

The Spiritual Basis of Health

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The lecturer spoke substantially as follows:

Recently I stopped by a bank to cash a check. In clearing my identification with the manager I happened to mention I was in the city to give a talk on Christian Science. He looked up and said, "Oh, you're one of those people who don't go to doctors." Then, since I must have seemed like a comparatively sensible person, he leaned over and said, "You really believe all that?"

Christian Scientists are often challenged on this point of spiritual healing. Of course, many people will say, "I believe our thinking affects our health." Or, "I think a lot of disease is just imagination." But generally they come up with some kind of illness they feel can be corrected only by medical means.

How far can we rely on prayer for healing? That's what I'd like to talk about this evening.

A Man Who Needed Healing

Archibald MacLeish, the poet, wrote a successful Broadway play about a Biblical character who found healing through prayer. He called it "JB" to give it an up-to-date feeling. But most of us know this man as "Job." And as we examine the exact nature of his prayer, I think we'll begin to find the reasons why Christian Scientists consider prayer the most effective healing agent for disease of every kind—as well as for all other human difficulties.

We're not sure how much, if any, of the Bible account of Job is actual history. But one thing's certain: Job parallels a lot of us. Mr. MacLeish says in his play:

"Oh, there's always someone playing Job.

"Millions and millions of mankind
Burned, crushed, broken, mutilated,
Slaughtered, and for what?

"Job is everywhere we go,
His children dead, his work for nothing,
Counting his losses, scraping his boils,
Discussing himself with his friends and physicians,
Questioning everything — the times, the stars,
His own soul, God's providence."

Job is a symbol of us trying to unravel our problems, trying to find the reason for suffering. His problems aren't really much different from ours—except perhaps in the size of them and the way they all piled up on top of one another.

Job's Theory for Suffering

Job was a rich man, the richest in the whole country. Devoted to his family. Moral. Religious. You couldn't find a better man. I'm sure we all know such a model person.

But he began to have troubles. He lost his money. His sons were killed. And as if this weren't enough, he got sick. You may not think the diagnosis of his disease was very professional, but you've got to admit it was graphic. "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome" (Job 7:5). For months the man sat in torment. He couldn't even sleep. He wanted to die.

Why had it all happened to him? He'd been living an exemplary life. Why did he have all this trouble? If God controlled everything—and Job was convinced that he did—then the only explanation he could come up with was that God had been unfair.

I guess we all can imagine Job's frustration as he struggled to find out why this hardship had come to him. As far as he was concerned, he hadn't done anything to deserve it. It reminds me of what Sigmund Freud is supposed to have said. When he got to heaven, he'd hold a cancerous

bone up to God and ask just one question: "Why?"

We do wonder: What's the justice of disease?

His Friends' Theory for Suffering

As the Bible story continues, three of Job's friends came to see him and presented their theory as to why people suffer. They didn't agree God was unjust, that Job was suffering without a cause. "Job, you must have done something. Come on, confess it. Change your ways. You play straight with God, and He'll play straight with you."

But Job couldn't buy that theory—that sickness was God's punishment for wrongdoing. He listed all the ways he'd acted rightly (Job 31).

He told his friends, "I could sit there and talk like you do. You tell me to change, but you haven't shown me a thing I've done wrong." And he added, "Miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2). No, Job couldn't go along with this theory that every sickness must be a punishment for something we've done wrong.

Along this line, I remember a Peanuts cartoon with Linus and Charlie Brown looking at a splinter in Linus's finger. Lucy marched up and really gave it to Linus, "Aha, that's a misfortune. Linus, you must have done something to deserve it. I know about these things."

All of a sudden, Linus said, "Ooops, it popped out!" Lucy stalked away furious. Her theory had fallen flat. If Linus got the splinter because he did something wrong, it shouldn't have popped out until he'd changed his ways.

It's true wrong moral behavior and disease are sometimes connected. And when they are, the moral fault has to be removed in order to permanently cure the disease. But Job was right; the presence of disease doesn't always imply a moral fault. There certainly wasn't any in his case. So

adding a sense of moral guilt to his other troubles wasn't going to help anything.

