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A Christian Science Nursing Facility

Christ-Healing and the Grace of Christian Science Nursing

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I've so appreciated the theme of this meeting that I've built my talk around it, with a little grace-note of my own. Today, I want to talk about Christ-healing and the *grace* of Christian Science nursing. The privilege of speaking at this annual meeting is a double blessing for me because it's always a joy to speak about God's grace and what it can do for our daily lives. It also gives me an opportunity to tell Christian Science nurses how much they're loved and valued. It seems that no matter how many times I hear from these dedicated workers in the course of doing their job, there has always, always been a tone of good cheer.

Good Cheer. I have a question about that 'good cheer.' Mary Baker Eddy states in our textbook, "The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith,—receptive to Truth and Love."¹ It says, "...*should be.*" Does that mean there's a choice? You can be cheerful on the good days but on those days that seemingly to go on for 30 hours it's okay to be a little grumpy? Cheerfulness to the Christian Science nurse is more than a choice. "Let not your heart be troubled," Christ Jesus said.² That sounds like a command to me. His oft-repeated, "Be of good cheer" is unmistakable.

The 'grace' that came by Christ Jesus comes from a word meaning 'cheerful, calmly happy.' So the cheerfulness, the calmness Christian Science nurses so consistently express, regardless of what they face, is rooted in the divine authority of God's grace.

Grace as Divine Influence. In the Bible, grace is sometimes defined as unmerited favor. God loves us whether we deserve it or not. There have been times in the course of my human experience when I've been very thankful for that. But there's another definition: "The divine influence on the heart and its reflection in the life, including gratitude."³ I'm doubly thankful for that! The question is: What influences you and me?

False influence can be very subtle. At one time there was a superstition that a common ailment comes from the influence of the stars, thus the name 'influenza,' a well-publicized error. We've overcome that superstition, but here's an influence much more subtle. Have you ever thought of *aging* as the superstition of astrology? The earth moves around the sun in 365 ¼ days, and I'm supposed to be a year older? Why? Did you know that even medical doctors do not know

¹ *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 395

² John 14:1

³ Strong's Exhaustive Bible Concordance

why people age? According to medical research, every cell in the human body replaces itself every 5-10 years, implying that no one in this room has a body older than 10! After much research these doctors finally decided that people age because they think they have to.

Another subtle avenue for influence is sensitivity. It can be a quality of insight, perception, responding to the needs of others. Christian Science nurses are very good at that kind of sensitivity. But being sensitive can also mean being excessively affected by outward influences, easily shaken or annoyed. Grace reaches our hearts with love, patience, and forgiveness that makes us sensitive to the pure, spotless, uncontaminated nature of man made in the likeness of good.

The most subtle of the erroneous influences that would affect our healing work is material sense. It sees what it believes and believes what it sees, then tries to fix it. Christian Science nurses are tempted every day to be influenced by what the material senses report. Yet in Science nurses know, because of their own healing ability, that they do not agree with the material senses and their erroneous report. Nurses agree only that it's an adversary and they are not impressed.

Then how do we maintain the grace of being sensitive to spiritual insight, responding to the needs of others, but not sensitive—*reacting* to what the material senses report? The answer is simple. Practice!

Practice. We often think of practice as doing something over and over until we finally get it right. But what if there's a mistake in what we're doing? Then we're practicing the mistake! A higher and more useful concept of practice is: "to put into effect what you know." However little we know about the Science of Christ, we can put it into effect. It's not just theory.

A woman received a call one morning from a military hospital telling her that her brother, serving during World War II on a Merchant Marine ship, had been taken to the hospital. She was urged to come right away. So she and her husband headed for the hospital, about an hour's drive away. She had just become interested in Christian Science, understood very little of it, but she resolved to pray with that "mustard seed" size of understanding. She understood that man in the image and likeness of God is wholly good, and that her thought need not accept anything less for her brother. She thought, "What you don't take in (into consciousness), you don't have to get out." While her husband drove, she stayed resolutely with that simple thought.

