

God will heal the sick through man...

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Several years ago I began one of my lectures my recounting a healing of a young man that suffered a fall while rock climbing with some friends. Despite having all the necessary climbing apparatus, when he slipped from the rock formation he was climbing, his rope broke and he fell to the rocks some 200 feet below. As you can imagine there were some pretty serious consequences from a fall like that. But he and his friends were a least a day's hike, under the best of circumstances, from the nearest town. So they needed to do something immediately that was effective. Not being skilled in medical diagnosis, they made him as comfortable as possible and began giving him treatment—prayerful treatment. They used the ideas from a Bible passage from Psalms which reads, *"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."*

Now the imagery of that Psalm is pretty appropriate to rock climbing and especially to my friend's physical dilemma. He had been ascending, he probably felt like he was making his bed in hell, and he most definitely needed to know that God's hand was holding him, despite evidence to the contrary. He needed to challenge the whole scenario of physics and replace it with reasoning from a metaphysical basis. Interestingly, however, this wasn't essentially a demonstration over physical laws. He said what most stood out to him during that experience was the idea that he could never be separated from God's presence, and not just during climbing. His parents, it seems, were going through a divorce and the separation had not been easy. During this time he often felt that his foundation in life was being torn out from under him. All that he had counted on for stability was being compromised. That's why he initially accepted the invitation of a Christian Scientist friend to attend Sunday school with him. Over the course of the last months he had been learning about the nature of God, especially that God is Love and that a loving God was his true basis of support and foundation. In short he was growing in his understanding of and reliance on God.

It was this understanding that sustained him that night. By the morning help arrived and he was transported back to their base camp. His parents were called and they made arrangements for him to flown home and taken to the nearest hospital for examination. He was able to fly home because by the time he had to travel he was feeling pretty well. The examining physicians confirmed that he had suffered extensive internal injuries and even some broken bones. But, much to their amazement, those injuries had healed and the bones had knitted. After several days of observation they released the boy with no

reservations. He began as a freshman at the University of Wisconsin that fall and began playing what would be four years of varsity football.

In her book **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures**, Mary Baker Eddy writes: God will heal the sick through man whenever man is governed by God. The intriguing phrase of that quotation and the one we'll be examining is "whenever man is governed by God." From a spiritual perspective, which is from God's vantage point, there is never a moment when man is not governed by and is the expression of God. So obviously this comment by Mrs. Eddy relates to the human sense of things and turns us to the question, "when are we governed by God?" The healing I just related was about being governed by God, by learning more of the divine nature and drawing closer to God in one's thought. The healing shows that real spiritual healing is not so much an alternative form of healing as much as it is an alterative, changing the way we look at things, changing thought, character and desire. Mrs. Eddy points out that this kind of healing is helping the individual spiritually, morally, and intellectually while attending to the needs of what we call the physical body. Thus the goal of spiritual healing as understood in Christian Science is really about spiritual growth not just physical wellbeing. When we have the motive of spiritual growth in mind, we are being governed by God.

Over the years, I've had many people ask the question, "how come someone like this who knows little about Christian Science can have such a quick, effective healing while I, who have been a student for many years, often struggle with my demonstrations of healing?" When you think about the healing just mentioned, you find that what gave it momentum was this boy's growing understanding of God—with the emphasis on "growing." Each of us needs to be growing in our understanding of God to keep up our momentum. It is not enough, like some Christians believe, just to accept God into our hearts on a one time basis. To really experience salvation, we need to grow in our sense of God's nature, the godliness which animates us. Yesterdays lessons were useful...yesterday. But today's lessons call us today. It makes no difference whether we've been in this process for one day or one hundred years, spiritual growth is a constant demand for effective healing. And this is just another way of saying, being governed by God.

In her book **Miscellaneous Writings**, Mrs. Eddy refers to a question that was often asked of her: *"If Christian Science is the same method of healing that Jesus and the apostles used, why do not its students perform as instantaneous cures as did those in the first century of the Christian era?" Here is her answer: In some instances the students of Christian Science equal the ancient prophets as healers. All true healing is governed by, and demonstrated on, the same Principle as theirs; namely, the action of the divine Spirit, through the power of Truth to destroy error, discord of whatever sort. The reason that the same results follow not in every case, is that the student does not in every case possess sufficiently the Christ-spirit and its power to cast out the disease. The Founder of Christian Science teaches her students that they must possess the spirit of Truth and Love, must gain the power over sin in themselves, or they cannot be*

instantaneous healers. In the CS textbook, she notes that *"by the truthful arguments you employ, and especially by the spirit of Truth and Love you entertain, you will heal the sick."* So what is this "spirit" that is so essential to successful healing?

