

## **OUR CHRISTLY MISSION: BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE**

*Talk by Ralph Byron Copper, C.S.  
for the annual meeting of Daystar, Davie, Florida  
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I happily accepted Daystar's invitation to come to Florida to share with you an adaptation of a commencement talk I gave for a Christian Science nurses' graduation ceremony at Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association in Boston last November. Repeating the truth of what I said then is not redundant; it's reaffirming. The Lord's Prayer, said from the heart, loses none of its healing efficacy by devout repetition. Eternal truths travel well over time and space because divine verities are always applicable to every need and at every moment and in every place.

Although our meeting today is not a graduation ceremony, we've come to honor Daystar, both in person and via Zoom, in the same spirit that motivated fellow Christian Scientists to join together in watching a broadcast of the graduation ceremony at the Benevolent Association—namely, the Christly spirit that champions the sacred work of Christian Science nursing in its support of metaphysical healing.

As to the requirements and rewards of this sacred work, Daystar's dedicated workers have no need for me to discourse on what they already know. Their firsthand knowledge of the spiritual essence, the moral ethics, and the practical skills requisite in Christian Science nursing far surpasses anything I could possibly say on the subject. For me to try and do so would be to gild the lily!

Instead a theme for this talk first emerged as I contemplated how Christian Science nurses the world over have individually heard and answered a divine calling in their lives by way of each one's own spiritual receptivity and unselfed love. And in so doing each one has united in common cause with their like-minded co-workers—proving

thereby that when it comes to right action, an individual performance and a joint endeavor harmonize in the design of God. Hence the title of this talk: “OUR CHRISTLY MISSION: BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE.”

The title derives from what the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, writes in the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Referring to the glorious life-example of the master Christian, Christ Jesus, she says: “His mission was both individual and collective. He did life’s work aright not only in justice to himself, but in mercy to mortals,—to show them how to do theirs, but not to do it for them nor to relieve them of a single responsibility.”<sup>1</sup>

### **“To keep the faith individually and collectively”**

By definition, the biblical injunction “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”<sup>2</sup> means that no one else can do it for you. But, thankfully, we all can help one another along the way. Mrs. Eddy assures us: “Of two things fate cannot rob us; namely, of choosing the best, and of helping others thus to choose.”<sup>3</sup> A math teacher, for example, can assist a third-grader in learning the multiplication tables, but it is the student, not the teacher, who must successfully pass the school exams.

In a letter to the members of her Church Mrs. Eddy emphasized the need “to keep the faith individually and collectively.”<sup>4</sup> The Leader of Christian Science knew that the daily endeavor of every Mother Church member to work out his or her own salvation in accord with the teachings of Science is what enables the membership at large to keep the faith collectively. In a sermon to her followers Mrs. Eddy used the imperative form of speech to declare: “Know, then, that you possess sovereign power to think and act rightly, and that nothing can dispossess you of this heritage and trespass on Love.”<sup>5</sup>

Let’s face it: a person can be of no earthly good to others if he isn’t first good himself! A collective endeavor by Christian Scientists

bears fruit in the measure that we each partake of the same singular Mind which was also in Christ Jesus. Whenever two or three gather together to worship and work in the name and nature of Christ, the essence of this coming together is not a mathematical act of addition but the metaphysical action of God's law of adhesion, cohesion, and attraction, maintaining the spiritual oneness of creation. It is this law that has brought us together today in the unifying spirit of Christ. The Apostle Paul described the operation of God's law this way: "All things work together for good to them that love God."<sup>6</sup>

A sweet story illustrates how mutual good comes to all those who individually express the same motivating spirit. A Christian traveler arrived at a little Swiss village where old traditions had been preserved since the sixteenth century. Toward evening the church bell rang. Soon worshippers were heading toward a dark edifice, bearing a little bronze lamp of very old design. The traveler asked why each person carried a lamp. A villager replied: "We have no other way of lighting our church. In the year 1550, when it was built, the [lord] of the village decided that each should carry his lamp. . . . We light [the lamps] at a torch as we enter. . . . [O]ur church is known as the church of the lighted lamps. Each one comes to make it more bright, for he knows that if he stays at home, the church will be the darker for it and the service more somber. The pastor must have before him every lighted lamp and each dark spot speaks of one absent."<sup>7</sup> (That concludes the story but not its import—which, I dare say, puts the question of our church attendance in a whole new light!)

