



The Things of the Spirit

A talk given by

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**“For they that are after the flesh
do mind the things of the flesh;
but they that are after the Spirit
the things of the Spirit.”**

(Romans 8:5)

About David Sand, C.S. —

David is a life-long Christian Scientist who grew up in a small town in western Massachusetts. He completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1975 and received class instruction in Christian Science the following year.

In 1976 he moved to Boston to work for The Mother Church. For fourteen years he worked in the Church Archives as a curator and researcher. Then, in a change of career, in 1992 he enrolled in the Christian Science Nurse's training program at the Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association. There he completed his first two years of training.

In 1994 he had the opportunity to attend the University of California at Santa Barbara where he completed a Master of Arts degree in 19th century American history.

After completing his graduate work, he returned to the Christian Science nursing profession.

He joined the Lynn House staff in 1998 and became a *Journal*-listed Christian Science Nurse in 2001.



In 2005 he moved back to western Massachusetts where he took private duty cases and also worked as a contract Christian Science nurse at the Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association.

In an unexpected turn of events, he returned to Lynn House in 2016 to serve as Executive Director for six years, until he retired in May of 2022.

He now lives with his wife Consuela in Arlington, VA where he serves in various capacities in his branch church and devotes time to the Christian Science practice.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Lynn House. It is wonderful that we are all here today for this special occasion where we'll have the opportunity to explore together "the things of the Spirit."

To examine spiritual things,

- to hold them up to the light for inspection like you would a precious jewel,
- to look at them intently as you would look at a great work of art,
- or to stand in awe before them as you would before a natural wonder like the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls,

— this is to see the very substance and beauty of Life, God. It is to see into the very heart of Truth and Love itself.

It is not difficult for us to do. It comes naturally to us because we are spiritual beings. We see the things of the spirit all around us.

Wherever we see honesty, truthfulness, goodness, delight, kindness, friendliness, intelligence, thoughtfulness, gratitude, justice, moral courage, mercy, etc. we are seeing the evidence of spiritual things. Through the lens of spiritual sense, we see things in the right light. We see things as they really are.

So, let us begin this morning by looking through this spiritual lens and thanking God for the beautiful ideas He is bringing into focus for each one of us here. Let us relish and savor the spiritual nourishment we are all taking in together. Let us rejoice

in the bright and wholesome thoughts that are unfolding to us as we listen for the voice of Truth.

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL THINGS?

We all recognize this phrase — "the things of the Spirit." It's from the New Testament book of Romans. The entire verse reads:

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5)

Practicing Christian Scientists are all familiar with the "things of the Spirit." We live and work with them every day. They are conscious, pure qualities of thought. They are, like the description of faith in the book of Hebrews, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

These unseen "things" spring from a living hope in our hearts.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul describes spiritual things this way:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness, goodness, virtue, praise – these are the things to think on. To set on high. To put front and center. To make our closest companions.

These indispensable qualities, and many more like them, are at the very heart and are the very substance of our identity.

Again, Paul referred to these unseen things in 2 Corinthians when he said:

. . . we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. (II Corinthians 4:18)

Mary Baker Eddy says something very similar in *Science & Health with Key to the Scriptures*:

In Christian Science, substance is understood to be Spirit, while the opponents of Christian Science believe substance to be matter. They think of matter as something and almost the only thing, and of the things which pertain to Spirit as next to nothing, or as very far removed from daily experience. Christian Science takes exactly the opposite view. (SH 349:31)

To take “exactly the opposite view” is to reorient and recalibrate human thought. It means that the first shall be last and the last first. Seeing past material sense evidence, that which is first, and looking at the things which are unseen, that which is last, involves shedding personal sense, subduing the human ego, and instead acknowledging our perfect spiritual identity.

Sounds easy enough. Sensible, logical, and straightforward. And so it is as we adopt the mental habits that forward spiritual realization and spiritual growth.

Mrs. Eddy writes:

The life of Christ Jesus was not miraculous, but it was indigenous to his

spirituality, — the good soil wherein the seed of Truth springs up and bears much fruit. (SH 270: 31-1)

So, our radiant, uplifted lives are indigenous to our spirituality, indigenous to our acknowledgment and acceptance of our complete dependence on God.

The first beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” is translated in the *New English Bible* as:

How blest are those who know their need of God; the kingdom of heaven is theirs. (NEB Matt 5:3)

This is the opposite attitude of the human mind. The unilluminated, unregenerated, unchastened, human mind is always off kilter, off base, even while it is quite confident of what it wants and what it needs.

