



Fern Lodge Focus

November 2002

From the Fern Lodge Annual Meeting, 2002

- Some important questions* page 2
- Speculation or Science?*, Morris Trevithick, C.S.B. page 3
- "Skill in comfort's art"* page 7

Some important questions — Administrator's report, George Strong

Mary Baker Eddy once asked, "...what of ourselves, and our times and obligations? Are we duly aware of our own great opportunities and responsibilities? Are we prepared to meet and improve them, to act up to the acme of divine energy wherewith we are armored?" And she followed with this reminder, "Never was there a more solemn and imperious call than God makes to us all, right here, for fervent devotion and an absolute consecration to the greatest and holiest of all causes. The hour is come," *Miscellaneous Writings* 176.

These questions are still pertinent, and the demand for devotion and consecration to the Cause of Christian Science is still urgent. Today, as our Church seeks to share Christian Science with newcomers around the world, it is so important that we understand the demands on us. What of "our times and obligations?" Even as we reach out to help and heal those who are new to Christian Science, we also find dedicated Christian Scientists who need assistance to meet the suggestions of age, disease, loneliness, and so on. Many of these church members have served our Cause faithfully, some have kept churches and reading rooms active in small communities and neighborhoods across the country.

"Are we duly aware of our own great opportunities and responsibilities," to comfort, help and heal those who have just learned of Christian Science and also those who have carried the day for our Cause so far? "Are we prepared to meet and improve" our opportunities and responsibilities to all mankind? Are we ready "to act up to the acme of divine energy wherewith we are armored?" Are we able to offer spiritually inspired Christian Science nursing that helps and heals, and how do we maintain a facility that is a refuge and a support for prayer, free from the influence of the aggressive suggestions of medical models of sickness and health, treatment and care?

These are questions we strive to keep in thought at Fern Lodge. Giving healing Christian Science nursing, divine Love reflected in love, is demanding, and we are grateful for your help. There are also some specific needs we seek your help in supplying. Thanks to you we have given over \$400,000 in financial assistance so far this year. As you know, the demand for financial assistance continues each month, and we thank each of you for making it possible for us to help those who require it.

We need to find housing for some of our nursing staff. To increase our capacity to serve, we have hired new nurses, but they need places to live. We currently are using four patient rooms to house nurses. If you know someone who has an apartment or room to rent, please call and let us know.

We are seeking a special individual who would direct our volunteer activities, someone who loves working with others and can help to match each volunteer's special gifts and abilities with those who need nursing at Fern Lodge. This position could be full or part time, and it can be tailored to meet individual needs.

Mrs. Eddy closed the remarks quoted earlier with these searching questions, and her demand for a reply, *Misc.* 177, "Will you doff your lavender-kid zeal, and become real and consecrated warriors? Will you give yourselves wholly and irrevocably to the great work of establishing the truth, the gospel, and the Science which are necessary to the salvation of the world from error, sin, disease, and death? Answer at once and practically, and answer aright!"

Answering aright, and keeping our answer practical, is our heartfelt desire, our prayer, and the focus for our daily nursing work. We are grateful that the grace of God enables us to work and ensures progress.



*Thank you
for making it
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Speculation or Science? —excerpts from a talk by Morris Trevithick, C.S.B.

Sunday afternoon, September 29th, Fern Lodge held its Annual Meeting. After reports from the Administrator and Director of Nursing, which are also printed in this *Focus*, the main address was given by Morris Trevithick, a Christian Science practitioner and teacher. The following article consists of excerpts from his talk.

When it comes to health care I think you'd agree we are surrounded by countless alternatives. In addition to traditional Western medicine there are literally thousands of systems that offer a combination of matter and mind as remedies. I doubt there has ever been a time in history when there were so many alternative suggestions on the subject of health care. Given such options some may well ask why Christian Scientists would choose to rely on prayer alone. Today I hope to answer that question.

Christian Scientists are certain that the healings performed by Jesus were the result of his understanding the laws of God, divine Principle. These laws were later described by Mary Baker Eddy as to be so consistent in their results, when honestly applied, that they could truthfully be called the Science of Christ or Christian Science. Devotion to understanding the truth naturally includes a willingness to trust Truth in times of sickness.

But, some may ask, Isn't there more than one truth? Human reasoning argues that Christian Science is not the only truth. Now let's look at that. When we say we prefer roses to daffodils, or choose vanilla ice cream over strawberry, that is a preference. No one would suggest that one is demonstrably better than the other. But when it comes to truth there is no comparison.

A physicist for instance, would not say, "Today, I'm feeling kind of partial towards the law of gravity, but

tomorrow I'll try something else." No, once a law or principle of science has been proven the physicist has no option but to employ that law to get the desired results.

