

October 13, 2003—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 a portion of **DISSOLVING BARRIERS—The healing work of Christian Science — Part IV**, by John L. Morgan.

All that any one of us knows and understands about Christian Science comes direct from God. As students of the Word of God, the Bible and Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy are our guides. Mrs Eddy says of the textbook that it “contains the full statement of Christian Science, or the Science of healing through Mind” (S&H 456:28).

For many years we have heard people say such things as: Science and Health is too difficult and abstract, give me something simpler and relevant; or they ask: What is the basis for your attitude that this book has divine authority, spiritual sanctity, and a healing effect?

Christian Science teaches that healing is as possible today as it was in Jesus’ time. Jesus healed by knowing the divine Principle of wholeness; and this knowledge was not something exclusive to Jesus and his immediate followers. When one investigates this barrier that so many people believe is between themselves and the message of Science and Health, one finds that the book is not seen first as a textbook to be read from beginning to end before being used as a reference book. The Bible is so often treated in a similar piecemeal way. The power of these books lies in their coherently integrated wholeness. It is only from the standpoint of the whole that a detail remains valid and powerful and not self-contradictory and self-destructive.

In Christian Science we refer to the Bible and Science and Health as our twin textbooks. The latter shows us why the former is truly the ‘book of life.’ When Mrs Eddy discontinued personal pastors (including herself) in the churches she ordained the Bible and Science and Health to take their place, calling them “Your dual and impersonal pastor” (Mis 322:10). She said in an article called “Science and Philosophy,” “I foresee and foresay that every advancing epoch of Truth will be characterized by a more spiritual apprehension of the Scriptures, that will show their marked consonance with the textbook of Christian Science Mind-healing, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” (Mis 363:30). On another occasion, in a letter to a New York newspaper, Mrs Eddy said, “Christian Science presents the demonstrable divine Principle and rules of the Bible, hitherto undiscovered in the translations of the Bible and lacking in the creeds” (My 299:13). In no place in her writings does she indicate that Science and Health supercedes the Bible, supplements or replaces it. Indeed its full title, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures clearly states its relationship.

If we are seriously interested in any subject, we are prepared to go further than listening to lectures or asking questions about it, and we naturally turn to a textbook in order to make the elements of the subject clear. So what is the Christian Science textbook about? There is no quicker way of getting to the heart of what a book is about than to scan the Contents page. This is also the way that one sees the whole picture in one glance. So let us now look at the Contents page itself.

PREFACE

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KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES

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What can we learn from our first glance at this table of contents? We note that there are eighteen chapters and that the last four are headed Key to the Scriptures. (There are also seven hundred pages, so it is a long book.) There is first a PREFACE which introduces us to the twin points that dominate the book: the fact that God can be understood aright, and that healing power follows from this understanding.

Chapter I is PRAYER. All our work in spiritual things naturally begins with prayer. There is the hunger of the human heart for God, — there is the deep desire to know what reality is, what substance is. But what are we really praying for? Prayer is sometimes an earnest request for health or a blessing or for well-being. But when we look further into this question we realize that what we are fundamentally praying for is something much deeper: surely it is for our conscious union with God, with our divine source. Isn't this the basic longing? The Lord's Prayer, common to us all, begins with the words, Our Father, words that are both comforting and express the nature of what we are seeking. "Prayer is our acknowledgement of this desire to be at-one with the divine, with our Parent-source.

The second chapter is ATONEMENT AND EUCHARIST. The word atonement as used in theology means unity, reconciliation, and its derivation is literally at one. At-one-ment therefore is not just a play on words. Some dictionaries even include Mrs Eddy's words, "Atonement is the exemplification of man's unity with God, whereby man reflects divine Truth, Life, and Love" (S&H 18:1). But the chapter is called Atonement and Eucharist, and in this context eucharist focuses on the price we are required to pay to experience at-one-ment. This price is that we have to give up all personal sense of a separate self. Jesus' sinless life depicts the surrender of the mortal sense of a life of one's own; he had no sense of himself as a separate person called Jesus. His divine identity as the Christ was his whole being; it demonstrated man reunited with, or reconciled to, God.

Our prayer for the at-one-ment of humanity with divinity leads us to the third chapter, MARRIAGE. What “God hath joined together” is the true human and the divine — the manhood and womanhood of God. Our humanity is found to be in wedlock with our divinity. All there is to you and me engaged in our rightful activities is the divine operating as you and me. So there is a beautiful state of marriage, when the divine is operating not through us but as us.

