

August 25, 2003—Subject: Christ Jesus

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 from **THE GOSPEL OF MARK—A VERBATIM REPORT OF JOHN MORGAN'S FELIXSTONE SUMMER SCHOOL 1955**. For a brief biography of John Morgan, [click here](#).

Mark's Standpoint

So, to Mark's wonderful Gospel! It is so right that this Gospel should be the shortest of the four, because the whole character of his presentation is crisp, dynamic, and quick and clean as a sword; he wastes no words, but is short and direct and practical and right to the point. As somebody said to me a little while ago, he hits the mark, he makes his mark, and he leaves his mark.

It is helpful to have some idea of the historical background of the story. They say that Mark's Gospel was written in about A.D. 50 and that Mark was the companion of Peter in Rome. When Peter in the very earliest days of Christianity was preaching in Rome, he presented the idea of Christ to the Romans in the way in which they were used to thinking, namely, in terms of what it will do. The Romans were practical people, men of affairs, military conquerors and colonial administrators. Mark stood at Peter's elbow and often heard him preach the Christ and recount the life of Jesus as it had appeared to him; and later, when Peter had gone, the Church persuaded him to write down for posterity the story he had heard so often from Peter. That's why his Gospel is so crisp and practical and clean, and why it spends so little time on teaching. You wouldn't go to a businessman and start to give him something airy and abstract and metaphysical. What he wants to know is, What will it do for me if I buy it? How can I use it, how will it increase my business? And so Mark's presentation is telling us what it will do for us if we buy it, — if we accept it. It's packed full of factual incidents, full of practical and helpful detail.

Dr. Scroggie says an interesting thing in his "A Guide to the Gospels." He writes, "Matthew is methodical and massive. Luke is artistic and graceful. John is abstract and profound. And Mark, in contrast to these, is conversational, colloquial, graphic, concise, abrupt, vigorous, forceful, realistic." Isn't that a lovely sense? Mark is on tiptoe all the way. Now that is just what we would expect. We people have this wonderful privilege of realizing that the four Gospels present the one story of the man Christ Jesus from the four different standpoints, which we call the Word, the Christ, Christianity, and Science. Matthew presents his *story* of the Messiah for the Jews as the king of all they had hoped for; Matthew's Jesus was the fulfillment of the Messianic hope, and his account follows the Word sequence of thought.

Mark presents the same story for the Gentile Romans, from the lips of Peter, with the idea of what it will do for us in practice; his interest is the factual message rather than its theoretical background, and so he presents his Messiah, not as king, but as servant. This is the attitude we call the Christ. Luke, of course, presents his picture not just to the Gentiles, but to the whole world, the universal scholarly or spiritualized thought wherever it is. So he depicts his Messiah as man, — a new conception of man, and a spiritualized or Christianized conception of man.

This represents the Christianity attitude. Finally, John in his Gospel wrote again from an entirely individual standpoint: he wasn't writing for any particular readership, but was recording his story for its own sake, which is always the hallmark of Science; he presents his Messiah as God own expression. Now, out of that, let's recollect that Mark presents the Messiah as the servant, he's writing for the Gentiles, and his standpoint is the Christ.

What, Who, How and Why

Let's put that in our modern idiom. We could say that Matthew answers the question, What? Mark answers the question, Who? Luke answers the question How? And John, in Science, answers the question, Why? Thought in the Word is seeking, and asks, What is God? What is man? What is the story all about? What is the way of Life? and Matthew answers that by unfolding his story through the Word order. Then when we've found out a little about what God is and what man is, the human heart says, Where do I come in this picture? In other words, Who am I? Whose son am I? What or who is my true being, my true sonship, my true identity? All through Mark we get this lovely new Christ sense of who we are. It's a case of, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." It's no longer "Blessed are they," but, "Blessed are ye,"— as you remember the Sermon on the Mount has it where the Word changes into the Christ. Next, in Luke, which is Christianity, that who becomes a larger and more delicate thing, it becomes how. When through the Word we've learnt what we are, and through the Christ we identify ourselves with that and learn who we are, then we come to Christianity and through reflection learn how we be who we are. What we are could merely be written down on a piece of paper, and until that becomes how, or life experience, it might have very little real value. The Word, then, answers what, the Christ answers who, and Christianity answers how; finally, Science, which is divine interpretation, explains all things, and so it answers why.

