



Fern Lodge Focus

November 1998

*You are God's nestlings; and He will
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*Miscellaneous Writings
Mary Baker Eddy*

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In *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy wrote, "Paul had a clear sense of the demands of Truth upon mortals physically and spiritually, when he said: 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,'" (325:20), and, "We should forget our bodies in remembering good and the human race. Good demands of man every hour, in which to work out the problem of being," (261:31). These demands do not direct us to pay attention to the body or find better ways of caring for it. They require increased consecration to good and dependence on God.

We are confident that what God demands of us He also enables us to fulfill. Viewing Christian Science nursing strictly as a religious ministry helps us to distinguish it from materially based nursing. While we don't use material medicine, people frequently think it is the nurse's job to care for the body in a way that will aid healing, or at least to sustain the body until conditions are right for healing to take place spiritually. This is a mistake.

Our theology teaches that God is the only Creator, Preserver, and Caregiver. As we consciously stay close to this truth, we will find it more clearly and powerfully expressed in our human experience. We will find, as Mrs. Eddy writes, "...the Christian Scientist takes the best care of his body when he leaves it most out of his thought," *S&H* 383:7. So, where do the practical services and physical assistance that a nurse provides belong in this care? Let me share three cases that were physically similar but mentally dissimilar. Each involved injury to the ankle as the result of a fall.

The first case involved a woman who fell in her home. She called a practitioner and prayed diligently, but after several days, she was still unable to walk. She engaged the services of a Christian Science nurse, who adapted a large slipper for the swollen foot and taught her to use crutches to move around the house. Assistance was given with bathing, and meals were prepared. But healing progress seemed slow. One day, as the woman was sitting in a chair, surrounded by Christian Science literature she was startled by this phrase in a periodical. "We mustn't rest on pillows of matter." She

looked at her foot, cradled in *three* large, soft pillows, and she recognized the error to be overcome—the temptation to seek comfort in matter. Turning her thought away from the material picture to Truth and Love, she found the true Comforter and was soon healed.

In the second case, the injured woman was a Christian Science nurse. She was not impressed or afraid; she expected a quick and complete healing. But the next morning she was in great discomfort, so she settled herself in a comfortable chair, surrounded by her books, her foot resting on *one* pillow. Her affirmations of the unreality of accident and injury and of her God-given dominion had not resulted in healing, so she quietly listened for the angel message she needed. That afternoon she recalled an emotionally wrenching encounter with a loved one. She saw that *this* needed to be healed. When her prayers were properly directed, the healing came quickly; by evening she was walking freely. The relationship problem took longer, but, too, it was met.

The third case involved a woman who was out hiking with a Christian Science nurse friend when she fell. The nurse tenderly asked, "Are you all right?" It was as if she were saying, "How are you thinking about yourself?" The woman replied, "Yes, I'm fine." Her response was not based on the physical sense testimony, as she was feeling a lot of pain. Instead, she claimed her right to respond to the divine demand, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," The nurse then helped her to stand. It wasn't until she actually began walking that the pain disappeared. They continued their walk for several more miles, rejoicing and praising God.

In each of these cases, the practical nursing response was predicated on the *thought* of the patient, not on the physical condition. In our textbook, Mrs. Eddy speaks of the importance of "[turning] our thoughts towards divine Principle, that finite belief may be prepared to relinquish its error," *S&H* 322:9. Healing appears when the error is relinquished. During the *turning* and *preparing* period, the loving, patient, tender ministrations of the Christian Science nurse can do much to help the struggling heart feel the support of our divine Mother-Love.

You are God's Nestling — Marjorie Dagnall, C.S. of Aptos, CA

You are God's nestling! Such a wonderfully reassuring, comforting statement. It's from a letter in which our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, wrote,

...founded upon the rock of Christ, when storm and tempest beat against this sure foundation, you, safely sheltered in the strong tower of hope, faith, and Love, are God's nestlings; and He will hide you in His feathers till the storm has passed. Into His haven of Soul there enters no element of earth to cast out angels, to silence the right intuition which guides you safely home, (Miscellaneous writings 152:22-29).