But this so-called mind is blind to the Truth. It is an unreliable guide to good because it is not a disinterested party or impartial judge concerning what is best for us. It does not have our best interests at heart. It is instead an advocate for “the things of the flesh.” It is a shill for the carnal mind, a lobbyist for personal sense.

If we think that these material thoughts, disguised as our own thinking, can lead us to anything good, we are in for a rude awakening. And we can thank God that, in the glorious activities of the kingdom of heaven, this blind mind is not even a bit player.

The poet and essayist Neil Millar, a frequent contributor to The Christian Science Monitor’s Home Forum page some years ago, in an essay entitled “Unsolicited Advice” once described human cleverness

as “a harmonica talent with a pipe organ self-confidence.” (*Shards of Light*, Neil Millar, p. 17)

But taking in and holding to the opposite view, that we are tributary to God, Spirit, and to nothing else, means that the things of the Spirit become central to us, become our guiding light, our North star. Spiritual sense becomes our first, most spontaneous, sense of ourselves and of others.

The well-known 20th century Bible scholar Edgar Goodspeed, writing about the origins of Christianity, noted:

“It must always be remembered that Christianity did not spring from the New Testament but the New Testament from Christianity. Christianity did not begin as a religion of books but as a religion of spirit.” (*The Story of the Bible*, Edgar J. Goodspeed, p. viii)

Mary Baker Eddy makes a similar point in her autobiography when she states:

Of this also rest assured, that books and teaching are but a ladder let down from the heaven of Truth and Love, upon which angelic thoughts ascend and descend, bearing on their pinions of light the Christ-spirit. (*Retrospection and Introspection*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 85:9)

JACOB’S VISION

Her imagery in this sentence, of course, comes from the story of Jacob at Bethel. As you’ll recall, Jacob was on the run, escaping from the murderous wrath of his brother Esau whose blessing he had taken through deception.

Fleeing several days journey from his home, to Bethel, he found himself alone, in the dark of night, with broken family ties left behind and a long journey ahead of him into an unknown land and an uncertain future with distant relatives.

Here, after going to sleep with the stones for his pillows, he had a vivid and arresting dream.

As the Bible describes it:

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. (Genesis 28:12)

In this lonely place, running from danger, carrying, no doubt, a burden of guilt and shame for what he had done to his brother, he experienced a life-changing spiritual vision.

Right there, in the depths of despair, and with a broken heart, the Christ-spirit broke through to Jacob’s thought in bright and beautiful images.

This communication came with such vividness and clarity that he was lifted to a new mental height. He was overcome by the holiness of the experience.

As the story continues:

... And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew *it* not. (Genesis 28: 16)

In this dream he was reassured that the God of Abraham and Isaac was with him and would give him the land upon which he rested. And that his seed “shall be as

the dust of the earth.” And furthermore that “in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis 1:14)

What an incredible and incomparable message and promise this was. From such a weak vessel as he would come blessing for all the peoples of the earth. God had surely “chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” (I Corinthians 1:27)

There was an upwelling of devotion and resolve in Jacob. As the account continues:

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,
So that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:
(Genesis 28: 20, 21)

He had many humbling experiences to pass through before his momentous character transformation years later in Peniel, but there was no doubt that he was now securely on the road to reform and freedom. The “things of the Spirit” had taken hold of his consciousness and lifted him to a new mental height.

He must have thought long and hard on this heavenly vision through the twenty long years of toil and service to his uncle during which time he established a family and became a prosperous herdsman.

It must have been a source of wonder, inner strength, and comfort while he shouldered the burdens and worked through his family problems and responsibilities.

All that he did now, had a deeper dimension and meaning. He was not just

struggling to survive or to get by. Life had higher a purpose. It was a divine adventure to be embraced and lived.

From this time on there was no looking back. There was a conscious, constant thought force that moved Jacob in the right direction and kept him on the upward path.

That same Christly presence is with all of us here and now. That same spiritual vision is lighting our path and guiding our footsteps. Through spiritual, original illumination, we too are being transformed and lifted to new heights.

LA CONCHITA

An experience I had, many years ago, taught me a precious lesson about spiritual guidance.

In early 1994 I enrolled in a graduate program at a university in California. My in-laws, who owned a small vacation home near the school, offered to let my wife and me live there rent free while I pursued my studies. It seemed an ideal situation.

