

The substance of Christian Science nursing

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Christian Science nursing is more than an occupation, profession, or career. It is a ministry of unselfed love, the love that is the reflection of divine Love. The nurse's prayer is to follow in the footsteps of the Master, who referred to himself as one who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."¹

Such love fulfills the requirements of the promise voiced in Malachi, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."² In the measure that the nurse reflects divine Love, she finds her place, and the security and joy that go with it, in the very heart of this blessing.

The expression of divine Love in our lives is not the work of a moment. We have to strive for it; we have to earn the blessing. God's love has to be lived, not talked. This takes prayer, watching, working, demonstrating.

Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, gives us the steps. In answer to the question, "How can I progress most rapidly in the understanding of Christian Science?" she says in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Study thoroughly the letter and imbibe the spirit. Adhere to the divine Principle of Christian Science and follow the behests of God, abiding steadfastly in wisdom, Truth, and Love."³ I have read this statement many, many times, but recently the verbs suddenly stood out like beacons: study, imbibe, adhere, follow, and *abide*.

Let's consider first the matter of study. When Mrs. Eddy made this requirement of an applicant for membership in The Mother Church, "The Bible, together with Science and Health and other works by Mrs. Eddy, shall be his only textbooks for self-instruction in Christian Science, and for teaching and practising metaphysical healing,"⁴ she was not limiting him. She was freeing him, protecting him, loving him. We have to build on a solid foundation; we have to feed on the pure bread of Truth. Christian Science is Science. Human opinions and personal interpretations lose Science. They do not forward it.

As we pray for spiritual light, wonderful illuminations come to us. Then, like the wise men of old searching for the young child, we need to search. Where? In those very books. If what we earlier accepted as an illumination actually is one, it will be corroborated in the textbooks. If it is not there, we can discard it.

One of the ways that mortal mind would rob us is by making us believe we do not have time to study or do not want to study. This is animal magnetism. It is never our own thought. So whether we are the nurse on the case, the practitioner, or the patient, we must beware of these suggestions and reject them.

A prolific argument in disease is malnutrition, depletion. But it is far more important to guard against spiritual impoverishment. We should watch that we do not become spiritually undernourished—watch more alertly than the broker follows the stock market or we guard our savings! Our understanding needs constant replenishment.

An alert Christian Scientist decided to read straight through *Science and Health* several times within a short period. She told of the spiritual stimulus she had gained, the enrichment and sense of spiritual power. But what was most significant was her comment that this intensive study had carved for itself a place in her busy life that demanded to be filled by more of the same. This is what such study does for us all.

We should guard against mental penury, or spiritual impoverishment. The nurse is no good on a case—nor is the practitioner—if she is spiritually impoverished.

Now what about imbibing the spirit? Referring to Christ Jesus and his opponents, *Science and Health* says, "His senses drank in the spiritual evidence of health, holiness, and life; their senses testified oppositely, and absorbed the material evidence of sin, sickness, and death." ⁵

People today are all too often bombarded with depictions of sin, disease, death. Only Science can break this mesmerism. To be conscious of God—to feel His presence, His power, His allness, and the oneness of Principle and its idea—is to be armed with the light and love that unclasp the hold of sin and disease and heal. The Apostle Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" ⁶ —of strong *holds*.

Are we, through the spiritual vitality of our thought, drinking in Truth—drinking in the spiritual evidence of health and holiness? Or are we absorbing the testimony of the material senses? This is where the Christian Scientist needs to watch. The nurse, faced continuously with mortal mind's suggestions of life in matter, needs to build up her—or his—spiritual reserves. In the book of Revelation we read, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." ⁷

The question sometimes arises, What is the difference between the nurse's obligation on a case and the practitioner's? It's a simple difference but a big one.

The nurse has the obligation we all have—to keep her thought always on the level of Truth. She is concerned only with her own thought—watchful that she does not accept the testimony of the senses as real, no matter how loud it screams. She imbibes the spirit. She feels in her heart God's presence, the presence of the Christ. She is not there to judge, criticize, or condemn the patient, nor to uncover the error. She is there to reflect the Christ, to maintain an atmosphere of hope and trust, of gratitude and joy, and also to do the needed practical things for the patient.

The nurse may have to pray vigorously for herself to drink in the evidence of Spirit and not absorb the error, but her work is for herself, not for the patient. She does not invade his mental sanctuary, trespass on his mentality. She sustains the work of the practitioner but does not intrude upon it.

The practitioner, on the other hand, works specifically for and with the patient, letting Truth uncover the error, letting the Christ go in and heal it.

The work of the nurse is confidential and sacred. Surely Article VIII, Section 22, of the *Manual of The Mother Church* is as valid for the nurse as it is for the practitioner. It is plain that Mrs. Eddy loved and appreciated the Christian Science nurse, for in the *Manual By-Laws* under Article VIII she inserted Section 31, "Christian Science Nurse." In this By-Law she establishes the place of the nurse as long as the Christian Science movement itself endures—that is, until all of mortal mind is destroyed and there is nothing more to heal, until the reign of Spirit is demonstrated as absolute and final.

Adherence to Principle is essential in all our work as Christian Scientists. By revealing Love as divine Principle and Principle as Love, Science makes clear the infallibility of Christian healing. There is no uncertainty in

all-governing Principle, no partiality in all-embracing Love. There are rules to be obeyed, divine law to follow. Every page of *Science and Health* contains these rules. Some are specific commands: "Do this" or "Do that." Others are broad statements of fact; yet they are rules of which we should ask ourselves, "Am I doing this?" It is a rewarding thing to study *Science and Health* from the standpoint of heeding the specific rules it lays down.

Our Leader obeyed God's law. It was this obedience that opened her thought to the revelation, that enabled her to discover the Science of Truth, found the Church of Christ, Scientist, and lead the movement. To a branch church she wrote, "I, as a corporeal person, am not in your midst: I, as a dictator, arbiter, or ruler, am not present; but I, as a mother whose heart pulsates with every throb of theirs for the welfare of her children, am present, and rejoice with them that rejoice." ⁸ Let us never forget that she speaks to each one of us through her writings. There we have her admonition and counsel. There we find the answers.

The Christian Science nurse is not alone. Her work embraces her in the very heart of the movement. Unbounded opportunity to forward the healing thrust of Christian Science lies before her. Her path is rich with promise.

As she adheres to divine Principle—sticks to it as our Leader did—she abides in the secret place under the shadow of His wings. Whatever the situation, His wisdom is present to guide her, His strength is there to sustain her.

In the broadest sense, every dedicated student of Christian Science, every loyal member of The Mother Church and follower of our Leader, is engaged in this universal ministry of Love and is enfolded in its blessing.

¹ Matt. 20:28;↑ ² Mal. 3:10;↑ ³ *Science and Health*, p. 495;↑ ⁴ *Manual of The Mother Church*, Art. IV, Sect. 1;↑ ⁵ *Science and Health*, p. 52;↑ ⁶ II Cor. 10:4;↑ ⁷ Rev. 22:17;↑ ⁸ *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 152.↑