

Faith and Generosity

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*"The 'still, small voice' of scientific thought reaches
over continent and ocean to the globe's remotest bound.
The inaudible voice of Truth is, to the human mind,
'as when a lion roareth.'"*

— Mary Baker Eddy

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THE LORD THY CONFIDENCE

"FOR the Lord shall be thy confidence," wrote Solomon in his book of Proverbs, "and shall keep thy foot from being taken." Devout thinkers the world over have striven to make God their confidence, because in the course of ordinary experience they have found the ways of materiality so unworthy of confidence. But how much have they had of access to God? How much of His presence has been availing to them? Have they known how to walk with Him, talk with Him, admit Him wholly in all their thoughts?

No matter how we long to trust God, unless we know how we cannot. Many men and women wish they knew God to exist and to be a help in trouble; and stop just there, not understanding where to find Him or how to lean upon Him. Doubt suggests itself at times to almost every thinker, until he is well grounded in understanding God. Faith in right is not a natural attribute of the human mind, but is won by victory over the fear and the unbelief that pervade all human nature. Confidence in the infinite and eternal is something that comes in spite of and in the face of material evidences; and it is something to be sought and prayed for and sometimes mentally fought for and most zealously guarded.

Now many men doubt until proof convinces them; many disbelieve until driven for refuge to that divine Mind which enfolds us all. Like the little fish which swims in the ocean unknowingly, men have been unaware of the immensity of the infinite Mind, the Spirit, the Life, in which they really dwell. To such as these a scientific exposition of Christianity has come in this age; a revelation of actual truth about God and man and the universe. In Mrs. Eddy's book "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," the relation of man to God is set forth; and he who understands from this teaching the oneness of his own spiritually right thinking with God, finds himself one with God in the measure that his thoughts become spiritually right. Then as he grows in this he must part company with doubt, for knowledge and doubt do not dwell together.

The little fish, to carry our figure farther, becomes aware of his ocean; in confidence he goes about in it, knowing himself safe in its immensity. So

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he who awakens to understand spiritually the presence of God, and to know he is in that presence to the degree he keeps his thoughts open to it, learns to trust and forgets to doubt; learns to keep his thinking obedient to the divine, and to escape accordingly from the ills of human making.

This question of keeping thought right with God is really a very simple one. Take, for instance, some anxiety about the outcome of personal affairs. Selfishness, or pride of opinion, or even what is honestly "good judgment," is outlining some definite result that looks good and desirable. It may seem, in fact, that this hoped for result is the only way; but just the moment one's heart is set upon a specific thing, then fear enters. As soon as the desire takes shape, possible ways of losing what one wants very naturally appear. A train of anxious thoughts follow each other, until one may become the football of doubt and give way wholly to despair. Even the capacity for right effort is crippled, and the ensuing confusion invites the very disaster one would avoid.

On the other hand, suppose one sees a desirable prospect. If his confidence is in God, and his aim is to keep all his own thoughts godlike, his first utterance to himself will be, "Unless this thing is consistent with the highest right, I do not want it; and if it is, I can trust God's law to establish it." In this mental attitude he opens no door to fear, for he has set up no plan, no outline, no action of human will. He will be satisfied with whatever his understanding of God brings to pass; so he is at peace about results and is mentally at his best to do whatever right may require of him in working out the problem. Setting one's heart upon a given object or circumstance often leads to a frenzy of fear that is wholly avoided when one can fix his confidence in the power of good, and let right prevail without reckoning just how it shall prevail.

He who guides his thoughts in this fashion begins at once, when any plan or problem confronts him, to assure himself that God as divine Mind is the only power, the only presence; that whatever is opposed in any way to God has in itself no inherent power and survives only so long as it is given power. He then satisfies himself, by close scrutiny of his own thought-processes and by correcting any wrong thinking he discovers, that he is not giving power or place to evil in any way. He is not bargaining with God for certain things, nor fearing that he will lose them. He is just mentally

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standing, keeping his motives and aims as pure as he can, and knowing that constant dependence upon divine power will bring good to prevail in ways larger than he himself can foresee; and so he is content. He does not declare this or that must come to pass, but he knows steadfastly that divine Mind brings to pass whatever is right, annuls whatever is wrong. So he knows that if he lets divine Mind, God, govern his thinking, all his affairs will unfold in better ways than he could plan them, and always with the greatest good to the greatest number, for God's law blesses all.

