WHAT PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY STANDS FOR

WE RECEIVE many letters asking us to explain the difference between practical Christianity, as taught and demonstrated by Unity School, and other teachings of a religious character. The space of a short article does not admit of any very satisfactory answer to this inquiry, because Truth as taught by Jesus Christ is absolute and, being absolute, is limitless. There are, however, a few fundamentals that may be briefly outlined in an article of ordinary length, and these are here given.

It is the intention to state definite truths, rather than to point out differences. Differences will speak for themselves.

First, an understanding of the true character of God is all-important. Practical Christianity is based upon the truth that God is Spirit, all-knowing, all-powerful, and always everywhere present. The whole nature and the whole life of man become greatly changed when his mind is brought to the realization of this truth. So long as he thinks of God as a person, far away in the skies, he must necessarily have a God of limitations, and as he can rise no higher than that which he worships, he also is bound and limited.

Jesus showed the nature of God when
He said, “God is spirit” and “The kingdom of God is within you.” These statements, with Paul’s proclamations, “In him we live, and move, and have our being” and “Over all, and through all, and in all,” open the way to the complete revealing of God to man. No one can meditate on these statements in a prayerful attitude of mind and not enter into an entirely new understanding of God and a new consciousness of His presence.

We may talk about God forever, and describe Him by all the terms befitting His character, but we cannot know Him without coming into touch with Him through the realization that He is the original spiritual Being and that man has being in God’s being. So it is helpful to dwell upon and to enter into a definite acknowledgment, such as this: God is Spirit. God is Being. God is Mind. God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. Besides Him there is none else. In Him I live and move and have my being.

Practical Christianity stands also for the true understanding of the nature of man. Jesus taught that we should not judge by appearances, so we look away from them in seeking to know what man is. Sinful, wicked, diseased in mind and body he may seem to be; but judging righteous judgment, by principle rather than by sight, we look into Being for the real man, instead of assuming that the appearance is he. In the record of creation it is written that God created man and pronounced him good, and very good. All of God’s work is good. Being perfect Himself, He could create nothing unlike Himself.

But God’s creations are not in the realm of forms. He creates in the ideal, and the man that He made is therefore ideal. “Ideal,” to the world, represents something intangible, visionary, but as here used it means a perfect idea, a perfect pattern. Man exists in God’s mind as a perfect idea of man, just as the inventor makes and holds in his mind the perfect image of his invention before it is formed in the outer. The inner is the real invention, the real creation. The outward form is secondary; it depends for its merit upon its being like the idea or pattern in the mind of the inventor, assuming, of course, that the pattern is perfect. So man exists in God in perfection, and God exists in man in perfection. Man is therefore far more than a reflection of God. Every man is potentially all that God is, because he is the offspring of God, made in the divine image and likeness. As the oak is in the acorn, so God is in man.

Man is the expresser, but he has not correctly expressed God. In his freedom he became enamored of his own ideas, plans, and patterns, and lost sight of the God likeness that it was his part to express. He lost knowledge of the divine image, and it was this divine image that Jesus came to restore to the knowledge and the consciousness of man. The “fall of man” was a fall in consciousness. He fell from the God conscious-
ness down into a material, sense realm of his own making. But the potential God perfection exists eternally in him, in spite of his fall, although this perfection is so hidden to his sense-blinded eyes that he does not know of its presence.

From this it will be seen that sin is nothing in itself. It is not a great and fearful power of evil, but a want of conformity to divine law. It is a falling short of the divine ideal, a failure to recognize and to express in oneself the divine image and likeness. The power that sin seems to have is given to it by man. He puts his substance and his thought force into whatever he does, and when he expresses (thinks or acts) in ignorance and error, his own thoughts react upon him and he believes that this reaction is some evil power outside himself, fighting and trying to overcome him.