Today, it may be politically incorrect to say so, but no, there is not more than one truth. God is Truth. And that has been proved to perfection by Jesus. No one has ever lived who has come anywhere near doing what he did. Jesus looked beyond the material evidence and expressed the spirit of God or Christ. He expressed the Christ, Truth in such measure, he overcame evil in all its deceptive forms —sin, sickness, and death. He is the Wayshower, the one to follow in every detail of our lives.

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Mary Baker Eddy certainly followed Christ. The way she opened her chapter titled "Christian Science Practice" in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* is highly significant. Mrs. Eddy opened her timeless chapter on healing with the profoundly Christian story of Mary Magdalene, the perfect example of repentance and regeneration. This is solid evidence of Mrs. Eddy's determination to base Christian Science squarely on the teachings of Jesus, to make it inseparable from the inspired word of the Bible.

Nothing in human history shows God's love for us more than the advent of Christ Jesus. The Christ is the spirit of God which enables us here on earth, feeling material, to experience God's transforming power and presence now. Christ is the longed-for example of perfect man.

This point was so clear to Mary Baker Eddy, she came to the conclusion that because God, divine Mind, Principle fills all space, all true consciousness, there is no room for the fearful, limited thinking that manifests itself as suffering. She urged those seeking to prove it to pray humbly for the Mind of Christ —without reference

Speculation or Science?

to time or gender or space. She accurately and reverently named her discovery Christian Science.

Like all sciences, Christian Science, requires demonstration. If we just claim Christian Science to be the one true Science, the absolute Truth —we sound very similar to the fundamentalists we hear so much about these days. The demonstration of divine Science is more important than verbal claims to be right.

The serious student of it greets each day as an amazing opportunity to learn more. Our commitment to the demonstration of this truth involves discipline — as religion and science always have —and discipline is never a popular word with mortal mind!

Yet sincere students of Christian Science find themselves increasingly happy to conform thought to

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Truth. They find it not a burden but a tremendous freedom to glimpse daily something more of what the divine Mind is knowing. This involves dividing between right and wrong, truth and error, sin and holiness. Making our choice for righteousness, deciding for Spirit rather than matter or limitation.

Let's be very clear on this point. The human mind is not the healer. Neither is healing about visualizing a well body in place of a sick body. Nor is it about either using human will power, or the personality of the healer. Naturally being joyful is better than being sad, but positive thinking is not the healing power of Christian Science. God, the divine Mind, is. And the discipline of denying error and affirming Truth is an act of prayer.

In the first pages of *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy writes: "Many imagine that the phenomena of physical healing in Christian Science present only a phase of the action of the human mind, which action in some unexplained way results in the cure of disease. On the contrary, ... [she goes on to say] "The physical healing of Christian Science results now, as in Jesus' time, from the operation of divine Principle, before which sin and disease lose their reality in human consciousness and disappear as naturally and as necessarily as darkness gives place to light and sin to reformation."¹

Claiming the universal nature of Christian Science does evoke certain questions. For instance, when we refer to it as a final revelation, some critics have accused this Science of being a closed system that leaves no room for development and future discovery. Yes, it is true Christian Science claims to be the Comforter promised by Jesus. But far from clipping one's wings, the fact that *Science and Health* is the complete and final statement of God's allness —and matter's consequent nothingness —frees each one of us for limitless demonstration. Admitting the absolute Truth of God and man in no way prevents individuals from experiencing limitless growth in spiritual understanding.

So, do you have to be a Christian? Naturally the Bible and *Science and Health* are here for anyone to read. But to truly understand and demonstrate their message, it is necessary to acknowledge one God and Jesus as the Messiah or Christ. Again Mrs. Eddy writes: "Science may absorb the attention of sage and philosopher, but the Christian alone can fathom it."² Does this mean Christian Science has a narrow denominational application? Not at all. While the Church of Christ, Scientist is the institution committed to retaining the purity of the Science, its application is universal. Its blessings are for all the world.

Mary Baker Eddy experienced tremendous challenges to her efforts to maintain the purity of Christian Science. She was pressured to loosen up —to dilute it. Just as a mathematician would never say to a student,

"Well dear, if you find $2 + 2 = 4$ difficult at this time, why don't you start with $2 + 2 = 3 \frac{1}{2}$. It is nearly true and you'll gradually get to the right answer." Clearly that would be fatal to learning mathematics. You start with the truth and grow in your understanding of it. The same is obviously true in Christian Science.

Mrs. Eddy tells us: "My students need to search the Scriptures and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* to understand the personal Jesus' labor in the flesh for their salvation: they need to do this even to understand my works, their motives, aims, and tendency."³

Reliance on prayer in Christian Science is a religious practice known by its fruits. Healing through prayer is the by-product of loving the Truth of God's allness to the exclusion of all else. Mrs. Eddy, in speaking of Jesus' mission, writes: "We cannot depart from his holy example,—we cannot leave Christ for the schools which crucify him, yet follow him in healing. Fidelity to his precepts and practice is the only passport to his power; and the pathway of goodness and greatness runs through the modes and methods of God."⁴

Let me share an example of Christian Science healing—one that proves it's not a case of thinking oneself well.