If we look to the life of Christ Jesus for insight we see this spirit manifested in two ways: the spiritual and the moral. The spiritual demand of Jesus' life is clearly defined in his statement, *"I and my Father are one."* Jesus' sense of oneness with God is what made him mighty. This oneness meant that the very nature and character of God was evidenced in Jesus' experience. Another way of saying that is that Jesus saw in others what God saw. This was Mrs. Eddy's explanation of how Jesus healed: *"The Savior saw in this perfect man God's own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick."* Jesus' sense of his oneness with God, divine Mind, enabled him to see things from God's perspective. That our Leader did not see this capacity as peculiar to Jesus is evident when she encourages us all in the same passage: *Learn this, O mortal, and earnestly seek the spiritual status of man, which is outside of all material selfhood.* She practiced this oneness consistently in her own practice. In **Unity of Good** she refers to the healing of a cancer that eaten its way to the jugular vein. One her biographers fleshes out this healing by telling that the woman who was healed appeared in Boston some years later to give thanks to Mrs. Eddy for saving her life. Unable to greet the woman, Mrs. Eddy received the message through one of her secretaries. Upon being asked about the treatment, Mrs. Eddy noted, the sight was "so awful" that "I turned away and knew in the most positive way that God knew nothing of such a thing. That was all the treatment I gave her." In another instance when Mrs. Eddy was convinced she was needed to go carpet shopping, she met a salesman at the carpet emporium who had a growth on his face. So moved by this appearance she dismissed herself from the encounter and left to pray. Several days later one of the members of her household returned to purchase the carpet and was met by the salesman who inquired who the lady was that accompanied her several days prior. He explained that almost immediately this cancer had begun to heal and that there was no more evidence of it on his face. In both of these instances Mrs. Eddy demonstrated the need to turn entirely away from seeing through the physical senses and see with the oneness of God, see only the likeness of God present.

Jesus believed that there was not a single thing he could do that was not the result of God's expression being apparent in him. This sense of oneness was not confined just to his healing ability, his teaching, or his life work. It also extended to his dominion over material existence whether that dominion involved walking on the water, moving from one place to another instantly, or raising from the dead. Every activity of life, every function of the body he attributed to the presence of Spirit. Being governed by God was not just a matter of God intervening in his life; it was a matter of God constituting his life. I realize that can seem like a mighty demand, but it is one that separates successful and consistent healing from sporadic efforts. Each of us needs to ponder deeply and continually the "godliness which animates" us. In her oft quoted letter to James Neal, then a newly taught pupil and promising healer, Mrs. Eddy wrote: *"Oh may the Love that looks on you and all guide your every thought and act up to the impersonal, spiritual model that is the only ideal—and constitutes the only scientific Healer....A real scientific Healer is the highest position attainable in this sphere of being...Your aid to reach this goal is spiritualization. To achieve this you must have*

one God, one affection, one way, one Mind. Society, flattery, popularity are temptations in your pursuit of growth spiritual. Avoid them as much as in you lies. Pray daily, never miss praying, no matter how often: "Lead me not into temptation,"-scientifically rendered,-Lead me not to lose sight of strict purity, clean pure thoughts; let all my thoughts and aims be high, unselfish, charitable, meek,-spiritually minded. With this altitude of thought your mind is losing materiality and gaining spirituality and this is the state of mind that heals the sick."

What if you received a letter like this from Mrs. Eddy? She has just told you exactly what you need to do to heal—be spiritually minded, let all personal sense and the desire for personal glory go. Would you do it? James Neal did; he became one of the most effective healers that our movement has ever known. When appointed to the Christian Science Board of Lectureship, Neal went out to communities which had no Christian Science church, healed people in those communities, and then came back to lecture for them as interest grew. In one instance he arrived in a community the night before there was a terrible accident the next morning. It seems that a farmer and his son were putting up hay stacks in their fields and when done the farmer, standing on the top of one of the stacks, threw down his pitch fork and inadvertently struck his son in the head. A doctor was called from the town and said the boy would surely die in a short time. Neal, noticing all the commotion in town, rented a horse and went to the farmer's field offering to pray for the boy. The farmer agreed and within a couple of days the boy was completely healed. The town was ablaze with interest and begged Neal to tell them how this was done. He had a ready audience for his lecture.

