

Christian Science Nursing: Paramount

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Friends, ones I have met, and ones I have not yet met, welcome to this day, and this specific message Love is giving us all. What gratitude we have for these avenues to bless and be blessed we have just heard! They are present-day examples of Immanuel, God with us! Of present and lively Christian Science nursing in action, in many ways!

I am so grateful for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you today, the way friends share ideas with friends, that I have been pondering for decades. You don't have to be a card-carrying Christian Science nurse to pay attention, because the message is really for all of us. Here is the message: **Christian Science nursing is vitally important!** It's not just a nice system of care to have for ailing Christian Scientists, a handy and welcome benefit, to be sure. Christian Science nursing is exponentially more. Infinitely more. I believe it is essential to the survival of mankind, a key to surmount its present significant global challenges. Indispensable. Paramount, even.

That is perhaps a startlingly bold assertion, but stick with me as we look at this together. I have come to believe that Christian Science nursing is the hidden gem of this movement. In proportion to its importance, it has been obscured, misunderstood, maligned, ignored, spurned even. My hope for this talk today is to impart a much bigger sense of what

Christian Science nursing is, see it as imperative, and encourage each of us to look around to where we might practice it more.

I didn't always think of Christian Science nursing in these grand terms, however. Remember I said that in proportion to its value, error would obscure it through misperception? Well, that described my attitude exactly. When I was just about finished with schooling, considering what direction I might want to pursue as a career, I felt I had a number of doors open to me, and could likely succeed wherever I chose. However, I felt there was one door firmly shut— Christian Science nursing! I had a definite prejudice against it. At that time, I had never met a Christian Science nurse whom I could admire. The few I had met seemed socially inept, perhaps doing this work because they could find no other job. They were working for low wages and were not having families. None of those aspects appealed to me! The whole notion of putting Christian Science next to nursing seemed to me a murky gray area where Christian Science metaphysics blended somehow with medical practices, and I wanted nothing to do with it. I was interested in healing problems, not nursing them along. I went so far in my critical attitude of it that I nearly wondered if it were a mistake in the *Manual*. How could Mrs. Eddy have put that in there?

However, I loved Christian Science and our *Manual*, and knew in my heart there were no mistakes in there. In spite of my reservations and complaints about it, I truly accepted what Mrs. Eddy wrote in a letter of her slim book of governance, quoted in *Miscellaneous Writings* (Mis. 148:8):

The Rules and By-laws in the Manual of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston,...were not arbitrary opinions nor

dictatorial demands. They were impelled by a power not one's own, were written at different dates, and as the occasion required. They sprang from necessity, the logic of events, — from the immediate demand for them as a help that must be supplied to maintain the dignity and defense of our Cause; hence their simple, scientific basis, and detail so requisite to demonstrate genuine Christian Science, and which will do for the race what absolute doctrines destined for future generations might not accomplish.

If there were a mistake, it must be mine, and one day with some humility I decided to see if I could find the true idea behind this *Manual* provision... not to become a nurse, certainly, but just to correct my misconceptions. I attended a weekend-long introduction to Christian Science nursing called “Adventure in Learning”, put on by Fern Lodge, a Christian Science nursing facility in the San Francisco Bay Area. There, I met Emily Valentine, a sturdily-built individual with snowy hair coiled neatly in a bun atop her white uniform. Yet she exuded agelessness, humility, and wisdom, and was a joyous powerhouse of love with the most wonderful twinkle in her blue eyes. She was the head nurse there, introducing this class of young people to whole new vistas of how to love your neighbor.

Sometimes there are hinges in our experience that change the direction of our lives. We may not notice it at the time, but for me, that weekend was such a hinge. Through her gentle, joyous encouragement and example, I caught a glimpse of what Christian Science nursing truly is: our Christian outreach to each other, in complete accord with Christian Science, and actually indispensable to its expression. I still was distinctly not about to pursue this vocation for myself, but was so grateful to have had a

glimpse of its genuine nature. I was so struck by those eyes, full of joy, and even more, full of wisdom. I wanted to learn what she knew.

