

Why Not the Public Practice?

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I'm going to speak about the public practice of Christian Science. I won't *really* try to persuade anyone to enter the public practice. It's a very personal matter between you and God. But if it sounds like a good idea, I wouldn't mind. I would like to present some aspects of the practice for you to think about. They deal with supporting the practice, whether you're listed or not. And in a certain sense each of you is always in the practice with one major, permanent patient -- yourself!

There's an interesting event recorded in the book of Numbers. Moses called a meeting outside the camp. It may have been much like the one we're having today. The purpose was for the spirit of the Lord to descend on seventy elders of Israel. The Bible says, "...it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." (Num. 11:25)

The account goes on, "But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp." (v. 26)

Well! This had to be reported! A young man came rushing out to the tabernacle. "Moses, Moses, Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!"

Joshua protests: "My lord Moses, forbid them!" (v.28)

Moses reply? "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (v. 29)

Do we get a message from this? Even the number seventy tells us something. In the Bible the number seven generally refers to completeness, to holy completeness. Seventy is emphasis, like when Jesus said seventy times seven. Completeness emphasized.

Can this mean that everyone is intended to have the spirit of the Lord and to prophesy, that is, to see beyond the material evidence and be able to heal?

How did our Leader feel about this? She gives a pretty direct answer in two Manual By-Laws. In one she writes: "I recommend that each member of this Church shall strive to demonstrate by his or her practice, that Christian Science heals the sick quickly and wholly, thus proving this Science to be all that we claim for it." (Man. 92:7)

The other is a By-Law entitled No Monopoly. It reads, "A Scientist shall not endeavor to monopolize the healing work in any church or locality, to the exclusion of others, but all who understand the teachings of Christian Science are privileged to enter into this holy work, and 'by their fruits ye shall know them.'" (Man. 49:1)

Is this practical to think of everyone going into the public practice of Christian Science? If everyone were a practitioner, who would be the patients? Who would

grow our food, build our houses, handle communication, transportation, industry?

Let's do a little market survey Today there are about four to five billion people on the face of the earth. How many study Christian Science? A million, two million, ten million? How many listed practitioners are there, plus those who are healing but not listed. Five thousand, ten thousand, fifteen thousand?

How broad is the market? Are the world's four to five billion people in need of health care? Do they need answers to financial and relationship problems? Do they need spiritual food? If we look at it this way, the market for practitioners doesn't seem to be exactly overcrowded. In fact Jesus' words sound almost like an understatement!, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." (Matt. 9:37)

Can we look at it this way, thinking only of numbers? What about consciousness and receptivity? All the truth there is won't help if it isn't accepted.

How does the world feel about the spiritual truth of Christian Science? Mrs. Eddy speaks of a divine

influence ever present in human consciousness. (See Pref. xi:16) In every consciousness there are elements of divine goodness. They may seem deeply buried. Sometimes the concepts of good are rigidly set in ritual and custom, so it's hard to open up to further spiritual light. In other instances there may be no specific spiritual training at all. But there's always some element of good to respond to the Christ, Truth.

So the question is: How can we break through the resistance to this Christ, Truth? Don't we have to get beyond thinking in terms of just the human mind? Instead of looking at numbers, let's approach this question of the market from an entirely different side. Let's not think of a lot of people "out there". Christian Science shows us that everything exists within consciousness. There's nothing outside of individual consciousness. Everything you see or experience, everything that goes on, is within your own thought. Mrs. Eddy recognized this, but at the same time she made an all-important distinction between the so-called material consciousness, with its externalized form called matter, and the true

consciousness that reflects the infinite, unerring, divine Mind, God. In this perfect consciousness there isn't a multitude of mortals carrying on in material ways separated from each other and divided in their views.

Each identity is an infinite, compound idea reflecting the divine Mind in a unique, indispensable way. Also each identity -- and that means you in your real being -- is co-ordinated with and actually includes every other compound idea.

How does this relate to the public practice? As a practitioner you'll want to counteract resistance to what you're offering. The world views itself very much as a pluralistic society, a mass of people, each with his or her own set of views and conditioned by custom, by environment and by a particular religious or non-religious background.

How do we feel about this? Is our purpose to make everyone a Christian Scientist? I wouldn't object! Christian Science is great! But I'd really rather put it another way. Our goal is the same as the Master's when he prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father,

art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."
(John 17:21)

Christian Science doesn't make anyone a certain way. God has already created man as His spiritual expression. Christian Science defines man to human consciousness. It shows us how to understand and be the man that God has created.