By August of that year, we had sold our house in Boston and moved across the country to a small beach community on the central coast called La Conchita. By summer’s end we were nicely settled into our double wide house trailer on a small lot of land nestled at the base of a 600-foot bluff with an ocean view before us. We felt we had our own little slice of heaven.

But dark clouds, literally, soon loomed overhead. As fall moved into winter, the seasonal rains that year were much heavier and more frequent than usual.

That September, county officials called a meeting of the town residents to inform us that some cracks and fissures had been discovered in the access road that ran up the side of the cliff to the newly planted avocado grove on the top of the bluffs.

They assured us that they were keeping close watch on the situation and that there did not appear to be any immediate danger to the community below.

I didn't think much about this meeting with the county until one rainy Sunday morning the following January, while I was out walking our dog, I noticed streams of water flowing down off the bluff directly behind us, flushing out mud and debris onto a side street near our property.

I called my father-in-law when I got home to tell him what I had seen. He assured me that this was normal runoff for this time of year and that the county kept an eye on things and regularly came by to clean up the debris.

He also explained to me that, during the years, he had taken extra precautions by having trenches dug and protective earthworks built up behind the property.

As I explained all this to my wife afterwards, I could see that she was not at peace with this situation, and neither was I. So, we agreed that morning to take some time to pray about this and to seek God's guidance.

But, as I sat at the desk in my study, I found it difficult to settle down and focus. Fear and anxiety were running rampant in my thought and thwarting my best efforts to pray.

Panicky questions crowded my thought:

- Had we made a mistake?
 - Had we made the wrong move?
 - Was all this wasted work?
 - Should we abandon our plans?
 - Or were we overreacting?
 - Should we just sit tight?
 - Should we move, if so to where?
 - Who could help us with this move?
- And so on and so on . . .

Finally, I had to put my mental foot down and say, "Peace be still." I affirmed that we were not alone in a difficult situation trying to figure it out for ourselves. As I did this, I soon began to sense God's presence and power.

As I became still, the phrase "active God – active man" came to mind. I remembered this phrase from a Bible course on the Old Testament I had taken a few years earlier. In a discussion of Abraham, the teacher had explained that, through his spiritual striving to follow God, it was as if he had come to this formulation in his thought.

"Active God – active man." This meant to him that the God that he served was an active living God. Therefore, he was an active servant of this God.

This insight became central to his being and his life's work. It gave him a sense of urgency and agency. He was not a passive worshiper of a mute and immobile idol, an unknowable, capricious, and changeable deity. He was an active, intelligent servant of the living God – a God that made Himself known to man; a God that could be trusted; a God that made promises and kept them.

This knowledge was a source of dynamism as well as stability in his life. It showed itself in his willingness to leave behind his old life and venture forth into new and unfamiliar territory. It was seen in his wise leadership and careful stewardship of his family and tribe.

Mrs. Eddy urged us:

Be active, and, however slow, thy success is sure.... (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 340:23)

I could see the importance of this in my situation. As I affirmed my active agency as God's offspring, the paralyzing fear broke. I could see that God was calling me to action and that my only task was to obey that call.

I remembered then that Mrs. Eddy would often turn to her Bible when seeking God's guidance, sometimes letting it open at random, to see what verse or verses would speak to her.

I decided to do this. So, with the conviction that God was guiding me, I held my Bible and let it fall open. It opened to the Old Testament book of Haggai and this is the verse I read:

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.... (Haggai 2:6)

I was stunned. I couldn't quite believe what I had just read. I sat still for a moment to let it sink in. What did that mean, "yet a little while"? What did it mean, "shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and dry land"?

It was plain that there was a message here for us. I immediately went to the next room where my wife was praying and shared with her what I'd found.

To my surprise, she told me she had opened her Bible too. She had turned to the book of Jeremiah, the 3rd chapter, in which there were references to "backsliding Israel" and "backsliding children."

As we read through the entire chapter, we found that the word "backsliding" appeared six times, the most frequent use of that word anywhere in the Bible. We both felt that God was speaking to us and that the message was clear. This was not a safe place. It was not stable; it was not secure, and we should move out of there as quickly as possible.

From that moment on we felt like we were on a moving walkway. We called a friend who was a Christian Science practitioner and asked her to pray with us while we worked out our next steps.