Letting divine Mind govern our thinking, and leaning upon it for our intuitions, judgment, purposes, is surely better than depending upon our capricious personal view-points for any kind of guidance. He who keeps the stars in their courses and the harvests ever returning, can unquestionably shape the destiny of man far better than can man himself. So the whole Christian not only relies upon God in prayer, but he is learning how to rid his thinking of the fear and doubt that would, if not destroyed, cloud his trust. We all need educating, that we may know better what God is and why and wherein He is worth trusting. And he who diligently studies the Scriptures not only understands God better, but adds to this knowledge, if he is also heeding the scientific interpretation of the Scriptures which Mrs. Eddy has brought to this age, a clearer discernment of the human mind and its subtle ways of destroying trust in God. Then he can begin to free himself mentally, intelligently, from distrust and unbelief; and because all living is primarily mental, his cleaner mental field and increased confidence in God bring good to abound in everything he undertakes.

Wherever people have difficulty in committing their way to God because they do not understand how to do it, they may recall with comfort Jesus' words in the seventh chapter of John, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Too many of us, perhaps, are engaged in striving to know the whole "doctrine," when to do His will in putting into practice the little we already understand, is enough. If we cannot at once grasp the whole of Christianity, of Truth, or right thinking and right living, we can at least live faithfully the measure of it we do see, whether it be little or much. And this obedient mental attitude will surely bring us into "green pastures" and "beside the still waters;" it will loosen the hold of fear upon us and quicken our confidence in God, until through doing His will, however dimly it was

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first discerned, we are led into clearer seeing.

God Himself bestows confidence in good; for where divine Mind is, and where man is reflecting divine thoughts, there is trust. No doubt can enter. So we can worry less about the whole question of whether we know and trust God or whether we do not, and just quietly and humbly reflect and obey the good we know. This brings in godlikeness and puts out materiality; brings in trust and puts away doubt. And thus we learn step by step that God exists that He may maintain us; that we exist that we may trust in Him.

THE CLOSED HAND

IN an article published in the *Sentinel*, there appeared this sentence: "The closed hand cannot receive." This simple statement, almost epigrammatic in its terseness, lingered in the memory of at least one reader, and said itself over and over in her heart as she went about her daily work. "The closed hand cannot receive." And why not? She had only to hold out her own hand, tightly closed, to understand. Some one might have been offering her the price of a king's ransom, and yet so long as those fingers maintained their rigid clasp she could not have received it. Let her open her hand, however, and hold it out, palm upward as in the act of giving, and that very change of attitude, simple though it was, placed her at once in a position to receive.

As she pondered these things a picture which hangs in some Christian Science reading-rooms flashed into her memory. It represents a group of persons standing on a lawn listening to a woman who has evidently stepped out upon a low balcony to address them. The woman is Mrs. Eddy. She stands looking out upon that sea of upturned faces, a slender figure silhouetted against the sky, the face in shadow, but what a world of eloquence there is in those outstretched hands! And the palms are upturned. Giving, giving, always giving, — and since the days of Jesus of Nazareth no one has ever received in such abundance. Yet is it not only in accord with an immutable law that she who gave so much should receive in like manner? Jesus himself said, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Does the storehouse sometimes seem strangely empty, O troubled heart? We sometimes find ourselves thinking that we are not getting so much out of life as we ought, and wonder why we do not receive more. Before becoming unduly disturbed over this, suppose we try the experiment of taking an entirely different point of view. Instead of saying; "I am not getting so much as I ought," suppose we ask, "Am I giving as much as I can?" Instead of saying, "I wonder why I do not receive more," suppose we ask, "Am I making the most of what I have?"

Why should we concern ourselves as to how much we are receiving?