An understanding of man in his relation to God leads to the consideration of a third great fundamental in the teaching of practical Christianity: the atonement. To atone is to make at-one, "to bring in or to a state of agreement or reconciliation." The atonement is the union of man with God, the Father, in Christ. Stating it in terms of mind, we should say that the atonement is the at-one-ment or agreement or reconciliation of man's mind with Divine Mind through the superconsciousness or Christ mind. The very foundation of the Christian religion is the atonement of Jesus Christ; but the results of past teaching show that there has been a misconception of the nature and scope and object of this atonement, else the race would not now still be suffering from the results of the fall. Jesus came to redeem men from sin, and salvation through Him is complete. He saves "to the uttermost." Ignorance and sin, with all their effects—sickness, sorrow, pain, and death—will be removed and known no more when men understand the atonement and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Since salvation depends on faith, the atonement can of course bring no benefits to those who do not believe that Jesus Christ came to save them, here and now, from sin and death. So long as the belief is held that man must worry along somehow with all the afflictions of sin and be taken to a heaven somewhere after death, just so long will the blessings of the atonement be delayed. A living faith in the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will prepare the way to an understanding of His mission and will open the consciousness to the saving Christ power, which alone can, here and now, make the transformation of the soul and the body that is called redemption.

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," and the mighty import of this statement is just dawning upon the race. In Jesus Christ is Truth absolute, all Truth. His great name comprehends all that man has sought to know in his reaching out for Truth. "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is
above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

The full power and glory of this great name are yet to be revealed, but all who have faith in the name, believing, not yet having seen, are blessed. They delight to take upon them His name and to be called Christians. Perhaps the custom of the bride’s accepting the name of the bridegroom symbolizes the church’s taking the name of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom; and, even as the true bride in the world chooses to be called by the name of the one whom she loves, so the church loves to be called by the name of her spiritual bridegroom. She knows that in His great name all true riches lie and that she has need of nothing else. The world may tempt, saying, "This name will make you more popular" or "That name will make you more acceptable to the intellectually wise," but she unhesitatingly rejects all such suggestions as temptations to deny her Lord, and goes on, serene and happy in her loyalty to Him.

So practical Christianity stands for the name of Jesus Christ. He is not a man of limitations, but a man manifesting the omnipresence, the omnipotence, the omniscience of God, His Father. He is therefore far more than what we know as personality. He is perfect and absolute in His individuality, which means that He has overcome all the limitations that He took on Himself when He came; "in the likeness of sinful flesh," to redeem this fallen race. His church is now awakening to the consciousness of His presence, and her eyes are being opened to behold Him in His perfection and glory. Every new glimpse of Him quickens her love and her loyalty. The world may call as it will; she does not heed.

When we speak of "the church," no reference is made to any sect or denomination. "The church" is first an inner consciousness of the Christ on the part of the individual, and then a body of individuals in whom the Christ consciousness is quickened and given outer form.

In the light of our new understanding of the atonement it will be seen that practical Christianity stands for the redemption of the whole man. For centuries "soul saving" has been an ecclesiastical business. Now a better understanding has come, and we know man to be Spirit, soul, and body. The one-third salvation no longer seems reasonable. Jesus came to lift up the whole man and to make him complete, perfect, whole. Redemption means the unification and spiritualization of soul and body consciousness in Spirit. The soul cannot be saved or lifted up apart from the body, because soul and body are inseparably connected in Being; one is manifestation and the other is expression.

The body is not mortal error. It is mortal only as man makes it so by his ignorant, untrue thoughts. When he recognizes the divine-body idea and thinks ac-
cordingly, he brings into manifestation the perfect spiritual body. Jesus and Paul both taught clearly that the body is the temple of God. It is the duty of every one to keep the body pure and holy by acknowledging it as God’s temple and by obeying the laws of Being, which will enable it to manifest that which it is in reality. The appearance of separation, called death, results from ignorance of the unity of Spirit, soul, and body, and from the misuse of the powers of Being.

This brings us to another fundamental in practical Christianity, namely, the overcoming of death. Death came into the world by sin, and is just as far from beautiful as the sin that produces it. The Christ teaching is that death can and must be overcome. This point marks very clearly the need of the church to be identified with her Lord, for the belief that death is a beautiful friend, waiting to take us to heaven, or to open the gates to a higher life, is widespread. Not that people really believe it. If they did, nobody would want to stay here a minute. When death’s advance agents, disease and sickness, come, every one wants a doctor to come quickly—or the best healer that he can find, if he believes in spiritual healing. People try to believe that error (the necessity of death) because they do not know any other way out of the dilemma of life. Their thoughts along this line hasten death. What they really want, if they but knew it, is the fullness of life here and now, and this is provided in Jesus Christ. “I

Practical Christianity stands for health. The desire for health is universal, but because men have been ignorant of the fact that God is the health of His people, they have sought out many inventions, have tried, by many methods, oftentimes barbarous, to heal themselves. There is only one way to health, and that is through Jesus Christ. He is the Truth that heals. He reveals God to man as Father, and shows by His teaching and His healing that it is God’s will to free men from diseases by forgiving the sins that produce them and by establishing the sinner in right relation with the Source of his being. All true and permanent healing, therefore, depends on a complete and entire change of consciousness, from sense to Spirit. This change Jesus called regeneration. Practical Christianity stands for regeneration.

