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### THE STATE OF CHURCHES IN AMERICA

An article in *The Epoch Times* of April 12-18, 2023, stated "A recent poll showing decline in traditional American values confirms what conservatives have been saying: "The character of America is changing.

"The percentage of those polled who said patriotism is important dropped to 38 percent today from 70 percent 25 years ago... And the importance of religion dropped to 39 percent now from 62 percent calling it important 25 years ago.

"The poll, released in March, was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and funded by *The Wall Street Journal*.

"Those who are older understand what this country was and how we're devolving, said Rev. C.L. Bryant, a senior fellow at FreedomWorks, a group that advocates for freedom and small government...

"For the first time in our nation's history, he said, more than 65 percent of children from the ages of 7 to 17 have never been to a church, synagogue, or mosque." (End of quotation)

"On the home front today, many children are obsessed with I-phones and social media on their computers. Their interactions with family members and school age companions tend to be more *superficial* and greatly reduced having been replaced by text messaging and endless staring at social media sites. It used to be that preschool children would follow their mothers around the house making observations and asking questions about how the world works. Children used to join Cub Scouts, Brownies, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts and learn to appreciate each other's friendship, character, and talents. (Memberships in all four are now greatly reduced.) Now interactions with others their own age tend to be less engaging, less appreciative of others' character and uniqueness and much more superficial. The sanctity of life would seem to a subject only superficially considered or thought of."

[theepochtimes.com]

"A *World Net Daily* article from April 10th, titled, 'Attacks on U.S. Christian churches exploding in 2023' stated that there were 69 'acts of hostility' putting the nations on course for potentially the worst record in years... There were 53 acts of vandalism, 10 arson attacks, arson attempts or fires with unknown causes,

three gun-related incidents, three bomb threats and two 'other' situations, like assault. Twenty-nine states experienced acts of hostility against churches. North Carolina had the most incidents, with seven. Ohio and Tennessee each had five. Florida, Missouri, and Pennsylvania each had four. No incidents were found in 21 states or the District of Columbia,' the report said...

"Three gun-related incidents occurred on church property in the first three months of 2023, including the shooting at the Covenant School in Tennessee. In one incident, two adults and two juveniles shot 50 rounds from 9mm pistols at a Mennonite church building in Versailles, Missouri; the property damage was charged as a hate crime. In another incident, a late-night shooting took place in the parking lot of the Praise Temple Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, sending four individuals to the hospital."

An article in *USA Today* (April 27, 2023) stated, "The mental health crisis among our children has reached epidemic proportions especially among teenagers. They're dying more frequently and feeling more depressed, anxious, lonely and hopeless than ever before... Maybe it was too easy for us to allow them to be 'electronically babysat' by the devices we bought them to notice they were not becoming socialized, developing self-esteem and finding their passion. That's on us.

"Several leading researchers have posited reasons why teens are so sad now. New York University professor Jonathan Haidt blames the rise of social media and the amount of time teens spend on their phones instead of with friends. Haidt has said that 'childhood has been rewired' by phone-based social media...

"Some experts have suggested a direct line between the advent of smartphones and social media and increases in teenage depression and anxiety...

"And Haidt shows that anxiety began to skyrocket among teens the same year Facebook bought Instagram and increased its user base... It's clear from the literature that activities devoid of phones and the internet improve happiness... Teachers and schools have a role to play. In class, they can promote group activities that require discussion without any technology... Communities from schools to neighborhood blocks to churches must unite and together model the value of social *connection*. It's not too late, but we have no time to lose." [usatoday.com]

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

With the advent of the computer age, the idea of machine-based intelligence has received much attention and speculation. One recent article, "The Aliens Have Landed, and We Created Them" by Niall Ferguson [www.bloomberg.com] (4-9-2023) explores this subject.

Among those embracing the religious foundation for life, existence, and intelligence, the Supreme Being is understood to be the source and Creator of all that truly is. At the same time, there are those who choose to depart from this understanding and distort reality for their own purposes. It was this self-serving mental distortion through human history that ultimately required all the divine correctives in the Bible such as the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

An article appearing in *The Daily Mail* (May 2, 2023) by Jim Norton, Technology editor for The Daily Mail, states, "The world is on the verge of a new religion created by artificial intelligence, the historian Yuval Noah Harari has claimed.

"The academic -- known for his bestselling book *Sapiens* -- said software such as ChatGPT could attract worshippers by writing its own sacred texts.

"Speaking at a science conference, he said, 'AI had crossed a new frontier by 'gaining mastery' of our language and was now capable of using it to shape human culture.

"Dr Harari used the event to add his voice to growing calls for urgent regulation over the sector, which experts have warned is amid a 'dangerous' arms race.

