

“They need not depart”

A talk given at Arden Wood on March 11, 2010

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For me to be standing here in front of you, dear friends, is more of a privilege than you can ever know. When I was invited to speak at Arden Wood, my thoughts flew back to my very first visit here in 1962. My husband was a student at Berkeley. We had two small children, very little room, and less money. Summer came along, so we started plotting the ideal vacation for parents. Our decision was unanimous: one weekend I would come to Arden Wood and he would care for the children, and the next weekend he would come to Arden Wood and I would care for the children. It was perfect.

At the time, I never dreamed I would have the chance to thank you personally—all of you who made it possible: the nurses, cooks, servers, dishwashers, housekeepers, maintenance workers, accountants, receptionists, instructors, supervisors, managers, directors, and administrator. To the whole team—today and yesterday—THANK YOU. The benefits are ongoing.

Thank you for providing the means whereby those in need of healing or rest never have to depart from the Christian Science standard—never have to depart from the environment of Christian Science.

Remember the time Jesus fed the five thousand? Jesus was moved with compassion when he saw the crowd that had followed him to a desert place. He healed their sick. The disciples, who were thinking mostly about the multitude’s need for food, told Jesus to send the people into nearby villages. The Bible tells us, “Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.”¹

Can you imagine how disruptive it would have been if the people really had departed—if the disciples had told everyone to go away and come back later? Most people would have lost their train of thought; some, no doubt, would simply have gone home.



Isn't there a parallel here? Without Christian Science nursing and without Arden Wood, untold numbers might have departed from the pure teachings of the Christ Science.

We are told that there were twelve basketsful left over after everyone present was fed that long-ago day in Galilee. One Bible commentary tells us that those baskets were part of the luggage that Jews always took on a journey “. . . to carry both their provisions and hay to sleep on. . . . [In that way] they might not have to depend on Gentiles and so run the risk of what, for them, was ceremonial pollution.”² That Bible story provides a nice metaphor for us today. I like to think of Arden Wood as my basket. The care provided here prevents me from ever having to deviate from the perfect law of God in healing.

What a comfort to know that I can be brought into no circumstance where I cannot be taken care of in Christian Science. But that would not be true without your work at Arden Wood. Without Arden Wood, there might be times when I could be tempted to make compromises with material methods. Instead, Arden Wood helps me to avoid

worshiping other gods, turning to other forms of help. It is the means for experiencing unity with God under all human circumstances.

Our Leader writes in *No and Yes*, “My system of Mind-healing swerves not from the highest ethics and from the spiritual goal.”³ And in *Rudimental Divine Science*, she speaks of “. . . divine Love, as caring for all the conditions requisite for the well-being of man.”⁴

In deciding on types of healing, Dr. Jonathan Miller, physician, Shakespearean director, and author of *The Body in Question*, once said, “When someone chooses one or other type [of healer] he is inadvertently expressing assumptions about the way . . . the world works.”⁵

When one chooses Christian Science treatment, one is expressing a conviction that things are not what they seem. While the problem may look and feel extremely physical, it is, in fact, completely mental. Reasoning from this basis, it would not be logical for a Christian Scientist to seek opinions from someone who believes every problem is physical—in cause and effect.

A patient seeking help from a Christian Science practitioner is demonstrating his agreement with Mrs. Eddy’s thesis: Mind All, matter nothing. The Christian Scientist subscribes to the greatest health-care system in the world, described under the word “Japhet” in the glossary of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: “A type of spiritual peace, flowing from the understanding that God is the divine Principle of all existence, and that man is His idea, the child of His care.”⁶

Man is the child of God’s care. And Arden Wood is the place in our lives where we can experience that care no matter what the human circumstances may appear to be.