And, I thought, three months should about do it! I decided to become a nurses' aide at Fern Lodge for three months so I could learn her wisdom. Thirty-five years later, I had begun to learn a bit of it.

Here is some of what I learned. It begins with this indispensable foundation: Christian Science, inseparable from Christian Science nursing, is not just a wonderful but relatively unknown denomination we all love, with churches and Christian Science facilities we support. It is so much vaster! It is monumental, essential, the law of God, Love itself, ever-present Good. It is universal. It is the law for all mankind, whether folks are aware of it or not. It permeates all space. It describes the relationship of God to man. Christian Science enables man to see himself as Love always sees him: not on a timeline of birth to death, not corrupted, broken, conditioned by harsh experience; not added to nor subtracted from. Christian Science, the law of God, removes the tarnish of daily experience by showing us what cannot be invaded. It reveals man as God sees him. This heals.

How does Christian Science nursing fit together with this? If Christian Science is how God loves us and we love God, we might say Christian Science nursing is how we love one another—essential to life.

You are very likely familiar with Jesus' teaching on the indispensable necessity of love. He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to

another” (John 13:35). That’s how folks would recognize his followers, by their love for each other. You likely also remember some of his final teaching to his followers in Matthew 25. I am going to read that whole passage right now. This is from the New Living Translation.

“... when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

“Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was

naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

"Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'

"And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'

"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."

By this, we can see Jesus wasn't just saying loving one another is a good idea. He puts it quite plainly. He was saying it is absolutely essential. If you want to live, you need to love. In fact, it is a damning punishment not to love.

We sometimes have heard it said that Mrs. Eddy established Christian Science nursing with the *Manual ByLaw*. For those of you who may not have reviewed it lately, I'll read it:

Christian Science Nurse. Sect. 31. A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science 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.
(Man. 49:7)

This short paragraph is the standard and basis, heart and soul for Christian Science nursing. It is helpful to notice the elements clearly defined in this directive. It declares what is required for members of The Mother Church who wish to represent themselves in this way.

The requirements are a demonstrable, that is, applicable knowledge of Christian Science practice; an alert grasp of practical steps to be taken; and the ability to give proper, appropriate care. Like three legs of a stool, they give balance, are each indispensable to the others, and all together give solid support. The directive might be thought of as the commitment to practice God's love, the wisdom to see how, and the hands to do it.

In light of Jesus' teaching on loving your neighbor that we just heard, might we consider that the Christian Science nurse ByLaw was not Mrs. Eddy establishing a new thing, but a recognition of Jesus' imperative teaching, and conscious placement of it for the guidance of all her followers? The Christian Science nurse Bylaw requires love expressed in a practical, wise, and appropriate way. As the Christ is without beginning or end, so Christian Science nursing is without edges in time or space. Jesus gave us the blueprint, and he got it from Leviticus, written centuries before he came, where it says: "... thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD." (Lev. 19:18 thou) This is the quick essence of Christian Science nursing: the Golden Rule, and Jesus' summary of the commandments: Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

So, how and why could such a modest statement outlining the requirements for a Christian Science nurse be such a powerhouse for good? How could we say its practice is paramount? Simply, because it is the most Christian arm of our movement. It is love in action. It exemplifies the Christ, which it says in *Science and Health* "... comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error." (SH 583:10)

It compassionately meets folks where they think they are, while tenderly and boldly seeing them instead where God is. It is the visible expression of Love reflected in love. It is a present day utterance of Isaiah: “Here am I; send me.” (Isa. 6:8)