The fourth chapter is CHRISTIAN SCIENCE VERSUS SPIRITUALISM and it handles the belief of mediumship in any form. If you think of God working through a person He is requiring a medium, but if you think of God operating as what is called you and me, that is what is meant by the term Christian Science. We are not persons who have to take the ideas of God and do something with them, rather we are the direct operating of these ideas of God. Just as when we are honest, or intelligent, or loving, these qualities operate as you and me, not through us as persons. A Christian is not someone with a will of his own, he is a spiritual Scientist. There is not really a person in the picture; there is only the direct operation of God. It is this that uncovers or unmask the lie or false influence.

The fifth chapter is ANIMAL MAGNETISM UNMASKED. Animal magnetism is the term used in Christian Science to denote all error, but essentially the error of personal sense, personal will. It is this that keeps all humanity in bondage. Christian Science unmask this attempted personal despotic control of man and shows that animal magnetism has no power of its own and no authority. Unmasking this error at the same time reveals the truth in our hearts and lives that “man is properly self-governed only when he is guided rightly and governed by his Maker, divine Truth and Love” (106:9). This is God’s man. This is a real Christian Scientist.

Chapter six, SCIENCE, THEOLOGY, MEDICINE, is such an encouraging confirmation of this point, for it begins: “In the year 1866, I discovered the Christ Science or divine laws of Life, Truth, and Love” (107:1). It was Mary Baker Eddy who, in making this discovery, named it Christian Science and wrote the textbook. But we can never act with conviction if we merely accept something we have been told, therefore the I that makes the discovery of the divine laws is not only Mary Baker Eddy but is also any student who has been prepared through the steps of the five previous chapters. Unless we make discoveries ourselves, we do not really understand.

The first five chapters enable the student to participate in an orderly way in what Mrs Eddy describes as God’s gracious preparation of the heart and the mind and the life before the discovery of spiritual reality makes sense to us. What really makes sense is this fact that God operates through divine laws, not haphazardly.

The method by which the falsity of material evidence is changed to that of spiritual reality, as we have already seen, is by translation.

At this point the book shows that the divine laws are beginning to pour into our consciousness, leavening, translating and transforming everything. The Science of God and man comes to us as a true theology — “I and my Father are one,” as Jesus defined it — and that conviction medicines or heals the human condition of apparent separation from our Father. Science gives us the Christ view, which heals and changes and resurrects everything in the human. We see evidence of this in the next chapter.

Chapter seven, PHYSIOLOGY, deals first with the physiological sense of body, which we tend to think of as the working of organs and as being subject to disease and death. But as we let that Christ translation come into consciousness and overturn our false conceptions, we experience body, not as organic or physiological, but as the embodying of the activities and faculties and powers of God.

This chapter shows us a transitional stage where the five physical senses yield to God; we learn that Mind, not brain, controls the body. The famous pianist, Ashkenazy, was once asked how it was that he reached the pitch of being able to play music so supremely well. His answer was, 'I practise, and practise, and practise until it is no longer me playing the music but the music playing me.' So you might say that the physiology of Ashkenazy is transformed; it is not him sitting there consciously telling his fingers to do this and that, but the music is pouring through him, as him, translating the personal physical sense of himself. We've all experienced this from time to time in some degree.

The eighth chapter is FOOTSTEPS OF TRUTH. We now realize that these longed-for footsteps to Truth which we are faithfully trying to fulfil are only possible of fulfilment because they are in fact footsteps leading out from Truth. It is a cycle. Perfection may seem to be an absolute goal, an impossible ideal, but these demands of Truth upon us can be fulfilled because our footsteps are actually the footsteps of Truth itself. At the end of this chapter we are told, "The divine demand, 'Be ye therefore perfect,' is scientific, and the human footsteps leading to perfection are indispensable" (253:32).

Chapter nine is CREATION. Our vision is opening to a totally new view or sense of creation. The concept of man cast out of God and having the burden of trying to create is fading. As we saw in the sixth chapter, we are discovering what God has created. "There can be but one creator, who has created all. Whatever seems to be a new creation, is but the discovery of some distant idea of Truth" (263:20). God has not created a *material* universe. The material universe is the shadow of the reality. God is infinitely expressed as spiritual ideas. All that really exists is God in self-expression and our new view of creation is simply that "multitudinous objects of creation, which before were invisible," have suddenly "become visible" (264:14). Because our vision is clearer, we therefore see more. We begin to see creation fulfilled and complete and accomplished *now*.

