

Comments on Some of the Windows in the Original Edifice of The Mother Church

For Bliss Knapp's Students' Association, October 10, 1959

By Eloise Maybury Knapp

Our Executive Committee of Bliss Knapp's Students' Association has asked me to say a few words to you. It is indeed a joy and inspiration to me to be on this platform of the original edifice of The Mother Church where our beloved Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, herself has stood. Then Judge Hanna and Mrs. Eldora O. Gragg have stood here as Readers of The Mother-Church for seven years. Inspired teachers of The Massachusetts Metaphysical College have taught classes, in this edifice for many years' past. And many Christian Science teachers have held their Association Meetings in this sacred edifice.

I used to tell my Sunday School classes that this Church is the greatest building on earth; not the largest, but the greatest. I believe that this is the greatest edifice which has ever been built. And why? Because every material law and obstacle which Mortal Mind could devise was broken during the building of it by our Leader's understanding of God's law and in record time. You may cite Solomon's temple as an example of marvelous building; but Solomon had unlimited riches with which to build, and the artisans were Jews, who were erecting their own temple. This edifice, on the other hand, had to be paid for as the bills became due, and the builders were of every faith and' nationality.

Mrs. Eddy has referred to this church edifice as "our Prayer in stone." (Mis. 141:1); and she has also called it "this 'miracle in stone.'" (Pul 8:15) That shows her estimate of this building. Mr. Joseph Armstrong, in his book describing the building of this edifice, pays this tribute to Mrs. Eddy: "She alone, God's chosen and anointed one, deserves the credit of this mighty victory for Mind's supremacy; for it was her warning call and loving counsel that led on to success, in the face of such seeming odds. Her nearness to the great heart of Love endowed her with power from on high, before which every obstacle vanished." (Page IV).

Mrs. Emilie B. Hulin, a student of Mrs. Eddy's from Brooklyn, New York, and Mrs. Caroline Frame, another student of Mrs. Eddy's from the same area, were appointed a committee to supervise the making of the stained glass windows for The Mother-Church. The manufacturing firm was Phipps & Slocumb, located at that time on Bradford Street, Boston, who were commissioned to make the

windows.

One day Mrs. Eddy sent word to Mrs. Hulin that the windows for The Mother Church were not being made, although the manufacturing firm was sending out good reports on the work. Mrs. Eddy said to Mrs. Hulin: "If the windows are not done in time, you will be sorry, for God will never forgive you." Think of the intensity of the importance of the time element for Mrs. Eddy to have said that!

After that warning, Mrs. Hulin and Mrs. Frame went immediately to the factory, and asked to see the work which had been done on the windows for The Mother Church. They were courteously received in the front office, and were told that the work on the windows was proceeding well, but that no outsider was allowed in the factory itself. While one of the ladies talked with the officials, the other one did her metaphysical work in order to get at the truth of the situation. Finally, the committee was permitted to go into the workshop itself — and there they found that the windows had not even been started, just as Mrs. Eddy had foreseen!

Mrs. Hulin and Mrs. Frame made frequent visits to the factory after that experience; and some Christian Scientist was appointed to be always on hand to watch the work daily, (See Armstrong's Book, page 64), and help to explain the spiritual meaning of the Scripture to be illustrated.

The greatest delay was on one special window; and I have been told that this window came so late on the Saturday night preceding the first service to be held in The Mother Church edifice, that the window had to be propped in its place, and only temporarily secured. Now, which window do you think that was? It was not the Resurrection Window at the left of the pulpit.

Mary First at the Resurrection

It was not the Lazarus Window,

Resurrection of Lazarus

nor the window portraying the raising of Jairus' daughter;

The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

nor yet the window of the Angel with the "Little Book."

Angel with the "Little Book"

Yes, you have guessed it! It was the window portraying the Woman of the Apocalypse.

The God-Crowned Woman The Woman of the Apocalypse

Mortal mind seems to have had such resistance to that window from the beginning. But all the windows were finished in time for the first service in The Mother Church.

Mrs. Hulin has several times related to Mr. Knapp and me her experience on this committee, and there is such a lesson involved in it, that I wanted, to share it with you.