If you look behind the organization of any enterprise—the organization of any religious, business, academic, or political institution—you'll find individuals at work. Look within each individual, and you'll find conscious thought. Examine conscious thought, and you'll find either spiritually right or mortally wrong impulsion. Validate the right and eliminate the wrong in conscious thought, and you'll find only one motivating power for good at work

in the individual and therefore in the institution—one supreme, governing consciousness that is the universal Mind of one and all.

But remember, whatever good an institution does is because individuals in the institution are doing it. And individuals are doing it because God's Christ is empowering each one to do it. The primal worth of every entity in God's creation is sacrosanct. That's because everything God knows and does is an act of individuality and must be understood as such. The one infinite Mind individualizes all its thoughts, giving to each idea distinct identity and purpose. All that our Father-Mother does by empowering us as His spiritual offspring, He does through us as His individualized expressions. In Biblical terms, "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."<sup>8</sup>

To keep the faith collectively doesn't result in a mass consciousness or an aggregate understanding that's superior in knowledge and power to what any individual is able to know and do. If it were otherwise, if a person's salvation were part of a group redemption plan, contingent on the combined right knowing of others—instead of on one's own spiritual understanding—our dear Master's ascension would still be on hold, waiting for the rest of us to catch up!

Eventually all mankind must learn that no group of people—no government bureaucracy, no business conglomerate, no academic think tank, no ecclesiastical body, no medical complex—possesses a greater measure of truth or power than does the individual who thinks and acts in obedience to God.

A collective endeavor, spiritually impelled, represents individual right thought and action expressed without limit—in other words, infinitely expressed. If I asked everyone in this room right now (and all of you Zoomers!) to mentally add 2+2—and assuming we all correctly remember what we were taught in first grade about the decimal system!—our collective answer of "4" would not be *more* right or represent a *greater* truth than any individual answer of "4."

Rather it would be a sign of unity, oneness—the individualized yet diversified expression of the same mathematical verity. In divine metaphysics, not only is God, as universal Truth, eternally “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever”<sup>9</sup>; He is equally the same for everyone everywhere.

### **“To individualize infinite power”**

Mrs. Eddy’s message at the dedication of the Original Edifice of The Mother Church in 1895 reminded her assembled followers, who had gathered in Boston by the thousands on that historic day, that every individual has essential value and empowerment. She said: “Is not a man metaphysically and mathematically number one, a unit, and therefore whole number, governed and protected by his divine Principle, God? You have simply to preserve a scientific, positive sense of unity with your divine source, and daily demonstrate this. Then you will find that one is as important a factor as duodecillions in being and doing right, and thus demonstrating deific Principle.”<sup>10</sup>

That’s a mighty good truth to remember when the troubles of this world would storm in like a flood. Never doubt that you have what it takes to turn the tide. What you have is the truth. And what it takes is for you to know the truth. The Bible says that just one poor wise man was able to deliver his besieged city from its foes.<sup>11</sup> Although outnumbered by the enemy, the city was not outmanned, thanks to one spiritually wise individual!

To know yourself as metaphysically and mathematically one, a *whole* number—not a fraction or a fragment, not a partial reflection or an incomplete expression, not an insignificant idea, but a perfect unit, entire in its being—is, in Mrs. Eddy’s words, “to individualize infinite power.”<sup>12</sup>

An item from *The Boston Globe* wonderfully illustrates the infinite capacity for good that is divinely bestowed on each individual. The story itself is some forty years old; but the truth it represents is timeless. It shows how the exercise of our God-given

dominion enables each of us to be the master of circumstances—and how others are blessed in the process.

Here's what the *Globe* reported: “Arnold Lemerand of Southgate, Mich., is 56 years old and had a heart attack six years ago. As a result he doesn't like to lift heavy objects. But this week when Philip Toth, age 5, became trapped under a cast iron pipe near a playground, Lemerand easily lifted the pipe and saved the child's life. As he lifted it, Lemerand thought to himself that the pipe must weigh 300-400 pounds. It actually weighed 1800 pounds, almost a ton. Afterward, Lemerand, his grown sons, reporters and police tried to lift the pipe but couldn't.”<sup>13</sup>

This remarkable experience exemplifies what our Leader refers to as “the individual, stupendous Godlike agency of man.”<sup>14</sup> What to a material way of thinking appears suprahuman or miraculous is divinely natural to spiritual understanding. And when human judgment yields to divine wisdom, the so-called “impossible” becomes possible. Or as Mrs. Eddy puts it: “. . . whatever is possible to God, is possible to man *as God's reflection*.”<sup>15</sup>

The suppositional opposite of this spiritual fact is what the Bible calls “the carnal mind,” or “enmity against God”—that which would mentally change “the truth of God into a lie.”<sup>17</sup> This lie argues that infinite creative Spirit, the Father and Mother of us all, is the originator of Spirit's antipode, finite matter, out of which emanates a corporeal conception of you and me as aging, fallible beings, subject to various ailments and misfortunes. This inverted image of our true individuality fosters a limited way of thinking and living that's antithetical to our mission of helping and healing ourselves and others through God's spiritual means.