Often we need reassurance, and like tired children we run to the arms of Love to be reassured, to feel and know that we really are God's offspring, that we are in our right place, that we really have an identity of our own and the right and ability to claim our own experience, that we aren't being punished, that our bodies aren't going to do us in, that we're not going to suffer and die our way out of this experience, and that we aren't forsaken; we haven't lost our healing power, our joy, our way as individuals, a church, or even a government.

Every now and again we need to be reminded that God indeed loves us without measure, that we are His nestlings, safely sheltered in that tower of hope, faith, and Love. And may I say there is absolutely no doubt about this fact—you are God's nestling. However, you better be careful where you put your nest!

In 1 Kings 17 there is the story of Elijah and the woman whose son "fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him." It is so wonderful that dear Elijah had the good spiritual sense and the moral courage to take that youngster out of his mother's bosom and put him in his own bed. I used to think Elijah put that child in his own abode on his own bed, but now I see that he recognized this child as God's own—as God's pure reflection, that delightful nestling, having his own place, his own purity and identity not

dependent upon a fleshly mother, on personal beliefs. World beliefs of sin and sickness were not his, nor could they influence him; he was free to claim his own experience, one of freshness and innocence and ongoing Life.

Each of you, out of the purity of your own Christliness can appeal to our divine Principle, Love and to yourself, Love's pure idea, to be reassured about your identity, to see it is wholly independent of fleshly parents, their beliefs or anyone else's—"entirely separate from the belief and dream of material living is the life divine,"—that's your life. Elijah clearly understood this, and firmly but lovingly he took the child into that oneness which needed only to be acknowledged.

It's such a wonderfully comforting thing Elijah did, because they were suffering so! The mom embedding the son she dearly loved not on the rock of Christ but on a bed of sin. In her intense fear and guilt she asked, "Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance?" Could we not hear her say, as we might on some occasion, "Is this problem in my experience because I am so awful—

because I have done awful things and thought awful things; because deep down inside I deserve this because I'm not good enough for anything better; because God really doesn't accept me or approve of me; because I don't really get Christian Science?" Such a lonely place. When storm or tempest beats upon our sure foundation we forget that we're in the strong tower of faith and hope and Love and that we are God's nestlings, and God is not failing in His responsibility to shield us.

But Elijah didn't forget, and he put that child in cradled obscurity. He sheltered him there away from mortality's attempt to frame him in a bed of suffering and death. Let's be so careful to put our loved ones on the bedrock of integrity and innocence.

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It's not bed we're placed upon, it's bedrock, it's spiritual foundation and divine Principle Love, and it is that which rests upon and proceeds from divine Principle. Our nesting place from everlasting to everlasting is in God. "Lord, thou has been our dwelling place" from generation to generation. "He shall cover you with His feathers..."—a warm and cozy place is God's nest. Our bedrock is never hard and cold, never harsh, and we're never forgotten, never left alone to shrivel up and die.

Elijah didn't put this child in cradled obscurity and leave him there. He blanketed him with Love—with the living palpitating presence of the Christ. God is never austere and harsh and cold. Oh, let's do that to our loved ones and with ourselves—not condemn or criticize but blanket them in Love. And while he blanketed him with Love he did not cover up the error. There must be no attempt to cover up error. It is to be disrobed. Look it squarely in the face, not with cold disdain but with the warmth, the flame of Love burning ever so brightly in us, as us, and leading us to higher, clearer views of man and the universe. That's when we see that the One consciousness, which is, will not accept that which is not. And Elijah, through the purity of his own Christliness never did call that sin to remembrance, never pinned it on her, never condemned her, but more importantly he didn't justify it. He killed the lie. What died in that house was the opportunity to associate sin, sickness, and man.

As Elijah refused to condemn, to call sin to remembrance, we too must refuse to bring our so-called sins to remembrance. Elijah refused to condemn body! Let's not condemn and accuse our body. Jesus once asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers?" Well, I know exactly where they are and what they're doing. They're health, safety, and fashion laws and issues and they're condemning and criticizing all over the place! They

accuse breast of malignancy, heart of attacks, kidneys of failure, limbs of paralysis. And if that weren't enough they condemn stomachs, thighs, and rear ends of being fat and overweight. "There is now no condemnation."

