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Only One Comforter

These days we hear a lot about health care — and a lot about alternative methods of healing. We're told that Americans spend 70 billion dollars a year on alternatives to mainstream medical help. We're told that increasing numbers of medical schools are teaching their students about alternative systems so they will understand better their patients' beliefs. The bookstores, too, are full of books

that use words like "spirituality," "mind," "body," "soul." They are words that can sound similar to ones we Christian Scientists use — but be watchful. We may well ask ourselves: Do these alternative versions of spirituality acknowledge one God and His Christ? Do they teach the Allness of divine Mind and the consequent nothingness of matter? No, they do not. So, today, as we give thanks to God for seventy years of pure healing ministry at Arden Wood, I'd like to talk about a type of healing that has nothing to do with mixing mind and matter, nothing to do with mind over matter, and nothing to do with sick or well matter. No, the subject for today is Christian Science healing. And I can't emphasize enough: Christian Science stands alone, unrelated to any other healing on the face of the earth. It is radically reliant on Truth.

I felt the healing power of God understood when I was a young man in New Zealand. I was walking along the beach early one morning, pondering the truths I was reading for the first time in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I felt very close to God. But the calm was shattered by the screams of two small children huddled together in the sand. I found that the four-year-old boy had just stepped barefoot onto some jagged glass and had gashed the underside of his foot. It was bleeding profusely. I picked him up and cradled him in one arm while holding his little sister's hand with the other. As we walked towards their home, I felt God was there loving us, healing me of believing there ever was a moment of separation from His care. Fear melted and the bleeding stopped. When I handed him to his mother, he bounded off completely free. In looking back, I realize this was my first experience of healing another. Remember when Jesus said,

"... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye

*clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*¹

The blessing that day on the beach — the experience of tangibly feeling God present to save and to heal — has stayed with me. Looking back over fifty years, I realize it was the first step on a journey that has led me here today. It was the first step of being willing to come out, be separate — and in so doing, feel bound to humanity in Love.

Christ Science Stands Alone

Christian Science has nothing in common with faith healing or semi-metaphysical systems. It is not *a* truth, but *the* Truth that heals. It is the Comforter promised by Jesus. It is the Science of what God is and what He knows. It gives us the ability to heal the way Jesus did without surgery or drugs — not even drugs that are called natural, like herbal remedies, which are just as material as any synthetic drug. No, this Christ Science stands alone. It cannot be compared to any other healing on earth. It cannot be mixed with any other explanation of health. It is demonstrated by having no other gods, no other explanations of life than God and His Christ, described alone by Mary Baker Eddy.

Mrs. Eddy writes: "Inferior and unspiritual methods of healing may try to make Mind and drugs coalesce, but the two will not mingle scientifically. Why should we wish to make them do so, since no good can come of it?"² Now, many sincere Christians and others are interested in faith healing. But it is important for Christian Scientists to understand their necessary separation from that belief. We can have nothing in common with faith healing —

with prayer for the sick body to become the well body— with prayer that accepts matter as real and that God is conscious of limitation. As Mary Baker Eddy so clearly states, “. . . without this Science there had better be no ‘mind-cure’ . . .”³ So whether we’re dealing with the doctors’ interests in patients’ beliefs — or other Christians’ interests in faith healing — let’s never forget: Our Leader is very clear in insisting that the human mind has nothing to do with healing. She writes in the “Preface” to *Science and Health*,

“Many imagine that the phenomena of physical healing in Christian Science present only a phase of the action of the human mind, which action in some unexplained way results in the cure of disease. On the contrary, Christian Science rationally explains that all other pathological methods are the fruits of human faith in matter. . . .”

She goes on to say,

“The physical healing of Christian Science results now, as in Jesus’ time, from the operation of divine Principle, before which sin and disease lose their reality in human consciousness and disappear as naturally and as necessarily as darkness gives place to light and sin to reformation.”⁴

The Christian Scientist, understanding that there is no matter, is confident and happy to rely on God for healing. The reason the Scientist is so certain there is no matter is because of what God is. Because God fills all space, because God has all power, and because God knows every detail of our being, there is no room for matter or limitation of any sort. When practiced according to divine Principle, Love, we feel safe and secure in God’s care. No other healing method or system is based on Mind *all* and matter *nothing*. Is there any other book in the bookstore saying there is no matter because God is all? No, there is not. Mary Baker Eddy alone discovered that. Yet, as radical as that discovery sounds, it is based squarely on the words and works of Jesus. Our Leader writes,

“I therefore plant myself unreservedly on the teachings of Jesus, of his apostles, of the prophets, and on the testimony of the Science of Mind. Other foundations there are none. All other systems — systems based wholly or partly on knowledge gained through the material senses — are reeds shaken by the wind, not houses built on the rock.”⁵