This provision has often been interpreted as meaning this care is intended for Christian Scientists praying with a Christian Science practitioner for healing of a defined nursing problem. And certainly, that is a very useful expression of it, an excellent place to start, one for which we are very grateful. The work of Christian Science nurses selflessly helping the elderly, the ill, the mothers and the children, is a great blessing to the world, and an example that beams a light of hope to all. But what if we were to pry open our concept of Christian Science nursing, to see it as not just a activity by and for Christian Scientists, a little-known care system suitable for a few folks, but instead consider the possibility that it is the cherishing, spiritually bold answer for all the world’s anguish? What if we busted that narrow view wide open with the acknowledgment that it is the specific expression of the Christianity embodied in CHRISTIAN Science? Let’s consider this passage from *Science and Health*, by Mary Baker Eddy:

It is not well to imagine that Jesus demonstrated the divine power to heal only for a select number or for a limited period of time, since to all mankind and in every hour, divine Love supplies all good. (SH 494:11)

If “to all mankind and in every hour, divine Love supplies all good,” doesn’t it make sense that that good amply includes cherishing, fostering, comforting, loving— all nursing expressions, for any seeker? For all seekers?

Christian Science nursing is the specific arm of Love loving universally, where it feels effortless and where it is difficult. It is practiced constantly, most often unobtrusively, by students of Christian Science, certainly, and by others who have caught the spirit of it, if not the letter. It happens where these three elements come together: the heart that sees Love as the sole power; the wisdom that sees the need and the path; the hands and feet that meet that need.

With this wide-open view of Christian Science nursing as not just a useful resource for Christian Scientists, but a tangible expression of Love practically meeting needs for all mankind, what might that look like?

Well, here is one of Jesus' illustrations, centuries before the phrase Christian Science nursing was known, but a blueprint for it. A man, perhaps on his way to a gambling town, was attacked, robbed, and left in the ditch. A few church-going folks spotted him, but did not come to his aid. If we were looking at this parable through the lens of our present day *Manual* provision, they may have professed to have had the membership credentials, and possibly claimed that first stool leg (a working understanding of God's laws), but they clearly did not have the awareness of how to help or willingness to get their hands dirty, the second two legs. They went on their way. Someone else came across him, however, who did have all three of those Christian Science nursing qualities. He "came where he was"...had the compassion to acknowledge the need and see Love as empowering a solution. He saw some things that might be helpful, and did them: cleaned him up with what he had, helped him onto his own donkey to carry him, and went out of his way to see that he would get whatever further care was needed. He

had the heart to love, the wisdom to see what was needed, and the hands to do it. We know this story as the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Here is an account of Jesus expressing Christian Science nursing qualities, a seamless part of his loving practice. He was walking on the sea after a long day of healing and a long night of prayer. The disciples in a boat were frightened by the tempestuous sea and perhaps even more spooked by the unexpected sight of a man apparently walking over the waves coming to them. Peter called out, Is that you, Jesus? If so, I want to come, too. Jesus said, Come, and Peter did. He was successful at walking on the sea. About then, Peter looked around at his swirling circumstances, and perhaps suddenly thinking, What am I doing? I can't do this!, began to sink, calling to Jesus to save him. This is where the Christian Science nursing qualities naturally came out. It says in the King James Version, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14:31) He reached out his hand, a very practical thing to do at that moment. It wasn't because Jesus was afraid, but because Peter was. That was a living example for us of Christian Science nursing: the heart that knows and loves God as all; the perception of his brother's present need, and what would be helpful; the action that brought a solution.

Peter learned from this experience. Many years and many lessons later, when Jesus was no longer with him in person, he was putting into practice what he had been taught, including this lesson. One day he was called to the sad scene of a disciple who had died, one renowned for her service. It records in the Book of Acts that Peter turned from that tumultuous picture,

prayed, and spoke to her expecting a response. “And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up,” it says. (Acts 9: 41 (to 2nd ,)) She arose from that deathly sea that had engulfed her. This was Peter exercising those Christian Science nursing qualities that knew God was in unwaveringly control of every idea, had awareness to see what was required, and stretched out his hand to lift up the one who needed it.