Generation is defined by Webster as the “act or process of producing offspring; procreation; reproduction.” Regeneration is a reversal of all the life forces, producing, instead of physical offspring, a “new creature” in Christ Jesus. This is a complete change within the individual, renewing him in mind and transforming his body after the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is the new birth. It is that process by which the Christ mind takes entire possession of all the mental faculties and all the functions of the body, redeems them from their bondage to sense consciousness, and estab-
lishes them in the order and harmony of spiritual consciousness.

In man’s dim understanding during the centuries immediately following Jesus of Nazareth, the first steps in regeneration were supposed to constitute all of the new birth, but in the fuller understanding that has come in these latter days spiritual rebirth is recognized as having to do with the whole man, even to the extent of changing the corruptible, mortal flesh into incorruption and immortality. All this of course calls for changes in the manner of living. Our reason readily grasps the truth that after a man is born of Spirit his life differs greatly from what it was while he was following the desires of the flesh.

Practical Christianity stands for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon the earth. Jesus taught us to pray for the coming of His kingdom; for two thousand years that prayer has been on the lips of men. And it will be answered. It is now being answered. His kingdom is forming here in our midst, first in the minds and the hearts of men. But that which is within must become manifest without. Practical Christianity therefore stands for the redemption of the earth. All false material beliefs will be broken up and dissolved, and the new heaven and the new earth will be the result. The prophets have given glimpses of the coming glory, of the time when regenerated man will dwell in his perfect, redeemed body upon the perfect, redeemed earth.

It is often assumed that Jesus went away into the skies to prepare a material heaven with golden streets, but the Spirit of truth reveals that the place that Jesus went to prepare is here. “Lo, I am with you always.” That place is in the mind. “The kingdom of God is within you.” By His redeeming work, Jesus Christ is forming and establishing a new consciousness, into which all may enter. He went first into the interior spiritual realm of consciousness, and thus opened and prepared the way for all to follow Him and enter with Him into the realization of a perfect union with the Father mind.

When this consciousness is attained by men it will be manifest in righteousness—in perfect conditions for the whole creation.

Practical Christianity stands for freedom. Men think that they are free, when in fact every man, while he is in sense consciousness, is in bondage to himself, or rather to the will and the desire of his own sense. Jesus Christ “led captivity captive” and set men free, when He overcame the bondage of self and proved Himself master even of death and the grave. Now all men are absolutely and entirely free, but to have the benefits of their liberty they must accept their release in faith and act upon it.

Making practical the liberty of all in Christ, those who follow Him in the regeneration allow freedom to all men; they do not try, in any way, to force others to accept Truth. This is not a mat-
ter of minor consequence, but a vital point that tells powerfully for good or for evil in the life of every one, according as he obeys the spirit of liberty or disregards it in acts of oppression toward his fellows.

Because God's abundance is freely provided for all, practical Christianity stands for prosperity. "All things whatsoever the Father hath" He has freely given to His children, and every one who claims sonship with Him has a full right to the riches of the kingdom. These are not perishable, material riches, but "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled." This inheritance furnishes for every need of man a plentiful supply out of the storehouse of God.

Somewhere in the history of man the notion was conceived that it is God's will for His people to be poor. Now many find that one of their first steps in demonstrating spiritual prosperity is to get this misconception of God out of their mind. Prosperity, like health and all other spiritual blessings, depends on faith and comes as an added or resulting benefit of faith. The great law back of prosperity is: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Practical Christianity stands for spiritual unity. Jesus talked often about separation, which at first thought may seem inconsistent with unity, but, studying His words carefully, we find them entirely consistent. As a fundamental truth we should keep in mind the fact that the only unity is in Spirit. The natural man thinks that he can tie some kind of denominational string around a number of people and bind them together in what he calls unity; but this method has never succeeded and it never can succeed. The innate love of freedom will make a struggling mass of what is intended to be a harmonious body. To demonstrate real spiritual unity may seem a longer way round than to enforce some counterfeit of harmony, but it will be found to be the shortest way—in fact, the only way.