When they arrived at her brother's hospital room, she was told that he had fallen from the highest point of the ship to the deck. His legs and lower spine were crushed. He was not expected to live. In their hotel room that night, she continued to affirm, "What you don't take in, you don't have to get out." She didn't go to sleep that night but continued studying *Science and Health*, and when fear or sorrow tried to overwhelm her, she rejected them instantly and continued knowing the same simple truth, "what you don't take in, you don't have to get out."

The next morning when they arrived at the hospital, they were surprised to see a number of patients in the corridor outside her brother's room. It had been a busy night and the hospital was crowded. Then they heard someone say angrily, "Who let this man in here when there's absolutely nothing wrong with him?" When she entered the room her brother jumped out of bed to greet her. He had been healed overnight. The next day he was back on the ship, jumping up and down on those legs and waving to her.⁴

Science and Christianity. Practice putting into effect whatever you know of the Science—the law of Christ's Christianity is a fervent declaration of the grace of God's healing power.

⁴ *Christian Science Sentinel*, November 15, 1993, p. 4

Science declares the truth, but what demonstrates it? Let's take a moment to consider that pertinent question. *Science and Health* gives us the answer that can help our healing and nursing practice, "Science will declare God aright, and Christianity will demonstrate this declaration and its divine Principle, making mankind better physically, morally, and spiritually."⁵ Mary Baker Eddy told her students, "The grand secret of all your success is in your Christianity."⁶ It's important to understand and practice the profound Christianity of Christian Science.

We practice Christ's Christianity from what Christ Jesus did and taught, not from what other churches are doing. Did he teach baptism? Do we have communion? Do we partake in bread and wine? Did he teach we must be born again? Yes, all the above! Christian Science doesn't deviate from the requirements Jesus gave us on a single point—not even on the point of healing. Above all, Christ-healing begins with the law that Jesus said he came to fulfill. That law is to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And the natural sequence of loving God is to love His creation, man,—to love your neighbor as yourself. Therefore, the very essence of our practice of healing is Christian love—tender, ministering love. This love moves beyond mere human emotion to the unspeakable peace of Love's presence and power.

From that Love we begin to see a new view of ourselves and others. One of the Christian commands that Christian Science highlights, underscores, and emphasizes is: "Know thyself!"⁷ The more we know of the Creator, the more we know His beloved creation, man. Each of us has the privilege of knowing ourselves, not through material sense but through grace, the influence of Love on our innermost being. Working consistently and persistently to know man's true identity as one with the Christ, God's anointed, gives us the ability to know others in the same way. From that inseparable connection of God and man through Love, we can obey the law of Love. This living Love knocks on the door of thought and tenderly says, 'I am written on your hearts and in your minds,—a divine influence ever present in human consciousness.'

This living Love is not written in our hearts just for storage. It's there for *action*. Mary Baker Eddy discovered the Science of Christianity and put it into effect at once. When we put into practice whatever we know of the action of Christ, we can accomplish the command of the Master, who urged his followers to heal the sick and raise the dead. It was the divine nature, the Christ, which accomplished the healing work, then and now.

That divine nature enables both Christian Science nurse and practitioner to greet the day's healing opportunities with the freshness of inspiration, conviction, and absolute faith that all things are possible to God. The work of the practitioner and the nurse is not the same, but it harmonizes. It's like being in a choir—filling different parts but singing the same song. To simply acknowledge the presence of the living Christ, prepares the nurse to let his or her divine nature go first when entering a patient's room. Here's an example.

My mother often visited us. On one visit, I was awakened during the night by a strange sound—an incoherent babbling coming from our daughter's room. I quickly ran to the room. My mother was already there—once a Mom, always a Mom. She was not a Christian Scientist, and I could see the fear on her dear face. I knew she would want emergency medical treatment for her loved granddaughter. At the door of our daughter's room, I paused. From the doorway I could feel

⁵ *S&H*, p. 466

⁶ *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer*, p.135

⁷ *S&H*, p. 571

the heat of the fever.