So, how might the exercise of those three Christian Science nursing elements look today? Well, it often takes the form of a trained Christian Science nurse seeing the needs of another and meeting them. That is happening all over the globe this minute. It happens in watchful nurturing; patient service; cheerful feeding; orderly and loving care; joyful encouragement. It is happening as we speak. But it is also happening all over the world in ways we might not immediately associate with Christian Science nursing, just because we haven't been used to recognizing it there.

Here's one example. A couple of weeks ago, I got a call from a friend who does not identify herself as a Christian Science nurse, or even a Christian Scientist, though she loves Christian Science and loves God and works in the care-giving industry. In the midst of the conversation she shared that she had felt somewhat burdened recently and decided to go get an ice cream cone. On her way there, she saw a man on the street in obvious need. He seemed hungry and cold. She spoke with him, turned around, went home, and got him some dinner. When she returned to give it to him, there was another young man speaking to him, who had a blanket and a pillow for the house-less one. The two spoke lovingly and encouragingly to him. The next morning, my friend packed a sandwich to give him on her way to work. She was

grateful to be able to do that and still be right on time for her tasks. When she returned later, she found the man had moved on.

What was the substance of her gift? The dinner, blanket, and sandwich? Or the love shared?— the willingness to see a need and meet it with what was at hand. The meal had been eaten, and blanket left, but the love, the awareness that someone cared enough to reach out, remained. To my way of thinking, that was an expression of the universal nature of Christian Science nursing. It included the commitment to acknowledge God as supreme; an awareness of the need; and a willingness to appropriately meet that need.

Let's consider the life of another tireless worker, and see if her works exemplify the spirit of Christian Science nursing: Mother Teresa in India. In addition to her own ministering to the poorest of the poor, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, an order within her church that organized over 4,500 nuns serving in 133 countries, compassionately helping folks needing food, shelter, counsel, love. Her selfless work, leaning on God, seeing the need, and responding to it practically, points to my attention Christian Science nursing.

But wait, don't you have to be a Christian Scientist to practice Christian Science nursing? That *Manual* Bylaw does begin, "A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has..." those three Christian characteristics. Let's think about this. If this were an exclusively literal definition, the Good Samaritan would not qualify, for he was living before Christian Science or Christian Science nursing got their names. Jesus and Peter

would not pass that test, either. What if we looked at the *Manual* directive as inclusive instead of exclusive? Members of The Mother Church are those who have made a conscious life commitment to the practice of Christian Science. But Christian Science is not just a denomination, according to the author of its textbook. It is the law of God, universal, available to all, for the salvation of all mankind. This Bylaw defines what a member who wishes to represent themselves as a Christian Science nurse must do. However, it does not restrict this beneficent practice to only members of The Mother Church, nor say it is only to benefit a narrow band of followers. Humankind needs practical love. We have the means to give it! Christian Science nursing is exactly the answer to so many needs we collectively face! It is inclusive. It has an effect. Just as water makes something wet, love softens and renews. Folks respond to love. And they naturally wish to express it.

The Bylaw speaks of “ the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room”. A sick room is generally thought of as a place occupied by or set apart for people who are unwell; we tend to think of it as a specific place in a building. However, isn't much of the world right now crying out for help on many fronts? Perhaps at this moment, that “sick room” of anguish from too many hurts is not just local, in a small room, but global.

That could sound pretty daunting to one yearning to help. How can I help answer global needs? she might think. They are so vast, and I am only one person. But think of this: light pierces darkness. Darkness cannot resist it. The light of God's love must pierce the darkness of hopelessness and helplessness, sin and sorrow. God, Love, is doing the heavy lifting; our job is to bear witness. And just as light is seen not solely in a focused laser

beam, but appears in innumerable ways, so the action of Christian Science nursing, that is, Christianity made practical, takes form in many ways: in benevolence that protects children and elders; grace; social justice; neighborhood kindness; love. Let's consider a few of our global challenges, and see how this wide-open view of Christian Science nursing can tangibly help.

How might we address global warming with its increasingly violent weather disruptions through the lens of Christian Science nursing? Well, we start with our commitment to seeing this as students of Christian Science, which means we begin with God, not the problem. Mrs. Eddy instructed her household workers to pray about violent weather in her time, expecting results of pacified conditions. At one time Irving Tomlinson, a member of Mary Baker Eddy's household, recalled that our Leader used to tell them to "know that God governs the weather and no other influence can be brought to bear on it" (Irving C. Tomlinson, *Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy* [Amplified Edition], p. 269). Another time, she said, "The weather expresses our concept of it and can be handled as any claim if you do not hold it as something apart from you, governed by some other power or almanac. God governs all. This is the way Jesus stilled the tempest" (*We Knew Mary Baker Eddy*, Expanded Edition, Volume II, p. 287). So, we begin by seeing God as always in charge, even of the weather. We acknowledge that truth, ponder it, stick with it, persist. Then, we might ask ourselves, is there action to be taken? The prayer that dispels the perception of another antagonistic power may be all that is needed, but Christian Science nursing frequently includes action.

Here is an action that a friend of mine, a Christian Science nurse, took when weather in her part of the country turned bitterly

cold. It occurred to her to put up a table outside her apartment on the street, where she had gathered warm coats and blankets, and had hot drinks ready: hot chocolate, cider, and coffee. She stayed there during the day, offering the warm coats and hot drinks along with cheerful encouragement to any who needed them. Many were incredulous, wondering why she would just be giving things away. She saw it as Love warming Her precious ideas. Many were grateful, and some other neighbors came and offered extra coats, too. It turned into a neighborhood blessing! She was moved by Love to respond to the need of some of those around her in a practical, joyous way.

Let's consider another major challenge of our day: racism. Remember, in the practice of Christian Science nursing, in our commitment to practice Christian Science, we start with God, are aware of needs, and are willing to meet them in response to God's love. In addressing racism, we might start with asking ourselves, what does God know about this? An answer to that might begin, God knows and loves every idea She has made. Each one is precious. Each one is colorful. Each one is unique. Each one is needed. As God's, Love's, image, man is not a material collection of conditions and circumstances, culture and education, but a loved, pristine, God-embraced spiritual idea. He naturally expresses that love, not fear, hatred, suspicion, or division.

A friend of mine, another Christian Science nurse, is a member of a Gospel Choir. Though she and most other members of the choir are White, this joyful group is directed by an African American and firmly anchored in the Black gospel tradition. Not too long ago, the choir decided to attend a major national convention of gospel choirs in Birmingham, Alabama.

She prepared joyfully and prayerfully for this large gathering. Upon arrival, one afternoon on the way to rehearsal, her African American choir mate walking just in front of her tripped over some cords, falling hard on her face. She chipped a tooth, and seemed dazed and not herself. Immediately, my Christian Science nurse friend was at her side, telling her God is here, loving her. She spoke in ways this Bible-loving friend could understand, and she kept it up. God is present, now. His will is good. It is not His will for you to fall or be hurt. A mutual friend with a rented car drove the woman to the hospital. The Christian Science nurse accompanied her friend, continuing to reassure her of God's love and constant care. During the long wait at the hospital, the singer began to be more herself and by the time a doctor was ready to see her, she felt fine. After being examined, there appeared no sign of a broken nose, as that had been a major concern. The two returned to the gospel gathering. They were scheduled to perform that night. The woman who had tripped earlier that day ended up front and center in the line up on stage. Though her face was still black and blue, she sang out as happily as the rest, perhaps even more so. No one ever commented on her appearance. She had felt Love's embrace that day, in the tender and persistent care of the Christian Science nurse bearing faithful witness to God's ever-present, unfaltering love. Though their choir was the last to perform in a long night of many such performances, they received a standing ovation from the audience of mostly Black fellow gospel singers, musicians, directors and performers, well versed in the Black Gospel tradition. Love is universal, and all those present felt it. That singer who was helped by her Christian Science nurse friend continues to this day to remark about it, saying, "She just stayed with me the whole time!"