Three months after the dedication of this edifice, our dear Leader made her first visit to The Mother Church, for the building of which she had labored so long and valiantly. She came on a week-day, accompanied only by Calvin Frye and Miss Clara Shannon. The latter has left us a written description of this momentous visit. . Miss Shannon says that Mrs. Eddy walked slowly down the south aisle of the church, looking up and around as she walked. When she came to the steps leading to the pulpit, she knelt there, in prayer and thanksgiving.

It is truly marvelous that we have Mrs. Eddy's own description of her experience as she knelt there. She writes in Miscellany:

"My first visit to The Mother Church after it was built and dedicated and it pleased me, and the situation was satisfactory. The dear members wanted to greet me with an escort and the ringing of bells, but I declined and went alone by carriage to the church, entered It, and knelt in thanks upon the steps of its altar. There the fore splendor of the beginnings of truth fell mysteriously upon my spirit." (My. 302:25-1).

Then Mrs. Eddy ascended to the pulpit, and stood behind the First Reader's desk. There she repeated aloud the 91st Psalm.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress:
my God; in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with his feathers,
and under his wings shalt thou trust:
his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;
nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness;
nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side,
and ten thousand at thy right hand;
but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold
and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge,
even the most High, thy habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee,
neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee,
to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands,
lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon me,
therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high,
because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.
With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Then standing behind the Second Reader's desk, she repeated the Gospel hymn, "Guide me, Oh Thou great Jehovah! Pilgrim through this barren. land."

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land:
I am Thine, and Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven! Bread of heaven!
Feed me now and evermore.

Open is the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing waters flow;
And the fiery cloudy pillar
Leads me all my journey through.
Strong Deliverer! Strong Deliverer!
Still Thou art my strength and shield.
Hymn 90

Then she walked down the steps, and up the north aisle, looking around and up at each window. Mrs. Eddy spent the night in "Mother's Room," the four Directors remaining all night in watchfulness in the Directors' Room near the entrance to the church on Falmouth and Norway Streets.

In speaking of "Mother's Room," Mrs. Eddy writes: "The room of your Leader remains in the beginning of this edifice, evidencing the praise of babes and the word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (My. 6:19-22). The room was furnished by the "Busy Bees," the Sunday School children under the direction of Miss Maurine Campbell.

The central window in this room was taken from "Christ and Christmas," and portrays the woman at the desk, with the caption, "Seeking and Finding." But in this window, there is no serpent behind the woman's chair!: Miss Campbell herself told me of an incident which emphasizes this fact.

Seeking and Finding

Miss Campbell said that at the Dedication of this edifice, the Mother's Room was open to visitors, and she was one of the Scientists who acted as hostess in this room. Several disloyal Scientists were about at this time, viewing the proceedings. While Miss Campbell was showing Mother's Room to a group of people, she suddenly became faint, and felt as if she were losing consciousness. Then she looked up at the central window, and she said to herself, "Why, There is no serpent here!" — and immediately she was restored to perfect poise and freedom.

In an editorial which Judge Hanna wrote and which was published in The Christian Science Journal for January, 1895, he described the interior of this edifice for the benefit of the Field. He wrote of four windows portraying the "Four Marys": namely,

1. Mary, the mother of Jesus
2. Mary anointing the head of Jesus with oil;
3. Mary Magdalene kneeling at the feet of Jesus
4. The Woman God Crowned

Which Mary was that, think you?

When I was a High School girl, my mother and brother and I came on from California to Boston, mainly to visit The Mother Church, which had recently been built and dedicated. We were so grateful to Mr. William B. Johnson, the Clerk of The Mother Church, who showed us around the Church, and so lovingly explained many things to us. He dwelt quite at length on the "Directors' Window," the large Rose Window on the wall of the South Balcony. After he had described it, I stood there looking at that magnificent window, studying its details. I remember saying to myself, "Yes, there is the Virgin, the mother of Jesus. And next to her, that must be Jesus at the top of the window, portrayed as the Good Shepherd. But who is the lady in blue, standing next to him? Now, who is that lady in blue? Who could she be?"

Window of the Open Book The Lady in Blue

I did not put my question to Mr. Johnson; and it took me some years to find out who is that lady in blue. Now, who do you think told me who she is? Why, it was Bliss Knapp! and he called my attention to the fact that she had a crown on her head, and was standing on the moon, like the Woman of the Apocalypse in the big window downstairs. His father told him about it. I understand that Ira Knapp had some of the planning of the window to do, although it was the Directors' Window, and was approved by them all. Think how many bewildered Christian Scientists, as well as others, may wonder as I did, who is the lady in blue! May they all find out who she is, and rejoice in the fact:!

