

April 11th, 2005 — Subject: Doctrine of Atonement

DEAR FRIENDS: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is an Article by Frank Bishop.

HAVE BUT ONE FEAR

Frank G. Bishop

The only fear which man is spiritually justified in having is the fear of God. And this fear should not be a dread or uneasy feeling about Deity, but should be an awe or reverence of God. The latter was a definition of the word fear that was commonly employed during the time when the King James translation of the Holy Scriptures was made from their original languages into English.

A reverence for God comes from understanding the allness, goodness, purity, and sovereign power of the creator of the universe. Reverence is a deep love for God, a veneration of His omnipotence and omnipresence. Reverence must necessarily include a feeling of closeness to God, a realization that He is the cause of our being as the Psalmist proclaimed: "Know ye that the Lord is God: it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves." (Ps 100:3)

Denial of Oneness

Even though we may have a keen recognition of God's might, any sense we entertain in consciousness that we are separated from the power and harmony of God, divine Love, is an erosion of reverence. Such is a claim that man, an idea of God, is not in the infinite Mind (the singular Consciousness of the universe) and that man can be separated from the allness of God. Thus a lack of reverence for God is really a denial of man's oneness with God.

Belief in Matter Brings Fear

Fear in the mode of English spoken today is usually an uneasy or mentally uncomfortable feeling. It is a restless sense, an anticipation

of danger, loss, or deprivation. Matter is commonly claimed to be the substance of the world and the universe. This concept of substance occasions much fear, either due to the belief of lacking enough high quality matter, the presence of too much matter, the supply of matter is being dissipated or is undergoing decay, or that matter is present in some objectionable or fearful form.

A careful examination of the so-called substance-in-matter theory needs to be made to determine the nature of fear's foundation. Materialism and all of the other *isims*, which derive from a belief in matter need to be evaluated for their avowed validity. In *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*, a textbook that deals more summarily with matter and concerns about it than any other work, its author, Mary Baker Eddy, writes: "Matter disappears under the microscope of Spirit." (S&H 264:21)

Matter Is Not Found

Under the focus of such an all-powerful force as Spirit, matter is found not to be an entity or reality but only a belief or a misconception of being. It is therefore pointless to study matter under a less powerful microscope or telescope than Spirit to determine its real nature or makeup of existence.

The author of the Christian Science textbook also makes this uncompromising statement about the nature of matter: "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter." (S. & H. 468:9) If this statement is accepted to be true, then matter has no ability to produce feeling, no validity or power to govern feeling, no intelligence to transmit feeling, and no substance to sustain feeling.

Condition

Thus fear is seen to be a substanceless feeling, a non-entity that can only be classified as a belief. Fear is nothing more than a suggestion, which attempts to authenticate itself by claiming to be a condition. With error or evil under this masquerade, the medical faculty and others are prone to consider inharmony in the body as a condition, to diagnose and analyze the condition, to deliberate over the condition, to lament about the condition, and to treat the condition as being real without a firm conviction that the condition can be changed.

Mrs. Eddy states in her Miscellaneous Writings collection: "Divine Love, as unconscious as incapable of error pursues the evil that hideth itself,

strips off its disguises, and — behold the result: evil, uncovered, is self-destroyed.” (Mis. 209:32) When error’s mask is uncovered, its most prevalent identity is seen to be fear—

false
evidence
appearing
real

an erroneous suggestion. The other identities of error are ignorance, sin, disease, and death. In the Christian Science textbook Mrs. Eddy tells us: “The procuring cause and foundation of all sickness is fear, ignorance, or sin.” (S&H 411:20) This triad of error, unless uncovered and destroyed, crowns its achievement with death— the ultimate false condition.

Always Allay Fear

In the chapter entitled “Christian Science Practice” in the textbook Mrs. Eddy gives this fundamental rule for Christian Science treatment: “Always begin your treatment by allaying the fear of patients.” (S&H 411:27) Later she describes the results of this removal: “If you succeed in wholly removing the fear, your patient is healed.” (S&H 411:32)

Most all great leaders and movers of world thought have had to cope with fear, handle it, recognize its assumed threat and importance, and destroy it in the consciousness of those who entertained it. Moses, a shepherd at the time, was called upon by God to lead the Israelites from their sordid Egyptian captivity and expressed fears of inadequacy, lack of authority, and possible outright rejection by the Israelites.

Moses Met Fear

However, Moses was directed by God to handle the error typified by a serpent and was told to throw down his rod, a sheep-herding tool. When Moses obeyed the divine directive, his rod assumed the appearance of a serpent. Fear then seized him, and he retreated from the serpentine appearance. But God directed him to “Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail” (Ex 4:5-6) — a procedure which venomous snake handlers would strongly caution against.

Moses was obedient, however, in following the divine direction of handling this serpent threat, and it became again a rod in his hand. This victory of handling fear through obedience to God became a rod on

which Moses relied in meeting the many challenges of fear which he had to face and conquer in the exodus of the Israelites from their material bondage and their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness until his followers mustered the courage to enter the land which God had promised to them.

Perfect Love

In his first general letter to the early Christians, the Apostle John wrote: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." (4:18) This perfect love involves our recognition of our constant oneness with God, the all powerful, all protecting, and all directing divine Love. This removes the temptation to entertain a fear of any condition, any thought, any force, any power, any environment, any ism, any disguise of error, or anything that is unlike God.

Fear destroyed is an experience of love in divine Love.



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