It is a spacious place, and in that connection I am reminded of a comment in *Pulpit and Press*: “Indeed, one of [Mrs. Eddy’s] motives in buying so large an estate [at Pleasant View] was that she might do something for the toilers, and thus add her influence toward the advancement of better home life and citizenship.”⁷

Arden Wood is such a place: a house where the Ten Commandments are joyfully obeyed; a house where the beatitudes are loved and lived; a house where

the rules of divine Science are fervently practiced with humility and joy. This is what provides such a healing environment: you, the associates; you, the residents; and we, the field. It is our house, our demonstration, our model, our ideal of what a place should be that achieves our goal: to save Christian Scientists from ever being tempted to depart from radical reliance on Truth.

This is a sacred place where all needs can be met.

And into this atmosphere come the children of God’s care. Unlike a hospital or a hotel, no one knows why any guest is at Arden Wood. Visible symptoms give no indication of the problem—or the solution. The problem is mental and the solution is spiritual. No one is categorized according to illness. Thus the sacred confidence, which exists between patient and practitioner, is carefully protected in Principle and in practice.

Each one who comes through this door expresses God in a way that has never been seen before. Each patient and guest is an instance of God expressing Himself uniquely. Each one has felt the power of the Word; otherwise, they would not have chosen to come here. Each one brings with him everything he has ever understood about God.

I hope we all go about healing our problems with the same vigor, hope, and enthusiasm as a woman I read about in a local Florida paper:

When Beulah Mercer was unable to find a doctor who would make house calls, she didn’t give up hope. She advertised. Mercer paid \$500 for a column surrounded by flowers. It said: “I am 104 years old and can’t get a doctor to make a house call. Surely, somewhere there is an M.D. who will call on me once a month to tell me I’m still alive. A young doctor would be preferable—not a contemporary! . . . I’d like for him to have a sense of humor and bring a joke or two with him. Then I could play my piano for him and maybe even sing.”⁸

Do you know what happened when Beulah’s column ran? More than 150 physicians responded! What a spirit!

I pray to have the same enthusiasm for solving my own problems.

In her wisdom and compassion, our Leader knew there would be times when we, too, might need someone to bind up our wounds, someone who was trained to see beyond the sense testimony and remain firm. She provided for Christian Science nurses in her *Church Manual*—nurses who would stand guardian so diligently over their thoughts that the atmosphere of the sick room would be conducive to healing.

Now, it could be argued that a very loving church member or friend who is a Scientist could do as good a job of giving a shampoo, making a bed, preparing food, and making a patient comfortable. So what is the difference? The difference is experience in Christian Science. The definition of **Christian Science nurse** in the *Manual* stipulates that a nurse must have (1) “a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice” and must be someone who (2) “thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick.”⁹ Those are two absolutely essential qualities.

To illustrate: While I may have a “demonstrable understanding of Christian Science practice,” I do not have a thorough understanding of the “practical wisdom necessary in a sick room.” That wisdom, that craft, has been handed down through the centuries. It is a priceless body of knowledge that must never be lost. As a practitioner, I appreciate beyond measure the professional skills the Christian Science nurse brings to the sick room.

The Christian Science nurse has the same pair of hands and physical capacities as a medical nurse. The difference, of course, is in thought. A Christian Science nurse has experience in maintaining spiritual altitude in the special conditions of the sick room. This is enormously helpful to the Christian Science practitioner on the case.

When a medical nurse dresses the body, judging by previous experience with similar cases, he or she may make certain predictions as to the outcome of a disease. On the other hand, the Christian Science nurse can see the same symptoms during a dressing, but will be very alert NOT to jump to any conclusions. Why? Because while the symptoms may seem almost identical to symptoms seen in other cases, the Christian Science nurse knows that he or she has never dealt with this particular case before. The symptoms may look the same, but each body is an objective state of

thought. The nurse has never seen this thought before; therefore, the nurse will not limit in any direction what the power of Truth can accomplish in a case. Every case is a new case. And Christ is the Great Physician. The Christian Science nurse will be just as expectant of healing as the practitioner and the patient.

