Both sexes should be loving, pure, tender and strong." "Let us ... shape our views of existence into loveliness, freshness, and continuity, rather than into age and blight." "Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good." Each rule provides

information about the magnificence of your being, guides you to broaden your vision of yourself, expands immeasurably your dominion and your joy.

Our theme today has been a higher and more practical Christianity. We've dealt with a higher Christianity by showing how the rules set forth by Jesus and Mrs. Eddy lead us to the ideal of a total spiritual reality. What about a more practical Christianity? So often when people talk about making something practical, they mean making it material. Actually, being practical means finding our way out of materiality with its limitations, disappointments and suffering. So how does this spiritual elevation of thought translate into meeting the needs of mortals in sickness and in health, as the theme of our meeting states? In other words how do these spiritual facts affect our human lives which seem so material? This would be a hard question to answer if there were two realities -- a spiritual reality and a material reality. But there are not two realities. There's just one: the spiritual or divinely mental. What appears to be a material world and body is an inaccurate, limited view of the wonderful universe of ideas that make up our real identity. Mrs. Eddy explains it this way: "Every material belief hints the existence of spiritual reality; and if mortals are instructed in spiritual

things, it will be seen that material belief, in all its manifestations, reversed, will be found the type and representative of verities priceless, eternal, and just at hand." (Mis. 60:28)

You're not going to become *more* spiritual. You already are spiritual. But you're going to discover more about what spirituality means as a light in your life. You'll continue to apply the spiritual rules more fully and you'll continue to bring this spiritual encouragement and joy to others. This is a higher and more practical Christianity.