A friend of mine was not even looking for healing. She was skeptical about the whole thing when she attended a Christian Science church just to please her husband. She told me she had suffered for many years from an affliction of the spine which gave her great pain and had reached the point where her head and neck were locked to her shoulders and she had to take pain killing drugs every day. There was also a lump forming at the base of her spine and she was getting frequent and severe headaches. She'd had all manner of medical treatment but to no avail. She was getting worse.

About that time her husband joined a chess club, and a member offered to lend him *Science and Health* to read. Her husband accepted, and once he had started to

study it, he would not stop—he read it right through. He asked his wife, my friend, to read it. She tried, but said that frankly at that time she felt it was not for her.

However, after some urging, she agreed to attend the church for a Sunday service. (Now you'll notice she did this just to please her husband. She was not seeking for herself either healing or enlightenment.) She said she was so filled with such a sense of peace and love that she decided to continue to attend, although she went with no thought of a healing.

Then she says the most important Sunday in her life arrived. As usual she had taken her pain killers before leaving for church. Then while listening to the First Reader she suddenly felt a warm glow go over her and to her amazement, she discovered she could move her head to one side. Then to the other side and up and down.

Reliance on prayer in Christian Science is a religious practice known by its fruits.

And the pain and stiffness were all gone. When she got home she found the lump at the base of her spine had vanished.

From that day on she has never had any need to take a pain killer. She was completely healed. Both she and her husband joined the church.

Now, sometimes we think we've got to be perfect before we'll be worthy of a healing. That is a mistake. This woman's healing simply proved the power of God's Word to melt a person's false or fearful beliefs and replace them with the spiritual facts. The truth can melt skepticism, doubt, self-will, or whatever is in the way. God is infinitely more powerful than any resistance we may have to healing.

With a change in thinking the body changes, and healing takes place. Not only physical healing, but the healing of loneliness, selfishness, prejudice, and fear, the healing of the misunderstanding that divides people, of the tragedies that mar human relationships and the frustrations that distort human behavior.

Unlike the children of Israel who became impatient waiting for Moses, and who turned to golden calf worship—we can resist the temptation to melt down the gold, to speculate, to dilute or redefine this Science to accommodate our shortcomings—to bow to the impossible mixing of mind and matter. Instead we can choose Spirit—choose “Life in and of Spirit”⁵—as our Leader did so decisively.

This does not mean we either ignore or fear the body. As proof of that, we have Christian Science nursing for times of need.

Some may wonder why we have our own nurses. A medical nurse has the same hands, and can be just as kind, loving and cheerful. That is true. The difference is in the viewpoint. The Christian Science nurse is consciously holding thought to what God knows. As the nurse lovingly goes about cleansing, feeding, binding, he or she is not tempted to believe the problem is either God’s will or a fixed fact. The nurse is convinced that the physical symptoms can change at any moment—that they are not part of the real spiritual identity of the patient. This is a wonderful help to the patient and to the practitioner who is giving Christian Science treatment through prayer.

Historically churches have been identifiable by their architecture. Our prayer is to be recognized by our proofs of utility in the form of growth in spiritual understanding expressed in healing.

And to help us as we do that, we have Christian Science nursing facilities. In times of need the nurses and nursing facilities provide the way for students of Christian Science to remain true to their theology while they are having a healing. No words could express the gratitude we have for these selfless people—the nurses, the administrator, office staff, cooks, housekeepers, gardeners, volunteers, board members, and loving support from the field.

As Christian Science defines Principle, God is also Love and infinite intelligence, knowing everything that is true and good and constant about our essential spiritual being. This same reverence for Principle prevents leadership by personality. Mary Baker Eddy regarded herself as a humble student constantly praying for the Mind of Christ that would enable her to better heal the sick. As a measure of her humility and love for all mankind hear her words:

“I am persuaded that only by the modesty and distinguishing affection illustrated in Jesus’ career, can Christian Scientists aid the establishment of Christ’s kingdom

on the earth. In the first century of the Christian era Jesus’ teachings bore much fruit, and the Father was glorified therein. In this period and the forthcoming centuries, watered by the dews of divine Science, this ‘tree of life’ will blossom into greater freedom, and its leaves will be ‘for the healing of the nations.’”⁶

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¹ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. xi

² *Science and Health*, p. 556

³ Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 214

⁴ *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 270

⁵ *Miscellaneous Writings* p.24

⁶ Mary Baker Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection*, pp. 94, 95



"Evidences of progress and of spiritualization greet us on every hand," Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health* (p. 158). That's what we are striving for at Fern Lodge, and our Leader assures us, "the spiritualization of thought and the Christianization of daily life" supply evidence of the divine origin and operation of Christian Science, (p. 272). Isn't that a great definition of the work of a Christian Science nurse? A good way to continue spiritualizing our thought is the reading of *Science and Health* as a staff. We think of *Science and Health* as the textbook for Christian Science nursing.

