



A CHRISTLY VIEW OF HEALTH CARE

A talk given at Lynn House of Potomac Valley
by Elizabeth Trevithick, C.S.
on Saturday, November 12, 2016.

It's no accident that Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered Christian Science, named her book "*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*." Not "Science and Success" or "Science and Happiness" but "Science and Health." Health is a universal and primary human need. You have only to turn on the television for five minutes to discover the almost total preoccupation with matters of health.

Historical Responses to Sickness

Historically, as far as I can see, there have been three main responses to sickness.

1. God sends it as a way to teach us lessons (in the manner of Job). So suffer with grace and sometime in the unknown future you may come to understand why you were allowed to suffer.
2. Sickness results from violation of some physiological, material, or biological law. Sickness is material so fight it materially.
3. The human mind affects the body to *some* extent so be glad instead of sad; embrace mind over matter and books like *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

Mary Baker Eddy rejected all three. First, she could not reconcile her experience of God as infinite Love with a God who would punish His own creation and allow all the suffering in the world.

Second, accepting Jesus' consistent healing record and observing that he never employed

material methods, she rejected the assertion that health problems are fixed material, physiological, biological facts.

Third, she did not believe that the power of positive thinking or the human mind was the healer of the body. The hospitals are full of good people whom she was convinced were not being punished by God or for their bad thoughts. Instead of regarding the human mind as the *healer* of disease she regarded its material basis as the *cause* of disease—which is only permanently healed by exchanging the human mind's conclusions for the spiritual truth found in the first chapter of the Bible—that the real man is the image and likeness of God. God is our real Mind and in reality we are His perfect ideas.

We'd never have believed it if Jesus had simply announced that Life was eternal. He went through the agony of crucifixion and the triumph of resurrection to prove to us that Life is truly indestructible.

Christian Scientists pray never to lose sight of that, so in time of need they turn quite naturally

to Christian Science care, both for treatment through prayer by Christian Science practitioners and appropriate care in the sick room by Christian Science nurses.

By earnestly studying the most successful healer who ever trod the globe—that is, Christ Jesus, who used no material methods—Mrs. Eddy came to the inevitable conclusion that it was his completely spiritual viewpoint that healed the sick. She writes: “Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the Saviour saw God’s own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick.” (S&H 476:32)

Jesus’ intimate awareness of God always with him, lines up perfectly with Genesis One in the Bible: “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Jesus saw the perfect man right where the rest of us see the problem. Christian Scientists are committed to proving the healing effect of Jesus’ correct view of man in their own lives.

The student of Christian Science who aims to follow Christ in every detail of his experience devotes him or herself to daily growing in spiritual understanding. From experience he is convinced that this has a direct, healing influence on the body.

Obviously no one can be talked into this. Its acceptance rests on demonstration, on physical proof of healing.

So Where Do Christian Scientists Turn in Time of Need?

What do Christian Scientists do when they experience disease or accident? They do what everyone in the world does. That is, they turn first to what has helped them in the past. Given the steady record of Christian Science healing, it is natural for the student of Christian Science to turn first to God and then often feel directed to employ a Christian Science practitioner to pray for them.

Again, Christian Scientists are not a group

of people who pretend not to ever have health problems. We are a group of people who cherish the freedom of responding to those problems from a spiritual point of view after the manner of Christ Jesus.

Definition of Christian Science Nurse

At the time Mrs. Eddy established Christian Science nursing, her church was already full of good Christian people who no doubt were very willing to help fellow members in time of sickness. This, combined with good metaphysical treatment by practitioners, was NOT viewed by Mrs. Eddy as sufficient. She saw clearly the need for the Christian Science nurse and added her definition of that nurse to the *Church Manual* thus ensuring the permanency of this benevolent function of The First Church of Christ, Scientist. Here’s what it states:

“A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick.

The cards of such persons may be inserted in *The Christian Science Journal* under rules established by the publishers.” (Art. VIII, Sec. 31, p. 49)

The two parts of the definition of Christian Science nurse can never be considered separately. In Christian Science it is not possible to administer proper care to the sick without a demonstrable understanding of Christian Science practice. It is that understanding based on Christian Science class instruction that enables the nurse to hold thought steadfastly to God and His idea, man, as the care is being given. In this way, Christian Science nursing is permanently linked to The First Church of Christ, Scientist.

The Distinction between Christian Science Nurse and Practitioner

The distinction between Christian Science nurse and Christian Science practitioner is just as clear as the distinction between prayer and treatment.