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That is God's part, and His work is already done. Divine Love is always saying, as did the father in the parable, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Since Principle and its idea are inseparable in Science, man already has all, for man is God's reflection. The ring and the best robe have always belonged to the son, but he can use and enjoy them only as he turns to the Father, the divine Principle of his being, from whom all good proceeds. And by the same process of reasoning, if we, today, would receive all that "the Father hath bestowed upon us," we should ask ourselves whether or not we are making the absolute best of that good of which we are already in conscious possession. If we are honestly doing this, and giving to others as it hath been given unto us, fully, freely, out of the abundance of a grateful heart, and with no thought of recompense or reward, the clear, strong currents of a still higher understanding will flow into our lives in accordance with a law of divine reciprocity.

When Saul of Tarsus first saw the light of Truth, he did not stop to inquire what all this was to bring him, nor what return he might expect for work in the Master's service. He simply fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And one who carries this prayer in his heart each day will find, when the evening shadows fall, that opportunities to give and to bless have come to him far beyond his fondest hopes. For it is the prayer of divine activity, which must ever find its answer. It is the prayer which longs to give, not one which murmurs because it does not receive. It is the prayer which asks to be shown the Father's will, not one which desires to carry out its own. It is the prayer of the righteous, which "availeth much."

Self-examination is not always an agreeable occupation, nor is it the one best fitted to send us up in our own esteem, for when we dig deeply into the depths of human consciousness we sometimes bring to the surface thoughts which do not look very pretty when viewed in the honest light of day. It is nevertheless a purifying process which none of us can afford to neglect, for nine times out of ten when things go wrong, we have only to look within to locate the trouble. Do we feel, for instance, that we receive but scant measure of love from those around us? Let us look within and find how much love we are giving. "But," we complain, "certain people do not even seem to like us." Do we like them? "If ye love them which love you," said the Master, "what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the

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same?"

Perhaps we feel that we have been unjustly treated. What about our treatment of others? Has it invariably been characterized by a gentle charity, "broad enough to cover the whole world's evil, and sweet enough to neutralize what is bitter in it"? (Miscellaneous Writings, p. 224.) Possibly our best efforts are often unappreciated. What of other people's best efforts? Have we always given to them the cordial "Well done" which we ourselves have failed to hear? Many of us feel that we are frequently misunderstood. Do we always understand others? Those who happen to differ from us may yet be quite as sincere and honest in their convictions as even we ourselves; but it takes a nature rarely great to remember this. Do we hear our mistakes criticized? Before resenting this, we might profitably look back into the past and see if we can remember ever having become a self-appointed judge in Israel. Are our faults magnified and commented upon? What of other people's faults? Have we always maintained toward them the same loving silence which we would be glad to receive in return?

Truly it is "with what measure ye mete," dear fellow worker in the bonds of Christ. Then let each begin this day, this hour, to do something for somebody; and if the suggestion comes that one is so situated that he cannot do anything for anybody, let him talk straight back to the lying argument and send it where it belongs. No one is so poor that he cannot do something, if it is only to turn over with his foot the beetle which is struggling on its back in a garden path. It is not always money which this sad world needs. In fact, could statistics of this kind be taken, they would probably show that more people starve annually for want of love than for want of food. There may be those within sound of our voice today to whom a word of encouragement would be worth more than all the money in the world. Indeed, circumstances sometimes arise when it requires more of the real Christ-spirit to hold out a hand to a friend who stands alone and misunderstood, perhaps even for the moment disgraced in the eyes of the world, than to build a church whose spires shall reach the very heavens.

When the hungry multitude lacked bread, Jesus fed them in the wilderness, "about five thousand men, beside women and children," but when Mary sat at his feet to learn more of Christ, Truth, he said she had

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chosen the one thing needful. Thus was he ever ready to give according as the human sense of need presented itself. He did not tell the starving multitude that "man shall not live by bread alone," nor did he give to Mary of the loaves and the fishes. Can we pray too earnestly for a similar discernment, for that intelligent, wisely expressed love which is ever reaching out toward humanity in tenderest compassion, ever ready to bless, to comfort, to heal?