But I had learned through Christian Science to establish my own identity as one with the Christ, claim that powerful divine nature as my own. I knew that it is the Christ, man's real identity that does the healing work. I knew that I must let the Christ go into the room before me. In those few moments I stood at the doorway the material senses pressured me to admit that there was one sick little girl in that room and two mothers with conflicting views about what was best for her. But the Christ, my divine nature, told me a whole different picture. In Truth, there were three children in that room and one Mother—God. I was so relieved of fear for my daughter with that Christly thought that in the few steps it took to get to the bed, the healing took place. The babbling had stopped, the fever had left her, and she was sleeping peacefully. The next morning she was her own happy, active self. I had learned through the grace of God that prayer for one's self to reflect the Christly nature is essential.

Prayer for Self. How do you pray for yourself? Praying for oneself is not selfish. It's probably the most unselfish act of the day because it empties individual thought of false influence and lifts consciousness to the Christ. It shuts the door on fear, self-centeredness, self-concern, depression, criticism, fatigue, discouragement and does not peek to see if it's gone yet. It was never there!

Prayer opens thought wide to the love of Christ. It removes the fears and doubts with the "unselfed love" that moves the focus of thought from self to Soul.⁸ That's what gives us the strength to minister to the needs of others. Mrs. Eddy emphasized the need to pray for one's self. In fact, she felt so strongly about it that she made it a bylaw in the *Church Manual*.⁹ Also, we have made a "solemn promise to watch, and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus."¹⁰

Atmosphere. She not only prayed to have that Mind which was also in Christ Jesus but she lived it. In her writings she states, "Pure Mind gives out an atmosphere that heals and saves."¹¹ Apostle Paul tells us we can arm ourselves with that same Mind on a daily basis.¹²

On one of the rare occasions that she left the New England area, she visited Chicago. She was invited to attend a convention organized by a group called The National Christian Science Association. Their purpose was to present Christian Science to the public. It was June 13, 1888, in Central Music Hall. There were about four thousand people there. One of them was Susan B. Anthony, who had taken class instruction from Laura Lathrop, a student of Mrs. Eddy.¹³ Of those 4,000, less than a quarter of them were students of Christian Science. Mrs. Eddy had gone just to observe how they were presenting her discovery. But to her great surprise, she was introduced as the main speaker!

Here's the dilemma. She's just been introduced as the speaker of the day. Was she going to stand before four thousand people and say "Sorry, I wasn't prepared for this," and walk away? No, her spiritual-mindedness was always prepared. She spoke extemporaneously, and what she said was so permeated with pure Mind, divine Love, that it provided an atmosphere that healed. A

⁸ *S&H*, p. 1

⁹ *Church Manual*, Art.VIII, Sect.6, "Alertness to Duty," Mary Baker Eddy, p. 42

¹⁰ *S&H*, p. 497

¹¹ *Miscellaneous Writings*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 260

¹² I Peter 4:1

¹³ *Years of Trial*, Robert Peel, p. 223

synopsis of her address titled “SCIENCE AND THE SENSES” is in *Miscellaneous Writings*.¹⁴

When she finished her address, people rushed to the stage to speak to her. One was a woman who sat in the front row. She hobbled to the stage on crutches to say something to the speaker. Mrs. Eddy leaned over from the stage to reply. Then a remarkable thing happened. The woman put down the crutches and walked out healed. My Primary class teacher said his teacher had been there that day and had witnessed that remarkable healing.

Now we know that both practitioner and Christian Science nurse must do more than know God is Love, however comforting that is. They must also know there’s no resistance to that Love. If resistance isn’t going on in infinite Mind, it’s not going on anywhere. But we still must handle it, not as a reality but as an aggressive mental suggestion.