We then called a church member who we had gotten to know through the local branch church we had recently joined. As a longtime resident of the area, we thought he might have some suggestions about where to find a good place to rent. After we explained the situation, he suggested that we come by his place that evening to discuss things further.

That evening, as we sat in the spacious living room of his lovely home, he explained to us that this house had belonged to his parents and that he had moved into it several years ago to help care for them.

They had both since passed and now he was working to settle their estate and put the house on the market. But his progress had been slow because of his own demanding work schedule and frequent business travels.

He wondered whether we might be open to some arrangement whereby we could rent a room from him and also be house sitters while he was away on business. And, if it worked out, maybe lend a hand in helping with the disposition of the things in the house.

When we responded positively to these ideas, he offered us a suite of rooms at a very reasonable rent. In fact, except for his room, he said we could have free run of the place. At the end of that evening we had a deal. He gave us the keys to the place and we started moving our things in the next day.

This meeting took place on a Sunday evening. By Thursday of that week, we had moved everything out of the trailer into our new home.

This lovely spacious home located in a gracious neighborhood near a beautiful harbor and marina with the university an easy forty-minute commute became our haven for the next three years while I finished my graduate work.

During our time there we became close friends with our landlord, and we were all able to help and support each other in many unforeseen ways.

Six weeks after this move, early one Sunday morning in mid-March, I walked out to the driveway to pick up our copy of the LA Times. There on the frontpage was

a picture of a massive landslide that had occurred the day before at La Conchita. As I studied the photograph, I could see the place where our home had been. It was completely buried.

The little trailer home with its front porch view of the Pacific ocean, the lovely yard with its avocado trees and fragrant jasmine bushes, the sunroom and back patio with a view of the majestic bluffs behind them — all of it, gone.

Heavy winter rains and the irrigation runoff from the new avocado grove at the top of the bluffs had oversaturated the hillside. The toe of the hill behind the town finally gave way and 600,000 tons of mud and debris slid down onto that community. Four houses in all, including ours, had been completely buried and a number of others badly damaged.

It was a relief though to learn that, despite the significant property damage, there had been no loss of life. That was not the case a decade later when the same community experienced an even larger mudslide.

Our sense of gratitude was unbounded. We were both awestruck and humbled by these events. Like the Children of Israel, we felt we had been delivered from a great danger by the hand of God

The passing years only deepened our appreciation for this experience. We took to heart the truth of Paul's words to the Corinthians: "For we walk by faith, not by sight...." (II Corinthians 5:7)

THE LEADING AFFECTION

Mrs. Eddy spoke of Jesus as knowing that "one affection would be supreme in us

and take the lead in our lives.” (SH 201:4)
She had learned that nothing but Christly affection could satisfy the deep hunger and yearning of the human heart.

She spoke of the bright future for humanity under the influence of this Christly affection, under the government of divine Science.

Three places in *Science and Health*, point this out. Let’s take a look at them:

1. Give to it the place in our institutions of learning now occupied by scholastic theology and physiology, and it will eradicate sickness and sin in less time than the old systems, devised for subduing them, have required for self-establishment and propagation. (SH 141:30)
2. If half the attention given to hygiene were given to the study of Christian Science and to the spiritualization of thought, this alone would usher in the millennium. (SH 382:5–8)
3. If men would bring to bear upon the study of the Science of Mind half the faith they bestow upon the so-called pains and pleasures of material sense . . . the whole human family would be redeemed through the merits of Christ . . . For this glorious result Christian Science lights the torch of spiritual understanding. (SH 202:6)

Eradication of sin, sickness, and death, the ushering in of a new millennium, the redemption of the whole human family, and lighting the torch of spiritual understanding! This is prophetic vision of the highest order!

Whatever dark valleys and agonies humanity must pass through on its journey from material bondage to spiritual freedom, the ultimate destination is perfection — perfect spiritual consciousness.

Complete triumph over sin, sickness, and death. Complete dominion over matter. Perfect peace, prosperity, health. Radiant inspiration, joy, and holiness. The calm and bright glory of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

It is heartening to look out over the mental horizon to see this magnificent future. A future, which we can see now in degrees, in which the kingdom of heaven reigns supreme in the hearts of all mankind. A future in which it has become the standard for all thought and action — in which one affection has taken the lead in the lives of all humanity.

PRAYER LIFE

Cultivating and developing the attitudes and qualities in ourselves needed to grasp this spiritual vision requires deep devotion and consecration to the things of the Spirit.