Chapter ten is SCIENCE OF BEING. The phrase, Science of being, is always spelt with a capital S for Science because it is God's Science, and with a little b for being, because, you might say, it is our being. (The textbook always reserves the capitalized letter for God and the uncapitalized for man as the activity of God.) If Science is the truth of our being and all comes from God, this is the Science of *our* being *God's* Being. God's Being is our very being.

This is a long chapter full of beautiful details of how the divine comes with Christ power to illuminate, and to transform, and to redeem all the details of our human sense of being. It finishes with thirty-two numbered sections, called "the platform." Mrs Eddy introduces this by saying, "When the following platform is understood and the letter and the spirit bear witness, the infallibility of divine metaphysics will be demonstrated" (330:8). The word *platform* is derived from two words, *plat* and *form*, and plat is an interweaving. So the platform offers us interwoven spiritual precepts about the nature of God, the nature of Christ, the nature of the human, and the resolving of the problem of evil. This therefore must be something on which we can safely *stand*.

Chapter eleven is SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. How often we preface what we say with 'but' or 'what about so and so?' This chapter says that we only raise objections if we take things out of their context and regard them as separate objects. By taking ideas away from the oneness of God, out of their real context, they lose their relationship to the whole.

The objections are answered if we view the *parts* of the whole always from within the framework of the divine *whole* itself. So often in life when we find things objectionable it is because we have isolated them from the purpose and meaning of the plan of the universe.

This purpose must be God expressing Himself as man, not man having his own ideals unrelated to God. But if we can reintegrate ourselves with the sense of divine purpose and wholeness—see everything interwoven with everything else—that which objects, or is *objective*, is then seen as part of the whole. It is answered from within, from the *subjective* point of view.

Chapter twelve is CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PRACTICE.

In answering the objections, by putting everything back into God and acknowledging that there is a divine plan where everything relates with everything else, we are in fact practising Christian Science. We are removing the objections of the human mind by working from the unbroken wholeness of being, seeing everything slotted back into its proper place and value in the divine purpose and plan.

“Christian Science Practice” is a long and very practical healing chapter, finishing with an allegorical account of a law case. The prisoner on trial is accused of transgressing the laws of matter. He has watched with and tended a sick friend, but in doing this he has broken the laws of health that claim to govern the material body. This is his crime and he is condemned to death. But then permission is obtained for a retrial in the Court of Spirit. Christian Science, appearing as counsel for the defence, argues for man’s freedom under the law of God. God’s law liberates him from the bogus laws of mortality. The law case finishes with the commanding sentence, “Christian Scientists, be a law to yourselves that mental malpractice cannot harm you either when asleep or when awake” (442:30). Be a law to yourselves!

Chapter thirteen, TEACHING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE, tells us where to turn *for* our teaching, how to be taught of God and not depend on man for instruction. It is about the ethics of how we handle each other; we do not stand as a person telling other people what to know, believe, or do. Rather we encourage them to be taught of God, by turning to the books. It is a lovely delicate chapter. Teaching relates to education, and the word education comes from the Latin *educare*, meaning to lead out, educe. All good education is drawing out, or leading out the individuality that God has already planted. We are therefore concerned with giving birth to ourselves out of the very nature of God. So it is not surprising to find near the end of the chapter that wonderful paragraph with the marginal heading, “Scientific obstetrics.”

Chapter fourteen is RECAPITULATION. What is it that is coming to birth? What is this nature of God? This chapter is a series of questions and answers. The first is, What is God? The whole chapter is an elaboration of the answer, because that basically is the first and last and only real question. So “Recapitulation” is letting God reveal to us what He is. By the answers to these questions we are being taught of God. The answer to this first question is: “God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite” and then come these seven capitalized terms which have dominated the book throughout, “Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love.”

Every idea that we ever need in the whole of being can be found in those terms. But by having seven capitalized terms, seven names for God, are we not in danger of having seven gods? Therefore the second question asks, “Are these terms synonymous?” The answer in part is, “They are. They refer to one absolute God.” (This is why you will notice that so often we refer to `the synonymous terms for God.’) But we must go further. The next question is, “Is there more than one God or Principle?” And the answer is: “There is not. Principle and its idea is one, and this one is God, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Being, and His reflection is man and the universe.” It is here that we find this statement on which we build our assurance of the inseparability of God and man as our basis of operation Principle and its idea *is* one.