Jesus’ teachings, our Leader assures us, are “. . . the only true solution of the perplexing problem of human existence.”⁶ Our prayer is to have the Mind of Christ and so experience that state of harmony Jesus spoke of so often and so reverently. He said, “I and my Father are one.”⁷

Based on Jesus’ Words and Works

When I was living in Boston a few years ago, I served as a Christian Science chaplain at a state penitentiary for the criminally insane. About fifty inmates regularly attended the Sunday afternoon church services we provided at the prison, and on Fridays I used to set aside time to talk one-on-one with any inmate who wanted to find out more about God and Christian Science. Some of the ideas we talked about came back to help me one afternoon. I was driving along Boston’s busy Massachusetts Avenue during the evening rush hour. I pulled over and stopped, with my motor running, to pick up my wife. At that moment, a total stranger started violently kicking the car. He threatened me verbally, and then reached through the open window on the driver’s side, and punched me in the face. The force of the punch stunned me. I felt a sharp pain on the upper part of my cheek where, I later was told, bones were broken. Although I could not focus clearly, I recognized my assailant as someone I had noticed standing on the pavement moments before, as I’d driven past. Now he was shouting at me, accusing me of attempting to run him down, which was clearly untrue! Instead of responding to the man in kind, I covered my face with my hands and prayed.

A statement from *Science and Health* came to me: “Jesus did his own work by the one Spirit.”⁸ I’d often encouraged the prison inmates to accept that there really is only one Mind — one Spirit whose influence is totally good, never evil. Now I needed to know that for myself! Despite the pain and fear that I felt, those words were reassuring, and I was able to turn to God in prayer. I thanked God that my entire being was constituted of His knowledge of me. And I tried to understand what God knew about me — with the childlike trust that knows what’s true and what isn’t true, what’s fair and what isn’t fair. I could not see clearly enough to drive, but there was no further pain. My wife drove our car home, and I continued to give myself Christian Science treatment. X-rays taken for the court proceedings confirmed that three bones had been broken in my face, but they had been set correctly without any medical intervention. Although the doctor who had examined me recommended surgery to correct the focusing of my eyes, I relied on Christian Science treatment. I understood that there had never been a moment when God was not in control, and at that moment, I literally felt my body change. I felt things slip back into place. My vision was completely and permanently restored.

But truly, the best healing was yet to come. The next day, when I returned to the prison where I was serving as a

chaplain, I was overwhelmed by the reception I received. The inmates took one look at the extensive bruises on my face and the patch over my eye, and sized up the situation instantly. One of them said — I hope jokingly! — that he wished he were out on the street because he'd sure see that justice was done! But beyond the feeling of camaraderie, there was an amazing outpouring of kindness, compassion, and sincere concern for my well-being. And all of this was coming, you remember, from people who'd been diagnosed as criminally insane. I'd never experienced anything like it before.

Glimpses of Truth Heal

It dawned on me at that moment, in a wave of gratitude, that no matter how low in society these inmates had sunk, they nevertheless maintained a spirit — a hunger for righteousness. There was an inherent yearning for goodness in them all, a spiritual sense, eager to recognize and respond to the Mind of Christ. Now, sometimes we hear it said that we should not be discouraged if our demonstration is not as good as Jesus' — that we should only demonstrate Christian Science gradually. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no process in Christian Science healing. We don't emerge gradually from being material, to feeling both material and spiritual, and finally to being completely spiritual. No. We thank God for His presence and what He knows about us right now. In childlike trust, we receive glimpses of Truth, and there is no limit to what those glimpses can heal.

Our job is to be so faithful in our prayer and study that we set ourselves up for those experiences of God's presence. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you."⁹ Now. It's been said that one of the reasons Christian Science took off so successfully in the beginning was because of the primitive state of Western medicine at the time. Be careful of that argument. It would follow that because modern medicine has made such advances, we don't need Christian Science now. Oh, no. We need Christian Science now more than ever. We need it in its pure and accurate form described by Mary Baker Eddy. Truly, the discovery of Christian Science was an event in history compared with no other. Mrs. Eddy should never be relegated to the 19th century as an amazingly successful woman — one among others. She stands alone for all ages to come as the woman who discovered and recorded the Science behind Jesus' works. Remember that before Mrs. Eddy's discovery there was tremendous faith in God expressed by devout Christians.