In this regard, this description of Mrs. Eddy’s own prayer life is interesting. One of her biographers, Stephen Gottschalk, in his book *Rolling Away the Stone*, describes it this way:

Eddy’s own prayer life, as well as many admonitions in her writings, tells us much about the priority she placed on making time for communion with God.

Doing this, as she understood it, requires sustained periods of quietness

in which the insistent voice of the world and its materialism is silenced and those who would commune with God wait for his voice to be heard.

A household member at Pleasant View recalled that Eddy spent little time in studying, as such, “but very much time praying.” “He advances most in divine Science,” she wrote, “who meditates most on infinite spiritual substance and intelligence.”

She saw this kind of meditation and disciplined spiritual listening as a deep necessity for the genuine practice of Christian Science and would accept no excuse for her students’ failure to make room for it in their lives. As she put it in a 1901 letter, “God has shown me that the students need spiritualization more than they need Metaphysics.”

(Rolling Away the Stone, Stephen Gottschalk, pp. 109-110)

This supports her own description of what was required to maintain a vital Christian discipleship. In the preface to *Miscellaneous Writings*, she writes:

To preserve a long course of years still and uniform, amid the uniform darkness of storm and cloud and tempest, requires strength from above, — deep draughts from the fount of divine Love. (Mis ix:15–18)

We all need these “deep draughts from the fount of divine Love.” We are, after all, spiritual beings and so require spiritual nourishment. We are all hungry for righteousness, spirituality, holiness. We long for justice, integrity, wisdom. We strive for honesty, depth and meaning in our lives.

UPRIGHT MAN

The human mind doesn’t begin to grasp any of this. It doesn’t understand this spiritual hunger. It attributes man’s yearnings and drives to material causes — to genetics, chemical processes, brain functions, psychological factors, subconscious thought, animal instinct, cultural influences, etc.

In some unfathomable way, these forces are supposed to combine to produce human consciousness and identity.

Past “isms” and “ologies” designed to explain human existence have failed to do so and have fallen by the wayside. Nor have present-day so-called advances in biotechnology, neuroscience, and medicine succeeded. They are, one and all, materialistic in their tendencies and methods and would reduce man solely or primarily to a material organism.

They miss entirely the spiritual and immortal element. The mainspring of man’s identity, the wellspring of his spiritual nature, they leave completely untouched.

Because these inventions rest upon human observation and reasoning they take in only their own material conceptions and ideas which tend to darken and obscure human thought.

This verse from Ecclesiastes captures it well:

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.
(Ecclesiastes 7:29)

God hath made man upright! What a joyful jumping off point from which to explore and explain man.

What a fair port to sail out from onto the seas of life. What beautiful qualities and concepts we carry in our hold. What bounty and treasure we have on board — an imperishable cargo, safe from storms and pirates — to bestow on all who will receive it.

We work only with God-made man, beloved man, honest and intelligent man.

We behold this spiritually endowed man, through our spiritual sense. We see a God-sponsored, God-sustained man, radiant with blessings, unbowed before evil, prolific in good, infinite in scope, powerful in perception and performance. A vibrant, vital, and viable spiritual idea.

There is nothing provisional or transient about this man. Nothing temporary, fleeting, mythical or mystical.

A grand and graceful mental image, a glorious and compelling creation, a beautiful and healthful spiritual being is what we see when we look into the mirror of divine Science. And, looking only there, we can see only that.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

...we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord. (II Corinthians 3: 18)

MANY INVENTIONS

But the “many inventions” of mortal mind all point in an opposite direction. They

reflect and magnify thought forces that would obscure and conceal divine Science.

These so-called forces would substitute for the perfect mirror of divine Science, a cracked and fractured one, that reflects back to us a distorted and disfigured image, a material image wholly unlike Spirit.

These forces would keep us gazing on this false image, bowing down to it, worshipping it, giving it reality and power. They would keep us zigzagging between hope and fear, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain.

As these human inventions multiply and accumulate, they claim to dominate thought and shape it solely after a material model. They attempt to bring it into line with purely material ways of seeing and being. Through mesmeric and hypnotic means, they appear to lead poor humanity down the garden path into darkness and despair.

The call of conscience, the voice of reason, the claims of morality they would disparage, silence, and erase. They would substitute the virtual, the illusive, the fantastic for the actual, the real, the substantial.