There was once a poor widow whom Elijah found, in time of famine, gathering sticks. When he asked her to fetch him a little water and a bit of bread, she explained that she had only a handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse. "And, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." The same old lying argument — "too poor to give!" But what said the man of God? Did he come down under the same mesmerism, accept her point of view, and hastily take himself off in search of some one whose opportunities were obviously less limited? Not at all. On the contrary, he saw the mental attitude of the speaker, saw the closed hand holding fast to fear, doubt, self-interest, and lack of faith in God's infinite bounty. He saw that, so far as she was concerned, the sense of famine was nowhere so great as with her own thought, and he helped her heal it in the only way which at that moment would have done the work. "Fear not," he said, "go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first." Open the closed hand. Those stiff, cramped fingers have been shut too long. Let go of all that makes for limitation. Stop doubting God and begin to supply a brother's need out of that good of which you are already in conscious possession. The woman did as she was told, and the upturned open hand received the blessing, for we are told that "she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail."

Elijah is not here today, but God is. The same Principle which was operative then is with us now, for God is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Then let us act as if we believed this. Let us give what we have, and give it gladly. If some beautiful new thought has unfolded as consciousness, to shine like a star upon our ascending path, let us remember it is only as we pass on to others the blessing it has brought, that we may really make it our own. That which we gained yesterday, and give today, fits us to receive in yet greater measure tomorrow. The only

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man who receives nothing is the man who stands still, tightly clutching that which he has for fear of losing it.

Then let us open the closed hand. Open it wide. It should be joy enough for any one of us "to sow by the wayside for the way-weary, and trust Love's recompense of love" (No and Yes, p. 3). That recompense is sure, but it often comes more quickly when we stop looking for it. Let us be willing to leave that part of it — the what and the when and the where — to God; and just go quietly on, forgetting self in blessing others, and leaving the future to make manifest that which is already growing clearer to us each day, each hour, that we cannot lose by giving.

CONTINUITY OF RIGHT THOUGHT

THE study of Christian Science, coupled with earnest and sincere effort to conform to its teachings, results in a mighty mental revolution, an overturning of the established order of thinking and the acceptance of a new standard. At first the inquirer is buoyed up by the hope that God will heal him, whether his sickness be physical, mental, or moral, and this hope grows into faith as a faint glimpse of the truth taught in Christian Science is grasped. This faith may be, and frequently is, sufficient to result in a healing that is marvelous from a human standpoint. Following this experience, he begins, as did Mrs. Eddy, to see the necessity of learning how the healing was accomplished, and enters upon the stage of spiritual understanding of the laws of God and their application to the human race.

At this point in the journey from sense to Soul the student begins to realize the great difference between Christian Science and all other religions and philosophies. Every religion the world has known, every system of philosophy, and every phase of physical science, insists that God (to use the religious term), or the First Cause (to use the material scientist's term), is unknowable. Herbert Spencer in his great work "First Principles" devotes more than six hundred pages to an effort to reduce material science to a First Cause, and reaches the conclusion that while it must be admitted there is a First Cause, it is impossible to know it, to conceive of it; that the First Cause is unknowable, unthinkable. Religious systems have held to the same conclusion, though they have reached it by different methods of argument. "The ways of God are inscrutable," is a favorite religious declaration.

Christian Science, diametrically opposed to all these systems, insists that God is knowable. Further than that, Christian Science insists that God must be known by every one, a state of mental awareness foreshadowed in the prophecy which declared, "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." Christian Science goes still farther, and accepts literally Jesus' saying, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Even more than this, Christian Science maintains that all the life which man has, consists in what he knows about God. From this it logically follows that

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ignorance of God is death, stagnation, inaction, non-thinking.