A fruitful life of good works is ours to the extent that we daily disassociate ourselves from a false carnal mentality with its matter-based conception of life and daily align ourselves with what Jesus knew and demonstrated to be true—that “the spirit . . . quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”<sup>18</sup>

Like the allegorical serpent in the garden of Eden, the tempter in our lives whispers its insinuations with a forked tongue. It argues that the woes of a material world are too numerous and intractable for an individual Christian Scientist to overcome them in his or her daily life through prayer, so why try. The tempter doubles down on this falsity by further arguing that collectively Christian Scientists are too few to make a positive difference in the world, so what's the point.

This negative way of thinking—which Mrs. Eddy dismissively refers to as “Satan’s reasoning”<sup>19</sup> and which Jesus denounced as “a liar, and the father of it”<sup>20</sup>—is a mental booby trap, a diabolical catch-22, which would, if it could, immobilize our best efforts at well doing. Fortunately for the advancement of early Christianity St. Paul was undaunted in his missionary work by the argument that the manifold tribulations of this world are too overwhelming for anyone to successfully “fight the good fight of faith.”<sup>21</sup> The apostle declared his defiance of a “carnal mind view” of life and manhood. He said: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”<sup>22</sup> This triumphant credo is a proclamation of man’s indomitable spiritual individuality.

The activity of Christ, Truth, in your life represents the dawning in your own consciousness of the real man—of how God has made you perfect as His incorporeal likeness. This is what Paul meant in his epistles when he spoke of “Christ in you, the hope of glory”<sup>23</sup> and when he said, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.”<sup>24</sup>

As Jesus supremely demonstrated in his own life, Christ is the true idea of man’s spiritual sonship and at-one-ment with God. *Science and Health* affirms that “Christ presents the indestructible man, whom Spirit creates, constitutes, and governs.”<sup>25</sup> This presentation of the spiritual idea, or ideal man, doesn’t occur outside your consciousness. The coming of God’s Christ stands for none other than your own conscious appearing as the man of God’s immortal creating.

All this reminds me of an experience I often tell on myself. One day while walking down Newbury Street in Boston, I saw a fellow coming toward me who looked mighty familiar, but I couldn't place him right off. Then on a second, closer look, I saw that I was viewing myself! In the middle of the sidewalk was a store sign with a mirror as big as life. For half a block I had been walking toward my reflected self in the mirror!

From this “close encounter of the most personal kind” I learned an important lesson in Christian Science. When we glimpse something of the ever-present Christ appearing to us in consciousness—that is, when we perceive in our prayers, and demonstrate as true in our lives, some spiritual fact of God's man (that man is pure, healthy, happy, obedient, loved)—we are at that moment entertaining the true idea and individuality of who we really are as God's image and likeness. We are experiencing, in that degree, the truth stated in *Science and Health* that “man's birthright of sole allegiance to his Maker asserts itself.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Man, “including all right ideas”**

No one can express his or her true individuality in self-centered isolation. That's because, as Mrs. Eddy explains, man is not “an isolated, solitary idea, for he represents infinite Mind, the sum of all substance.”<sup>27</sup> This divine sum that man represents—this all-knowing, universal Mind, this one infinite Ego, which constitutes the only I, or Us—includes within itself the identity of every idea, an inclusion that man reflects. Or as *Science and Health* says of man: “He is the compound idea of God, including all right ideas . . . .”<sup>28</sup>

The metaphysical concept of inclusion—either in its primary meaning of what God includes or in its secondary sense of what man, by reflection, includes—does not signify absorption or amalgamation of individuality. If such a fusion were possible, the result would be an unholy mess, an identity crisis of mass disorientation! God's thoughts would be an indistinguishable blur, lacking specificity and focus.