It's been inspiring for the nurses to meet and share perceptions on how the chapter we've just read applies specifically to our nursing work. Some of those concepts include the spoken and unspoken thoughts of the nurse, faith in God the Great Physician, constant self-immolation, following the example of Christ Jesus. One idea that has stood out very clearly is that whatever needs to be adjusted in the human picture needs to start with the nurse's own thought, not the patient's thought. This can be a struggle at times, and Our Leader refers to this struggle in *Miscellaneous Writings* as "the cup of martyrdom: wherein Spirit and matter, good and evil, seem to grapple, and the human struggles against the divine, up to a point of discovery; namely, the impotence of evil, and the omnipotence of good." The patients have joined in this project, and we'd love to have you join us, too. Call or send us your inspiration.

Looking back in our healings journal, we found many instances of overcoming the beliefs of age: regaining the ability to hear, a stronger appetite, the ability to walk and feed oneself, the ability to participate understandingly in educational and recreational activities, the ability to overcome intense fear, are just a few examples. This is done through "dematerialization and spiritualization of thought," (S&H 211).

A patient came to us after being bedridden most of a year. On the third day, she was in a wheel chair sitting outdoors. She is now walking and has returned to her home. Another patient came to us from a hospital after having a hip set. The leg that had not been injured also appeared swollen and deformed. In due time, the patient was expressing dominion and able to move about but not to walk. The swelling went down and the leg assumed its normal appearance. After more prayer, and encouragement from the nurses, the patient was able to begin walking. Now she can be seen practically running down the hall!

*Your support
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long time
practitioners
and nurses.
Thank you!*

Recently we heard it said that patients should not mingle with others who are more able-bodied, as it may give the more able-bodied person more fears to work out. However, we've seen just the opposite happen. Several patients who did not feel able to walk had the opportunity to see their friends get up and walk each day, with nurse assistance, as needed. Soon these patients asked if they could be helped to walk, too. Patients regularly encourage each other in walking and in other aspects of daily living, including study of Christian Science. It is dear for us to witness these expressions of loving care.

At Fern Lodge we are aware that there are church members of advancing years who need help. Your continued support enables us to care for some long time practitioners and nurses who have few or no resources. These dear ones are so precious to our Movement. In her *Message for 1901*, Mrs. Eddy poses this question: "Has the thought come to Christian Scientists, Have we housed, fed, clothed, or visited a reformer...?" She continues, "...mortals in the advancing stages of their careers need the watchful and tender care of those who want to help them. The aged reformer should not be left to the mercy of those who are not glad to sacrifice for him even as he has sacrificed for others all the best of his

earthly years. I say this not because reformers are not loved, but because well-meaning people sometimes are inapt or selfish in showing their love."

We are grateful that Christian Scientists are so selfless. We thank you deeply for showing your love and support in appropriate, tangible ways which allow us the privilege of housing, feeding, and in some instances clothing some of these dear ones.

Our nursing education program continues to be active. It is open to non-employees as well as staff. If you or someone you know might be looking for a rewarding ministry, please give us a call. The program is flexible to meet the needs of those wishing to learn Christian Science nursing.

There is a short, inspiring poem at the end of Mary Baker Eddy's autobiography, *Retrospection and Introspection*, which urges us to ask God for skill in comforting others. For over 25 years I have applied that poem to my nursing. But when I saw that Mrs. Eddy closes the story she tells of her life with it, I decided to ponder other possible meanings. After looking up almost every word in that poem, I came away with the feeling that its message is for all

Christian Scientists, just as demonstrating nursing, in some form, is a charge for all Christian Scientists.

We each have a nursing practice that consists of cherishing and nurturing the qualities inherent in man as the spiritual image and likeness of infinite Motherhood. That Mother-Love is the source of nursing ability for each of us, and that ability is ours by reflection. Whatever you are called to do, you might think about your work this way: Ask God to give thee skill in *volunteer's* art. If you know people who like honest hard work for the glory of God in service to mankind, please call us. We have an ongoing need for nurses and volunteers —all with Christlike touch.

This poem is such a wonderful benediction.

Ask God to give thee skill
In comfort's art:
That thou may'st consecrated be
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy.
For heavy is the weight of ill
In every heart;
And comforters are needed much
Of Christlike touch.

— A. E. HAMILTON

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