When I'm speaking of the oneness of man, I certainly don't want to imply that there's no variety of expression. God requires an infinite variety to be manifested fully. Each individual reflects God completely, but in a unique, original and indispensable way. And since each individual reflects the one divine Mind, each is aware of the other as included in the entirety of God's creation.

Your first requirement as a practitioner, then, is to see *yourself* as you really are. Then you can see others in their true being and help them to see it, too. This was brought home to me shortly after I opened my office for public practice. I received a letter from a family friend in New York, a Christian Science teacher named Maurice Hastie. He wrote many articles for the periodicals. He'd

been in the same primary class as my mother, and he'd gone into the practice when *he* was young. I was in my early twenties at the time. I remember one point in his letter very clearly. He said, "You may have thought about it already, but don't strive ambitiously for particular positions in Science. Strive instead to demonstrate your primordial sonship with God, and you'll find yourself in such positions in the movement as are most useful and satisfying."

I had been thinking about this and had already come to an agreement within myself. One of my greatest inspirations had come from what Mrs. Eddy wrote to James Neal when *he* entered the public practice. She told him, "A real scientific *healer* is the highest position attainable in this sphere." I had resolved that if I never served in any way except to do the work of healing, that would be totally fulfilling. Healing is demonstrating the truth of God and man. Any other activity in the movement, whether it's teaching or writing or speaking about Christian Science, is simply an extension of the

basic activity of healing. And it all rests on this basic point of demonstrating our primordial sonship with God.

Mrs. Eddy tells us this is what Jesus did. She writes, "Jesus of Nazareth taught and demonstrated man's oneness with the Father, and for this we owe him endless homage. His mission was both individual and collective. He did life's work aright not only in justice to himself, but in mercy to mortals, -- to show them how to do theirs, but not to do it for them nor to relieve them of a single responsibility." (S&H 18:3)

Our work in the practice is the spiritualizing of our own thought. We can't do someone else's thinking for them. But if they're receptive, we can unite with them in helping them realize their own true identity. We can help them exercise what Mrs. Eddy calls "the patient's spiritual power to resuscitate himself." (S&H 365:29) The work of the practitioner is to realize what man is and to know that this description fits the patient asking for help. So the more we can clarify our own thought, the more we're in a position to help others clarify theirs.

After listening to the talks this morning, I don't know whether you intend to open your office for the practice this Monday or wait until the following week, but whatever your decision, you'll always be developing your own consciousness and bringing it more into line with God. Your practice, in the broader sense, is your daily living, and the more fully it's drawn from God, the more effective your living will be. And as this development of consciousness takes place, you can very well feel more confident about entering the public practice and also feel a greater urge to do so.

Let me take up three important questions here that often arise in regard to the practice.

The first is: How can I pray so people will call me? This was my concern when I entered the practice. I knew I couldn't pray for people to be sick. Actually, there were enough people with problems already. We didn't need any more. So my prayer had to be something else.

I needed to pray that people would see the Christ, Truth, as the answer to their problems rather than

material approaches. Also, I had to see the oneness of man. Oneness means no division, no separation, no estrangement. If God is the one infinite, divine Mind -- that is, the source of every idea and quality -- and if man is the full expression of this Mind, then man must know every idea as a constituent of his own being.

The communication I was seeking was already established. In reality I was already united with the entirety of God's creation, and divine Mind had established the appropriate mission for me to fulfill.

Two statements of Jesus were helpful in praying for activity in the practice. The first: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32) Jesus was referring to his crucifixion and the resurrection that would follow, but we certainly can apply this to our own resurrection or lifting up of thought. As we're lifted up in our *conviction* of God's total power and goodness, people feel it and are drawn to it. As we're lifted up in our awareness of God's all-embracing, unconditional love, people are drawn to this and are comforted. They can feel when a person cares.

The other statement was Jesus' *own* prayer for his practice. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) Jesus saw himself as sent by the Father. Everything he was, everything he did was derived from God. We need to see ourselves that way, too -- to see that everything about ourselves is derived from God -- from divine Love, Mind and Life. Those who came to Jesus were drawn by the Father, by the power of God that he expressed. This is the same power that draws the receptive thought to you.

One further word here. The practice is not like a big pie where, if there are two practitioners, each gets half of the activity, and if there are four, each gets a fourth of the activity. Each person generates his own activity, and the more spirit that is generated, the more activity there is. Everyone is benefited by this.

The second important question that often comes up: Can I heal? I remember when I started in the practice, I didn't feel I was the most experienced practitioner. But I determined to give what I had, and I knew my ability would increase as I stayed with the work. I was also

convinced that people would come to me for what I had and not for what I didn't have.