The distinctness of each identity included in divine Mind was the subject of a 1954 editorial in the *Christian Science Sentinel* by Helen Wood Bauman, who as the longest serving editor in the history of our religious periodicals is a metaphysical thinker worthy of our continued attention. She explained: “. . . while one can say, ‘I include the rose,’ he can never say, ‘I am the rose.’ The rose’s identity is maintained by and is in Mind, and man reflects it because he reflects the Mind which includes all ideas.”<sup>29</sup>

Even as I speak, your consciousness is including me, or how else could you know what I’m saying right now? But that doesn’t mean you are me. Nor would you want to be. You’re having too much fun being yourself! All of us can joyfully affirm, as did St. Paul: “By the grace of God I am what I am.”<sup>30</sup> This truth applies to everyone throughout the world; it is a universal antidote to racism, sexism, ageism, authoritarianism, elitism—to whatever would belittle or deny the spiritual worth of any individual.

The good you and I manifest is forever identified with us and as us. It cannot be effaced or detached from who we are. What God knows of each one of us by name as His much-loved and cherished idea, He causes to be shared, by reflection, with all His offspring. This sharing or reflecting is what enables you and me to benefit and learn from one another. It’s how and why all God’s children get along so well together as one harmonious family, wherein rivalry, envy, and inequity are nonexistent. No child of God is inferior or superior to any other child of God. According to the Bible, we are all “*joint-heirs* with Christ.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Today’s faithful few**

*Science and Health* explains that “man is the family name for all ideas,—the sons and daughters of God.”<sup>32</sup> So in Science, when we speak of man in the plural—such as “the sons and daughters of God,” or “God’s children,” or “His ideas”—we’re not referring to the *number* of man but to the infinite *diversity* of man as the family name for all God’s offspring, the male and female of His creating. God’s

thoughts are not carbon copies of one another. Every idea in the one omniscient Mind is an original concept, unique in expression.

The diversity of what God knows can't be quantified numerically because, as the Bible says of God, "his understanding is infinite."<sup>33</sup> God's infinite ideas reflect, qualitatively, the allness—not the mathematical total—of divine Mind's knowing. The immeasurable things of Spirit are incalculable by human reckoning. So there's no point counting!

Not only is it pointless for us to do so, our Leader specifically proscribes the doing of it. In 1908, at a time of rapid growth within the Christian Science movement, a new Church By-Law was adopted that prohibited members from reporting for publication membership figures of The Mother Church and its branches, thereby putting a stop to what had been a longstanding practice in the Church of publishing a list of the names and admission dates of every member of the Church. Mrs. Eddy explained the wisdom behind this Rule. "According to Scripture," she said, "they shall turn away from personality and numbering the people."<sup>34</sup>

This By-Law proscription is actually a protection. Like a two-edged sword, it saves church members from the delusion of worldly success when membership figures go up; and it defends members from defeatist thoughts when the numbers go down. The Bible account of Gideon, in which Israelite forces were pared down from 32,000 to 300 before they routed the vastly superior forces of their enemy, is a constant reminder to us that reliance on God—rather than on the size of things, big or small—is what gains the victory.<sup>35</sup>

Let's always remember, with everlasting gratitude, that the Cause of Christian Science began with just one adherent—Mary Baker Eddy. This brave woman, who stood alone with God to face a resistant world, would later write from her own heart's experience: "You may know when first Truth leads by the fewness and faithfulness of its followers."<sup>36</sup>

If “fewness” is today the apparent lot of Christian Scientists, it is “faithfulness” that keeps us strong and fit for God’s service. Fidelity to Mrs. Eddy’s divinely inspired discovery makes us equal to the times we live in. As in the days of Jesus’ early followers, the strength of Christian fellowship is not in numbers but in a mutual love of the truth—and in a faithful practice of that truth.

What our Leader knew to be true, we her followers are called on to prove—namely, that “a small group of wise thinkers is better than a wilderness of dullards and stronger than the might of empires.”<sup>37</sup> What God requires of each of us is that we be one of the wise thinkers—and not one of the dullards!

A noted Christian Science teacher, lecturer, and editor by the name of Ralph Wagers said that after he joined a Christian Science society with few members, he was bothered by the numerically limited scope of his church work. Then he heard a story that helped him to appreciate the broad reach of his small society as a branch of The Mother Church. “A lumberman owned a short railroad over which he transported logs. At a railroad meeting someone asked him how large a railroad he had. With a twinkle in his eyes, he answered that it was not as long as some others *but it was just as wide!*”<sup>38</sup>

I often think of that story when reading Mrs. Eddy’s statement in the *Manual of The Mother Church*: “God requires our whole heart, and He supplies within the wide channels of The Mother Church dutiful and sufficient occupation for all its members.”<sup>39</sup> Perhaps someone listening today is prayerfully considering a life-mission of Christian Science nursing. If so, this *Manual* statement is tailored-made to fit you to a T! It is your Leader’s express invitation (her earnest request, actually) for you to join the ranks “within the wide channels of The Mother Church.” And make no mistake, the office of Christian Science nurse, like every other designated activity in the *Manual*, is integral to the divinely inspired design of Mary Baker Eddy’s Church with its “wide channels” of serving our fellowman.