How Animal Magnetism Works. As the teacher thought about that talk and the healing she saw, she began to wonder if she had really seen it. She began to doubt. Human reasoning based on the material senses said, ‘no, that couldn’t have happened. Healings can’t be that quick with something so severe.’ It came to her as her own thought, and finally convinced her that she had just misremembered the scene. She felt like Peter who had walked on the water, then fallen in.¹⁵ But, like Peter, the Christ was there to lift her up. Some friends who had also been there that day talked excitedly about that particular healing they had witnessed. Then she quietly realized how wrong she had been to doubt it.

She also saw more clearly how animal magnetism works. If it can draw our thought away from perfect God, perfect man and woman, and not only cause us to accept what the material senses suggest, but believe it’s our own thinking we are mesmerized into doing its destructive work for it. I call such thought “sleeping with the enemy,” mesmerized. If it can pull our thought away from man and woman as the image and likeness of God and begin thinking of man and woman as sick and suffering, it has won the battle. But it hasn’t won the war!

Animal magnetism is not something to fear. It’s not a person or a thing. It’s a term for the false influence which aims to prevent spiritual healing—stumbling blocks like quackery that makes a reality of discord and then tries to pray it away. It denies the healing activity of the Christ and would entice us into believing healings aren’t happening today, that Christian Science isn’t as effective as it used to be even though it’s based on timeless Principle, divine law. It mentally argues that some things can’t be healed. It would demote spiritual healing to rare miracles instead of the natural, normal activity of the Christ. It would make us believe we have to improve matter instead of making the Christ apparent. It’s the adversary. We can agree that it’s the adversary, always resistant to Christ-healing, but we don’t have to agree with anything it suggests.

¹⁴ *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 98-106

¹⁵ Matthew 14: 24-32

That meeting in Chicago had an atmosphere so rich with the grace of pure Mind that many other healings occurred that day, including rheumatism, paralysis, diabetes, etc. Now here's our task today: What exactly was it that provided such a powerful, healing atmosphere? Personality? Charisma? Mary Baker Eddy would be the first to deny that, as her teachings do. It wasn't the personality of Jesus, but his divine nature, the Christ, that healed. Christian Science urges us to rise to the atmosphere of grace, and see every challenge as an opportunity to make apparent the healing influence of God and His Christ.

We think of the atmosphere in *Wide Horizon* as peaceful, quiet, conducive to rest and study, and that's correct. But I like to think of it as *alive*, rich with opportunity. Opportunity is simply a condition favorable for the attainment of a goal. If we think of the goal as merely making matter better, we'd be wise to ask ourselves some questions. Why would Spirit give us the power and ability to make its opposite, matter, better? What is the goal we seek? Healing, of course, but more! We seek to restore our innocence as the likeness of pure Love. Do you realize the entire chapter of "Christian Science Practice" in *Science and Health* confirms woman's and man's innocence?¹⁶ From beginning to end, from sin to sickness it pleads "Not guilty!" That innocence is the safety and refuge of Christ always with us in every circumstance. Our work is to make the Christ apparent. It will appear as healing, but it will move thought to a higher concept of man's goodness, his God-given identity as one with Christ.

The Gift. We have been given the gift of grace, the divine influence that opens our eyes to the scientific truth about God, the truth about man, and the truth about lawless and powerless error. In my healing work I have been helped by thinking of that gift of grace, this divine influence, as the source of four specific qualities found in the first chapter of Genesis.

1. Identity. Man, male and female, has only one identity.¹⁷ There are not two of us. True identity is the likeness of pure divine Mind. It's a mental likeness, free from fear. That true identity can be fresh and vibrant every day through the Christianization of thought that makes it practical.

2. Character. Man's nature is not just good. It's *very* good.¹⁸ The purity of man is unmixed with evil, terrorism, fear, doubt. The law of likeness is the law of Christ replacing man-made laws of mortality. That law of likeness is man's unity with God giving us the character that enables us to follow our Way-Shower and his faithful follower, Mary Baker Eddy, and their healing works.