How might we all practice this more consistently? Well, the best place to start is right where we are. Starting with a commitment to practice this universal law of Love, acknowledging God, Love, as supreme, we get to listen. We get to be acquainted with what might be helpful, and be willing to help right where we see a need. Acting on that willingness, do that deed. And though the needs may be global, our response to them comes right where we are.

Here is another story, that makes us want to do better as a community of Christian carers. A friend of mine found herself unwell. As a student of Christian Science, she prayed for herself and had practitioner help. After a long time of little relief, she felt she might not survive this and decided to seek medical attention. At that point, her church friends stopped coming, and the practitioner stopped praying. She felt desperate and abandoned. She did improve under the medical care she received, but was anguished to feel she had lost her church in the process. She eventually reconnected with Christian Science, but still feels deeply the need to see how we can help each other if an ill has not been healed in Christian Science treatment, and one turns to other means. As this is not an isolated case, here is a question for all of us who yearn to help: is there a place for Christian Science nursing in situations like this?

Humbly, we acknowledge that each of us is free to seek help where we feel it is most likely to be successful. It is not for us to judge another's choice in that. If a fellow member is struggling and afraid, and turns to an approach other than Christian Science, most likely a Christian Science practitioner will not be continuing Christian Science treatment, and the individual will not likely be receiving care in a Christian Science nursing facility,

as the guidelines are pretty straightforward on that. Attempting to combine two opposite standpoints doesn't make for success in either. But can't we as practicing Christians listen for how we can still love and support these dear ones? Love is what we all need. Love is what those frightened folks need. Maybe that can be expressed in a phone call, a card, or a visit to the hospital. Maybe it will be delivering a meal to the family or a basket of goodies. It might be taking their children out to a park or swimming pool. Perhaps it will be including them in one's prayer for all mankind. It can take all sorts of forms, but the essence of it is Love, the love-in-action Jesus spoke of that we do for another, we do to him. That Love-in-action is a form of Christian Science nursing in action, that is, a commitment to the practice of Christian Science, an acknowledgment of God as supreme, no matter what; a willing and accurate awareness of what could be helpful; an action that is appropriate.

This brings to mind Mrs. Eddy's remarks on Love in *Miscellaneous Writings*:

Love is not something put upon a shelf, to be taken down on rare occasions with sugar-tongs and laid on a rose-leaf. I make strong demands on love, call for active witnesses to prove it, and noble sacrifices and grand achievements as its results. Unless these appear, I cast aside the word as a sham and counterfeit, having no ring of the true metal. Love cannot be a mere abstraction, or goodness without activity and power. As a human quality, the glorious significance of affection is more than words: it is the tender, unselfish deed done in secret; the silent, ceaseless prayer; the self-forgetful heart that overflows; the veiled form stealing on an errand of mercy, out of a side door; the little feet tripping along the sidewalk; the gentle hand opening the

door that turns toward want and woe, sickness and sorrow, and thus lighting the dark places of earth. (Mis. 250:14)

In sharing these ideas and experiences of Christian Science nursing in unexpected places, there is no thought that this blessed practice of Christian Science nursing should be watered down or compromised, just because it may be new to the folks being helped, any more than a practitioner of Christian Science would water down or compromise his treatment if the seeker were new to Christian Science healing. The purpose in exploring this is to consider that we have been looking at this provision perhaps too narrowly for a long time. We have much to offer. The world needs this Christian Science care, just as it is set forth.

I was recently asked, What if it's in your face? What if it's really hard? Well, the situations that call for Christian Science nursing very often are "in your face," and frequently are hard. However, a lie repeated remains forever a lie, no matter how often it is presented. Our determination and ability to be firm in the face of those aggressive pictures comes from our standpoint of perfect God, perfect man.

