

You Are What God Has In Mind! by Melissa Hayden CS for Canterbury Crest Annual Meeting, April 27, 2014

You are what God has in Mind. But God doesn't have in Mind your body or your history or your opinions or your pains. Or your mistakes or your sorrows. None of those exists in divine Mind. So they must not really be you. But you do exist, you as God's image and likeness, – and there is no other you, there are not two yous – only the you that God knows. This is basic to Christian Science: that we know we are what God knows. That's our starting point!

Here's something I heard at the recent Church Alive Summit. On Sunday afternoon, there was a Skype session with the Christian Science Board of Directors. In response to the question something like "what new projects or innovations are you involved in?" one of the directors talked a bit about the Board's ongoing interest in the sustainability of Christian Science nursing. She finished her comments by saying "we must be better nurses for each other." I am assuming that she means better than we have been. *Better* nurses.

How do we do that? First of all, we move away from thinking of nursing as merely meeting the physical needs of one another. That is actually a very medical model. And we want to stop thinking that it's someone else's job. The kind of nurses we need to be is bigger than that – broader than that. Here are a couple of definitions of "nurse" from the *1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary*: To cherish; to foster; to encourage; to promote growth in. And of course Mrs. Eddy says in *Science and Health* that "The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, — receptive to Truth and Love."¹ Those are the qualities of thought we should always strive to have in our interactions with each other, that tender solicitude for one another's welfare.

Think about how Jesus or Mrs. Eddy nursed. They didn't limit their nursing just to the so-called sick. Or to just their students or their church: they nursed the world. When you read *Science and Health*, is there any statement in there – even the really tough ones – in which you think she's not cherishing you? Encouraging you? Promoting your growth? And Jesus prayed that throughout all time, everyone who believed in him would be one with him and his Father.² Isn't that the ultimate kind of nursing: to see each other as one with Jesus' Father, our Father – Father-Mother?

There's a great illustration on page 115 and 116 of *Science and Health* that puts all of this into perspective where Mrs. Eddy gives both the Scientific Translation of Immortal Mind, and the Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind. Her definition of man there - "God's spiritual idea, individual, perfect, eternal" really does confirm that you – the image and likeness of God you – are what God has in Mind.

The first degree is called "depravity" or "physical." This is where mortal mind says we live and move and have our being. Since the world says that God is corporeal, then man is too, right? Isn't there lots of so-called evidence to support that assertion? Even Jesus had to overcome its seeming grasp in his crucifixion and resurrection. Yet Mrs. Eddy has the courage to say in the marginal heading that everything in that degree is unreal. She does concur however, that it is solid conviction to the sufferer. And to the sensualist as well. It seems as though God, Spirit, Mind, is nowhere to be found. But she writes in the chapter on Christian Science Practice: "Immortal Mind, governing all, must be acknowledged as supreme in the physical realm, so-called, as well as in the spiritual."³ Mind is supreme, even there. God is all powerful, even there.

And as better nurses for each other we would do well to remember that. If we know, for a fact, that our fellow man is an exact and scientific expression of God's supremacy, and that we are to cherish, and encourage this dear child – punctually and cheerfully – we won't condemn him or ignore him or be afraid of him. We will not be fooled into mistaking the first degree for man, any man. In her *1901 Message to The Mother Church*, our Leader writes, "To be delivered from believing in what is unreal, from fearing it, following it, or loving it, one must watch and pray that he enter not into temptation — even as one guards his door against the approach of thieves."⁴

This is an important point: that we guard our doors – that we enter not into temptation to attribute any truth or power to that which is really powerless and untrue. The whole first degree seems to clamor for our attention suggesting with very compelling so-called evidence that there is pain and pleasure in matter. When Mrs. Eddy talks about self-immolation, it is this perverse sense of selfhood that she means for us to sacrifice. We are to guard our doors against the thieves that would steal our health, steal our peace, steal our hope. Self-immolation requires courage, great courage. "Not my will, but thine, be done,"⁵ was Jesus' humble confiding that, whatever God's plan was, he was willing to do it. That ultimate self-immolation also led to the ultimate glory.

The purification of one's sense-of-self counteracts the earthward tendencies that would seem to consign one to Hell as defined in the Glossary.⁶ That definition matches very closely the contents of the first degree. Because this whole degree is about believing that you are separate from God – isn't that what hell is? Separation from God? Let us foster, cherish, and encourage in each other a growth out of that belief of separation. Let's love the hell out of each other!

That's what these Christian Science nurses do: love, love, love. And they are in constant prayer – not for their patients – but to reject within themselves and their environment, anything that would stain their purity. That elevated and scientific thought, heals. You and I may not represent ourselves as Christian Science nurses, but we can certainly strive to attain that altitude of thought. So, being better nurses, especially better than we have been, must include being better healers too. Mrs. Eddy cautions: "If hypocrisy, stolidity, inhumanity, or vice finds its way into the chambers of disease through the would-be healer, it would, if it were possible, convert into a den of thieves the temple of the Holy Ghost, — the patient's spiritual power to resuscitate himself."⁷ Remember how we were just talking about barring our doors against thieves. She admonishes us here, not to bring the thieves in with us.

