

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE IDEA

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Can the idea of Christian Science again be lost? The answer to this question is 'no and yes'. During the last ten years I have frequently expressed my concern that the idea of Christian Science and particularly the Christian Science brought to light by John W. Doorly might be lost. The usual response to this question has been an objection, such as: "How can one even express this fear when we are taught that God and idea are indestructible? The idea goes on eternally; therefore, we must have no anxiety." Such reactions — whether expressed or silent — give rise to very serious thought. Why? Their reasoning is unscientific because the concern they express is not considered in its true context. A question asked on the level of absolute Christian Science must often be translated to the level of Christian Science.

Categories must not be mixed. The justifiable concern that the idea of Christian Science may again be lost is a question which definitely belongs to the level of Christian Science. From this level we determine the connection between Truth and its supposititious opposite, error. The laws of this level show us, through absolute, eternal Truth, how the opposite claims of mortal mind are handled, so that the false claims cannot proliferate in mortal existence. On the other hand, the statement that God and His idea is eternal and can never be lost is a statement from the standpoint of absolute Christian Science. From the standpoint of this level a specific question, such as the threatened loss of the spiritual idea, does not arise.

All truly scientific thinking and discussion presuppose the ability never to confuse the different categories (in this case the two different levels of Science) although these categories, within the infinite One of the whole, are connected with each other through definite laws. Therefore, we must not only be familiar with the separate categories, but also understand the laws by which, within the different scientific levels, all absolute truths are translated to the other levels. Applying this scientific process to the problem

in question, we find: The statement that God and His idea (i.e. the idea of the Science of Christian Science) is eternal and indestructible, belongs to the level of absolute Christian Science. The absolute standpoint, however, if we are dealing with the human, must be translated to the level of Christian Science. This means that the erroneous claim *must be handled specifically*, not just ignored. If we do not *handle the claim* of the human mind that the idea may be lost, but simply ignore it, the idea remains *in Being* eternally, but is lost for *mortals*. They are not yet freed from belief; and this belief is not just the fear of a single person but a collective claim. This must, therefore, be handled by us fundamentally, even if one or the other does not consciously harbor this particular belief. Is it sufficient to know that the idea can never be lost in Being? No, for this by itself still leaves unhandled the belief that the idea may possibly be lost in our human life-experience. This is exactly what happened soon after the spread of Christianity, and it took hundreds of years for the idea of true Christianity to be rediscovered. We do not want to live an abstract Christianity, but rather a living constructive human life in which Christianity is at work as a redeemer in the human.

Understanding, not just truths, is needed. Only a few days before Mary Baker Eddy left us, she dictated to her secretary, Adam Dickey, the well-known article *Principle and Practice*, which is also printed in my booklet *Why Study Christian Science as a Science?*¹ Dickey declared later that in all his years with Mrs. Eddy, he had never seen her so serious as when dictating these words. In this article she tackled the important subject of understanding versus blind faith, declaring among other things, "Christian Science is not a faith-cure, and unless human faith be distinguished from scientific healing, Christian Science will again be lost from the practice of religion as it was soon after the period of our great Master's scientific teaching and practice." We also know that for Mary Baker Eddy the question of how her own discovery and teaching could be assured was of paramount concern; she was constantly working on it. Thus she answered the question about her successor by saying it would not be a particular person or organization, but that generic man would lead the centuries forward and reveal her successor.² Only a growing individual understand-

ing of generic, i.e. true man can ensure the continuity and further development of the Christian Science idea. Christian Scientists cannot avoid their responsibility to grow in understanding. They must not succumb to the belief that someone else is better suited to the task. All who comprehend the idea are called upon to work for the continuance of the idea *in our own lifetime*.

Handling evil. It is a blessing to have been led to Christian Science; and it is also a special blessing to be learning the Science of Christian Science. As Paul would say: Do not spurn the truth. Mortal mind is lukewarm and therefore only too ready to push the demanding work of devotion to the idea on to someone else, or to some other time. To justify this attitude, mortal mind hides behind a thousand excuses, but there is no valid reason for our unwillingness to be responsible for the idea. All excuses come from mortal mind or animal magnetism. Certain statements of Mary Baker Eddy have been handed down, which throw a light on this subject. "I cannot do it for you. You must do it for yourselves, and if it is not done the Cause will perish and we will go along another 1900 years with the world sunk into the blackest night."³ On another occasion she showed that we live in a mental age, and added: "Malpractice would dominate, and unless Christian Scientists are awake to it and alert, it would hold back Christian Science for centuries."⁴ To assure the vigilance of her students, Mary Baker Eddy set the task of keeping certain 'Watches'. One of them runs: "God demands a more Christian, zealous and persistent effort to resist evil and overcome, or our Cause will again be covered by the rubbish of centuries."⁵

These few examples should be enough to dismiss the comforting thought that we need not make a conscious effort to further the Christianly scientific idea but can leave its development to the future. This attitude supports error's desire to be undisturbed. We all must set priorities in human life. The eternal is more important than the temporal. Everything mortal passes away; we cannot take anything with us into eternity. We should give to the eternal all our love, all our energy, our time and devotion. We have freely received grace. We cannot excuse ourselves, for any reason, from giving our best, fully and completely, in return.

Footnotes:

¹In his Class of 1937 John W. Doorly, who was closely associated with Adam Dickey, quoted this statement. *Principle and Practice* may also be found in John W. Doorly's *1938 Association Address*, reprinted by The Foundational Book Company for the John W. Doorly Trust, London, England.

²See *The First Church of Christ Scientist, and Miscellany*, Mary Baker Eddy, page 347:5

³See *Course in Divinity and General Collectanea* — Richard Oakes, page 251

⁴See *Course in Divinity and General Collectanea*, page 225

⁵See *Course in Divinity and General Collectanea*, page 50

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