The only way truly to answer this question of your healing ability is to get a clear view of what healing is. True healing is the activity of divine Mind and not the activity of the human mind. Healing is the replacement of the beliefs of the human mind with the reality of the divine Mind. At present we see this process as improved beliefs. In other words when we say that man is spiritual, the body doesn't immediately disappear. But the spiritual fact does have an effect on human thought, removing its fears and limitations. The body or present view of ourselves then more nearly resembles the intelligence of Mind and the permanence of Truth.

The world sees disease as expressed in matter. What's the cure? Isn't it to understand God as Spirit? When we understand God as Spirit, we see that creation can't be material. Most physical problems respond to the basic denial of matter, because then the so-called medium of disease is erased. This is why the Scientific Statement of Being is so effective in healing. Denying

matter doesn't mean that you will be erased. You are consciousness, and when you hold to the consciousness of Spirit rather than matter, you find yourself progressively free from the more distressing forms of matter until matter ceases to appear as substance at all.

At times you'll need to be specific in your treatment.. For instance, you may want to deny the belief of accident or chance. Much physical difficulty is related to accident or chance. I don't mean accidents like falling down or bumping into something, though that's included. I'm referring to the inconsistency of why one person would contract a disease and another would not. The world might say the disease results from a particular cause like a virus. But what makes one person a victim of a virus and another person immune? Isn't it accident or chance? Maybe the problem comes from immorality. But again, what makes one person prone to immorality and another person not? Or the world might say a problem is hereditary. What makes one person's genes favorable and another's unfavorable? When we know God as divine Principle we counteract the

belief in accident or chance. The Apostle James saw God's nature as unchanging Principle two thousand years ago. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (Jas. 1:17)

We could speak of understanding God as Life to restore strength and faculties or understanding God as Mind to expand mental abilities or we could speak of God as Truth to quiet pain. When you're knowing these facts in connection with someone who's asked you for help, you're uniting on the basis that you both reflect the one divine Mind, and this enlightenment brings healing.

Physical problems aren't the only reason people call a practitioner. You'll get calls for help in finding lost articles or important papers or a lost child! People need a job. People are discouraged or depressed or sorrowing or lonely. Some are looking for direction and meaning in their lives. Some want help with moral problems. With legal problems. People will call you about a theft, a difficult relationship, finding a house or

deciding which car to buy. I received a call: How can I get my house cleaned before guests arrive? (I'm not just making these up!) I want help for a school test or the bar exam. I want to do well in a sports event. A tree just fell on my garage. I think you get the idea. There's a wide range of problems that people ask help for.

They're all difficult situations to the caller, but each one can be translated into spiritual terms. You ask yourself, "What is God thinking about this? How is God conceiving His idea?" You do this from the standpoint of what you've learned about God from your study of Christian Science. You listen for the original, spiritual answer with the spiritual sense you've been cultivating. And you draw on your own life-experience.

David drew on his own life-experience when he faced Goliath. He told Saul, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (I Sam. 17:37) David drew on what he'd already learned of God's power. Our Wednesday evening testimony meetings add to this resource.

You have a wealth of experience to draw on. Every spiritual thought you've ever had, every example of demonstrating divine goodness -- and a few instances where you may not have demonstrated divine goodness -- they're all empowering you to go forward yourself and to help others.

And there's one further factor you can depend on. There's always a supply for every demand. When a call comes, it's matched by the welling up of a spiritual idea to meet the need. And those ideas will continue to come until every trace of mortal error has disappeared. No case is ever really finished until every factor is aligned with God. That's why your healing, based on your oneness with God, has to be effective.

Then the third question: Can I support myself financially from the practice?

We could ask this question about other professions. Can I support myself financially from accounting or law or sales or music or teaching school?

If you're a Christian Scientist, you'll try to answer the question by translating your profession into spiritual

terms. You'll see that your motive is to serve through expressing divine qualities. You'll accept Jesus statement "...the labourer is worthy of his hire." (Luke 10:7) In other words, there's a law of justice that provides right pay for valuable service. You'll think about what true substance is, and you'll pray to act intelligently in your job.

In a certain sense you could approach the practice in the same way. But that wasn't how I felt about the practice. I loved Christian Science with all my heart. I can't say there were no worldly pulls, including academics and the arts. But Christian Science had become all-in-all to me, and when I saw I could devote my life to studying it further and applying it in healing through the public practice, it wouldn't have mattered what I needed to do in order to be in this work. Scrub floors, whatever!

Well, I had to prove it. I came here to Minneapolis from the Chicago area with a hundred and eighty dollars separation pay from the army. I leased an office in a good building, furnished it attractively on a contract,

rented a room to live in and began my practice. I also took out a note at the bank to capitalize myself.