Human Nature

This lovely question, then, of who: Mark presents our real "wholeness/or whatever it might be; he tells us who is the only person or our real personality; "who" is our real individuality; who is the only Son, - our sonship or manhood; who is our real self and identity; "who" is our real nature; and "who" is our real mentality. One is always struck, when preparing work of this kind, with the enormous number of possibilities and channels that open up in front of one's thought; and one has to resist the temptation to collect everything one has seen and bring it all into one vision, lest we confuse ourselves. It is always possible to take any Gospel in any one of a hundred different ways; I want, this time, to confine myself to one single narrow line of thought so that it will be consistent and easy to understand all the way through, and that line is this aspect of who, man's real nature, the divine Who.

That is what we meant in that circular letter by saying that Mark presents the Christ as the spiritual impulsion that resolves the apparent dualism in humanity, and brings out the fact that man's only nature is divinity. That's really the who. The human "who" in us says, the evil that I would not, that I do; and the good that I would, that I do not. We say, well, you see, that is my nature; or, that's human nature, or the nature of the beast. So in the mortal we start out with the proposition that our "who" or our selfhood is a matter of conflict, that it has an angelic side and a bestial side, that man is at war. This claim is answered so cleanly and dynamically by the Christ in Mark's Gospel. It isn't the picture at all, although it may look like it. Truly, man is the Son of God, and this Christ fact overturns the mortal illusion of being the son of Adam.

Because this overturning process takes place in what we call human consciousness, it seems as though it is our own two halves at war with each other. Actually, the human status is a disappearing point—the disappearing of the illusion under the eternal manifesting of the Christ-fact. Although this exchange seems to take place in us, we are, only spectators, not participants. Mark, then, in presenting our real nature, takes away the dualism and conflict and leaves only the divine fact.

Mark shows us not only Principle's Christ, but also the Christ-status, the Christ-character, the Christ-nature, the Christ-temperment, the Christ-spirit, — all those associated ideas which together depict the true character of man. And in presenting those, Mark opposes and disallows that proposition called human nature. One is often reminded of that wise and lovely provision that we have in human law, where we are required to swear on the Bible that we will tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” The bare words, “the truth” are not enough to cover the human predicament, and so even human wisdom expands it to make it all-inclusive and to cut out any loopholes. Truth, then, involves not only the truth and the whole truth at that, but in addition it involves nothing but the truth. To frame it like that is being wise as the serpent, isn't it? And that's just what Mark does, he states the divine Truth, he states the whole truth about man's nature, and he states nothing but the truth by disallowing any other proposition. He shows us how to cut it away, how to dissolve it, how to be free of this hideous sense of conflict within.

“Christ” in Mrs. Eddy's Writings

So we know that Mark presents the Christ. What do we know about the Christ in our studies? Mrs. Eddy, of course, summarizes the Christ in many different ways. (S and H 473) which is a very absolute definition. Again, she says, “Christ...is the ideal of God”(361). Bringing it down a little more relatively she says, “Christ is the true idea voicing good, the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness” (332:9-11). There we can discern that message within, which we discussed a little earlier, “the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness” The Christ, then, is not only the divine ideal, it is also the means by which that ideal itself speaks to the human consciousness. For example, in practical terms, if you are helping someone and are not in a position to convey to them in words what you can see is the truth about that situation, that truth has its own way of finding acceptance in consciousness. If what you have seen represents the Christ ideal, then that ideal is also its own messenger, it voices itself without wires or letters or words, so that suddenly some message will speak in that individual's own consciousness because the Christ is direct, and needs no human intermediary or agency. It is both the divine fact and the means by which that fact operates.

Perhaps the most lovely and all-inclusive reference of Mrs. Eddy's to the Christ is the well-loved statement in the Glossary, the Bible sense of the Christ, — where she defines it as, “The divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error.” How many times have we read and repeated that? The divine manifestation of God comma, pause, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error. Can you feel that that is a double statement? “The divine manifestation of God,” is all a top line sense, the ideal; it makes no reckoning of the human problem; as far as the comma it is simply the divine manifestation of God. But the nature of the Christ is that it does take stock of the human proposition, it is practical, it is operative, it doesn't state divine oneness and leave the mortal proposition of twoness unresolved. It comes down from its high level, past the comma, so that it comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error.