These inventions would build their tower of Babel on lies, personal power, soulless matter and would attempt to control us all through fear, mental manipulation and brute force — to keep us configured in matter and confined to it, tolerant of half-truths, satisfied with surface appearances, ignorant of our own nature, worth, and individuality.

And, as if this weren't bad enough, they would demand our full allegiance and undivided attention.

Concerning these tendencies, our Leader wrote:

The despotic tendencies, inherent in mortal mind and always germinating in new forms of tyranny, must be rooted out through the action of the divine Mind. (SH 225:25)

And rooted out they shall be when we counter them with the spiritual thought forces of divine Mind.

Science and Health states:

We must realize the ability of mental might to offset human misconceptions and to replace them with the life which is spiritual, not material. (SH 428:19)

The ability of mental might is found in our silent mental treatments in Christian Science. These treatments go forth into human consciousness like angel messengers bestowing comfort and calm in the troubled places of earth. They go out like roaring lions establishing boundaries and standards for human thought, rebuking vice and stilling the storms of error.

What Paul called the carnal mind, what Mrs. Eddy termed mortal mind, has always claimed to obstruct and oppose human progress and stunt spiritual growth. It has always boasted itself above God claiming to outmaneuver and outperform divine Spirit.

When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, it became a serpent. This solid symbol of authority had behind it a formidable life-force. The God of Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob that Aaron and Moses worshipped and represented, was an invisible and invincible force for good.

In her chapter on Genesis in *Science and Health*, Mrs. Eddy makes an interesting comment on the serpent, one of the few positive references to this much maligned creature. She writes:

The serpent of God's creating is neither subtle nor poisonous, but is a wise idea, charming in its adroitness, for Love's ideas are subject to the Mind which forms them, — the power which changeth the serpent into a staff. (SH 515:5)

Pharaoh's magicians, working with the magnetic forces of the human mind, also threw down their staffs and appeared to duplicate this phenomenon. But, as you'll remember from the story in Exodus, "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." (Exodus 7: 12)

The specious claims of materialism and magic, of spiritualism and hypnotism, were swallowed up by the authentic and authoritative demonstration of divine power.

And so, it continued down the centuries with the compelling proofs of God's presence and power by the prophets and by Christ Jesus and his followers.

In our own time, when the Reformation had cleared the way, and a country had been established in which individual rights and freedom of religion were enshrined and protected, Christian Science appeared continuing this line of light and restoring again to Christianity the lost element of spiritual healing.

And so, this sequence will continue until, like St. John in the book of Revelation, we all rise to the realization that “the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” (Revelation 12:10)

DEEP INTO REALISM

In *Science and Health*, we read:

We must look deep into realism instead of accepting only the outward sense of things. (SH 129:22–24)

You’d be hard put to find another author who advocates and advances such a thorough approach, and who urges on us such wholehearted faith in the words and works of Christ Jesus.

She states:

We must have faith in all the sayings of our Master, though they are not included in the teachings of the schools, and are not understood generally by our ethical instructors. (SH 429:27)

The thought leaders and experts of today, our ethical instructors, are not keeping pace with the things of the Spirit because they are not looking in that direction. They are not acknowledging and utilizing the tremendous power of infinite Love because they do not see it.

We are a tremendous help to the world, a true friend, and a force for good, when we acknowledge and yield to this power.

Yielding to the power of divine Love comes naturally and easily to us when we see ourselves for the spiritual beings that we are. We turn naturally and spontaneously from matter to Spirit as the flowers turn naturally to the sun.

But the default setting of the human mind is to believe what it sees and to take that appearance at face value. And then, from that basis, to explain how everything works and how to solve all the world’s problems.

Mrs. Eddy notes:

Mortal mind produces its own phenomena, and then charges them to something else, — like a kitten glancing into the mirror at itself and thinking it sees another kitten. (SH 220:18)

It would tempt even Christian Scientists to think and work this way. To unwittingly accept as true what the senses report, and then to bring Christian Science to bear on the situation. As we know, this is not the genuine practice of Christian Science. It is instead mental malpractice and always results in disappointment, failure, and defeat.

But we won’t be fooled, we won’t have the wool pulled over our eyes, if we are watchful. We don’t have to let mortal mind’s misdirection play divert our attention away from Spirit.

During those years in California that I mentioned earlier, I had a healing that taught me something about this.