One of the dear members of this Association has been reading recently some of the early Christian Science Journals, and in The Journal for March, 1904, he came upon two most interesting letters which had been written to Mrs. Eddy, and which she had printed in The Journal, showing her approval of them. I am sure that you will enjoy hearing them.

The first is an extract from a Letter to Mrs. Eddy by Professor Herman S. Hering, C.S.D., dated January 21, 1904, and reads as follows:

"Next Sunday marks an interesting event. The window of The Mother Church containing the picture of the God-crowned woman, east of the chancel, has never been illuminated, as it was against a small air shaft, and the light was obstructed by the wall of the adjacent residence. As you may know, many endeavors at artificial illumination were made some years ago, but all failed, and the picture remained dimly lighted. The obstructing wall has been pulled down this week, -- the last of the houses on the lot for the new church having been razed, -- and next Sunday will be the first Sunday that this picture has ever been illuminated by the full light of day.

The Woman God-crowned

"It so happens that the Lesson-Sermon for that Sunday, 'Love,' contains several references to the God-crowned woman which are even stronger than any given before, as I remember, and it seemed interesting to me that this should occur on the same day, although the lesson was prepared six months ago.

"I hope that this is symbolic of a fuller recognition of our Revelator and her

Revelation."

(From The Christian Science Journal, Vol. 21, page 714, March, 1904.)

The second Letter to Mary Baker Eddy is from her student, Herbert L. Dunbar, C.S.D., dated January 24, 1904. (C.S. Journal for March, 1904).

"Beloved Leader and Teacher: --

I thought you would be pleased to learn of a very significant incident in connection with our morning service in The Mother Church today. The Lesson-Sermon was "Love." Today is the first Sunday that the window on the left of the Readers (the God-crowned woman) was fully seen in all its perfection and beauty On this beautiful Sunday morning the glorious import of the window became more apparent to all, as it revealed itself in the sunlight of this day. The lesson on "Love" with reference as found in Revelation, which tells of the "woman clothed with the sun," was truly prophecy; it gave us more of its meaning than ever before.

"Another incident occurred while the fifth section of the lesson was being read: it was this: two little birds, sparrows, came and lighted on this window, one above the other, clinging to the outside frame work. Their little forms were plainly visible from the audience room. They remained only while this part of the lesson was being read, and then flitted away. To us this was a glorious omen. I think this may interest you, knowing that not even a sparrow passeth our Father's notice. May we all get the rich, grand, and deep meaning of the lesson herein mentioned.

Lovingly your student
Herbert L. Dunbar."

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While Mr. Knapp was First Reader of The Mother Church, I came into this auditorium on a week-day, and found the electricians putting a row of electric lights behind the edges of the two large windows on either side of the pulpit. They explained that the wall of the Extension of The Mother Church was so close to these windows, that very little light could shine on them. I thanked them heartily for this great improvement, but I asked them if they were not going to light up the two small windows also, which were above the two large windows.

I said that these two small windows were so important, because the one over Jesus showed the Bible, and the one over the Woman of the Apocalypse showed Science and Health, with the name of the author plainly visible. The men made no answer; but the next time I came into the auditorium, the two

small windows were lighted, as well as the two larger windows. I do not know whether my request had anything to do with this result, but I have always been grateful that all four windows can be lighted, and thus their co-relation can be seen.

One of the last By-laws in the Manual of The Mother Church reads as follows:

“The Mother Church Building. Sect. 3. The edifice erected in 1894 for The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Mass., shall neither be demolished nor removed from the site where it was built, without the written consent of the Pastor Emeritus, Mary Baker Eddy.”

That By-law means to me that neither an atom bomb nor any other means of destruction can ever harm this original edifice of The Mother Church.

Mrs. Eddy has written of her Church:

Methinks this church is the one edifice on earth which most prefigures self-abnegation, hope, faith; love catching a glimpse of glory.”

(My. 6:27)

END OF PAPER NUMBER 1

By Mrs. Knapp

[Note: The pictures herein from the Mother Church, the words from the 91st Psalm from the Bible, and Hymn 90 from the Christian Science Hymnal, were not in the original address given by Mrs. Knapp, but were added by the compiler of this document for your further enlightenment and edification.]