

How Christian Science nursing brings healing and peace

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When we think of nursing, perhaps care of the sick comes immediately to thought. Christian Science healing, however, is meant to cure sin as well as sickness, to address materialism in our own thought even as we care for the patient. This outlook opens up an interesting and important dimension —nursing as an opportunity for overcoming sin, and so bringing peace into our lives as well as providing a better mental environment for the patient.

To do justice to the responsibility of Christian Science nursing, the nurse must do justice to the requirements Mrs. Eddy includes in the *Manual of The Mother Church*.

Understanding the mission of Christian Science makes clear why Mrs. Eddy felt led to set the following high standards for nursing. She says in the *Manual* that a nurse "shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick." ¹ Being established in the *Church Manual*, nursing exists as an activity of the Church and, as such, has a permanent role in its ministry to humanity.

Does the requirement that a nurse have "a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice" make the nurse also the practitioner on the case? No, the nurse prayerfully treats his or her own thought. As nurse, he or she is not acting as the practitioner and does not specifically address the patient's thought in prayer. The patient, practitioner, and nurse constitute a work team in order to bear witness together to the healing and liberating power of Truth. Their roles have nothing to do with rank or social position, or who is the best person or the best Christian Scientist, but their work does have to do with God, Truth, and with purifying themselves so they better express ministering Love.

John's Gospel describes Christ Jesus as entering Jerusalem on a young ass.² According to some commentators on the Bible, an ass stands for peace and humility, in contrast to the horse as symbolizing war and pride. This event is symbolic of the appearing of Christ, Truth, which brings peace to our consciousness when we humbly accept Christ's message of God's love for man. Through these Christly thoughts and actions, the environment around the patient is a healing one, open to Truth.

A nurse needs the qualities described at the beginning of the chapter entitled "Christian Science Practice" in Mrs. Eddy's book *Science and Health*. We might say these qualities make up our "uniform." It consists of repentance—the willingness to change one's thinking and to abandon habitual or routine ways of doing things. It requires honesty, meekness, affection, purity, gratitude, and joy. He or she should also make liberal use of the attributes associated with the spiritual description of *oil* as given in the Glossary of *Science and Health*.

It is certainly necessary for all of us, whether or not we are nurses, to put off the earthly garment—the pharisaical attitude—to free ourselves from selfishness, pride, egotism, self-will, self-righteousness, sensuality, hypocrisy, destructive criticism, prejudice, fear, and doubt, which often manifest themselves in blatant forms of sin. We may have put the garment on through ignorance and fear, but however long we've been wearing it, Christ helps us lay aside this garment. It can never become any part of our true self, which is spiritual. Through prayer, we can cast aside sinful traits like an old coat and be free.

"Love for God and man is the true incentive in both healing and teaching,"³ says *Science and Health*. Love is a pure impetus for all motives and actions, including our nursing work, while a longing for personal importance is not. And mere human pity for the sick is insufficient as a motive for nursing and healing.

Love is spiritual, filling the heart with loving ideas and enabling one who opens himself to it to know what to do, how it can be done well, when to be where, when to speak, and when to be silent. Love frees from tired, routine thinking, from lack of self-confidence, from fear and pity. Love defends one against pride or the burden of false responsibility and self-will.

Nursing is not confined to a sickroom. We can bring the qualities of nursing to bear wherever people come together— at home, in marriage, in school, at the university, in our job, and even when we are listening to the news. In this light we are all nurses, and all we need is to accept ever-present Love—to believe in it, to trust it, to understand it.

Obedience to the laws of divine Love as given to us in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, and as reflected in the By-Laws of the *Church Manual*, enables us to find the kingdom of heaven within ourselves. There we find the treasure-trove of spiritual qualities that enable us to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead—to find and promote peace on earth. These qualities also lead us to freedom from sinful thoughts and acts.

Mrs. Eddy points out some of these qualities in her description of a nurse in *Science and Health*. She says, "The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, —receptive to Truth and Love." ⁴ Our job is to identify with and to live these qualities.

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In his letter to the Galatians, Paul speaks of the fruit of Spirit as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" and says that "against such there is no law" ⁵ These qualities provide divine exemption from the material beliefs so commonly embodied in medical theory and psychology, and also protection from faulty human judgment and personal condemnation.

A Christian Scientist obeys the laws that are in force in his or her country, of course. If these allow the free practice of Christian Science nursing, the nurse is subject only to the rules of Christian Science. In this situation, it is also essential not to make any compromises with materialism. Otherwise the nurse forfeits his or her protection under the spiritual law and the human law.

But neither medical caregivers nor one who has chosen to rely on conventional medical treatment instead of on Christian Science should be condemned or judged. Such situations require prayer and compassion.

The expression of intelligent, caring Love is one of the pearls in our treasure-trove of nursing qualities. Thus equipped, we can also discern how to help those who choose to rely exclusively on Spirit, God, for regeneration and healing.

One of the loveliest rewards in Christian Science comes to us as Love reveals the nothingness of matter. This experience is one of the most uplifting, most satisfying phases of one's spiritual training. In it, the understanding appears that matter is neither the basis of life nor the preserver of life. Matter is not the substance of man, a law-giver, a cure, or a condition for preserving health. The appearing of this truth in our lives demonstrates the allness of Spirit and shows that the true creation, including man, is spiritual, sinless, and complete. This understanding is the peace we are looking for, the peace we want for both our patients and ourselves.

¹ *Man.*, Art. VIII, Sect. 31.↑ ² See John 12:12-15.↑ ³ *Science and Health*, p. 454.↑ ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 395.↑ ⁵ Gal. 5:22, 23.↑