"He said, 'In the future we might see the first cults and religions in history whose revered texts were written by a non-human intelligence... This could become true very, very quickly, with far-reaching consequences.

"Speaking at the Frontiers Forum event in Switzerland, he warned machines now had the tools to 'cocoon us in a Matrix-like world of illusions', referring to the 1999 sci-fi film.

"The Hollywood blockbuster depicts a dystopian future in which humanity is unknowingly trapped inside a simulate reality that intelligent machines have created to distract humans while using their bodies as an energy source.

"He said: 'Contrary to what some conspiracy theories assume, you don't really need to implant chips in people's brains in order to control them or to manipulate them.

"For thousands of years, prophets and poets and politicians have used language and storytelling in order to manipulate and to control people and to reshape society.

"Now AI is likely to be able to do it, and once it can... it doesn't need to send killer robots to shoot us. It can get humans to pull the trigger.

Calling for tighter regulation, he said: 'We need to act quickly before AI gets out of control. Drug companies cannot sell people new medicines without first subjecting these products to rigorous safety checks.' He added, 'Similarly, governments must immediately ban the release into the public domain of any more revolutionary AI tools before they are made safe.'"

## CHURCH CLOSINGS

A comparison of the January 2023 and the April 2023 issues of *The Christian Science Journal* reveals that the following churches have closed in the United States: Sanibel-Captiva (1st), Florida; Philadelphia (2nd), Pennsylvania; Wauwatosa (1st), Washington; and Onalaska (Soc.) Wisconsin. Since the count began in February 1987, 1187 churches have closed and 86 have opened.

## From: WATCHES - PRAYERS - ARGUMENTS

Given to students by Mary Baker Eddy with a forward by Gilbert C. Carpenter, Jr., C.S.B.

Privately printed in 1950

## WATCH

Mentally treat yourself that nothing can govern your actions or come to your thought that is not from divine Mind. Be strong there. So many sinister suggestions come to mind, watch! and each day commit yourself to the care of our one Parent, trust Him, turn to Him in all your ways for light to direct your footsteps and wisdom to enable you to separate the tares from the wheat -- so that you can judge well between the human or the evil "suggestions" and the good or divine impulse. (p.14)

## PRAYER

Beloved Father-Mother, God, give me wisdom to meet the problems I may have to meet today; give me understanding to deny error and to proclaim the truth. Give me grace to keep silent when speech is unnecessary. There is no strife, for Truth, risen Truth will destroy error of every sort. And heaven is right here. God gives abundance of intelligence and opportunity. I cannot be impoverished mentally, physically, spiritually, or financially. God is substance and I reflect that substance. Realize to yourself daily more than once that the fields are white and ready for the harvest, that divine Love always has met every human need, the need for work as well as any other; that Mind is ever active and you reflect divine activity; that the source of supply supplies every need; that there is plenty of work for all, and yours belongs to you and no one else can do it. *It comes to you direct* and the supply is abundant, and know all the time *that this is so*. Never let a lack of anything stay a moment with you. It is rank error and brings all sorts of disease and difficulty. (p.29)

## ARGUMENT

Our home is in Mind, in spiritual consciousness, the eternal harmony of Soul. The builder and maker of this home is Mind. It is built and established in the eternal. Nothing can destroy the harmony of our home. Mind fills it with the glories of the kingdom of God. No fear of sin, sickness, or death can enter this home, no sense of poverty or want. No lack of supply has any presence or place here. These are illusions, nothing but M.A.M., -- sin, a belief in a power apart from God. They cannot find us, for we dwell in the secret place of the Most High, God, and we are eternally conscious of the infinite riches and abundance of Love. God is our supply, is inexhaustible. The lie that argues poverty does not know us. We do not know it, cannot see, fear, hear, or manifest it, for we are living in God. God governs our home. Truth fills our household, is recognized received and sought. There is no resistance, no rejection, no indifference. Love destroys all unlike itself -- removes all that is offensive. Mind plans every detail of our affairs. Nothing can obstruct the path of Truth -- the only path in our consciousness. (p.35)