Although fewness of followers is the sign of when *first* Truth leads, another sign will be given when the following of Truth's leading reaches its zenith. Then "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."<sup>40</sup> The tiny mustard seed holds within itself the promise of its eventual manifestation as a great tree in whose branches all the fowls of the air—all the hopes and aspirations of humanity—will find their permanent home. Like that tiny mustard seed, the Cause of Christian Science is destined to grow and eventually transform the whole world of human thought. Mrs. Eddy foresaw and foretold what the future holds. "It is undoubtedly true," she said, "that Christian Science is destined to become the one and the only religion and therapeutics on this planet."<sup>41</sup>

Such a prospect may seem light years away, but that makes the ultimate outcome no less certain. Even if our Cause were at its nadir—even if those who worship God "in spirit and in truth"<sup>42</sup> were but a remnant—even so, the essence of immortal Truth would, in the ripeness of time and the maturing of thought, revive the dry bones and bring about a spiritual rebirth: life consecrated anew to the divine metaphysics of the Christ Science.

In her poem "Satisfied" Mrs. Eddy quiets dispiriting concern for the future—whether for that of ourselves, our Church, our country, or our planet—by affirming what she elsewhere calls "faith in God's disposal of events."<sup>43</sup> Her poem voices the promise:

And of these stones, or tyrants' thrones,  
God able is  
To raise up seed—in thought and deed—  
To faithful His.<sup>44</sup>

In order for this promising scenario to be fully realized in our lives and in our world, there is work to be done—the daily, hourly, moment-by-moment work of fidelity! To forward that work is at the heart of today's meeting. It falls to each generation of Christian Scientists, under God's direction, to water with their prayers, and to

nurture with their lives of dedicated service to others, the good seed Mrs. Eddy has planted in the soil of human consciousness—and to root out the noxious weeds of materialism, sensualism, and egotism that would choke the spiritual seed’s natural growth and development.

In the broad sweep of history the Christian Science movement is still in its early stage. Mrs. Eddy has acknowledged that “centuries will intervene before the statement of the inexhaustible topics of Science and Health is sufficiently understood to be fully demonstrated.”<sup>45</sup> But for you and me to be convinced now of the Biblical truth that God’s word guarantees “the end from the beginning”<sup>46</sup> gives purpose and power to our current endeavors.

Our daily strivings to grow Spiritward are not in vain. A mountain trail that’s well-trodden is one that won’t be overgrown and lost sight of. Every step we take, individually and collectively, on the straight and narrow path of Truth impacts both the present moment and the future. Posterity will bless today’s faithful few for their dedicated efforts in climbing the hill of Science, step by step, thereby helping to prepare the way *by preserving the way* for future generations to follow.

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Good news! We’ve passed the mid-point of this talk—and that’s cause for great rejoicing! So let’s have a sing-along of Hymn No. 18. The truths voiced in this hymn had special meaning for our Leader. In her own hymnal book she wrote of this hymn: “Sing often in The Mother Church.”<sup>47</sup> Although Mrs. Eddy did not make this statement an official requirement, the spirit of her judgment is ours to cherish and imbibe.

To me, it’s as if the Founder of Christian Science were saying: “In the coming decades and centuries, whatever difficulties may test the faith of Christian Scientists, individually and collectively—whatever challenges may confront The Mother Church from within

or from without—members of my Church will be able to meet the demands of their day if they live, as well as sing, the truths expressed in this hymn.”

With that in mind, let’s sing “with the spirit, and . . . with the understanding also”<sup>48</sup>—taking heed to what this message of truth requires of us today as members of Mrs. Eddy’s Church. I’ll read the first verse:

Be firm and be faithful; desert not the right;  
The brave become bolder the darker the night.  
Then up and be doing, though cowards may fail;  
Thy duty pursuing, dare all and prevail.