I was nearing the end of my schoolwork but had yet to pass the exam for the language requirement. I had taken the exam the year before but had failed it. And now, in my last year, I had one more chance to pass it or I would not graduate. Although I had worked hard and had taken a preparatory course, I still felt unready for the test.

This began to weigh heavily on me, and I became very fearful. One day I noticed that a small growth on my cheek had begun to enlarge. After a few weeks I began to cover it with a bandage when I was in public.

Finally, I called a Christian Science practitioner and told her about the physical problem and about my worries concerning the upcoming exam.

She affirmed to me the spiritual fact that the only growth going on in God's kingdom was growth in grace. Fear could not dominate my thought because I had the mind of Christ. And, even if fear claimed to be in the driver's seat, perfect Love would cast it out. Perfect Love was all I could feel or think about. It was all that existed.

This was a tremendous help to me. As I prayed on my morning walks around the neighborhood, I began to sense God's love and to see that this was all that mattered.

I also realized that I had been making a god out of this exam. I had been attributing power to human intelligence, a mind apart from God. Whereas the only thing really going on was the one Mind's conscious love for "me and mine and all." (Hymn 207) Exam or no exam, what weighed most in the balance was knowing God's love. From that time on this became my focus and I began to relax and to enjoy my exam preparation.

In about a week or so the facial growth had dissolved, and my face was clear.

Also, during this time, I recalled that I knew someone in Boston who could help me with this preparation. When I called her and explained my situation, she

assured me she had helped many students prepare for this type of exam and that she would be glad to share some tips and strategies about how to approach it.

As I followed her advice, the path just seemed to open up before me. When I took the exam a few months later I passed it without a problem.

Divine Love had blown away the mental miasma of fear and worry that had clouded my thinking. In its place was revealed the light of intelligent Love at work in my life.

DIVING DEEP

Not long after this, during the spring break, my wife and I took a trip up the California coast to visit some friends. On our way north we passed several beaches just south of Point Reyes, not far from San Simeon, that are famous for their colonies of elephant seals.

During the spring mating season, you can see hundreds of these strange and remarkable creatures populating the beaches.

The huge bulls, some of them weighing in at 5,000 pounds, guarding their harems and protecting their territory; the females caring for their young; the adolescents playing along the shoreline; and hundreds of them just lying on the beach flapping sand up onto their backs with their flippers to keep cool in the hot sun.

Reading through the informational displays in the lookout area I learned that these creatures were one of the deepest diving mammals in the ocean. An average dive was between one and two thousand feet.

By comparison the limit for most recreational scuba divers is 130 feet.

Their thick layers of blubber protected them from the cold and the intense pressure at such depths and their large eyes and stiff whiskers allowed them to detect food in the dark. They were also able to store oxygen in various parts of their bodies which allowed them to stay under water for up to half an hour at a time.

At these great depths, out of the reach of predators, they found the small crayfish, shrimp, octopus and other small fish that made up their diet.

Almost 80% of their lives were spent below the ocean surface. They were designed to live and thrive at these great depths.

Now, I know this is more than you probably need or want to know about elephant seals, but, for me, there was valuable food for thought in this information.

Like these great creatures, I reasoned, spiritual man is designed to live at great spiritual depths. Depths of understanding, insight, inspiration, compassion, humility, happiness.

Infinite spiritual consciousness is our feeding ground and prayer is our oxygen that allows us to stay below the surface appearances. Here, safe from predators, we find abundant nourishment to satisfy our spiritual longings. It was a lesson that I pondered much and took to heart after my recent healing.

MEAT NOT MILK

The book of Hebrews has this to say about spiritual nourishment:

For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13, 14)

That's the kind of exercise that we need and want. Having our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This involves "trying the spirits," separating the "sheep from the goats," dividing the "tares from the wheat," distinguishing between sense and Soul. This is the exercise of our God-given judgment and spiritual discrimination and discernment.

Mrs. Eddy tells us:

Spiritual sense is a conscious, constant capacity to understand God. (SH 209:31–32)

This spiritual discernment is at our beck and call. It is our lifeline and life preserver. It enables us to take those "deep draughts from the fount of divine Love" — to drink in Truth, to think clearly, act wisely, and love unfailingly.

This spiritual sense is what made Jesus' responses to seemingly hopeless and intractable human situations so stunning and impactful. It explains why his healings and teachings left an indelible mark on human thought and reshaped human history.