Clearly we have now arrived at a climax in the book and a new section opens consisting of four chapters forming the KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES. The next two chapters have the titles of the first and last books of the Bible.

Chapter fifteen, GENESIS, begins with the story of the seven days of creation showing that the nature of God as sevenfold has in fact always been presented to mankind through the Scriptures. The seven days are the Bible's symbolization of what we call the seven synonymous terms. These days illustrate how the seven terms which are God generate within us the understanding of what those synonyms are. It is like a teacher in a classroom telling the children what the numbers are and then saying that next he will show them what they represent, how to use them, and what to do with them. So the "Genesis" chapter shows us how the divine sevenfold nature of God unfolds itself in human life, regenerating our conception of ourselves, so that we are no longer born of Adam and Eve, or of Darwin's theory of evolution, but we are really consciously born of God right where material evolution seems to be. The sevenfold generative nature of God exposes the unreality of the Adam story in which mortals seem to have originated.

Chapter sixteen, THE APOCALYPSE, now transforms our sense of the *ultimate*, "Genesis" having transformed our sense of *origin*. From the book of Revelation in the Bible the textbook extracts just a handful of verses. They introduce the angel with the little book, the God-crowned woman symbolizing man generically, and show how the problem of evil, or the great red dragon, is finally resolved when we let the holy city come down from God into consciousness. This chapter comes to its climax in this four-sided holy city, called in the textbook language, the Word, Christ, Christianity, and Science. The Bible begins with "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It ends with the Revelator saying "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev 21:1,2). This sixteenth chapter ends with the twenty-third Psalm, which is the state of divine consciousness that John finally depicts. Mrs Eddy substitutes the word LOVE for the Bible words, The Lord, "substituting for the corporeal sense, the incorporeal or spiritual sense of Deity" (578:2).

There, then, are the sixteen main textual chapters. They can be to proceed in groups of four: First we pray for our unity with the divine. As we begin to give up a sense of a separate self we begin to experience our at-one-ment. We then find we are married to the divine and the divine operates as the human not *through* a person. In these first four chapters our searching has begun to reveal the oneness of God and man.

In the second group, personal sense, or animal magnetism, is unmasked as the problem of evil, and simultaneously we discover the Christ laws which translate everything in the human. The true human is seen to be the Christ-self that was exemplified as the Christ-Jesus. We are not left with a physiological concept of person as body, but as the very embodying of God, and our footsteps are found to be those of Truth itself. In this group, because we have begun to discover the nothingness of evil, we can start to translate our view of the world.

A third group follows where our vision is opened to a new sense of creation and we see God is in fact our very being. This interwoven wholeness answers our objections. Christian Science is practising us. In this third group of chapters we are now seeing that we are the actual demonstrating of God.

The fourth group gives us the Science that underlies the first twelve - that which makes them happen. "Teaching Christian Science" explains that God, not person, is our teacher.

“Recapitulation” draws out of us, by question and answer, what God is and how God operates. Then the first two chapters of KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES show us this same story in the Bible. In “Genesis” the seven days of creation symbolize what God is and in “The Apocalypse” the four-sided city symbolizes God in operation.

There are two final chapters - part also of the Key to the Scriptures. Chapter seventeen is GLOSSARY. The light of the previous chapters has shown us “that the substitution of the spiritual for the material definition . . . [gives us the] spiritual sense, which is also [the] original *meaning*” (579:1). “Glossary” shows how this divine activity has always been at work transforming people, events and history, translating them from matter and time to idea, from mortality to immortality. This chapter, through Scriptural characters like Abel and Abraham or symbols like river and wind, illustrates the working of the spiritual idea. Most of the definitions are worded in both a positive and a negative way, showing how the spiritual idea works - you let the divine pour into consciousness, you let it lodge there, do its own leavening work and it resolves the negative appearance of things. So the whole “Glossary” is built around this concept of how the great spiritual facts of being, when we are aware of them and accept them, translate our mistaken sense of those facts.

To complete the book is chapter eighteen, FRUITAGE. This is what we are all interested in, for “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt 7:20). The chapter contains letters from individuals who have been healed of all sorts of complaints, mostly physical, by the reading of the book. Here we return to the initial point of wholeness: we experience health restored as we accept the book as a whole. The book concludes therefore with evidence of the fact that it is a self-fruiting book, a self-demonstrating textbook.



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