

PLAINFIELD INDEPENDENT

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE PLAINFIELD CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
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From Precepts III

Gilbert C. Carpenter

Mrs. Eddy implied that it was more important to beautify the outside of the church and to make it solid and substantial, than to ornament the inside. Often a dull party will send people home feeling satisfied, because the refreshments were good. Christian Scientists, however, have a better way. They know how to provide spiritual refreshment that will cause people to go away satisfied. Students and members should never forget that the finest decoration and ornamentation of the interior of a Christian Science church is the spiritual atmosphere. There would be no objection to beautifying the interior even to the point of pretentiousness, were it not for the temptation to believe that that beauty is enough to satisfy the stranger. The only objection to elaborate beautification is lest it cause the workers to neglect the mental and spiritual side of the services.

Usually a plain interior in a church will help to remind the workers that they must make up for the lack of material beauty with the demonstration of a healing atmosphere. Then the stranger will go away feeling that he has attended the most beautiful church in the world. When the man who started the great First National stores attended a Christian Science service for the first time, at the urgency of his daughters, he said, "That was not a church; that was a home." He made this remark because he felt a homelike atmosphere, in contrast to the austere coldness and conventionality that characterizes so many magnificent churches. It is this stiffness that causes many people to be prejudiced against going to church; but nobody is prejudiced against a *home*. Thus the alert member of our faith strives through demonstration to make each service and lecture seem homelike, on the basis of the presence of God and man's dearest Friend.

Mrs. Eddy knew that if the ideal of the stu-

dents was to make the interior of The Mother Church the richest possible, the demonstration of "home" might be neglected. She evidently thought it proper to make the exterior attractive, because often a fine looking church will attract people. These letters of our Leader show that she felt that the money contributed by students and friends could be used to ornament the outside, as well as the inside to some extent, but that in reality it was the demonstration provided by the members that would furnish the inside with that which would really satisfy the stranger and send him away rejoicing.

Our Church Home

For several weeks, some of the members of Plainfield Church had been getting the thought to change the color of the church auditorium. It has been the same mustard/gold color for over 35 years, and it was definitely time for a change. One of the Board members offered to poll the congregation for color and decorating ideas. Bill Callahan offered to contact painters for estimates.

I was reminded of stories I had heard about corporate meetings at other churches that went on for hours as members argued about colors and drapes, etc. But we were all cognizant of the need to keep this project out of the human mind and be sure that God's will be done!

After receiving several proposals from painters, Bill was still not peaceful until he thought of a painter who had done an excellent job painting the house of another member. This painter was thrilled to be considered and gave a very attractive proposal. He also has a good eye for color and was very helpful in offering good ideas.

Shortly after selecting the painter, Bill turned to a page in Gilbert Carpenter's book, "Mary Baker Eddy, Her Spiritual Precepts," which is

printed above. In it Mr. Carpenter explains Mrs. Eddy's attitude about the appearance of the church, and the importance that the spiritual atmosphere inside the church has in satisfying visitors. The article was distributed to every member, because it stated so well what really matters in the appearance of the church.

Several of the members were focusing on various shades of blue, but none of them seemed to be the right shade. Then someone found a picture of a room painted a shade of green that everyone immediately agreed was the right color. The auditorium is now a peaceful shade of "Chinese Jade" with white trim, and it looks beautiful.

It was a testament to the ability of the congregation to leave a project like this in God's hands, and resist the temptation to have "many minds" arguing over individual taste or preference. Everybody is busy doing God's work, and can't afford to indulge the human mind.

We invite everyone to come and enjoy our beautiful church home!

*Gary Singleterry
Plainfield*

"Labourers Into His Harvest"

During a recent Sunday Roundtable, while discussing that week's Lesson on "Substance," tithes, offerings, gratitude, and being a "cheerful giver" were discussed. Later, I was reading from Matthew 9: "when he [Jesus] saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

This really made me think about being an out-of-town member of the Plainfield Christian Science Church, Independent, and that I sometimes feel faint, scattered, and act like I have no shepherd. I have been receiving all the blessings that the Plainfield Church is sending out, and not being a laborer in that harvest. Freely I have received, and freely I need to give!