The truth is, since we're all would-be healers, this is an important lesson in discernment. Don't let any negative thought divert you in your treatment, or limit the power of your prayers. When you're praying, stick to the truth. Don't get sidetracked with speculation or blame or diagnosis, don't wonder whether you or your patient are up to this. Don't get distracted – bar the door. Pay attention to your prayer. This is the temple of the Holy Ghost we're talking about. This is where the Comforter abides – the Spirit of truth which Jesus said would bring all things to your remembrance.⁸ So, you can't be made to forget that both you and your patient are safe there, whole there, well there.

Mrs. Eddy listed four negative qualities in that quote: inhumanity, hypocrisy, vice and stolidity. Which means, according to *Webster*: dullness of intellect; stupidity; from the Latin for unmovable. Actually, those four nasty attitudes are just placeholders for any and all unmovable modes of thought. Mental laziness, inflexibility, rigidity, spiritual dullness, self-righteousness, etc. None of them is welcome where the patient is striving to resuscitate himself – whether the patient is you or someone else. But, when thought moves, healing occurs.

If we're going to keep unwanted thieves out of the chambers of disease, what are the mental qualities we want to let in? Look at the second degree called moral. Those characteristics are powerful antidotes to all of the hellish conditions in the first degree. Why? Because they are more like God, and therefore tend to take our thoughts off ourselves. Encouraging us to give up our moth-eaten, and corrupt viewpoints Jesus made plain "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." He further stated that when your treasure is in heaven, "no thief approacheth."⁹ What better way to bar your doors than to put them far out of sight of that first degree. Doors that operate in the mud, tend to get stuck open, or stuck closed. I'm not sure which is worse.

The second degree is where all the good works traditionally equated with true Christianity, lie. The Bible is full of stories that promote selfless benevolence and goodwill and the admonition to go and do likewise.¹⁰ And rightly so. Lifting our brothers and sisters out of physical and mental wretchedness is an example that both Jesus and Mary Baker Eddy set for us. And The Manual clearly states that a Christian Scientist is a humanitarian.¹¹ But, let us watch that those good works are scientifically based – third degree based – otherwise, they are just human goodness. And it's not that human goodness is necessarily wrong, it just doesn't solve the problem. Christian Science is about solutions – the universal solution of Love.

Our lectures and Reading Rooms, even our church services and nursing facilities could easily become bulwarked in second degree human activity. We could see them merely as good works, faithful outreach, doing our duty. But you see, the second degree is still mortal mind. It's much more transparent than the first degree, and the scientific shines through more readily. But when we are about our Father's business we must – to the best of our ability – work out from the third degree if we expect a lasting, in fact, permanent impact.

The second degree actually takes on the hue of the direction in which it's looking. For example, second degree compassion looking towards the first degree, darkens and becomes enabling. But looking towards the spiritual and understanding, it becomes luminous with mercy. Affection can be either lust or love depending on which way it's facing. Meekness can be a doormat or spiritual power. These transitional qualities are so useful in lifting us out of the evil beliefs of the first degree, but we want to make sure that we're not sympathizing with error when we embrace them, or using them as a bludgeon to further afflict our already afflicted neighbor. Instead, see them as Mrs. Eddy did when she labeled them "evil beliefs disappearing." We want to purify them of any depraved tendrils. But we certainly don't lose them in reaching the third degree, because they are foundational to your growth spiritward. They are transformed just as you are.

I want to mention here that these three degrees are not a progressive process: you don't start out in the first degree, move on to the second, and finally graduate in the third. Mrs. Eddy called them degrees and not stages. If they were stages, then mortal mind would be real and a starting point for man. But mortal mind is

unreal and man is forever one with his heavenly Father, immortal Mind. However, you do want to spend progressively less time mucking about in the first degree and progressively more time rejoicing in the second, and ultimately living in the third. The bottom line is, that you are what God has in Mind. You're never anything less than that.

Here's a parable: There was a monastery in the country. It was a beautiful setting and many people came to visit it, and many young men were interested in becoming monks. Over time though, fewer visitors came, and no more young men signed on. Finally there were just a handful of rather elderly monks left and they couldn't really do all that needed to be done. The monastery became dilapidated. In the tiny village at the foot of the hill, was a synagogue. The abbot, in a last ditch effort, decided to visit the rabbi to see if he had any advice.

The rabbi could only confirm that his own congregation was shrinking too. They wept together, read Scripture together, and just as the abbot was ready to head back to the monastery, the rabbi said, "by the way. The Messiah is one of you." Upon his return, the handful of elderly monks asked the Abbot what he had learned. "Nothing really," he said. But then added, "he did say that the Messiah was one of us."