## ARGUMENT

Your experience at this time is most *promising*. Every one that stands by me and is governed by God, the divine Principle of his work, will experience from the influence of Satan *trying* him just what you do. It is only the influence of malicious mesmerism, the influence of a *lie*. Now remember, dear, your cardinal points in Science, viz., a *lie is never true*, that Truth and Love are your only Life, substance and intelligence, or *Mind*, and you cannot lose your true mind any more than God can. You cannot suffer for defending me which is acceptable in God's sight. "Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of these little ones, you have done it to Me," are His words. You cannot love me too much for the love of good fulfills the law of Truth, and you cannot love the evil only sensually, and you do not love me sensually. Now awaken from this spell of animal magnetism! *Root* and *Swarts* figure largely in it. But you are the master of them, for you are better than they, and more than this, they can only hold you by a lie of belief, and you *shall not believe* a lie; a lie was never more than a *lie*; it has *no power* and you *are not held by it*. There is no *liar*; there is no *animal magnetism*. You can think of me and concentrate your thoughts on whatever you please. Evil, malice, envy, hate are *powerless* to prevent this. You are the one to control them; they cannot control you. God, good, has all the power on earth or in heaven, and "He doeth His own will and none *can stay His hand*." *Waken* from this dream! Look and behold the *Truth* of what I say. It is all a lie that you have written me. This is the hour of the lie, yea, for the snake and Red Dragon to do their best. But you are

privileged to have this battle with the *lie early* in your labors, and why? Because God knows you are equal to meeting it and putting it *down*. If you were not, you would not be called to meet this temptation. And blessed is he that can endure temptation, said our Master. He even was tempted and you are enduring temptation, that is all, and are *growing* under it. You will come out of this ten thousand times as strong in Truth as you went into it. Just know there is no power, no spell in animal magnetism, no electricity, no brains, no nerves, and no intelligence or power in mortal mind, alias evil, - - and that truth, good, is omnipotent, has *all power* and it governs you, and all error, evil, is under your feet. *See this, know it*, and after your forty days and nights experience, like the blessed Master, you will have angels minister to you -- white winged higher and holier views of divine Science and thank God for what you have learned.

Now, dear, a dream is not real! You have not been sick and cannot be sick. It is impossible, so I shall not worry. No mortal, however malicious, can *make a lie true*, and if they tell you you are poisoned, it has no effect whatever, for *a lie is not real, and you know this*. (pp. 60- 62)

## ARGUMENTS

There is no error of any name or nature in my consciousness that can resist, hide, or escape the Truth. The light of Truth and Life and Love shines straight through my belief of evil, and banishes it, chasing it into its native nothingness.

My desire is to know and obey God's law, to be filled with all the fulness of Spirit, knowing only the consciousness of God, good.

My health, strength, life, intelligence, action, etc., are subject to the governing and controlling power of the divine Mind, and to nothing else, for there is no other power.

There is no insufficiency of any kind in Truth, in infinite Love.

Good is ever-present, and is the only reality of existence; this renders evil obsolete.

There is nothing present or has power apart from God that has any reality.

Error cannot strangle, smother or choke the Truth or its manifestation and the Truth cannot be reversed.

There is no belief or evil in the bodily senses that has any reality, and that is the Truth and cannot be reversed.

Impersonal error is obsolete, absolutely obsolete, in the presence of Truth, of God of the Christ, or the spiritual idea, of Life, Love, Spirit, Mind, Soul.

The law of my so-called mortal mind concerning my body or any part of it, is *unreal, nothing, rendered null and void* by God's law.



No mesmeric law of my conscious or unconscious thought can formulate any inharmonious condition in my body that has any reality in the presence of God, LOVE...

No law of evil of any name or nature can separate my thought from the function of my real being in the Truth.

My mental concept of brain cannot hide, resist or escape the Truth.

The law of divine Life, Truth and Love does supersede the so-called law of my mental concept of brain, my belief of brain.

There is nothing present nor has power apart from divine Life, Truth and Love as infinite Mind, that can possibly control or confuse my thought, obscure my spiritual perception or hinder my progress in Christian Science, spiritually, mentally, morally, physically, financially or any other way.

God's will is all good always, is harmony, perfection. The will of God is health, gladness, all good, Life. His will is the consciousness of divine ever-presence, of Life eternal. It is to know what it is to act in conformity with the divine purpose and to be wholly governed by God.

There is no physical law that has any reality

to operate through my personality to harm me, to separate me from my true spiritual being in the Truth, to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus, to separate me from harmony.

I have no belief that matter, brain, can control, derange, or confuse my thought, or can suffer or cause suffering in the Truth, in Life, in Love.

Look away from body to Spirit. My being is spiritual, my life, my intelligence are spiritual; my senses are spiritual; my life is hid with Christ in God, and there is no other existence.

The Christ, or Truth, the manifestation of God, does supersede my belief that my true being, that real life and intelligence, are in matter. We have immortality *now*, *not* shall have...

There is no fear, *conscious* or *unconscious*, that can restrain the power of divine Love to heal.

I was born free, not in bondage to anything nor to anyone, for Principle leads me ever. Infinity includes only the man who is well, and all he needs. There is no mind to put forth a law of reversal. Love governs all, and there is only one governor. Mortal mind cannot make a law to reverse God's law, for God's law is not reversible. (pp. 68, 69)