Tithing I do, but what about offerings? As an out-of-town member, it is not possible to do certain jobs that an "in-town" member might do. However, through the wonders of technology, I

can make offerings: testimonies, comments on the Lesson Forum on the website, submissions for the CornerStone and church newsletter — and we have even been invited to try our hand at writing Lesson Sermons. I can be a labourer in the harvest.

What stops me? I come up with lots of reasons, and they often sound quite reasonable. All of them first come as thoughts. For example, "I'm afraid," "I'm not good enough," "I don't have time," "I'm tired."

When I have called a Christian Science practitioner from the Plainfield Church and I am explaining my situation or problem, the practitioner often asks, "Did God say that? What did God say? Where is God in this?" It comes down to this: Am I listening to God who loves me, or am I listening to error who hates me? How can I tell the difference? God's voice leads to joy and gratitude, while the other leads to self-condemnation.

Mary Baker Eddy writes, "The effects of Christian Science are not so much seen as felt. It is the 'still, small voice' of Truth uttering itself. We are either turning away from this utterance, or we are listening to it and going up higher." (S&H) It is up to each one to choose to listen to the "still, small voice" of God (Life, Truth, and Love) that is always speaking to each of His beloved children.

It is much like a radio station broadcasting to mankind. Am I tuning in to God's radio station, but need to adjust the dial or the volume? Or am I turning (tuning) away from God's radio station and listening to some other station that is trying to get my attention? The "false accuser" (error, animal magnetism) is always out there making suggestions and accusations, like a radio station that's on 24/7. So, if I find myself listening to error's suggestions, it doesn't mean I have to keep on listening to it. No need for condemnation; just wake up, stop listening to error, and change the station back to God!

I now know that when I'm preparing to give a testimony and get the thought, "This isn't very good, especially not after that testimony," or "the other people are so much more knowledgeable than I," it's just error, and I really need to give that testimony or write the forum entry, poem, article, or Lesson Sermon. When my motive is to

love and serve God, God will tell me what to say or what to write. And He will tell you, too. Come and join the laborers in the harvest!

*Betty Simpson
California*

Dedicatory Statement in Miscellaneous Writings

“To loyal Christian Scientists in this and every land I lovingly dedicate these practical teachings indispensable to the culture and achievements which constitute the success of a student and demonstrate the ethics of Christian Science.”

Mary Baker Eddy

This dedicatory statement that opens Miscellaneous Writings speaks volumes. Mary Baker Eddy addresses “loyal Christian Scientists in this and every land.” (Would she not be delighted to know of our internet outreach to every corner of the earth?) Loyal to what? we might ask. There can be no doubt that she meant loyal to Christian Science and not to person or to organization!

She refers to the contents of the book as “practical teachings indispensable,” first “to the culture and achievements which constitute the success of a student,” and second “to demonstrate the ethics of Christian Science.” Isn’t it enough to have success in healing? Why “culture” and “ethics”? Culture: “The application of labor or other means to improve good qualities in, or growth;” Ethics: “A system of moral principles.”

Mrs. Eddy saw plenty of success in achievements, in healing and opening of churches in her movement, but she was not satisfied. At the height of its success, she closed her college for a year and directed all Christian Scientists to study Miscellaneous Writings. Why? In the Dedicatory we may find our answer. If Scientists are enjoying the fruits of this Science but are not growing in self-immolation and love for their fellow-man, by Mrs. Eddy’s standard they are lacking in culture and, in fact, are immoral! “To whom much is given, much is required” is the Scriptural dictum.

Miscellaneous Writings is filled with rebukes, pointing out the depravity of mortal mind amongst teachers, practitioners, and other professors of Christian Science, and urging readers to greater effort and selfless love. The student who reads this work to “cherry-pick” the comforting

statements is playing a dangerous game.

We have embarked on an ambitious effort to make audio recordings of this great work with the desire to “lift the veil” so that listeners may hear the urgency with which Mrs. Eddy is reaching out to Christian Scientists. Portions can be found on our website, and will also be available on CD.

*Andrew Kidd
Plainfield*

True Happiness

Many people today seem to be on an endless pursuit to find happiness. It is what, in the end, appears to be valued above all — how to become happy, how to have happy children, how to have happy times, live in a happy town, etc., etc.!