As our Leader says, "Let us reassure ourselves with the law of Love." It's God's law of love, which expresses us, identifies us, and constitutes us. Mind and idea constitute the whole of being. Because there is one Mind and that Mind is our Mind, there is infinity of

body and that body is our body. Therefore, body is not a private body of an adult or child, a male or female that can be sick, and it's not made of a substance nor has a place that can be ill. Edward Kimball stated once: "I want to impress you with the necessity of not mentally sandbagging or abusing or slandering what seems to be your body or any part of it," *Lecture and Articles on Christian Science*, page 444. God has no problem children and we in reality have no problem members of our body. Right in the very place where the problem seems to be is the healthy manifestation of that part of body — every cell, every tissue, every

fiber of our being glorifies God and that is something we can truly love!

The tendency to be influenced by someone or something is quite strong in Christian Scientists who are generally sensitive to thought, rather like lightning rods up there, ready to be struck at anytime! Make sure you are sensitive only to the things of God; remember also our Leader's reference to "God with us, — a divine influence ever present in human consciousness..."

Elijah later had to struggle with those waking dream shadows, which seemed to conjure up an image of a menacing Jezebel threatening to kill him. His life was safe in God, not threatened in matter, and his earthquake, wind, and fire experience revealed to him that safety through Spirits' still small voice. Can we acknowl-

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edge and accept our safety also? Even when cancer, blindness, finances, career or family relationships take the form of domination—threatening to do us in?

How encouraging are Mrs. Eddy's words, "Evil is illusion, that after a fight vanisheth with the new birth of the greatest and best," ('00 10:4-5). Don't be afraid of the fight. It was said of Jesus, "He stirred them all up." To be stirred is not to be shaken, it's to be blended. On page 316 of *Science and Health* we read, "Christ illustrates that blending with God, his divine Principle, which gives man dominion over all the earth." Which gives man dominion, not rest!

As Christian Scientists, we have enlisted to lessen evil, and we do it willingly, and I might add happily—and we don't find it tiring. We are after all, the servants of the one restful Mind. On occasion, we find ourselves yearning for rest. We sometimes want to flee to our beds, cover our heads in darkness and say, "no more, no more." We can then remember Jesus' invitation to "come unto me and I will give you rest." Oswald Chambers, that penetrating Christian writer, suggested that Jesus meant by the promise, "I will give you rest," not "I will put you to bed and hold your hand and sing you to sleep," but "I will get you out of bed, out of the languor and exhaustion, out of the state of being half dead while you are alive; I will imbue you with the spirit of life and you will be stayed by the perfection of vital activity!" Now that's an understanding of bedrock and its rest at its most loving.

We are lovingly placed in the tower of faith, hope, and Love. Mrs. Eddy did not say in the tower of scholasticism. In fact, she writes, "Advancing to a higher plane of action, thought rises from the material sense to the spiritual, from the scholastic to the inspirational, and from the mortal to the immortal." *S&H* 256:2-5. What perfect words, "the scholastic to the inspirational," for our day when popular thought, and yes, even the thought of

we who are Christian Scientists, wants to abide in the scholastic, in the analysis of what's wrong, and why it's wrong.

Let's rise from the scholastic to the inspirational. The scholastic—the letter—is often so cold, the "whys" and "wherefores," the Pilate assumption, that which boasted blatantly, "Don't you know I have the power to kill you or to let you go?" Such arrogance! And that assumption that there is a cause apart from God gets its

impetus from the scholastic, which insists that the past is cause, that false theology is cause, that genes are cause, that human laws are cause, that the human mind is cause—scholastic assumptions every one. Don't put you nest there, don't live there or let anyone else live there. Live in the inspirational. Don't analyze and justify. There is a subtle gratification, which wants to present itself to us when we analyze someone's behavior or ourselves and then justify it and often put up with it. However, there are no martyrs in Christian Science, and we must be terribly sure that we are not putting up with error out of a false sense of love or Christianity.

Christianity is too precious to be abused. How often I hear "I just need to love him more." When David met Goliath I do not think he prayed to see the perfect man. I don't believe he said, "Now if only I could love this man more. Surely he will put down his battle axe and not harm me." As you recall, he killed him. We always kill the lie about evil and when we don't do it soon enough or firmly enough, it becomes chronic. When Jesus threw the moneychangers out of the temple he did not say, "Well, if I love them enough they'll stop these unholy, unjust practices in the temple." He threw them out! Jesus didn't justify error. He destroyed it! And so did Elijah. He didn't refer to a so-called sin. He did not theorize or analyze why this lad was ill—that would be scholastic. He healed him—that's inspirational!