One question that is often asked by people who desire to heal is, "could I do this; would I know enough to meet the cases that come my way?" This is the issue of the impersonal, spiritual model being needed rather than the personal. Personal sense is what asks, "am I capable, am I courageous, can I do this?" And the answer to personal sense is always "no, you can't." But God working through you, God governing you, can. If we can get a personal sense of healing out of the way and work with our oneness with God, we shall see this oneness, this presence of God, doing the healing. Divine Mind expresses in you the ideas that are needed, divine Soul expresses in you the feelings needed to respond, and divine Love carries you to the heights of care that breaks through all fear. It is the knowing of our oneness with God that does the work; it is not so much what we say to the patient. Returning to James Neal for an example, he was once called to Chicago by a Christian Science teacher friend of his, Mary Sands Lee. Mr. Neal was serving on the Christian Science Board of Directors at the time, but he jumped on the train from Boston to Chicago to respond to her call. Upon arriving at the Lee's apartment on Lake Michigan, he was told by Mary that her husband was dying and that he needed to deal with a very fearful wife in addition to her dying husband. Neal went into the bedroom where Mr. Lee was and closed the door. About an hour later he emerged with Mr. Lee completely dressed and well accompanying him. "What did you do," Mrs. Lee asked. "We talked about how the White Sox were doing this year," he replied. Mr. Lee was an avid baseball fan, and Mr. Neal

realized that what needed to be done in this case was to find a way to break the mesmerism of being in a state of dying. Neal showed that it was not so much an issue of what was said as what was known while he was talking that healed. It is our knowing that represents our being governed by God, not just what we say. We need to know our oneness with God, just like the Master did when he said, *"The Father in me, he doeth the works."* When we get rid of the personal element in healing, the feeling that healing is our responsibility, we can do what Mrs. Eddy calls "individualizing infinite power:" *To live so as to keep human consciousness in constant relation with the divine, the spiritual, and the eternal, is to individualize infinite power; and this is Christian Science.* There are no shortcuts to effective healing work; it requires spiritual growth and spiritual mindedness. In a very practical way this is what is meant by being governed by God.

As most of you know there is a very interesting description of a social encounter that opens the chapter in our textbook entitled "Christian Science Practice." It is the story of Jesus having dinner with Simon the Pharisee. Soon this social encounter is interrupted by a woman who comes in and washes Jesus' feet. This whole process is symbolic of this woman's attitude in seeking the Christ and it is an interesting contrast to the manner in which Simon seeks the Christ. We might ask why Mrs. Eddy chose to open this chapter on how to heal with this story? Why is it so significant? It addresses a very key issue in being governed by God—the moral demand. Usually when people first hear the word "moral" they think of things they're not suppose to do or what is socially permissive. But originally the concept of the moral really pertained to the practices, manners, or conduct of people with relation to what is right or wrong, especially in reference to the law of God. In other words, for our purposes, the moral demands of healing relate to the attitudes of thought we hold and how closely they come to expressing God's attitudes.

Upon completing the introductory story in the chapter, Mrs. Eddy asks this probing question: *"Here is suggested a solemn question, a question indicated by one of the needs of this age: Do Christian Scientists seek Truth as Simon sought the Saviour, through material conservatism and for personal homage?...On the other hand, do they show their regard for Truth, or Christ, by their genuine repentance, by their broken hearts, expressed by meekness and human affection, as did this woman?"* Do you suspect this is still one of the needs of this age? I would submit to you that it is even more important in this age than it was in hers. Why? Because it gets at the very roots of healing—what is its purpose? As I indicated earlier, true spiritual healing is not so much an alternative as it is an alterative. Its purpose is spiritual regeneration not just an inexpensive way to alleviate painful symptoms. Today's New Age religion often sidesteps the more demanding task of redemption and regeneration, yet that kind of approach comes nearer speaking to the moral demands of healing. What do you suspect Mrs. Eddy meant by seeking Truth as Simon did for "personal homage" and through "material conservatism." I think that seeking for personal homage may be the kind of prayer that asks something for oneself—like more money in the bank, a better job, someone else as President, a new car or wife. In other words, seeking Truth for personal

homage may be a utilitarian approach to religion—"what's in it for me." Interestingly some theologians have characterized Christian Science as a "success theology" meaning by that a theology which places emphasis on getting things from God that please us. Obviously those theologians haven't grasped the true essence of Christian Science, but we might have some inkling as to why they came to that conclusion. For better or worse we've presented Christian Science to the world for what it's done for us perhaps more than we've stressed what it's done to us. Clearly a distinction to be made between Simon and Mary is the one of what the Christ can do for us rather than to us. Simon has invited Jesus to his home as a famous guest, probably to bolster his reputation in the community. Mary seeks the Christ for change of reputation. Her meekness and repentance opens the heart of the Master with the benediction, "thy sins are forgiven."