Elihu Presents His View

Well, Job and his friends were arguing back and forth and getting nowhere fast when somebody new spoke up.

It was Elihu, and he argued with them all. He said the three friends were wrong because they couldn't tell Job his fault. And Job was wrong because he thought God's injustice was the source of his troubles. Then Elihu said to Job, "In this thou art not just: . . . God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not" (Job 33:12, 14). In other words, Job suffered for this reason alone: simply because he didn't perceive God rightly.

Then the Bible account says that Elihu went on to describe the nature of God. He assured Job of God's justice, of God's goodness and care for men. He said: "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit" (Job 33:23, 24).

Elihu next described God's great power. "Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom" (Job 36:5). "He will not afflict" (Job 37:23).

This was a far different concept of God from the one Job and his three friends had. And it's far different from the concept many of us have today, too. Elihu didn't describe God as punisher, or a source of suffering, but as a completely beneficent power, always supporting and helping mankind.

It may be difficult to conceive of such a power. We certainly can't see it with our eyes, and there seems to be a lot going on in the world that refutes the existence of this good power called God. But the life and beauty and

goodness we do see is evidence of such a creative supporting power, that is, evidence of God. And as we study to perceive what He really is, we begin to experience His power in our lives, as Job came to experience it in his.

If there are some of us, however, who don't feel the presence of God, we need a messenger, as Elihu said, to lead us to an understanding of Him and to show us our uprightness, physical, moral, and spiritual. Today Christian Science is bringing exactly this message of God's infinite presence and power and goodness. It's showing us the uprightness of man—of you and me—as the offspring of God, who is ever-present good.

This is the real significance of Christian Science healing.

How the Message of God's Goodness and Power Came to Mrs. Eddy

The Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, was, like Job, searching for the solution to this question of sickness and suffering. Her experience of learning that God, good, is the only power helps us understand just what it was that eventually brought about Job's complete healing and can still help all men everywhere.

Mrs. Eddy had seldom been well. She'd explored various means of healing—conventional medicine, *homeopathy*, which was so popular a hundred years ago, also various mental systems popular then, too. But her background was deeply religious, and her mother had often told her that God could raise her up from sickness.

During her years of searching, many experiences pointed to mental factors in the cause and cure of physical disease. Mrs. Eddy describes one of these in her book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (p. 156). A woman had edema. (That's a dropsical condition where the body becomes very swollen.) Doctors considered the case hopeless. And since it seemed dangerous to prescribe any more drugs, she was given unmedicated pellets instead. (Today we call this type of medication placebos—a pill with no medicinal content.) The woman believed so strongly in these pills she recovered.

This, and similar instances, preceded Mrs. Eddy's discovery of the wholly spiritual method of Christian Science healing. They were in no way spiritual themselves, but they at least pointed

the way to a nonmaterial approach.

Then in 1866 a turning point came. Mrs. Eddy was injured in an accident and brought home in a very serious condition. She opened her Bible to Jesus' healing of the palsied man. She reasoned that the same power which healed that man must be present to heal her. Then in a flash of spiritual insight, she was healed. She describes it like this: "My immediate recovery from the effects of an injury caused by an accident, an injury that neither medicine nor surgery could reach, was the falling apple that led me to the discovery how to be well myself, and how to make others so" (Retrospection and Introspection, p. 24).

She writes, "During twenty years prior to my discovery I had been trying to trace all physical effects to a mental cause; and in the latter part of 1866 I gained the scientific certainty that all causation was Mind, and every effect a mental phenomenon" (*ibid.*, p. 24).

Here Mrs. Eddy capitalizes the word "Mind." In this way she indicates that God, the all-powerful good whom Job learned to know, is infinite intelligence or divine Mind. We glimpse something of the full nature of this Mind in various other names for God which Christian Scientists use to describe this ever-present, wholly beneficent power—Spirit, Soul, Love, Principle, Life, and Truth.

This Mind doesn't stand all by itself, though. It has to have ideas; otherwise, it wouldn't be Mind. These ideas, the expression of the divine Mind, constitute God's spiritual creation—and most specifically man. A material, physical body, however, is not this expression of divine Mind. How could it be?

God's Justice Is Preservative

This is the message of Christian Science—that God, all-powerful and good Mind, is the basis of our identity, our being, and our substance. As Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*, "Rightly understood, instead of possessing a sentient material form, man has a sensationless body; and God, the Soul of man and of all existence, being perpetual in His own individuality, harmony, and immortality, imparts and perpetuates these qualities in man,—through Mind, not matter" (p. 280).

It's like Elihu was pointing out to Job. Man has to be shown his uprightness. God's being and power exist always, and man is

the expression or individualized form of His divine nature. God couldn't change and become unwise or unloving. This would destroy His nature. So God's justice is always to preserve our health, our well-being, and our happiness.

Now if God, good, is all-power, and if His ideas—that is, man and the spiritual universe—are entirely good and whole, what is disease? It must be a mistaken view of reality; and this is exactly the way Mrs. Eddy classifies disease—as illusion. Elihu was classifying disease this way when he told Job, "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not." Disease is a failure to perceive reality.

Does this reasoning seem absurd? Christ Jesus didn't think so. He was surrounded by disease, but how did he respond? He said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). But to know disease, that is, to see it as real, true, and present, certainly doesn't lead us to freedom. It's slavery. Job was led into this slavery by looking at his disease and other hardships as real instead of illusion, and then trying to find an explanation. He needed Elihu to open his eyes to the facts about himself, his uprightness, his health, established and preserved by all-powerful divine Mind.

If this is still hard to understand, consider that every truth has what we can term a hypothetical opposite. This supposed opposite is never true or real, though it may appear to be. We see this in our everyday experience. For instance, one morning my wife said, "Oh, I must have left our travel clock at that other motel."

I told her, "I'll call and have them send it on." But just then we found it right on the desk where we'd put it.

The travel clock was there all the time. The hypothetical opposite was that it wasn't there, that it had been left at the previous motel. Building on this supposition, we became concerned. I was even going to call the other motel. But the whole loss was imaginary, a misconception strictly in the mental realm. It never really occurred, no matter how convinced of it we might have been.

Disease Is Truth's Hypothetical Opposite

It may be harder, though, to take the same attitude toward what seems to be an actual physical condition; for instance, to see physical disease as a mere supposition or illusion. Job cer-

tainly thought his disease was real enough. Yet it's on this basis of the illusory nature of physical disease that Christian Science heals it. And every Christian Science healing is proof that disease is not an actual physical fact but a false mental supposition.

As an example, recently I heard of an outstanding testimony of Christian Science healing given by a doctor to some medical students. He told of a patient dying of cancer who, because all other hope was gone, turned to complete reliance on Christian Science and was quickly healed. The doctor said he cited this case so the students wouldn't be surprised if they ran into things they couldn't explain.

Naturally, this healing couldn't be explained if we accept physical disease as a reality and the physical body as independent substance, because no further physical treatment was given here. But the healing resulted because the patient accepted the fact of God as all-powerful good, maintaining His spiritual idea, man, in perfect health, and in doing so he rejected the hypothetical opposite, the false belief of an unjust God and a suffering mortal.

It's difficult at times to stop accepting as real what our physical senses have taught us, isn't it? Yet even some physicists are pointing to a concept of the universe very different from what has been commonly believed. A friend of mine, who's a physicist, described matter this way. "Finding out what matter is all about is like taking off the sides of a box and finding another box inside, and working your way down until, when you've taken the last box apart, you find there's nothing there."

Of course, most physicists wouldn't go as far as this, but some are getting pretty close. I ran across this statement the other day by an eminent one, Dr. Warren Weaver. "Solids are not really solid. 'Real objects' are not even composed as physicists thought a half-century ago of submicroscopic atoms like billiard balls." And he continues, "... the every-day reality of the table, the rock, is an illusion, and ... reality is in fact a very subtle, evasive, and somewhat abstract business."

It's not the same, but it doesn't sound very different from the explanation given by Christian Science for the healing of cancer I mentioned just now, as related by a doctor. The physical condition, though medically diagnosed on the basis of the physical

data, was an illusion, a false belief—the supposed opposite of spiritual reality. And that's true of *every* disease, whether we call it acute or chronic, functional or organic. All disease is an externalization of incorrect thinking about God and man. It's either our own incorrect thinking, or the world's incorrect thinking that we've somehow accepted.

We Must Disbelieve the Illusion

When Mrs. Eddy presented Christian Science, she translated everything into mental terms. But she went beyond this. She distinguished between the *divinely* mental, that is, the real, and the *mortally* mental, that is, the suppositional opposite; the unreal or the illusion. And she showed we have to disbelieve the illusion.

If she had stopped with just identifying everyday experience as externalized thought, this would still have left us vulnerable to any form of disease or disability. It would only mean we've conceived of them in mental rather than physical terms. Like a dream we have at night. We all agree it's totally a mental experience. But just because a dream is mental doesn't mean it can't be a nightmare.

So we have to separate the divinely mental from the falsely mental. Elihu was trying to help Job do this. He showed him the divinely mental is the awareness of God. It's divine Mind expressing itself in spiritual ideas, which come to us humanly as the right and useful ideas for every situation. And the falsely mental is the hypothetical opposite of divine Truth, Love, Life. It's the belief of death, disease, poverty, hatred. It's the belief in a mind apart from divine Mind, and a power apart from God, good, the divine All-power. Mrs. Eddy very logically concluded that, since God is everywhere present, then His opposite or absence has to be strictly hypothetical, a misconception of Him.

I was explaining this point to a friend one day. That our experience is not something material, outside of thought, but thought objectified. And I said, if we want to correct anything in our experience, we can do this by changing our thought. We mentally reject material thoughts such as sickness and the whole atmosphere of material thinking, whether they come as our own thoughts or the thoughts of people around us. We accept instead the loving and intelligent ideas of divine Mind, the reality of a spiri-

tual universe made and maintained by God, good.

My friend considered this a few moments. Then, since he felt he could be a little slimmer, he said, "Well, my health is pretty good. But I wish somebody would hypnotize me so I wouldn't like Danish pastry so much!"

He hadn't exactly gotten the point. So I said to him, "Rolf, you don't need anybody to hypnotize you. You're already hypnotized by the belief that you can't control your appetite. What you need is someone to *dehypnotize* you!"

And this applies to any abnormality, whether it's addiction, disease, or whatever the problem may be. We need to be rid of our delusions. And we get rid of them by accepting spiritual reality. That God is good and all-power. And that man, God's spiritual idea, has no mind but the divine Mind.

This is the healing message Mrs. Eddy discovered in Christian Science.

Job Applied These Truths

Everyone can apply these truths. Let's take the story of Job further as an example.

After Elihu challenged his false beliefs, Job stopped thinking he was the victim of injustice. Instead, he considered the true nature of God. And he concluded that, since God is unlimited, there can't be any power opposing Him. You might say God is totally good because there's nothing to reverse His forward and constructive action.

Job saw this in a series of beautiful metaphors, familiar things that hinted God's infinite power—the creating of our earth, positioning of it in space, control of the sea, changing of night and day, snow, rain, wind, stars. He thought of the wild animals and how they bring forth their young. The strength of the rhinoceros, the courage of the horse.

All these hinted to Job a creative, controlling power beyond the grasp of materially-based thought. They pointed to divine qualities: creativity, permanence, order, wisdom.

Job was so overwhelmed, he conceded: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee" (Job 42:2). "... I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Job was willing to completely let go of his self-righteousness and self-justification, and to acknowledge that his only righteousness was what God gave him.

Job's thought was so uplifted that his three friends were touched, too. They had urged him to confess his guilt. Now they saw the need to change their view, not to regard Job as a guilty, alienated mortal, being punished by an afflictive God.