In Science and Health (page 58) Mrs. Eddy gives simply a fail-proof recipe for happiness. She states, “Unselfish ambition, noble life-motives, and purity, — these constituents of thought, mingling, constitute individually and collectively true happiness, strength and permanence.”

Unselfish ambition — wow! This is quite different than trying desperately to make our own little lives happy. Could it be that happiness comes from thinking more of others than ourselves? Mrs. Eddy clearly states, “Happiness is spiritual, born of Truth and Love. It is unselfish; therefore it cannot exist alone, but requires all mankind to share it.” How wonderful to teach this to a little child (or a teen-ager or whomever!) by example and by deed; this certainly becomes a life-lesson that will do much to promote lasting happiness, and it doesn’t even cost a thing!

Noble life-motives — there is a far greater cause to our existence than merely seeking our own self-satisfaction. Why do we have life? Life comes from the Father and should be used to glorify Him. As we find His purpose and His will for our lives — yes, we also find a joy and peace unspeakable.

And finally, purity — pure in heart, pure in motive, pure in our love for God and man, so that we will not be taken off course by any passing breeze — this is what constitutes “individually and collectively true happiness, strength and permanence.”

As I look around our church, I do see genuinely happy faces, not plastered-on smiles or uneasy glances. Everyone here is working for God,

finding their true purpose; and this “unselfish ambition” and “noble life-motive” surely brings with it a deep content only God can give.

I am so grateful for all of you, everywhere, who have joined us in this holy work, for it satisfies the soul like nothing else can!

*Mary Beth Singleterry
Plainfield*

America

Herbert W. Eustace

America, spiritually understood, is the outward evidence of man’s individual oneness with God.

America, in that sense, is not a nation defined by territorial boundaries, but is the spiritual idea of Mind everywhere present. America typifies the yearning of the heart for spiritual reality. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

The “Pilgrim Fathers” were the “Separatists” who separated themselves entirely from bondage to ecclesiastical and political formulas and founded what is called America, as Abraham founded Israel by going out from his “father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee,” forsaking all for the highest sense of good. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate,” expresses America as the spiritual idea of Mind.

America is synonymous with individualism. Had individualism not been the objective of the Pilgrims, they would soon have been forced to admit that there is no freedom and success without it, as the following historical data show.

At first, the Pilgrims felt that community interest, rather than individual interest, in crops would better serve their ends. But they quickly learned that collectivism was doomed to failure. Complete individuality was essential for true spirituality and prosperity — as it always must be.

William Bradford was the governor of the original Pilgrim colony, founded at Plymouth in 1621. The colony was first organized on a communal basis, as their financiers required. Land was owned in common. The Pilgrims farmed communally, too, following the “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs” precept.

The results were disastrous. Communism didn’t work any better 400 years ago than it does today. By 1623, the colony had suffered serious losses. Starvation was imminent.

Bradford realized that the communal system encouraged and rewarded waste, laziness, and inefficiency, and destroyed individual initiative. Desperate, he abolished it. He distributed private plots of land among the surviving Pilgrims, encouraging them to plant early and farm as individuals, not collectively.

The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn, which before would allege weakness, and inability; whom, to have compelled, would have been thought great tyranny and oppression!

The Plymouth governor moralizes upon the failure of a scheme which, in theory, had seemed so attractive, but which in the end had militated not only against self-interest, but self-respect. The results: a bountiful early harvest that saved the colonies. After the harvest, the Pilgrims celebrated with a day of Thanksgiving — on August 9.

Man, as God’s idea, is necessarily individual. The attempt of evil to change America from individualism to collectivism, and all that goes with that theory, is destined to failure. The breath of America is freedom, which means individualism. To surrender its Pilgrim heritage, would be to sell the birthright of America. But this can never be done, for *it is America*. Mrs. Eddy emphasizes individualism thus: “Is not a man metaphysically and mathematically number one, a unit, and therefore whole number, governed and protected by his divine Principle, God?” This individualism, this oneness is America.

The true sense of what the Pilgrim Fathers, America — Christian Science — really means, may be expressed, “unto me every knee shall bow.” “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.”

Please join us in praying for our nation during this critical time.