Christian Science demonstration, the concomitant of understanding, implies a realization of the presence and power of God, a knowing which results in the destruction of ignorance about God. To know that God is present and is all-power, the source of all real activity, all life, is to know that evil is not present and has no power, activity, or life. It is the activity, the positive energy of right thought about God and man, which destroys the wrong thought or misconception. The spiritual fact is that health is the accompaniment of the law of God, and that this law is in continuous operation everywhere and throughout all time. The knowledge or understanding of this spiritual fact, applied as consciousness, destroys the beliefs of sickness which seem to manifest themselves in human experience.

That which God knows about Himself and the man whom He has created, is true; it is the only true thing about God and man. When we apprehend what God knows about us, we reflect God. The spiritual idea is the truth; the material misconception of that idea is the falsity. The practice of Christian Science consists in understanding the spiritual idea, or Christ, and this understanding destroys the material misconceptions. We thus begin to see man as God sees him; we begin to know ourselves as God knows us. The truth about man, about ourselves, was never more or less true than it is now; it never will be more or less true.

Whence, then, comes our ability to know the truth about God and man, the spiritual idea that will destroy the material misconception? Mrs. Eddy says that "scientific thoughts are true thoughts, passing from God to man." She also says that Christ is "the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness" (Science and Health, pp. 104, 332). The teaching of Christian Science is that the Christ is the impersonal truth about God and man, and that through Christian Science this truth is made available for the healing of the ills of mankind.

Since God knows all that is true about Himself and man, and since all that He knows is true, it logically follows that every right thought or spiritual idea originates and remains in God, divine Mind. God, then, is the source of right thoughts or spiritual ideas. As it is impossible to separate

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the idea from the Mind that conceives it, we must admit that God is present wherever the right thought or spiritual idea is present. Not only so, but the spiritual idea, being the expression of God, possesses the power and nature of the divine Mind. This power is unlimited, unquestioned, unbounded, uninterrupted; this nature is good, perfect, harmonious, pure.

The spiritual idea, expressing the power and nature of God, being the very activity of God, interprets itself, makes itself understood, enforces itself, maintains itself, and is its own law of continuous being. It possesses the resistless power of God. Regardless of mortal misconceptions about it, independent of human opinions and theories concerning it, this spiritual idea goes right on being itself, continually and consciously enforcing itself. A realization of the presence and activity of the spiritual idea is the coming of the Christ to the individual consciousness. This is the savior of mankind. Then, whether the human mind be conscious of it or not, the spiritual idea continues its work of being itself and destroying everything unlike God, or which would claim to oppose the divine activities.

"Be still, and know that I am God," expressed David's perception of the necessity for pushing the false sense of personal selfhood aside in order that the operation of the spiritual idea, or right thought, might be apprehended. The truth that Jesus apprehended about God and man, the spiritual idea which he perceived, had been in operation always and has continued to operate since his ascension above the earth. This spiritual idea has gone on doing its work, being itself, destroying material misconceptions, and continually lifting mankind above itself and out of its self-imposed bonds and misconceptions about God and His idea, man! The ability to know God is from God; the desire to know God is from and in God. The spiritual idea, or right thought, possesses the power to be itself. When the individual knows, apprehends, this idea, it becomes available with all its resistless power to heal the ills of mankind, — whether these are manifested as sin or sickness, — and to demonstrate the ever-presence of God's kingdom with its eternal harmony.

Every true thought about God and man that has been held from the beginning of human history, to the present day has destroyed some of the material misconceptions about man; and it will continue this work until there remains nothing of error to be destroyed. When the practitioner of

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Christian Science, whether he is trying to help himself or another, apprehends the spiritual idea, and applies his apprehension to a specific material misconception, he does not need to watch to see whether Truth will be itself, will destroy what seems to oppose it. So long as there is a desire to question, he may be sure he has not gained a full understanding of the presence and power of the spiritual idea. The right thought possesses no power through the action of the human mind or mortal consciousness. Its power is of God.

On the other hand, if the practitioner fully realizes that the right thought is from God, he will at the same time understand that God, operating through the Christ, does the healing work; he will also realize that nothing can interfere with the continuity of this right thought or prevent it from eternally being itself; he will know that this right thought will continue the healing. And — this is of vital importance — he will know that of himself he can do nothing, for the Master declared, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever."