

## **The Basis of Christian Science Nursing:**

### **Trust in the healing power of Christian Science**

I know we each have been thinking about the new concepts for nursing and training that have just come out and wondering what effect they'll have on the nursing activity. To me the answer is directly related to our conviction of the healing power of Christian Science. To the degree that people trust the Christ, Truth, there's going to be demand for Christian Science healing and demand for Christian Science nursing. And not only demand but enlightenment on how they should be pursued. That's why I want to focus particularly on the efficacy of Christian Science healing. The same divine Mind that produces the healing also provides the guidance and the ability that are involved in nursing.

Christian Science healing stands unique. The thing that distinguishes it from all other approaches is the different premise on which it's based. In Christian

Science we start from the premise that spiritual perfection exists now and always. It actually is our worship of God.

Outside of Christian Science, the premise is that disease is a material condition and it needs to be cured by changing one supposedly real material condition into a different real material condition. It's true that people are acknowledging more and more the part that thought can play in changing the physical condition. Dr. Bernie Siegel's book *Love, Medicine and Miracles* is an example. But even when people acknowledge that thought has played a part, they still continue to view the body as entirely material.

It seems to me that one of the big challenges we face is the need to keep the distinction between the spiritual and material approaches very clear. Over the past several years we've been having this in-depth review of Christian Science nursing. I believe this is a determined effort to maintain this distinction. On the

surface, it may appear that there isn't a great deal of difference between Christian Science nursing and medical nursing, except that the Christian Science nurse doesn't administer medicine. In both instances, the Christian Science nurse and the medical nurse help with bathing, feeding, bandaging perhaps, and generally assisting the patient with their physical needs. Also, in both instances, the role of the nurse is to be cheerful and orderly, to be loving and encouraging to the patient.

But, of course, there is a major difference. The Christian Science nurse works from the premise that disease is a false belief about man and not the fact. The medical nurse sees disease as a reality and expects it to follow a material pattern which can be either good or bad, but in any case sees man as subject to material conditions rather than governed by God's law of perfect harmony.

I've read the paragraph on page 395 describing the qualities of the nurse many times, as I'm sure you have. But I have to admit I never noticed how applicable the paragraph following it is in emphasizing this distinction between Christian Science nursing and medical nursing. .

You know the sentence well describing the nurse. It says, "The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, -- receptive to Truth and Love." (S&H 395:18) Now listen to how Mrs. Eddy follows this up with a warning against anything that would contradict the nurse's faith and receptivity to Truth and Love. She writes, "It is mental quackery to make disease a reality --to hold it as something seen and felt --and then to attempt its cure through Mind. It is no less erroneous to believe in the real existence of a tumor, a cancer, or decayed lungs, while you argue against their reality, than it is for your patient to feel these ills in physical belief." She concludes the

paragraph, "Mental practice, which holds disease as a reality, fastens disease on the patient, and it may appear in a more alarming form." (S&H 395:21)

I think we'll all agree that this distinction between the Christian Science approach and the approach of material medicine is one we need to be continually alert to, and I'm sure each one of us as experienced students of Christian Science does make every effort to understand the spiritual approach better and to apply it more fully. Yet the rejection of the evidence of the physical senses does seem to put a mighty big demand on us.

On the page following her description of the Christian Science nurse, Mrs. Eddy discusses this point. She tells us why this rejection should not be difficult. She writes, " The refutation of the testimony of material sense is not a difficult task in view of the conceded falsity of this testimony." (S&H 396:14) If we can only start from the standpoint that the

evidence of the physical senses is not true and stick right with that fact, we'll find the going easier. The temptation is to think maybe it's a little bit true. But it isn't true. Spirit and Spirit's ideas are true. And they're not physical, they're not limited, they're not changeable, they're not connected with time or matter in any way.

Then Mrs. Eddy explains why the rejection seems arduous. She writes, "The refutation becomes arduous, not because the testimony of sin or disease is true, but solely on account of the tenacity of belief in its truth, due to the force of education and the overwhelming weight of opinions on the wrong side, -- all teaching that the body suffers, as if matter could have sensation." (S&H 396:16)

How do we counteract the force of education and the overwhelming weight of opinions on the wrong side that this passage refers to? Mrs. Eddy uses a word in the textbook that we don't run across very

often in everyday conversation. I've don't think I've heard it often in the supermarket! It's the word "ontology." She says, "We must abandon pharmaceuticals and take up ontology, --'the Science of real being.'" And she adds, "We must look deep into realism instead of accepting only the outward sense of things." (S&H 129:21) Isn't this what we're talking about in regard to healing? The need to look deep into realism, instead of accepting the material evidence?

I've often thought of something a friend of mine, Peter Henniker-Heaton told me. Many of you may be familiar with his healing. He had become helplessly crippled. He worked for ten years before he'd gotten his healing. At times he was unable to hold the books so he memorized large portions of Science and Health. He said he especially had to watch when he began to improve and friends would say to him, "Peter, I think you're standing a little straighter today." Then he would have to go right back to the spiritual facts he'd

been dwelling with because those were the truth and that's where the real power was.

As a side note, this was during the 2nd World War. His wife Rose was a concert singer and had to leave him alone for extended periods. There was no Christian Science nurse to care for him and Rose said she really had to trust during those times. The needs were met moment by moment. This illustrates to me that whatever the circumstances, Christian Science healing includes the answers in whatever form they're needed.

Mrs. Eddy speaks of ontology again in the chapter Teaching Christian Science. She writes, "Ontology is defined as the 'science of the necessary constituents and relations of all beings,' and it underlies all metaphysical practice." She continues, "Our system of Mind-healing rests on the apprehension of the nature and essence of all being, -- on the divine Mind and Love's essential qualities. " She says then, "Its



pharmacy is moral, and its medicine is intellectual and spiritual, though used for physical healing." (S&H 460:3) Christian Science addresses the moral attitude of the patient, the temperament or character, and lifts the moral level higher. This helps the patient identify more closely with his or her true being as God's expression. That's the pharmacy or we could say the "dosage" that Christian Science administers. The medicine of Christian Science, Mrs. Eddy says, is intellectual and spiritual. We're always dealing with thought, and the healing effort therefore remains entirely in the mental realm. Even though, as Mrs. Eddy adds, it's used for physical healing.

Mrs. Eddy concludes this paragraph by saying, "Yet this most fundamental part of metaphysics is the one most difficult to understand and demonstrate, for to the material thought all is material, till such thought is rectified by Spirit." (S&H 460:10) Doesn't this show us where the central demand is in our healing work --

to get beyond this material thought that all is material? How do we achieve this? She speaks of the material thought being rectified by Spirit. Is this achieved overnight? It doesn't sound like it when Mrs. Eddy calls this most fundamental part of metaphysics "the one most difficult to understand and demonstrate." Should this be discouraging to us? Not at all. Instead, we feel the greatest incentive from recognizing what we are achieving with our efforts. We're achieving a higher morality -- the freedom and satisfaction of Soul, the fulfillment of divine Love, and the throwing off of limitation through Spirit.

When we combine this with the intellectual and spiritual medicine of Christian Science we find our health governed entirely by God's law and freed from the so-called material laws that would limit us and permit disease.

I was interested to see the paragraph that followed Mrs. Eddy's discussion of ontology. It shows the

wonderful balance that Mrs. Eddy always expressed. After discussing the deep absolute facts of being, she then tells us how we need to keep all of this in the proper perspective. She turns her attention to the needs of the patient, and at first it sounds as if she's contradicting everything she's said about ontology. She says, "Sickness is neither imaginary nor unreal..." And adds, "-- that is, to the frightened, false sense of the patient. Sickness is more than fancy; it is solid conviction." Mrs. Eddy doesn't take the feelings of the patient lightly. She advises us to be very sensitive. She continues, "It is therefore to be dealt with through right apprehension of the truth of being." And she cautions, "If Christian healing is abused by mere smatterers in Science, it becomes a tedious mischief-maker. Instead of scientifically effecting a cure, it starts a petty crossfire over every cripple and invalid, buffeting them with the superficial and cold assertion 'Nothing ails you.'" (S&H 460:14)

You and I aren't going to make any cold assertions like "nothing ails you," and you and I are not "mere smatterers in Science." You wouldn't be here at this meeting today if you weren't an earnest student of Christian Science with a deep desire to progress in your understanding and your effectiveness in applying the Truth. The public may at times misinterpret Christian Science, and think that it is nothing more than a superficial assertion "Nothing ails you." But the lives of Christian Scientists counteract this misconception. Through your earnest study and desire to progress, you reverse this suggestion that Christian Science is just cold, empty assertions. I might add that this suggestion that Christian Science is just empty assertions even tries to come and plant seeds of doubt in the Christian Scientists' own thinking. But those seeds are like the tares in Jesus' parable of the tares and wheat. The tares eventually betray themselves as invalid. Then they're removed and

burned while the wheat, or spiritual understanding, continues to grow.

It's inevitable that our spiritual understanding continues to grow. The nature of Truth compels us to want to progress through its attractiveness, through our need for it, and because it reveals itself as Truth. That's why I know that the needs for practical care are going to be met as the concept of Christian Science nursing continues to develop. This desire for Truth is always accompanied by the answers that Truth provides.

I can recall one point where my desire for the Truth was especially strong, and the answers did appear, along with great spiritual growth. Rosemarie and I were completing a three month lecture tour through southern Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. It had been long and demanding, but very rewarding. We had just two lectures more in Hawaii on the way home, and I had scheduled them so that we could

have one week before the first one, and a second week before the second lecture. This was to give ourselves a little quiet time, along with some happy recreation. At that point I can remember feeling a deep desire to come even closer to God.

We reached Hawaii on Monday morning, but I'm afraid I didn't get much chance for fun and recreation. By that evening I'd developed a terrific inflammation in my shoulder. I think I had never experienced such pain and it really laid me out. The condition was such that it actually pulled my shoulder forward out of its normal position. I lay there for two days in excruciating pain and praying the very best I could. The situation was such that I was able to pray just the very simplest prayer. I thought about God as divine Mind, the source of my ideas. I thought about God as divine Love, giving comfort rather than pain. I also took that familiar paragraph on page 495 which starts out "When the illusion of sickness or sin tempts you, cling

steadfastly to God and His idea." I went through the paragraph line by line, over and over again. You know how it continues: "Allow nothing but His likeness to abide in your thought. Let neither fear nor doubt overshadow your clear sense and calm trust that the recognition of life harmonious --as life eternally is -- can destroy any painful sense of, or belief in that which Life is not. Let Christian Science, instead of corporeal sense, support your understanding of being, and this understanding will supplant error with Truth, replace mortality with immortality, and silence discord with harmony." (S&H 495:14) You can see how appropriate this passage was, and how it helped me to keep my thought filled with the Truth and the awareness of God's presence instead of the pain.

Rosemarie was praying with me, of course, but I also felt the need to call on a friend there who was a Christian Science teacher to help me. I needed healing, to be sure, but I also had to be ready to give

the lecture there the following Saturday. You know, it's sort of funny, how when you're sick, you sometimes wonder if you're ever going to get well. Then I had one additional fear. I've been a long-time, avid tennis player. It's been my main form of physical recreation. My fear was that with this shoulder problem --it was my tennis shoulder --I might not be able to play tennis again. I confided this to my practitioner friend. I'm sure she had a few other comments, but I remember her response to that fear. She said, "Mortal mind can't take away your fun." That helped me to rise above the seriousness of it all. Actually, it fit right in with the description of the qualities of the nurse in the textbook. The first in the list is "cheerful." It's important to think about this. The Bible has many references to delight and joy and happiness. This is how we should think of our lives. These qualities generate buoyancy and energy and expectancy of good. They counteract the beliefs of



depression and hopelessness and loneliness which work against a person's health.

I continued with my prayer. Then about one or two o'clock in the morning on Thursday, the pain was so strong that I couldn't lie there. I got up and walked out onto the balcony. I looked down the beach toward the city of Honolulu which was all lighted up. As I did so, I thought about the contrast between the material approach to healing and the Christian Science approach. The material approach might make some adjustments to matter or inject some chemicals and might bring some relief. But this would be exchanging one material belief about the body for another material belief. And there'd be no guarantee against a return of the problem or different problems popping up, because I'd still be endorsing a material, vulnerable view of the body.

The Christian Science approach, on the other hand, deals entirely with mental factors. Christian Science

shows the material body to be a mistaken mental concept, a misstatement about the perfect consciousness that constitutes man's true body as the reflection of God or Mind. The ideas that make up true consciousness are eternal, perfect, harmonious. They're forever performing the function they're designed to perform. If there's an abnormality to human sense, this abnormality is subject to correction by spiritualizing our view.

As I saw the distinction between these two approaches, I gained a wonderful feeling of the safety of relying on Christian Science. There was no guesswork here. Perfect, intelligent Mind had established my being. Divine Mind continued to maintain it. There was no influence of medical theories vacillating from one moment to the next and from one case to the next. And most important, my prayers were bringing me into the very presence of God, were spiritualizing my consciousness, developing

my moral standards and enlarging my mental awareness and ability to help others.

That was the breakthrough. I returned to bed with a great sense of peace and confidence in the holiness of working in Christian Science. I could feel the healing taking place.

It wasn't instantaneous, but it was definite. By Saturday I was able to get into my suit and tie. I have to admit I didn't exactly wave my right arm around during the lecture, and I shook hands afterward in a somewhat reserved manner. But you can believe the lecture that day had a special inspiration and closeness to God. By the end of the following week when I had to give the second lecture, I was just about completely free. One added bonus to this healing: I found that I had also gained a greater freedom in my tennis playing. After a tough match, I didn't feel the stiffness that one often feels. As Wrigley's chewing

gum ad says, "I had doubled my pleasure and doubled my fun!" And I certainly had come closer to God.

I've described this healing to illustrate how spiritual thinking has a corrective effect on what we see as a material body. The true body is spiritual and perfect. It's truthful consciousness. If the awareness of this can correct abnormalities, wouldn't the awareness of true identity also be effective in preventing abnormalities? Prevention really is the higher art, and Mrs. Eddy advises us to utilize the preventive approach. She tells us, "Eradicate the image of disease from the perturbed thought before it has taken tangible shape in conscious thought, alias the body, and you prevent the development of disease." Then she explains further, "This task becomes easy, if you understand that every disease is an error, and has no character nor type, except what mortal mind assigns to it." Isn't this what we've been talking about as the method of Christian Science -- seeing disease as an

error and not as a reality? Mrs. Eddy concludes, "By lifting thought above error, or disease, and contending persistently for truth, you destroy error." (S&H 400:12)

Whether you're working for yourself, whether you're working for someone else as a practitioner, whether you're serving as a Christian Science nurse, or whether you're just thinking about meeting the need for care in the nursing field, the basic fact remains the same. God's creation is made up of ideas which are perfect and present right now. Our prayer is to realize that presence and utilize them effectively as they appear to us.

We don't know what form Christian Science nursing is to take, but we do know that it always takes the form that will meet the need in the very highest way. When I first began in the practice back in the '50's, there were far fewer nursing facilities and we had maybe one or two Christian Science nurses

listed in the Journal here in the Twin Cities. But I had a list of between twenty and thirty people I could call on for Christian Science nursing. Some had been previously trained as medical nurses. Others had developed their skills in caring for their family or for others, but they did exhibit the practical wisdom Mrs. Eddy talks about, and a conscious receptivity to Truth and Love. I remember one case I had. A member of our church, who I think had even done some prizefighting in his day, was a large man and needed nursing care. We had another member of the church whom I approached and asked if he would be willing to help this man as a Christian Science nurse. He had never done nursing, but he was a capable, loving person. He stepped in and met that man's need. This was over thirty years ago. He never went so far as to be listed in the Journal, but more recently he served five years nursing at the aid level right here at Clifton House.

There have been wonderful, forward steps in refining the practical skills of Christian Science nursing. Great thought has been given to developing the spiritual attitudes that make it most effective. This progress is going to continue. New paths to walk in, new paths to grow in.

To me that characterizes the thought of you, my friends here, whom I know so well. You have a beautiful vision. It's free, it's broad, and it's unselfish. So I know your efforts to provide effective Christian Science nursing care are going to be met with continuing success and progress.