You have to want spiritual regeneration. Mary put it all on the line; she realized her need for spiritual growth and spiritual mindedness. It was Simon that sought the Christ through material conservatism, perhaps unwilling to let go of the issues of material personality that landed him in the Pharisee's circle. You all remember, I am sure, a healing experience when Jesus asked the man at the pool of Bethesda, "will you be made whole?" He didn't ask him if he wanted to be free from his physical ailment but whether he really wanted to be whole—spiritually, morally, intellectually. Interestingly, the man did not answer, "oh yes, Master." Rather he launched into a lot of justification about why he could not be healed. We have to watch that. We have to watch that we are not side stepping the moral demands of the Christ to grow and change with some sort of justification of actions that probably need to see the light of Truth. Sometimes when we come face to face with what is required for wholeness healing we might answer, "no, I don't think I ready to give up certain things." Inevitably those things seem justified to us: we have good reason not to like our neighbor or surely we're not being asked to give up certain addictions to food, sloth, or emotional traits, after all that's what makes us who we are." Does it? Or do they keep us from experiencing who we really are. Mary could have justified her role as a harlot—maybe that was the only way she could see to make a living given the roles men allowed them. But that was not Mary, was it? She recognized in the moral demand something higher than human justification. She came to realize that her actions had to express the divine, had to let the activity of God shine through. And who better to help her do that than Jesus whose life was such a clear transparency for God. Jesus' example is just as much a help to us today as then, helping us take the moral steps to spiritual regeneration.

Our family faced one of those moral challenges many years ago. When my sister and brother were quite young, my parents took them to the local community club to watch the fireworks on the Fourth of July. My dad had just dropped them off to secure a good vantage point, when he returned to a screaming crowd. The fellow who was responsible for the fireworks display had mistakenly set off a Roman candle that went skidding along the ground rather than up in the air. It exploded on our family's blanket, killing my brother and critically wounding my mother and sister. They were not expected to survive either but

through the prayers of my grandmother who was a Christian Science practitioner they recovered. My mother regained her sight which the physicians declared was lost forever. The man who set off the fireworks was found not only to be negligent but also drunk. You can imagine the struggle our family had with that event, especially my mom. Anyone who has ever lost a child knows the challenge of pain and hurt that presents. As she advanced into her later years, the eyesight that had been restored began to fade because of developing cataracts. You may know that the claim of cataract is that it is a developing opacity that obscures the light in your eyes. As my mother pondered this situation, she came to the realization that what had been clouding her thought all those years was an inability to forgive that man. This lack of forgiveness was justified by what had happened to the family, but forgiveness is a divine demand not a human choice. She accepted this call to spiritual growth and redemption and began to see him that is using the sight of spiritual discernment, as an expression of God's being who had never fallen from that high estate. No matter what the human picture was, it had never touched his spiritual identity nor could it touch our identity and ability to see in others God's own likeness. I say "our" because this healing was a family experience. We all needed to put that experience in its proper light. As this way done, as we gained more spiritual discernment about the situation, her sight returned. In a sense the human need prompted the needed spiritual regeneration, and perhaps this example clears up the false accusation about Christian Science being a "success theology." If our human needs bring us face to face with the moral demands of our lives, then so much the better. After all, all that God records in our eternal history are the points of spiritual development, not the human failures. All we ever really need to carry forward are the impressions of Soul made on our senses, the lessons of spiritual growth.

When Mrs. Eddy wrote that God will heal the sick through man whenever man is governed by God she was making an observation that has been true through the centuries. She was also urging each reader to take up that challenge, to let our lives be at one with God, accepting the demands of Truth. As we look at the future of this healing movement, we know that its success is largely dependent on our willingness to accept that challenge, our willingness to accept the discipline of being increasingly spiritually minded. Then perhaps the same words that she wrote to James Neal a century ago will again be applied to us: *I had felt for sometime the fitness you possessed for healing...Now, thank God, I have a least one student ... that promises to be a Healer such as I have long waited and hoped to see.*

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