We have enlisted to lessen evil, and we do it willingly, happily—we don't find it tiring.

And where do we kill the lie, where do we trample on error? In the airport, in the media and even in the Spa Fitness Center and in our very own consciousness. That's where beliefs present themselves to us. We demonstrate, we do not legislate. And what do we demonstrate? Love—it's Love, which our Leader says will "mark the hour of harmony, and spiritualization will follow, for Love is Spirit." It's Love that lights us up. It's Love that is the living palpitating presence of the Christ. It's in the warmth of its glow and the inspiration of its light. It's love that keeps us safe when error is being disrobed, when error parts and false trusts are being dissolved, when cherished beliefs are stripped, when it's sometimes scary.

It's Love which marks the hour by killing the lie: that waking dream shadow can sometimes produce in our consciousness dark images of fear puffing themselves up as fatal illnesses, as Jezebels, as Goliaths, robbers, disquieting personal relationships, or material beliefs claiming to blur our vision. And how do we know that Love? By answering that call, "Come unto me." Because in that coming we lay down our personal sense testimony—our human stuff—on the altar of Love, where we are transformed, where we lay down our false concept of man. We have to bring our humanness to the feet of our Christliness and it's there that we learn to wash each other's feet. "Greater love hath no man than this," that he lay down his life for another, that he give up his false beliefs about his self and his brother man. And we answer that call daily, hourly, anytime the carnal mind offers its view of God's lovely universe or man or you.

Our leader wrote, "...the human Jesus had a resort to his higher self and relation to the Father, and there could find rest from unreal trials in the conscious reality and royalty of his being,—holding the mortal as unreal, and the divine as real. It was this retreat from material to

spiritual selfhood which recuperated him for triumph over sin, sickness, and death," No & Yes 36:14-20. "Resort to your higher self." This resort is the place where we live. It's the best room in our Father's mansion. It's a quiet sanctuary in which we can deny sin and plead God's allness. It's the place in which we acknowledge the royalty of our being through the rest of inspiration. Inspiration—God's gift, we don't make it, we claim it—restores your soul, your spiritual sense, and that's all that is ever needed—a new view, not a patching up of an old

view, but the unveiling of what has always been present in your real selfhood.

What a wonderful abiding place we have—a consciousness which never left heaven for earth, a royalty of being which always has been and always will be immaculate, untouched by unreal trials—where man is always innocent, always loved, always lovable, always loving. Where we are always God's nestling. Where it's natural to feel guiltless, natural to be happy, and where God is not failing in his expression of us — where "Into His haven of Soul there enters no earthly element,"

for "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place..." And we are your loved and loving nestlings.

How do we know this? Because you hear that intuition, that still small voice, when you resort to God, when your appeal is made as Jesus' was, both to his divine Principle, Love and to himself, Love's pure idea—that is Love meeting Love, that's your abiding place, that's your nest, where you belong, because you are God's nestling now and forever.

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How does Fern Lodge do it? — George Strong, Administrator

A question we frequently are asked is, "How does Fern Lodge do it?" How do we keep our charges as low as possible, maintain the facility in good repair, keep the grounds beautiful, and give over \$300,000 in benevolence each year. Our reply always starts with gratitude. Gratitude for each patient—for their radical reliance on Christian Science and for their trust in us for care—and for each staff member, board member and volunteer.

We are grateful for our work, grateful for Christ's call and that to some degree we've answered the call. We're glad for the Master's assurance that in service to our fellow man we find the true expression of service to God that earns the promise of the kingdom of heaven.

We are grateful for the demands on us, including the demand to give up the belief that nursing is a just physical activity, defined by nursing tasks. The demand is to demonstrate the mother-love with which our Mother, God, tenderly comforts us and heals "all thy diseases." If nursing tasks flow from "that Love, divinely near," Mrs. Eddy speaks of, they will meet human needs with grace and power, but the same deeds done without affection and humility lack the ability to help and heal.