If my neighbor has a problem and at the end of his description asks me to pray for him, my answer is always, “Yes, of course.” My prayer would go something like, “Thank you, Father, that you are able to communicate with each of Your ideas. You are ever-present as his Mind.”

I would never give treatment in this case. In requesting Christian Science treatment the patient is giving the practitioner permission to discern what in thought is being temporarily and falsely believed and to replace it with knowing the spiritual truth. My neighbor has not invited me to do that.

Similarly nurse and practitioner are specifically defined by Mary Baker Eddy and we are on very shaky ground if we attempt to edit or alter her writings or intent.

Take Mrs. Eddy’s Words Literally

Mrs. Eddy’s words should always be taken literally. When she said “nurse” she meant “nurse” as it was universally understood at that time. But because of having a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, her nurse would not use drugs or surgery or manipulation. Her nurse would retain the age-old craft, the wisdom passed down the centuries—finding public recognition in such as Florence Nightingale—from nurse to nurse on the best way to lift, to bandage, etc. At no point does teaching this craft shut the door on inspiration, but it keeps our Christian Science nursing safe and engenders respect from the public.

And inseparable from that appropriate care is the requirement that the Christian Science nurse have “a demonstrable understanding of Christian Science practice.” It is that understanding, based on Christian Science class instruction by teachers appointed by The Mother Church, that enables the Christian Science nurse to hold thought

steadfastly to God and His idea, man, as the care is being given. In this way Christian Science nursing is permanently linked to the Church. It is The Mother Church who appoints the teachers of Christian Science, ensuring that the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy are kept true to what was originally revealed to her.

The Nature of Proper Care Would Change Over the Years

The nature of proper care would change over the years as human thought improved its models. Methods of bandaging, development of equipment for more efficient bathing, bedding, lifting, blending food, etc.—all these ideas occurred to men and women who had the interests of the sick at heart. This body of knowledge is constantly being refined and Christian Science nursing makes use of it while NEVER using any product or procedure whose intent is to heal materially. The main feature of “proper care” in Christian Science is that it is given exclusively in the presence of God understood by the nurse and practitioner.

Your Choice of Health Care Depends Entirely on Your Point of View

All nursing is an art whose best practices have developed over hundreds of years. Techniques should be open to improvement all the time. But the huge, irreconcilable, distinctive difference between Christian Science nursing and any other is that the patient has come to the Christian Science nurse to receive proper care in the presence of God understood. So,

... the patient has come to the Christian Science nurse to receive proper care in the presence of God understood.

whether you employ a physician or go to a hospital, as opposed to employing a Christian Science practitioner and nurse, depends entirely

on your belief about the problem. When someone has a physical problem, they make a choice as to how they want to be treated or understood. The patient entering the hospital is seen to have a material problem.

The patient agrees to be treated materially. The patient entering a Christian Science nursing facility is admitting their desire for growth in spiritual understanding and chooses to be treated in the presence of God understood.

If you turn to a doctor you will be examined, and based on the material symptoms and the education of the doctor you will be offered a material remedy with the possibility of surgery and drugs. No matter how kindly, how lovingly, you are treated you will be seen to be material and treated accordingly.

If you turn to Christian Science for both treatment through prayer and care administered

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

by nurses holding thought to perfect God and perfect man, as the author of *Science and Health* describes the basis for true healing, you will be seen as spiritual and the appropriate care you receive from Christian Science nurses will be given while the thought of the nurse is devoted to understanding God—understanding that the Allness of the one God, divine Mind, Soul, Spirit, Principle, Life, Truth, Love precludes the existence of any form of limitation, in other words, matter.

There’s no denying all problems look material, but they are not, given that healing results time and time again when thought is held to what God knows about His own spiritual creation and not what the physical senses suggest.

In no way are we suggesting that all the hospitals should be closed. We are simply making the

case for Christian Science nursing and Christian Science facilities to be available for those who are convinced that all-powerful, ever-present, all-knowing God, Spirit is easily able to care for every one of His own ideas, His own expressions. We are simply grateful for a type of health care that allows us to accept the Truth that Jesus says will make us free—in an atmosphere that puts no material limits on our understanding that God is indeed able to heal us.

As the Bible tells us, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

I like to think of that verse this way: “God so loved the world that he gave his Christ perfectly expressed by Jesus to show us what the human life looks like when it is lived at one with God.”

We have the Example, the Way-shower, the Light of the World

So Christian Science care is not a way of fearfully avoiding medical care. On the contrary, it is a logical choice for those who are dedicating themselves to following Christ in every detail of their lives. It is based on the conviction that the Allness of God, Spirit rules out the existence of anything limiting or hurtful. Just as an ice cube is powerless to resist the heat of the sun, so thought in harmony with God, the All-knowing Mind, the only Truth, the indestructible Life and divine Love, yields or surrenders its fear and gives in to the overwhelming love of God. This yielding to God’s ever-presence and power and knowledge, registers on every cell of consciousness, and patients find themselves healed.