Geith Plimmer, a former member of the Board of Lectureship, said:

I once saw a man beautifully healed of an ugly outgrowth on his body. One day it was gratefully recognized that the spirituality this man reflected from God had the power to melt all assertions of self-will or animal instinct that might be lying in his so-called sub-conscious thought, just as the warmth of the tropics has power to melt all the ice of an iceberg, below the water as well as above. In a short time the growth disappeared, though it had resisted all other treatment for over 14 years.... It was one of the holiest healings I have witnessed, and a marvelous proof that even the images “in the water under the earth,” as the Bible puts it, must yield to the all-power of God. As you see, in none of these areas does Christian Science work from the physical to the moral, and the moral to the spiritual. No, quite the other way. It begins compassionately with the divine fact of man’s spiritual dominion, and uses this dominion to give men the moral power by which they can gradually control the physical.¹⁰

So we start our treatment with the spiritual fact—we start with divine Truth, which causes us to be more moral, and which consequently registers on our bodies and our human experience.

Knowing the truth—praying to be conscious of spiritual perfection—has nothing in common with visualizing a perfect body, as advocated by some semi-metaphysical systems. No, in Christian Science, praying to be conscious of what God knows opens thought to the experience we call healing, the present awareness of God with us.

Sometimes we get the impression that a nurse is meant to be so loving that she agrees with everything a patient says, and humbly loves, loves, loves. To me, that would be the same as if Jesus had gone to the pool of Bethesda and said to the man in need of healing with a voice full of love, “I will help you into the pool.” That sort of sympathy was just what that

man did not need. He had already spent thirty-eight years believing he needed to get into the pool to be healed. Jesus discerned that the man was blaming everyone else for getting in ahead of him. Jesus healed him instantly—out of his own sense of Immanuel, of God with us.

The Christian Science nurse, conscious of God's presence, is not just helping people into pools, but is providing an atmosphere in which real healing can take place. The nurse's quiet confidence in God's presence and power causes a tangible awareness of immutable Love.

Again, the thoughts and morals of the staff matter most in creating a healing atmosphere.

The devotion of thought to growth in understanding is certainly individual, but the benefits are shared. The private prayers of the staff for growth in grace create strong individuals. Taken as a whole, they create a staff united in purpose. The staff remains constant, fully employed in obedience to the commandments, graced by the beatitudes, and stretching and growing in understanding this Science.

Yet, sometimes we may feel that our work is just a system of ceremonies—an interminable round of bed-making, cooking, cleaning, mending, and balancing the books. It is true that the tasks remain the same each day, but our thinking never has to be repetitious. The glimpses of Truth we experienced yesterday are with us today as we listen for inspiration in all that we do.

Our Leader writes: "The Scriptures . . . require a living faith, that so incorporates their lessons into our lives that these truths become the motive-power of every act."¹¹

Sometimes we are tempted to make a separation between what we understand when we are reading our religious books and what we feel like when we have to take care of our day-to-day duties.

One man who had been raised in India in extremely privileged circumstances, a man who had never had to do any physical labor, was in desperate need of healing and all alone for the first time in his life. He wrote: "I was forced to wash my own clothes and bedding and prepare food, among other things. The only way this could be done was through

supreme efforts to raise my actions to the level of my prayers." He did this and naturally he was healed.

We do not come down from the summit of inspiration to take care of any human need.

Remember when Jesus had to whip the money changers out of the temple? I think I would need some time to restore my spiritual sense after wielding a whip. But not Jesus. Turning to Principle left him so aware of divine Love that he could immediately go out onto the steps of the temple and heal someone.

While Mrs. Eddy spent long hours in prayer, she did not limit it to times when her eyes were shut. Her aim was to do everything, from peeling a potato to threading a needle, in a prayerful way; that is, in a thinking way—a way that is aware of the idea behind the material thing, or the meaning behind the word. She was never very impressed with rushing around smartly if it just meant getting things done. She wanted everything done, but she wanted it done thoughtfully, with some concept of God as resting in action. She knew that it was not what the hands were doing, but what the mind was knowing that mattered.