To say things were slow at the beginning is putting it mildly. But gradually I did get a few calls. After six months I wrote to The Mother Church to apply for my card in the Journal. After all, I was devoting my full time as the Manual specified. I felt if I were listed in the Journal, it would help my practice be more active. They wrote back, "Work a little longer, and write us again."

So I worked another six months and wrote them again. By this time my practice had increased a little. Also, I'd been appointed evening librarian at the downtown Reading Room.. Six to nine Monday through Saturday, except Wednesday and two to five on Sunday. Not much chance for social life. It paid fifty dollars a month. And I'd taken out a second note at the bank. Well, The Mother Church wrote back, "Work a little longer, and write us again."

When the third six months rolled around -- that made eighteen months in all -- I owed about two thousand dollars. That would be about eight thousand dollars

today, and my practice still wasn't supporting me. I decided enough was enough with the borrowing. I took a job working in the morning from six-thirty to nine at a hotel picking up cleaning for the valet shop. It was a humble job, but it brought in a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month and I could be in my office before nine-thirty.

Of course, with this job I couldn't apply for my card in the Journal, because at that point I wasn't devoting my full time professionally to the practice. I'd also moved into a boarding house to cut my expenses further, but I didn't look at this period as a time of hardship. Maybe it wasn't too great at six in the morning when I walked two miles to the hotel at twenty degrees below zero. But I've always enjoyed whatever I was doing. My practice continued to grow and I was growing.

After another eighteen months -- this was over three years now -- I'd paid off everything I owed, my practice was fully supporting me, and I wrote again for my card in the Journal. This time it was accepted.

From that point finances were no longer a problem. Actually, time became the crucial commodity.

I learned many lessons through all this. I learned that my practice did not depend on official approval or any other human factor. It depended entirely on what I worked out together with God. Then the human circumstances would confirm it.

I gained a more spiritual concept of substance. I remember standing outdoors one summer evening during my first year in Minneapolis. I thought about some of the big estates just outside of town and I thought to myself, "Well, I'll never have anything like that." Then it occurred to me that all one can ever really have is his consciousness. There may be a big bank account, but that doesn't guarantee an untroubled consciousness. I thought of what Christian Science had taught me about consciousness, and I realized that my consciousness could be just as rich as I was willing to accept spiritually. There was no limit to the happiness, the freedom, the beauty that I could include in my consciousness. It was the richness of divine Mind and its

unlimited ideas. That sense of limitation dropped away and I've never lost the vision.

I was glad for this whole experience because it further prepared me to help others. No matter what the situation, I could say, "I've faced it, too." In the early days I recall walking into my office and deliberately looking away from the mail as possibly having a check in it. I *wanted* to look to divine Mind to provide me with spiritual ideas that I could turn into service. That would include ideas for healing, but it would also include spiritual insights that translate the material scene into its spiritual original. I was convinced that God's ideas are true substance, and they bring productivity on the human scene, which results in the only abundance that really counts.

Can you support yourself financially in the practice? Each person will find his answer in his own way. But whatever the answer, it will be a way that broadens your view of substance, brings you closer to God and makes you depend more fully on His infinite resources.

One final word about the practice. The practice is not like it was fifty years ago. Or even twenty years ago. Mrs. Eddy refers to the incredible good and evil elements now coming to the surface. She says Science only can explain them. (See S&H 83:6) The substance of your practice will be the same, but the surroundings are different. We're seeing violent and brutal hatred of one group to another in racial and class and religious conflicts. We're seeing economic danger springing from a disbelief in good. We're seeing religious approaches such as New Age and orientalism resembling the spiritualization of Christian Science. We're seeing the intolerance of the far right Fundamentalist religions, especially their intolerance toward Christian Science. And we're seeing state laws strongly influenced by medical beliefs.

You are a positive force in this setting. When people see you, they see a confidence, a shining of the spirit, whether you're in your office, in church, on holiday or in the grocery store. Your originality and spiritual sense develops qualities completely different from the atheism

that says we don't know God or we don't know what to do. There are times when you'll wrestle with yourself like Jacob did. You'll have your Gethsemenes like Jesus. But it all brings you closer to God and to the dominion of your real being.

Mrs. Eddy has predicted, "The present flux in religious faith may be found to be a healthy fermentation, by which the lees of religion will be lost, dogma and creed will pass off in scum, leaving a solid Christianity at the bottom -- a foundation for the builders." (My 301:5)

Today we've been developing the solid Christianity our Leader has shown to us. Let's continue to be builders on this firm foundation, united with God, united with each other and united in seeking the welfare of our world through the healing light of Christian Science.