The first step is to grant all people entire freedom to follow their own understanding, no matter how wrong they may appear to us. If they will listen we may express our ideas, but further than that we should not go. They should be free to accept or to reject, as seems good to them.

The second step in establishing spiritual unity is conformity to everything that our highest understanding reveals. By giving others their freedom and by conforming to our highest revelation, we maintain our spiritual integrity. It is this spiritual integrity that counts so largely, not only in arriving at unity, but in all spiritual growth. Let men think what they will of our nonconformity to their ideas; we shall finally be justified by the outworking of this same integrity.

The teaching of Jesus Christ does away with all that is complex and artificial in human life. Practical Christianity is therefore characterized by simplic-
Liberation. This means freedom from great bondage, for many of the burdens of life come from an effort to live the unnatural, artificial, complex life that seems necessary to keep up appearances. The sayings of Jesus clearly and definitely point the way to the simple life.

The question of authority always comes up when Truth is being considered. Practical Christianity has for its authority the Holy Spirit. No other authority is sufficient or safe. “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.” There are hundreds of sects, all sure of their Bible authority. This is unmistakable evidence that we must have something more than a book and the understanding and judgment of men to guide us into Truth, so we gladly accept the words of Jesus, which show that all authority and guidance are in the Spirit of truth. It is not safe to accept any man’s interpretation of the Scriptures. Only the Spirit of truth is able to open up the meaning of the parables so as to reveal the truth of the atonement, salvation, and all these vital subjects. Without the Holy Spirit as authority, the Scriptures are read in the letter, and “the letter killeth.” When all people look to the Holy Spirit as the one infallible guide and authority, they will see alike, and the many sects will be no more. But so long as people persist in giving their own conceptions of the Bible as authority, so long will there be divisions and lack of spiritual unity.

Practical Christianity is sometimes misunderstood to mean a dispensing of charity, but this is not its meaning or mission. It does not deal with outer things directly, but moves the external through spiritual understanding. “Heal the sick” means far more than to give medicine. To feed the hungry or to clothe the naked calls for something beyond anything that charity has to offer.

Practical Christianity helps people to help themselves. It reveals to them that they have within themselves the power to bring forth in their lives everything needed, whether it be health, supply, satisfaction, or any of the other blessings required in a life of completeness and joy.

Practical Christianity heals the sick by teaching men to conform to the divine law of life. This conformity to the law establishes the individual in conscious union with the harmonious, indwelling, spiritual life, and he therefore expresses life in that harmony which is called health.

Practical Christianity feeds the hungry by giving to them the bread of life, that everywhere present, spiritual substance from which every need of food is supplied. The naked are clothed from this same substance. No man need look to another for charity, for each has within himself the inexhaustible resource from which he may draw according to his faith.

The foregoing statements explain what we mean when we say “practical Christianity.” It is practical because it can
be demonstrated in every need of man.

Unity School is not organized in the common acceptance of the term. We are organized in Christ, and those who understand Truth as He understood it are joined in a divine unity that, according to the teaching of Paul, forms a body in which every member has definite place. Christ then is the teacher and the only leader and organizer, and the only textbook is the Spirit of truth.

The winged globe design on the cover symbolizes mind conscious of its spiritual origin and power. It originated as a symbol of the perfect soul, in Chaldean and Egyptian occultism. It emblematizes the soul in its flight back to the Supreme —its original Source in the bosom of absolute love and wisdom. It is a sacred symbol of the illumined of antiquity; it is also the distinctive insignia of an occult society that existed in Egypt some thousands of years ago. The Great Pyramid was constructed under the direction of that society. The society is again manifesting itself in the world in the building of a temple “made without hands,” of whose permanency and just proportions the great Cheops is the geometrical symbol. This new temple will be a unified humanity, by whom God is universally recognized as infinite supply, the bountiful Father, the one supreme Source of life, love, and intelligence.

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