Now obviously the arms and hands of the medical nurse can perform the same tasks as the Christian Science nurse, but the huge defining difference is what the nurse believes and is thinking. The Christian Science nurse is dedicated to acknowledging what God knows and sees. This spiritual perfection is not seen by the five physical senses, but it is concretely real to spiritual sense.

Psalm 71:1, 3 says it all: “In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. ...Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort...”

Reasons for Being at the Christian Science Nursing Facility Confidential

When a patient is admitted to a hospital, he is examined and assessed and labelled from a material point of view. When a patient is admitted to a Christian Science nursing facility, no one knows the reason. To be sure, the symptoms of the problem may be identical to many the facility has already taken care of, but the reasons for each case are completely different. With Christian Science care no material conclusions are drawn. Everyone who works at the Christian Science facility abides by a rule of strict confidentiality for the patient.

Christian Science Nursing Requires a Place

As we all know, Christian Science treatment can take place anywhere because it is prayer. It does not require a physical place. Wherever we are we can pray. There can even be absent treatment.

But nursing does require a place. In both medical nursing and Christian Science nursing sincere efforts are made to have the patient remain at home as long as care can be administered there.

To this end there are Visiting Christian Science nurses, who do an indispensable job.

The provision of Christian Science nursing is Mary Baker Eddy’s recognition that there could be times when we need bandaging, help with mobility, or modification of food. And it was critical to the success of Christian Science that we not be seen as a group who ignores human needs, but as a group who cares deeply and with appropriate action.

The creation of the first Christian Science facility in Boston was done in complete agreement with Mrs. Eddy’s wishes. She had been

thinking about it for a long time. Some say, “Well it’s not in the *Church Manual*.” That is actually not true in a real sense. By including the definition of the Christian Science nurse in the *Manual* everything that Christian Science nursing needs to minister to the sick is covered. Nursing requires a place. There is no absent nursing. The nurse and the patient are either in the patient’s home or, when more practical and in the best interests of the patient, in an accredited Christian Science nursing facility.

Adam H. Dickey in a piece called “A Progressive Step” wrote in the December 16, 1916 *Christian Science Sentinel*: “The purpose which the Directors of The Mother Church seek to accomplish in organizing the Christian Science Benevolent Association is one that is in direct obedience to our Leader’s wishes and which had for a long time been uppermost in her thought.”

He goes on: “The Christian Science movement has barely passed its infancy, and is only now branching out to fulfill some of the requirements that naturally fall upon it as a large and successful Christian organization and one from which so much is expected. First came the demonstration of the Principle of Christian Science in the overcoming of sickness and sin. Then came the formation of churches and the erection of church edifices, both of which have been done to an extent that has awakened the thought of the world to the importance of Christian Science as a religious movement. After this must come the establishing of what we might call hospitals or sanitariums, and the training of people to act as attendants in the sick room.”

It Takes Special Training to Become a Christian Science Nurse

Fine training is indispensable to good and safe nursing. No one would want to drive across a bridge designed by an engineer with no training, no matter how prayed up and inspired that engineer might feel.

There is superb training available for Christian Science nurses.

The Nurse from the Practitioner's Point of View

We know God doesn't play favorites. But let's be honest. I am tempted to feel like God's spoiled child, when I think of the huge blessing involved in being able to practice Christian Science with access to an accredited Christian Science nursing facility.

At the request of some of my patients, I have observed the action firsthand. Sometimes several nurses are required for cleansing and bandaging and I have been in awe of the reverent atmosphere. The practical steps are choreographed like a ballet with each individual nurse knowing his or her role. But what makes it seamless is the tangible spiritual sense that each Christian Science nurse, while performing physical functions, is remaining true to God—conscious of His presence and power right there. The separate roles of the Christian Science nurse and the practitioner are clear and complementary. Between the prayers of the practitioner and the care of the Christian Science nurse, the patient feels “cared for, watched over, beloved and protected” (*Christian Science Hymnal*, Hymn 278)—free to go forward, healed of any sense of being separate from God, good. That is called healing.

In *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer (Amplified Edition, p.398)*, Mrs. Eddy is quoted as saying: “Take God, Good, at His word and follow the teachings of my books and I promise you that you can demonstrate what they teach.”