Then Job was moved to take compassion on his friends. The Bible says, "... the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10). Here Job overcame his resentment toward these men. An important step, because resentment is a mental denial of the all-power and presence of divine Love. When Job prayed for them, that is, applied these spiritual truths, he got rid of his false belief in any agent for evil. He acknowledged God, and man expressing divine goodness and power, as the all-in-all of being, with no opposition.

Job was healed, and the Bible reports: "... the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

These Truths Can Be Applied for Others

Job had help from his friend, Elihu, in all this. He didn't have to go it alone. Neither do we. So not only can we apply the spiritual truths of God and man, to help ourselves, but we can turn to others for healing if we need to. And also we in turn can apply these spiritual truths to heal those who come to us for help.

The greatest example of this, of course, is Jesus. He healed *multitudes* by applying the truth of being. He also taught his disciples to do the same. And he extended this opportunity to *everyone* when he said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

This truth, which Jesus exemplified fully and which has been applied by prophets and by spiritually-minded men and women throughout the centuries, is known as the Christ. The Christ, Truth, is the true idea of God coming to men. It shows men the truth of their own being. This Christ, Truth, can be known by everybody. And it can be applied by everyone, either for himself or for someone else who asks for help.

Here's an example. An acquaintance of mine called a Christian Science practitioner one day and explained that a growth was developing on the back of her head. Her father had died from

a growth, and she asked help through prayer.

The practitioner told her that in reality nothing occurs except what is caused by God. He wanted first to counteract her belief that she had a diseased condition at all, a condition not caused by God.

As she was especially afraid because of her father's experience, the practitioner next helped her overcome this fear. He explained that, in reality, her father hadn't died from a growth or from any other cause. He told her to keep the view of man and of her father as a spiritual identity forever expressing God, who is eternal Life.

Another facet of her trouble, even more deep-seated than the hereditary aspect, was the basic pattern of thinking she'd gotten into. She'd lived through two wars in her country. Memories of loss, hunger, and injustice still haunted her. At times, she could hardly reason clearly.

Even though the practitioner worked with her over a long period, the growth and pain increased. But then one day the woman's fear suddenly lifted. Two thoughts came to her. First, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). This familiar Bible passage took on new meaning. She saw she could trust God for every needful idea. She stopped struggling to reason everything out on a human basis. And for the first time she felt *entirely free* from mental turmoil and frustration.

The second thought was just a phrase from Science and Health, "the universal solvent of Love." I'm going to read the entire sentence where this phrase appears: "In patient obedience to a patient God, let us labor to dissolve with the universal solvent of Love the adamant of error,—self-will, self-justification, and self-love,—which wars against spirituality and is the law of sin and death" (p. 242).

My friend asked herself, "What does unselfishness mean, this universal solvent of Love? Does it mean I have to do everything for everybody else, give in to what other people want, and always suffer myself?" That certainly wasn't the answer, and she knew it.

At that moment, she saw what unselfishness really is—the reflection of divine Love. So she began to quiet her human sense of ego in order to reflect the Love that is God. Divine Love filled her consciousness, and the suffering and

sense of injustice in her life dissolved.

This final change of thinking took place within just a few minutes; but, of course, it was the culmination of the steady movement of her thought Spiritward over the preceding months. The pain left immediately. My friend was healed. And after about three weeks, the growth was completely gone.

How Mental Treatment Benefits the Patient

How could the practitioner's silent mental affirmations during this time help? It would be easier to see how talking together or writing a letter could give encouragement and helpful ideas; but what about these silent mental affirmations? Often these are a major part of the Christian Science treatment. How do these have any effect?

The point is, when my friend asked for help, she was in reality perfect, but she had somehow accepted a misconception of reality. She had accepted the general human belief in harmful material heredity and therefore a power apart from God, good. Specifically, she believed in a harmful growth on her head. Because she wasn't able to break the illusion by herself, she decided to ask the practitioner for help. He was farther removed from the problem, so he could penetrate its falsity more easily. Also, my friend trusted the practitioner's developed spiritual understanding of the power and willingness of God to heal.