### **Praying for “more laborers of the excellent sort”**

What a heavenly choir! Your harmonious performance beautifully illustrates a key metaphysical point. Collaboration among Christian Scientists does not submerge the individual in the collective. Nor does it cause one to compromise one’s conscience in the guise of going along to get along. A pioneer of Truth retains his inalienable rights and his essential character all the while he works with others to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth. “Unity,” Mrs. Eddy says, “is spiritual cooperation, heart to heart, the bond of blessedness . . . .”<sup>49</sup>

The Bible is replete with examples of God-impelled cooperation among like-minded individuals. When Moses’ hands grew heavy holding the rod of God during the daylong battle with the forces of Amalek, we’re told that “Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”<sup>50</sup> And the victory was won.

Mind you, Moses did not hand over the rod to Aaron and Hur for them to hold. He did what was his divinely impelled task to do; but he accepted their help in supporting his efforts at right doing. Together all three men were in God’s service, fulfilling His purpose in the performance of their individual and collective mission.

Today's meeting has a profound purpose. It's meant to honor the work of Daystar's staff of modern-day "hand upholders" and "spiritual cooperators." It represents answered prayer. Jesus told his disciples: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."<sup>51</sup>

Our Master never settled for lack of any kind. He always demonstrated abundance of every kind. In his prayerful hands five loaves and two fishes were sufficient to feed five thousand men. That feast, however, was not a stag affair! Countless women and children, who being just as hungry as their menfolk, were equally well fed by the Master.<sup>52</sup>

So what does it mean to pray for more laborers in the Father's vineyard? Do we simply want more physical bodies to fill the church pews? Or more monied people to help pay the bills? If so, we "ask amiss."<sup>53</sup> As far back as 1914, a writer for *The Christian Science Journal*, who would become a distinguished Christian Science teacher by the name of Louise Wheatley Cook Hovnanian, made this telling comment: "Some one has defined the need of the moment as 'not more Christian Scientists, but better ones.'"<sup>54</sup>

Underscoring this point with words that echo the Master, Mrs. Eddy counseled her followers: ". . . pray ye therefore the God of harvest to send forth more laborers of the excellent sort, and garner the supplies for a world."<sup>55</sup>

Clearly the need for more laborers in the Father's harvest field—for those who will do His will, express His nature—is first and foremost a prayerful call for more *quality of excellence* in workers. The moral and spiritual characteristics of purity, courage, obedience, love, unselfishness, honesty—such attributes never run down or run out through daily expression. That's because these qualities of excellence partake of the divine nature of inexhaustible Life. They multiply in us, not by numerical increase, but by man's continuous reflection of God's infinite capacities.

Hence Mrs. Eddy's affirmation: "We are all capable of more than we do."<sup>56</sup> That statement packs a wallop! I must admit, however, in the spirit of full disclosure, that in those moments when I'm tempted to think of myself as a solitary, overworked mortal with a long laundry list of things to do and a finite amount of time to get things done, the last thing I want, when I'm in such a foul mood, is to be told that I could be doing more! But I'm happy to report that Mrs. Eddy's statement emboldens me when I identify myself with what our textbook calls "the spiritual man" and "the infinite range of his thought."<sup>57</sup> Then I'm eager to redouble my efforts—even quadruple them!

The essence of what we do is what we think. So in everything we do, we can always express more endurance, more patience, more integrity, more humility, more tenderness, more wisdom—more of every Godlike quality, flowing freely from a limitless source. Isn't this what we all should be praying to see "more" of in the Christian Science movement, starting with ourselves and embracing all the brethren?

With this goal in mind, a Scientist who has served for multiple years as an active branch church member, or as a dedicated Christian Science nurse or practitioner, can draw on an infinite reservoir of fresh joy, ever-deeper understanding, endless energy. A lifelong service of giving to others never reaches a point of giving up. Let me repeat that: *A lifelong service of giving to others never reaches a point of giving up.* That's because the merciful compassions of the Lord "are new every morning."<sup>58</sup>

The church member who feels within his heart each morning the regenerating spirit of Christ—who is progressively putting off the obsolete sense of a mortal self and putting on the original sense of God's spiritually perfect man—that member will not be stuck on a static plane of thought from one day to the next. Each time he enters his church to worship God or begins to perform his church duties in the service of his Maker and his fellowman—each time he does so, he is doing it, in a very real sense, as a *new* member (or should I say,

as a *renewed* member?). Each day he's showing forth *more* of his true nature as God's infinite manifestation, expressing the perpetual impetus of divine Life. And in this way our Leader's promise is being repeatedly fulfilled: ". . . rest assured you can never lack God's outstretched arm so long as you are in His service."<sup>59</sup>

### **Serving others by giving of yourself**

Toward the completion of her life-mission Mrs. Eddy captured in a few words the essence of what it means to serve as a member of her Church. She's recorded as saying: "Organization . . . is simply a matter of doing things by working together."<sup>60</sup>

"Doing things by working together" characterizes the unselfish spirit of Christ. "I am among you as he that serveth,"<sup>61</sup> Jesus said. His words testify to an unparalleled life-mission that was both individual (as he indicated by saying "I am") and collective (as he indicated by saying "among you").