But that did not make spiritual healing available and scientific — something any sincere seeker for Truth could practice. No, the Comforter promised by Jesus came through the discovery of Mary Baker Eddy and is protected by the Church she founded. She alone described the laws of God and, if we are faithful to Truth, if we do good healing work, then honest seekers will link Christian healing to Christian Science. Does this mean Christian Science has a monopoly on Truth? In the truest sense, yes. There is only one true Science of healing. And while glimpses of inspiration are to be found in all religions, it is only possible to practice genuine Christian healing by following the rules laid down by Mary Baker Eddy. There can be no combining it with anything else. For Jesus said he was the only Way to harmony. Be alert to any suggestion that Christian Science is just one of many healing options. It is not. It is the only way of salvation from sin, disease, and death — it is the one Comforter promised by Jesus.

This pure Science of healing needs no modifying, no changing, and no adjusting to make it appealing to the thinker. When a Christian Science lecturer first presented it to me and to Elizabeth, my wife — in separate countries — we instantly recognized it as the Comforter promised by Jesus. We immediately became students — profoundly grateful to the Church of Christ, Scientist for protecting the pure statement of Truth revealed to Mary Baker Eddy. At an Annual Meeting of The Mother Church some years ago, Mr. Will B. Davis, Manager of the Committee on Publication — the same lecturer we had heard in Australia and New Zealand — said this:

"The public is being imposed upon if people believe that the method of healing practiced by Christ Jesus and revealed to this age by Mrs. Eddy is not sufficient to meet every human need. They therefore must be rightly informed about how healings are accomplished through Christian Science. To protect our great Cause, we must make it plain that Christian Science healing is based not alone on faith, but on a spiritual understanding of God. Also, the public needs to be told why Christian Science teaches radical reliance on God alone, as contrasted with attempts to mix religious faith and material medicine."¹⁰

The Strength of Spirit

Before I ever heard of Christian Science, I suffered from a medically diagnosed liver infection. It was very painful and often kept me confined in bed with a fever for days at a time. I also had great difficulty eating. Drugs gave some

relief, but didn't cure the infection and it kept coming back. After coming into Christian Science, I realized that I didn't have to believe the information coming from my five senses. I saw what Mrs. Eddy meant in *Science and Health* where she writes, "Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good. God has made man capable of this, and nothing can vitiate the ability and power divinely bestowed on man."¹¹ And that's what happened. My thinking became more peaceful. The pain eased. That same night, my family was invited to a dinner party where the food was very highly spiced. Now, I would have found that a challenge in the best of times. But this time, because I had in some measure understood what it means to be God's child, I was able to eat everything without any problem. The liver infection was gone. It has never returned.

After the healing, instead of bossing me around, the body became more like a servant. I found that, to the degree I understood my spiritual nature as an idea of God, the divine Mind, I was free from fear and free to progress. Twenty-five years ago, that line of progress led me to a point where I wanted, above all, to go into the full-time healing practice of Christian Science. I had just completed my three years as Reader in our branch church and was very busily involved with my own company as a management consultant. One day I was offered a wonderful five-year contract. It was very tempting. They took me up to the top floor of a high building overlooking the Ottawa River and Canada's parliament buildings. With a sweeping gesture, they said, "This would all be yours." I told them I'd be honored to consider it. At home that evening, I said to my wife, "I'm either going to take that contract, or I'm going into the full-time practice of Christian Science. I'll tell you in the morning." During the night, the path became very clear to me. I stand before you today convinced that there is no greater privilege than to be asked to pray for the sick.

And, the fact that Christian Science nursing was available to support what I was doing, and to help meet the patient's

practical needs, shows the genius of our Leader's *Manual* provision. In her compassion, she knew that there could be times when we might need skilled hands to bind up our wounds. As a practitioner, I could never give thanks enough for the gift of Christian Science nursing. To know that the nurse is witnessing to Truth — lovingly conscious of what God knows about the patient — contributes enormously to healing.

And, just as there is a constant need for the organized Church of Christ, Scientist — for our separate denomination — to protect the purity of the word of this Science, in a similar way, the role of Arden Wood is to protect the pure teaching of Christian Science nursing. May our individual demonstration alone persuade other Christians of the truth of Christian Science — there can be no watering down of what that means — divine Mind *all* and matter *nothing*. This Christly teaching is the only scientific basis for Christian healing. How thankful we can be that Arden Wood supports our prayer to be faithful to Mrs. Eddy's theology. It is the loving and practical response to Jesus' words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹²

¹ Matthew 25: 34-40

² Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 143: 31-2

³ Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 59: 8

⁴ *Science and Health*, p. xi: 1-14

⁵ *Science and Health*, p. 269: 22-28

⁶ Mary Baker Eddy, *Unity of Good*, p. 9: 18

⁷ John 10: 30

⁸ *Science and Health*, p. 79: 19

⁹ Luke 17: 21

¹⁰ "Report of Annual Meeting," *The Christian Science Monitor* (June 3, 1957)

¹¹ *Science and Health*, p. 393: 12

¹² Matthew 25: 40



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