3. Dominion. We have Mind-given spiritual strength to detect and reject any other concept of ourselves or others. Man has dominion over what he accepts as his thought.¹⁹ Therefore he has dominion over sickness, and as the Master Christian proved, even over death itself. All cause and effect are mental.²⁰ With such dominion, both practitioner and nurse can perform their ministry with confidence. With faith! With results!

4. Purpose. "Be fruitful and multiply," Genesis tells us.²¹ To be fruitful and multiply means to express spiritual power.²² It's a full-time job and the perks are awesome. By filling the job humbly, persistently, and *cheerfully* our work is fruitful, healing. Jesus said his followers will

¹⁶ *S&H*, pp. 362-442

¹⁷ Genesis 1:27

¹⁸ Genesis 1: 31

¹⁹ Genesis 1: 28

²⁰ *S&H*, p. 114

²¹ Genesis 1: 28

²² *S&H*, p.517

perform “greater works than these....”²³ Greater can mean more of, on a worldwide basis!

Freely we’ve all been given these qualities through the grace of God, and we can apply them daily in practical ways.

Uplifting Daily Duties. Through the gift of such spiritual qualities, and many more, human experience takes on a new tone. It uplifts very ordinary tasks to a new level than merely chores. For instance:

Bathing – The Christian Science nurse often helps a patient with bathing. Knowing the identity, character, dominion and purpose of man, bathing can be lifted to baptism—purification from false influence. Baptism washes away the dust of Adam.

Food – The nurse often delivers nutritious food appropriate for the individual. But a higher concept lifts that duty to being fed by Love. Along with such mental nourishment, the nurse may serve may a heaping helping of “fasting.” In Christian Science, fasting is defined as “refraining from admitting the claims of the senses.”²⁴ What you don’t take into consciousness you don’t have to get out!

Exercise – Exercise is movement, and grace lifts it to movement of thought. *Science and Health* reassures us, “Mind is the master of the corporeal senses, and can conquer sickness, sin, and death. Exercise this God-given authority. Take possession of your body, and govern its feeling and action. 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.”²⁵ Unlike mere physical exercise, it doesn’t tire you, but rests, refreshes, strengthens.

Clothing – The Christian Science nurse patiently offers whatever is needed in putting on and taking off clothing. I think of the prodigal son and what the Father said to the servants when the son came to himself and returned home.²⁶ He commanded the servants to put the best robe on him, put rings on his hand and shoes on his feet. I did a little research some time ago and realized how symbolic that parable is. The best robe literally means the “former” robe. I take that to mean the Christly robe that came before the fig leaf of the dust-man Adam and the bone-lady Eve. A ring meant nobility. He was the son of the King. Shoes were also a symbol of status. The slave wore no shoes, but the free man did. Christ-healing depends on our willingness to clothe man and woman in the beautiful robe of Christ, the son of the King, no longer enslaved by mortal laws, but free!

Conclusion. The Christian Science nurse is influenced by the grace of God to be the Good Samaritan of today, patiently, lovingly, and *cheerfully* tending to the needs of others. When the day is done, the divine influence of God’s grace gently whispers through the love of Christ, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”²⁷

This is the grace of Christian Science nursing!

²³ John 14:12

²⁴ *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 222

²⁵ *S&H*, p. 393

²⁶ Luke 15:11-24

²⁷ Matthew 25:40

LIST OF CITATIONS

1. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 395
2. John 14:1
3. Strong's Exhaustive Bible Concordance
4. *Christian Science Sentinel*, November 15, 1993, p. 4
5. *S&H*, p. 466
6. *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer*, p.135
7. *S&H*, p. 571
8. *S&H*, p. 1
9. *Church Manual*, Art.VIII, Sect.6, "Alertness to Duty," Mary Baker Eddy, p. 42
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11. *Miscellaneous Writings*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 260
12. I Peter 4:1
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17. Genesis 1:27
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27. Matthew 25:40

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