As they pondered that together over time, they began to treat each other with greater respect – on the off chance that one of them really might be the Messiah. That respect grew into genuine affection. They found themselves feeling more useful, more vigorous, more happy. The monastery was again beautiful. Visitors began to come to see them and young men once again wanted to be monks.¹²

In order to be better nurses for each other, let's take that parable to heart. Mrs. Eddy expected her followers to be healers – to heal as she did, to heal as Jesus did. And the great lament is that it seems as though healing just isn't happening. It is true, that the most noticeable healings are those of disease – so we can't miss the point that our testimony meetings and our periodicals are filled with reports of physical healing. But Jesus didn't come just to heal disease. His highest mission was to take away the sins of the world. As in the parable I just told, the healing of the sins of discouragement, apathy, and lack were life changing for the monks, but they were also life changing for the monastery, the village, and the visitors. And it all happened when thought moved, when it grew out of itself. We can't really say, as the Rabbi did, that one of you is the Messiah – there is just one of those – but we can say that Immanuel is here, God is with us. And you are the infinite expression of that sovereign ever presence: you are what God has in Mind.

As you were listening to that parable, did any of you think of your own church? I think it's a very real truth that as we treat each other better, as we love each other more – in other words, as we are better nurses to each other – we will see more activity in our churches. When we recognize that every one of our neighbors, inside and outside the church, is a shining eternal idea in the Mind of God, and we let the Christ take away the sins of our worlds, little and big – we will see more healing in our churches. The Golden Rule plays a big role in this kind of nursing. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."¹³ It's not "whatsoever others do to me, I'll do to them." Nor is it, "until they do it to me, I won't do it to them." It's "I will treat you the way I want to be treated. And I will do it even if you don't notice. And I will keep doing it because I love you."

Perhaps, just like the “chambers of disease,” we would-be healers should see our churches as temples of the Holy Ghost and not as dens of thieves. When we’re barring our mental doors, we’re defending ourselves against the thieves that would steal our desire and willingness to love one another, but we’re not defending ourselves against one another. We’re actually making sure that we’re not bringing those thieves into our churches: the ones that say it’s too hard or it won’t make any difference anyway. We definitely don’t want to limit this patient’s ability to resuscitate itself. Sometimes the best prayer is just, “Father, don’t let me be part of the problem. Don’t let me be the pathway through which harm enters here.”

Here’s another definition, this one for depravity. *Webster* says it’s a vitiated state. And defines vitiate as “to impair so as to render useless.” Mrs. Eddy uses that word only once in her published writings. She says, “Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good. God has made man capable of this, and nothing can vitiate – nothing can impair so as to render useless – the ability and power divinely bestowed on man.”¹⁴

The third degree, according to the marginal heading, is reality. It’s where mortal mind is simply proved to be nothing. Instead of seeing man as expressing wisdom, we see that man is wisdom expressed; man is love expressed; man is health expressed. There is nothing left to vitiate that oneness. And as better nurses we want to be giving each other the third degree!

That doesn’t mean however that we’re interrogating our fellow man. I looked up that phrase: According to the *Henry Holt Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins*,¹⁵ it came from the process to achieve the third degree or highest level of Freemasonry. Applicants were required to pass grueling tests of proficiency. I am not suggesting any connection between Freemasonry and Christian Science, but I’m sure you will agree that there sometimes appear to be grueling tests of proficiency! Just look at the requirements of the Sermon on the Mount, or the Ten Commandments, or the Rule for Motives and Acts! But, you know what, since you are, we all are what God has in Mind, we are naturally and necessarily obedient. It’s inherent in us, isn’t it? Jesus knew it, Mrs. Eddy knew it, and we know it. Let’s nurse each other from that highest standpoint.

So, to sum up: whenever – if ever – you are confronted with any kind of suffering, whether it’s physical or mental, or moral – appearing to be your own or another’s, it’s all first degree error. And it’s all unreal.

The antidote? Be a better nurse. Cherish, encourage, promote. Take the second degree qualities and liberally pour them on yourself and others in both thought and action. Wash them clean with this floodtide of generosity. And let yourself be nursed. Let others care for you through their humanity and affection. We’re all in this together.

Because you really are what God has in Mind. Now and forever! Christian Science delivers. Amen.

¹ *Science and Health*, p. 395 ² John 17:21 ³ *Science and Health*, p. 460 ⁴ ’01, p. 14 ⁵ Luke 22:42

⁶ *Science and Health*, p. 588 ⁷ *Ibid.* p. 365 ⁸ John 14:26 ⁹ Luke 12:33,34 ¹⁰ Luke 10:37

¹¹ Man 47:1 ¹² Adapted from M. Scott Peck: *A 2nd Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul* (1994) ¹³ Matt 7:12

¹⁴ *Science and Health*, p. 393 ¹⁵ Henry Holt and Co. (1990)