In other words, they voluntarily joined efforts to apply spiritual Truth. They both gave attention to dismissing the false set of factors and to seeing the spiritual reality. And because both reflected the one divine Mind, the patient became aware of the same

divine freedom and perfection the practitioner was aware of. They both held this true view, and the illusion no longer deceived either of them. Just like with Elihu and Job, or with Jesus and those he healed, the Christ, Truth, brought to this modern messenger and the one who asked help some experience of reality.

Two Needful Steps

Actually two steps brought about the change of thought which resulted in spiritual healing. First, the practitioner identified the claim, the *precise* nature of the illusion. He recognized my friend's belief in the growth, her fear of heredity, the pain, and also the mental state of depression and feelings of loss. Elihu did the same in the story about Job. He recognized Job's acceptance of a specific disease, the calamities, his condemnation of God, and his anger against his three friends.

Both the practitioner and Elihu saw the claims, but they didn't treat them as real. This is extremely important: that, while we recognize the claims in a case, we see them as false, as illusions, as misconceptions, as the merely hypothetical or supposed opposites of Truth. As I said much earlier, disease is merely a failure to see reality. What appears to be a physical material condition is really a mental condition, a projection of thought. So we have to translate the apparent physical condition into a false mental condition. We must always see it as illusion, as untrue. Then we can heal it through divinely mental means. We can dissolve the adamant, that is the solidness, of what appears as material evil with the spiritually mental solvent of divine Love.

The second step which helped bring about the healing had to do with trust in God. Both practitioner and patient had this trust.

This is also extremely important—to trust God with our whole heart and thought. It's to perceive the allness of God, to realize that only God and His expression can actually exist. When we realize the nature of God and our own spiritual nature as His expression, then healing comes. Then we can't experience anything except the health, the freedom, happiness, that characterize true being.

My friend with the tumor felt the all-presence of divine Mind and divine Love, and there was no room for anything else. The belief in an unintelligent, painful condition was excluded by God's all-power and presence.

Job realized God's power and supportive nature. Then all he could experience were freedom and success. He found his answer to the question, "Why am I sick?"

What was it?

In reality he had never been sick. Job was never really sick. Nor was my friend.

In both these healings, *nothing* had actually changed. The hypothetical opposite of Truth always remains hypothetical. In fact, the claim that someone can believe a falsehood is itself an empty supposition.

Man is the idea of divine Mind and always knows what this perfect Mind imparts. So technically the word "healing" is a misnomer. What we're actually doing is seeing and experiencing to some degree the perfect selfhood which has always existed and which always will exist. And there isn't anybody who can't do it.

The Eternal Presence of God, Good

When the bank manager I referred to earlier mentioned spiritual healing and asked me, "Do you really believe that?" I answered: "Yes. I've relied all my life on Christian Science for

all my health needs—really, for everything." I could have pointed him to more than 40,000 authenticated healings published in Christian Science periodicals. Or thousands more related in testimony meetings in Christian Science churches every week, and thousands more that aren't ever publicly acknowledged.

But the answer to his question isn't really a simple yes or no. I'm sure each one of us has to answer and reanswer constantly this question of faith in spiritual versus material power. It goes beyond just the question of what method we use for healing our physical ills. It's really a question of what we think we are. Are we a material, physical structure, or are we each an individual idea in the divine Mind, God, conscious of what the divine Mind contains, governed by His power? Healing through spiritual means may strengthen our acceptance of spiritual identity, but healings won't do the whole job. This full acceptance comes from a deep spiritual insight and conviction based on our experience of what real consciousness is.

Jesus taught his disciples to heal through spiritual means, and he sent them out to do so. They came back rejoicing over their success. He rejoiced with them. But he also cautioned, "... don't be glad because the evil spirits obey you; rather be glad because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20, Good News for Modern Man—The New Testament in Today's English Version).

He had told them that heaven was within them, that is, in their consciousness of God and His power. This consciousness includes physical healing. But more importantly, it identifies us as spiritual. And this is the real reason to believe in and seek after spiritual healing. Because in this way all of us can discover our true, eternal, Godlike being.