Beautiful Healing Experienced by a Christian Science Nurse

Here I'd like to share a beautiful healing. I have permission to share it with you from the Christian Science nurse who experienced it.

While trying to prevent a patient from falling, she had a mishap. At first she experienced minor discomfort, but the next day she was unable to walk. Because the incident occurred while on duty at a Christian Science nursing facility, it was handled through Workman's Compensation.

This meant that she was legally obliged to see a doctor.

She was taken to the doctor's office by the Visiting Christian Science Nurse. Many x-rays were taken and a diagnosis was made: she was informed that she had a very serious back injury which necessitated surgery and that she would be in a wheel chair for at least 12 weeks. The doctor requested that she have additional testing, to pinpoint the exact area that needed attention. She declined this procedure stating that it was contrary to her philosophy. Well, the doctor inquired what her philosophy was, and she explained that she was a Christian Scientist. As Workman's Comp. requires check-ups, the doctor wanted to know how he would know she was improving if she did not accept medical treatment. With all sincerity she said that he would know when he saw her.

“Take God, Good, at His word and follow the teachings of my books and I promise you that you can demonstrate what they teach.”

Christian Healer (Amplified Edition, p.398)

The next three weeks were spent entirely in a wheelchair from which she worked diligently with a Christian Science practitioner and earnestly studied. Fear had to be overcome and she said she needed to realize that she did not depend on muscles for movement. She read in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: “If muscles can cease to act and become rigid of their own preference,—be deformed or symmetrical, as they please or as disease directs,—they must be self-directing. (S&H 160: 24)

And further, “Destroy the belief, show mortal mind that muscles have no power to be lost, for Mind [that is divine Mind] is supreme. . . .” (S&H 375: 23)

This Christian Science nurse had to take an active stand in claiming her freedom.

On her second visit to the doctor, she was wheeled to the door of the office, but she was able to walk inside with the help of a cane. The doctor was surprised to see her walking, but he pointed out that the muscles in her leg had weakened and would still need treatment.

On her next visit, she walked into the doctor's office without any mobility aids. When he saw her, he threw his arms around her and said, "How is my favorite patient? Look at you, this is a miracle!" His medical nurse, who had been very skeptical and had done all she could to convince my friend that she should indeed have an MRI and surgery, came into the room with him, and they both expressed their surprise and delight. The nurse said, "This really is a miracle, you know. She had a very severe back injury and now look at her!"

My friend's situation continued to improve steadily. She went home as planned for the Christmas holidays and when she returned to the Christian Science nursing facility three weeks later, she resumed her work on the nursing floor. She has since been on many long walks and is able to do all household chores in her home and garden. She is also back to actively playing tennis. She continues to express joy with each step she takes, knowing that something wonderful and special has taken place. She is profoundly grateful for Christian Science, to the practitioner who so tirelessly encouraged and worked with her through this experience, and for her Director of Christian Science Nursing who supported her so lovingly.

Conclusion

In the spirit of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, Mary Baker Eddy added the By-law

on Christian Science Nurse to the *Church Manual*. This By-law would save Christian Scientists from ever having to depart from their precious, demonstrable theology.

Christian Science nursing then is inseparable from Church. It is Mrs. Eddy's public declaration to the world that Christian Scientists do not turn their backs on suffering. They care for their own, that is, those committed to the Science of the Christ.

I hope Christian Scientists have the greatest sympathy for suffering humanity. The provision of Christian Science nursing facilities was Mary Baker Eddy's idea and requires our regular financial help in order to remain ready to care for any sincere student committed to relying on Christian Science.

In requesting your help in this great Cause I'm often reminded of Public Broadcasting's pitch: They urge us to become "sustainers"—no matter how modest the amount, to think of them regularly, and act upon our grateful thoughts.

You might never need Christian Science nursing, but someone you love or care about will. If you take assurance in knowing this nursing care is available and want its blessing to continue, we pray to find a place in your heart for this Christly way of caring.

Our Leader writes: "May the divine light of Christian Science that lighteth every enlightened thought illumine your faith and understanding, exclude all darkness or doubt, and signal the perfect path wherein to walk, the perfect Principle whereby to demonstrate the perfect man and the perfect law of God." (*The First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany* 187: 6)

THANK YOU

LYNN HOUSE
OF POTOMAC VALLEY, INC.



Lynn House of Potomac Valley, Inc.
© 2017 All rights reserved.
For additional copies, please contact us at
info@lynnhouse.org.

4400 W. Braddock Road
Alexandria, VA 22304
703-379-6000

Visit our website to see a video of this talk,
www.lynnhouse.org. Click on Recorded Events.