The stories are so familiar to us, that it is sometimes good to stop and appreciate just how "in the moment" his responses were. Jesus responded on the spot, in

real time, often under intense pressure, with just a few words dissipating danger, disarming evil, and healing disease.

Let's look at just a few instances:

- Dispersing the crowd who had gathered to stone the woman taken in adultery with the simple statement: "He that is without sin among you let him cast the first stone at her." (John 8: 7)
- Responding to the trick question: "... Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" with the statement: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:17, 21)
This silenced the duplicitous and insincere questioner.
- Or the healing of the paralytic man who was lowered down to him through the roof of the house. Jesus' quick discernment of the Pharisee's critical thought set the stage for an instantaneous healing and a lesson on forgiveness of sin.
- Or, at the wedding feast in Cana, averting a social disaster by changing the water into wine showing that unforeseen circumstances or lack of planning could not rob that blessed event of its inspiration.

This was the mind of Christ made manifest. Not for a great show or exhibition but as a benign influence to harmonize and heal.

LISTENING TO LOVE

I had an experience in my Christian Science nursing practice here at Lynn House some years ago in which I had to exercise spiritual sense.

A patient had been admitted who appeared to have a broken hip. Soon after her arrival she decided she wanted to get an X-ray and a doctor's opinion. We arranged for this, and I accompanied her to the appointment.

After the doctor had examined the X-rays, he met with us in his office and told the patient that this was a very serious situation that required immediate attention. He recommended that she undergo an operation which he said he could schedule for the next day.

While the doctor was speaking, I was praying and listening for God's guidance. In my capacity as a Christian Science nurse, I was there to support this dear patient however I could. I mentally affirmed that God's law of love was governing all of us harmoniously and intelligently.

By the time the doctor had finished his explanations, the patient was bent over in her wheelchair like a wilted flower. The doctor then left us alone for a few minutes.

I crouched down beside her, looked into her face, and reminded her that what she had just heard was not law. It was educated human opinion but had no relation to God's spiritual law that was sustaining her right here and now.

Spiritual law was all we were concerned with. God's law of love was producing only good and had complete control over everyone and everything.

I also reminded her that, regardless of what she decided to do, God's love was with her, protecting and guiding her. She nodded in agreement and straightened up

in her wheelchair. She then looked right at me and said, "I know this."

When the doctor come back in, she thanked him but told him that she did not want him to schedule the operation at this time. She instead wanted to go back to Lynn House.

He was not happy about this. In fact, he was very concerned and skeptical about this decision but, after seeing she had made up her mind, told her that he wanted to see her again in two weeks. She agreed, and we returned to Lynn House.

She made tremendous progress during those two weeks. When we returned for her second appointment, the doctor took new X-rays. While we were waiting for him, I happened to be sitting outside the small room where he was examining them. I could see him looking very closely at the negatives for a long time.

When he returned, he said to the patient that whatever it was that she was doing she should keep doing it. The break had mended beautifully, and she would have no trouble with it.

You can imagine our joy on the way home from this visit. We had seen proof positive of God's law in action.

And, I had learned a valuable lesson as a Christian Science nurse. Supporting that situation with silent prayer and then being a witness to the truth when it was called for, had brought the needed focus on spiritual reality. This was not interfering with the patient's choice, but simply making sure that the spiritual facts of the situation were being represented.

It wasn't long afterwards that this patient walked out of Lynn House completely healed. What a joyful day that was for all of us.

GAINING THE VISION

In our brief time together this morning, we have looked at how the things of the Spirit direct and enhance human life. How we must cultivate and nourish a deep prayer life.

We've touched on the various ways that evil, or the carnal mind, would try to block or stop our spiritual progress. And we've seen how listening and responding to Love's guidance delivers from danger, brings healing, and helps us support and protect those entrusted to our care.

Spiritual consciousness is indigenous to all of us. It is indeed right at hand. To realize and demonstrate this is the most important and precious thing to us and is vital to our quality of life and human progress.

Our Leader says:

When the human mind is advancing above itself towards the Divine, it is subjugating the body, subduing matter, taking steps outward and upwards. This upward tendency of humanity will finally gain the scope of Jacob's vision, and rise from sense to Soul, from earth to heaven. (*Message to The Mother Church for 1902*, p. 10:12)

Rest assured that we can all gain this vision, and experience first-hand, the transforming grace and transfiguring love that comes with devotion to "the things of the Spirit."

A M E N

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