Our Master was no recluse. He was among the people. He fed them. He taught them. He healed them. Yes, he rebuked them when that was needed, but he also comforted them. He loved them all—including those who despised him. And, most notably, he founded a society, a church, to spread the Gospel so that others could know what he knew and do the works he did. His unselfish sharing of truth and love was bestowed on both friend and foe, neighbor and stranger, Jew and Gentile.

No collective endeavor embodies the Christ-spirit of service more than does that institution which represents the spiritual idea known as Church. We'll never be able to meet the needs of humanity outside the realm of Church. That's because there is no "outside" to the infinite nature of the temple of God, which Mrs. Eddy defines as "the structure of Truth and Love; whatever rests upon and proceeds from divine Principle."<sup>62</sup>

This deific Principle, which is impartial and universal in its embrace of one and all, causes a follower of Christ to share freely

with others his or her God-bestowed understanding and love of truth. In this way God’s blessing for one becomes a mutual blessing for all through a spirit of divine service—expressed as unselfish giving and grateful receiving. The Bible instructs us “to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”<sup>63</sup>

It’s impossible for you and me to work out our own salvation if we’re indifferent to the welfare of our fellow beings. That’s because the perfect consciousness we seek to have—the Mind which was also in Christ Jesus—doesn’t permit a selfish motive to exist within it. The generous spirit expressed in Jesus’ directive to his disciples—“Freely ye have received, freely give”<sup>64</sup>—is the same spirit expressed in *Science and Health*, which says: “Happiness is spiritual, born of Truth and Love. It is unselfish; therefore it cannot exist alone, but requires all mankind to share it.”<sup>65</sup>

For you to impart to others comfort and care, happiness and love, in both thought and deed, takes nothing from you. To share your happiness with another doesn’t diminish your own joy but heightens it. We learn from our textbook that “giving does not impoverish us in the service of our Maker, neither does withholding enrich us.”<sup>66</sup>

St. Peter told a crippled beggar, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee.”<sup>67</sup> His declaration voices a divine law of universal supply for one and all. Peter *retained* the very thing he *gave* to the man he healed—namely, a spiritual understanding of that man’s true nature as God’s offspring.

Like Peter, you and I are charged by the Master to share with others what we possess—which is the truth of being. Mrs. Eddy expected her followers to do no less. She entreats us: “. . . may each member of this church rise above the oft-repeated inquiry, What am I? to the scientific response: I am able to impart truth, health, and happiness, and this is my rock of salvation and my reason for existing.”<sup>68</sup>

Unlike the economic world of finite matter, where supply and demand are in a constant state of flux (as the stock market keeps reminding us!), the economy of Spirit is in perfect equilibrium. The spiritual expression of giving, seen in our helping others to know and experience the reality of man's wholeness and holiness, never requires us to *give away* anything good or to deplete our own divine inheritance of health, wealth, and integrity. That's because our expression of divine goodness is individually imparted and received *as thought*, not personally exchanged as matter.

For instance, the act of giving someone a dollar bill is only as generous and beneficial as the motive is unselfish and wise. Devoid of a spiritual motive, any sharing of money is merely a redistribution of limitation, the circulation of a finite conception of substance. To say this is simply to admit the obvious—namely, that the person who is given a dollar bill has a buck more, while the person who gives it is minus a hundred pennies.

Anything of this world that can be divided and given away materially, or hoarded selfishly and kept unused, will never be enough to meet the needs of everyone everywhere. Some poor soul is sure to get shortchanged and miss out on the last piece of the pie! In the pseudo material world of finite resources, “ye have the poor always with you,”<sup>69</sup> Jesus said. But in the real world of divine Spirit, where the coin of the realm is mental and substance exists as an indivisible whole, infinite good is possessed by one and all equally and universally. Knowing this, Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”<sup>70</sup>

A Christly desire to share with others an understanding of the spiritual abundance of life shows itself in a willingness to pitch in and help by giving generously of one's self when help is needed. The Bible tells us: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”<sup>71</sup> A bountiful and cheerful heart rightly depicts our true nature as the man of God's joyous creating, made in the likeness

of Him who, as the Giver of all good, is an ever-abundant help in time of need.