God can feed our famished affections. We can so know our completeness that we stop yearning to be someone else or to experience something else. We need to be abundantly satisfied with the fullness of His glory. It takes enormous willpower to deny our spiritual selves, to deprive ourselves of accepting our wholeness.

Any of you who have been around little children know that one of the very first concepts they learn is "MINE." I like to try to lift that concept, and to think, *That is how God feels about us: "Thou art mine."* God is not about to let anything happen to His very own, His state of the art, His perfect you and me. God is wholly responsible for us. We can meekly cast our burdens upon the Lord; we can accept Christ Jesus' offer: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."¹²

God is the Creator and we are His creation. Let us not get the job descriptions confused. God is in charge of making and maintaining. The only trouble we ever get into occurs when we falsely take on

His responsibility and think we have got to make ourselves well, make ourselves happy, and so on.

We never have to suffer because of other people's thoughts or actions. We can take responsibility for our own consciousness and help others in the process. We are never helpless. I am always responsible for correcting my thought about anyone else and challenging the error, not the person. Our Leader writes in *Miscellany*: "Even the crown of thorns, which mocked the bleeding brow of our blessed Lord, was overcrowned with a diadem of duties done. So let us meekly meet, mercifully forgive, wisely ponder, and lovingly scan the convulsions of mortal mind, that its sudden sallies may help us, not to a start, but to a tenure of unprecarious joy."¹³

It has often been said that it is not what happens to us that is important—it is our response to what happens that counts. A friend of mine wrote in the *Christian Science Sentinel* that during the Second World War in London, she found herself feeling afraid and very resentful about the effects the war was having on her own life and freedom. She complained bitterly to her mother, who told her, "Doreen, you have a choice. You can live in a country at war, with all its limitations, frustrations and liabilities, or you can do as you have been taught to do as a Christian Scientist—you can live, move, and breathe in the kingdom of heaven and feel the eternal presence of God's goodness, protection and power."¹⁴

The bombing did not stop, but her human experience was transformed. Those years were useful and progressive. She did not wait for the human scene to stabilize or become perfect. She grew spiritually through both tear and triumph, and later devoted her life to the public practice of Christian Science—a practice immeasurably blessed by the presence of Christian Science nursing care facilities.

The coincidence of the patient's need for care and the staff's willingness to give it is a place called Arden Wood.

The unity of Arden Wood lies in the fact that patients, associates, and residents are all working

for the same goal: To love God so much that we will never depart from His law.

When we become aware of what Truth is knowing about us, when we accept what Love finds beautiful in us, we experience true healing. When we consider the spontaneity of Life that rejoices in our being—the depth and constancy of Soul, which finds us pure and totally satisfied—we experience true health. When we become aware of what Principle understands about us, of what Mind knows about us, we experience true health. We are redeemed, saved, and regenerated in Spirit. Nothing could be better for Arden Wood and all who love Christian Science!

1 Matthew 14:16

2 *JFB Commentary of the Whole Bible* (Mark 6:43)

3 Mary Baker Eddy, *No and Yes*, 44:8

4 Mary Baker Eddy, *Rudimental Divine Science*, 12:16-21

5 Jonathan Miller, *The Body in Question*, (NY: Random House, 1978)

6 Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, 589:8

7 Mary Baker Eddy, *Pulpit and Press*, 50:5-8

8 *Pensacola News Journal*

9 Mary Baker Eddy, *Church Manual*, Art. VIII, Sect. 31

10 *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 14, 1971

11 Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 196:30

12 Matthew 11:28

13 Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellany*, 201:13-19

14 *Christian Science Sentinel*, Vol. 92, September 3, 1990, p. 41



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