Could we say then that the definition shows how divine oneness is not only a fact but is also operative to dissolve mortal dualism? That may sound very metaphysical, but anything that you have ever seen to be true, in mathematics, the right way of making a cake or driving a car, has both its right actual ideal and it also has its operation in terms of how not to do it, how to correct mistakes. The comma stands between.

That comma in the middle of the definition is, as Irene Oppenheim points out, Mrs. Eddy's most important piece of punctuation. We shall see the significance of it again and again in this story of Mark's. It shows us how to let our thought rest in the divine ideal, how to work with Principle, how to be the Son of God, and yet how at the same time to be able to look at the mortal picture and look it away, or see it dissolved. We shan't need to be such battle-axes, getting embroiled in the struggle with mortality. Instead we gain a sense of detachment, because, whatever may seem to be the overturning of the moment, our feet are planted above the comma, and we are not in the medley. The two halves of the definition correspond to the Christ and the Jesus, the Son of God and the son of man. The Son of God is the divine ideal, whereas the Son of man is the demonstration of that ideal in terms of human experience, liberating man from mortality. Again, the definition is kin to Jesus' great statement: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father (John 16:28). I came forth from the Father, — that's the Divine manifestation of God; and am come into the world, — that's the comma, the hinge. Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father, — there is the destroying of incarnate error, for in going to the Father we disprove that belief of separation between God and God's idea.

The Two Scientific Translations

The Christ, then, is both that which comes forth from the Father, and also that which impels the return to the Father. This invites us to think once more about that wonderful passage on pages 115-116, the two scientific translations, the "Scientific Translation of Immortal Mind," and the equally "Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind." The first is the coming forth from, the second is what follows after the comma, - the returning to the divine by obliterating the supposed obstacle of mortality. (See p. vii)

The first Scientific Translation is stated under three heads, God, man, and idea. Actually, there are only two categories, God and man, or noumenon and phenomenon; the third item describes the relationship between these two, and defines it as 'Divine reflection'. Mrs. Eddy begins with "God: Divine Principle, Life, Truth, Love, Soul, Spirit, Mind." We call this sequence of the synonyms the Christ order, and it is characterized by the term divine, that is, from God, or of the nature of God. Next, she defines man as "God's spiritual idea, individual, perfect, eternal." The marginal heading is "Divine image." Then the third item quickly makes it clear that this image is a reflex image in the Mind, which is God: "Idea: An image in Mind; the immediate object of understanding." The immediate object of God's understanding of Himself. Immediate not only in time but in space and in quality. Immediate really means having no intermediary, having no gap, no fallen man, no separate existence, but God's nature and man's nature one, one in quality, one in substance, one in flow.

All that statement is the equivalent of what lies above the comma; we might now say, Yes alright, I see that is divinely true, I can see it intellectually, but what about this mortal picture which presents itself through the senses? Well, the Christ doesn't tell us not to bother about that, but comes beyond the comma to help us to resolve the picture simply as that which is not, although it may appear to be. And so through the three degrees of the second Translation that picture is dissolved; the physical is analyzed as unreality; the moral or mental stage affords a transition of values, until in the third degree the spiritual is seen to be the only reality.

In the third degree one has returned to the starting-point, — “Understanding,’ where man is the “immediate object of (God’s) understanding.

What is always such a lovely thing to realize is that this old familiar Word order of the third degree, — wisdom, purity, spiritual understanding, spiritual power, love, health, holiness, — is not the beginning of the story but the end. We are accustomed to regard it as the way of ascending thought, the path of the seeker, which sometimes seems heavy going. And although it does come first in human thought, it is really a secondary thing, — the effect of the Christ—impulsion of the first Translation. The beginning of the story is this Christ translation, of God, divine Principle, Life, Truth, Love, Soul, Spirit, Mind, and that divine impulsion, like the, hands going round the clock-face, swings forth from the summit, comes down through the bottom of the picture and, by its own divine impetus carries on round again to the top. So there is the Christ coming forth from and through the Jesus, —the working out of the mortal concept, — we get the return to; But Jesus in you and me the Son of man in you and me, could never possibly begin to make that journey unless it were for this great kick in the pants which we call the Christ. The divine impetus forces us to become and to be what we really are.



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