The willingness of Christian Scientists to give cheerfully and unstintingly of themselves is grounded in spiritual reality, not in personal do-goodism. *Science and Health* states: “In the scientific relation of God to man, we find that whatever blesses one blesses all, as Jesus showed with the loaves and the fishes,—Spirit, not matter, being the source of supply.”<sup>72</sup>

This divine law of reciprocity, in which “whatever blesses one blesses all,” is illustrated in a story recounted by Janet Colman, who was a devoted student and household worker of Mrs. Eddy’s. The story is about two travelers in the Alps. “The cold was intense as they journeyed, and after a while one of them became overpowered with sleep, and fell down in the snow. The same feeling was felt by the other, but he knew the fatal consequences of falling asleep, so he began vigorously to shake and pound his companion in his efforts to rouse him. At last he was rewarded and he became warm himself through his exertions to help another.”<sup>73</sup>

Every time I read this story my thought turns to what our Leader writes in *Science and Health*: “The rich in spirit help the poor in one grand brotherhood, all having the same Principle, or Father; and blessed is that man who seeth his brother’s need and supplieth it, seeking his own in another’s good.”<sup>74</sup>

Friends, this glorious statement sums up in one sentence what has taken me more than fifty-five minutes and seven thousand words to say! I guess I need to learn to be more succinct! Finding one’s own in another’s good mirrors how everyone’s Christly life-mission is, simultaneously, both individual and collective.

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## ENDNOTES

1. *Science and Health* [S&H], 18:5-9
2. Philippians 2:12
3. *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany* [My], 165:2-3
4. My, 134:8-10
5. *Pulpit and Press* [Pul], 3:7-9
6. Romans 8:28
7. Quoted in *Christian Science Sentinel*, February 22, 1941, Vol. 43, 497
8. Philippians 2:13
9. Hebrews 13:8 and S&H 249:18-19
10. Pul, 4:7-14
11. See Ecclesiastes 9:14,15
12. My, 160:5-8
13. *The Boston Globe*, November 1, 1980, 5
14. My, 14:2-9
15. *Miscellaneous Writings* [Mis], 183:12-14
16. Romans 8:7
17. Romans 1:25
18. John 6:63
19. *No and Yes*, 20:23-26
20. John 8:44
21. I Timothy 6:12
22. Philippians 4:13
23. Colossians 1:27
24. II Corinthians 5:16
25. S&H, 316:20-21
26. S&H, 226:19-21
27. S&H, 259:1-5
28. S&H, 475:14-15 (to ;)
29. *Christian Science Sentinel*, December 11, 1954, Vol. 56, 2182
30. I Corinthians 15:10
31. Romans 8:17 (emphasis added)
32. S&H, 515:21-22
33. Psalm 147:5
34. *Manual of The Mother Church* [Man], 48:16-21
35. See Judges 7:1-21
36. S&H, 225:5-6
37. My, 162:7-9
38. *The Christian Science Journal*, October 1962, Vol. 80, 547

39. Man, 44:26-3
40. Habakkuk 2:14
41. My, 266:29-2
42. John 4:23
43. My, 281:6-7
44. *Poems*, 79
45. *Retrospection and Introspection*, 84:1-3
46. Isaiah 46:10
47. *Concordance to Christian Science Hymnal and Hymnal Notes*, 184
48. I Corinthians 14:15
49. My, 162:9-15
50. Exodus 17:12
51. Luke 10:2
52. See Matthew 14:15-21
53. James 4:3
54. *The Christian Science Journal*, July 1914, Vol. 32, 195
55. Mis, 313:19-23
56. S&H, 89:21-22
57. S&H, 258:25-26
58. Lamentations 3:22, 23
59. *Message to The Mother Church for 1901*, 1:1-6
60. Quoted in Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, 346
61. Luke 22:27
62. S&H, 583:12-13
63. II Corinthians 1:3, 4
64. Matthew 10:8
65. S&H, 57:18-21
66. S&H, 79:31-32
67. Acts 3:6
68. My, 165:18-22
69. Matthew 26:11
70. John 10:10
71. II Corinthians 9:7
72. S&H, 206:15-18
73. *Christian Science Sentinel*, September 21, 1899, Vol. 2, 44
74. S&H, 518:15-19