We are grateful to know we cannot fulfill the demands on us by ourselves. We gain the courage and strength needed for our daily work when we acknowledge that we must rely on God's manifestation of care, supply, energy, endurance, inspiration, and accept these in the forms God chooses and provides for us.

And we are deeply grateful every day for contributions of all kinds—for the prayer that acknowledges the healing power of Christian Science and the effectiveness of Christian Science nursing in support of healing; and for the financial support that enabled us to give about \$250,000 in benevolence over the first 3 quarters of this year, while we paid for the cleanup and repair of the facility after the winter rains.

But gratitude is only a portion of our answer to the question, "How does Fern Lodge do it?" The full answer

could be summed up as simply as this: "Stick as close as possible to the *Bible and Science and Health*, and trust God with everything."

Consider the parable of the Good Samaritan. No matter how often I ponder its message, there always is a new lesson for me. Think of the lawyer's question, "and who is my neighbor?"—in other words, "who am I supposed to love?" The volume *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, by R.C. Trench offers this insight, "He who asked, 'Whom shall I love?' proved that he did not understand what love meant; for he wished to have it known beforehand where he should be at liberty to stop, while the very essence of love is, that it has no limit." Here is food for thought when we decide whom we should serve at Fern Lodge and for how long.

The Samaritan represents Christ, meeting human needs for comfort, care, safety and supply. The spirit of Christ can inspire Christian Science nurses to care for those in need, regardless of how difficult it may be. Fern Lodge represents the idea illustrated in the parable by the inn where the Samaritan took the wounded man. We, too, must take in those in need and allow the Christ to minister to them. And as the innkeeper accepted both payment and a promise of recompense for his future expenses, we must receive with gratitude the compensation Christ, Truth, gives today, and know that we can give in turn without fear of depletion, trusting that Truth will fully supply all we need for us to maintain a refuge, with kindness, and care, for those who are brought to us.

What's next? There is the ongoing work of maintaining the facility, including completion of storm-related projects. There is a need for benevolence to pay for Christian Science nursing for at least 3/4 of those who come to the facility. Good Samaritans are needed today as much as ever to nurse and to help pay for others.

Most important, nurses at Fern Lodge will encourage each other to work, watch and pray to understand and demonstrate the healing ministry of Christian Science nursing.

Nursing education opportunities at Fern Lodge

Fern Lodge offers a variety of means through which individuals and branch churches can develop and refine their expression of the God-qualities that nurse—nurture, nourish, cherish, protect—those in need. More information on these programs will be sent out as we finalize our plans.

♦ Introductory course work

For individuals who have little or no nursing experience we offer a combination of classroom instruction followed by supervised work/study. This program is flexible and intended to relate to each individual nurse's prior experience. Experienced Christian Science nurses, both those on our staff and others in our community, will share their understanding of the source of nursing qualities and abilities and will demonstrate some of the ways in which these can be put into practice.

♦ In-depth consideration of our mission

This program will build on the foundation offered by nurses' experience and inspiration. We will consider the individual demonstration of Christian Science nursing and expand this consideration to include Fern Lodge and its role in the nursing ministry. This program begins with the nursing staff and is intended to bring into sharper focus the mission of Christian Science nursing—what it is and what it is not. We also will seek clearer under-

standing of the purpose of nursing facilities; what a patient can expect from a nurse and a nurse from a patient; what responsibilities a nurse has to a facility and what responsibilities a facility, specifically Fern Lodge, has to nurses who work here. The program will expand to include patients as we gain insights into the scope of Christian Science nursing.

♦ Seminars for Christian Science nurses

We are planning a nursing seminar series to be held in the spring of 1999. This program will be aimed at giving Christian Science nurses an opportunity to discuss together in depth some issues of importance to them, to nursing facilities and to the Christian Science community. Topics planned for discussion include the following:

- ♦ What makes nursing a ministry
- ♦ The cost of nursing; the need for benevolence
- ♦ What aspects of nursing can be taught, and how
- ♦ The nurses' role in setting facility policies

♦ Information opportunities for branch churches

Fern Lodge will offer branch churches the opportunity to invite Christian Science nurses to speak with them about their ministry and mission. Church members can learn more about the various nursing resources available to them in their community. In addition they can see how to put their own nursing abilities into practice, helping one another.

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