As a final-for-today global challenge that can use some alert Christian Science nursing, let's consider this brash invader: Mr. Covid. Let's walk through this together to think how we might approach it. At the outset, we see our qualification. We acknowledge our membership, our collective unity, with the organization most dedicated to seeing God as supreme and man as safely in Her care. Whether you are a currently member of The Mother Church or not, if you feel this unity with God and Her followers, you can claim this allegiance on some level. If we are representing ourselves as Christian Science nurses for this

need, that means we are acknowledging our willingness and capability to bear witness and be obedient to Love's promptings. After that acknowledgment, we can be guided by the rest of the Bylaw.

Step 1: Have a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice. As always, we begin with God. Taking the world in our arms, we can say, Don't be afraid. God is here, now, the only Cause; the sole Creator; the Omni-good of the universe. Matter is not a cause. Disease is not a cause. A pandemic has no more reality in God's eyes than a stubbed toe. One times zero is the same as six billion times zero. Both equal zero. We get clear on that in our own prayer before we move on.

Step 2: Have a thorough understanding of the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room. It's always wise to get a spiritual take on what looks like a material circumstance, so here is how we might do that.

- In much of the world these days we are constantly being reminded to cover our mouths. We can take the spiritual essence of that to heart: watch and actively protect what we are taking in and giving out. Especially, beware of taking in large doses of depressing news, forecasts, numbers, and fear reverberating on social media, news, TV, and online. Keep that toxic stuff out! Don't be swept away with it! "Stand porter at the door of thought." (SH 392:24 Stand (only)) So, take in only dependable truth and exhale only benevolence. And, if you need to, cover your mouth.
- Wash your hands often and don't spread germs—negative thought-germs, that is. Jesus said, "It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart." (Mark 7:15, New Living Translation) Maintain

your innate purity, renewing that regularly. And clean hands are good.

- Keep a distance, we are told. OK, we can do that to help others feel at ease. But we can take that directive to remind us to keep a distance from the suggestion that disease is a possibility. In fact, we can entertain the truth that there is no point of intersection at all between a spiritual idea and conditions in matter. At the same time, we can rejoice that there is no separation whatsoever from God's eternal, persistent love.
- Stay home if you are not feeling well. There is no safer place than "the secret place of the Most High," where "...no evil [shall] befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." (Ps 91:1, 10)
- Get vaccinated, we are urged. That can remind us to claim our God-bestowed, already-present immunity from matter's allegations. In the Golden Text of this week's Bible Lesson, it says, "God ... is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." (Prov. 30:5) That shield is real, reliable, and provable.

Step 3: Take proper care of the sick. This is where we get to practice the Golden Rule. Confident of our own safety, and that of those around us, we can still by our actions help others be less fearful. If we find we are required to get the vaccination, we can do that without fear. We are law-abiding, and we are kind. And all the time, we can "...cheerfully await the certainty of ultimate perfection." (SH 97:2 2nd They) We can be unafraid, and we can be an influence for good when the occasion arises, in thought, word, and deed. Being equipped with the certainty of God's omnipotence, we can listen and act in a way that brings comfort and peace. God will tell you the what, when, where, and how.

I began our time together proposing that Christian Science nursing is way bigger than how it has been traditionally perceived and practiced. That bigger view embraces our dear fellow church members, as well as others along our path. The *Manual* definition is an inclusive directive, not an exclusive one. It calls out the loving and perceptive qualities of thought and deed necessary in the giver. It doesn't mention qualifications for the receiver but its practice deeply blesses both giver and receiver. That care, that love, is life itself! Essential, and paramount. We saw at the beginning of this talk a screen defining paramount. It means superior to all others in influence or importance; supremacy in rank or jurisdiction; central; dominant; leading; primary; that which outweighs all others in influence or effect. Think of it! In proportion to our fidelity to Love, our individual and collective practice of Christian Science nursing is paramount, for the world!

But wait, how about Christian Science healing, isn't that what is paramount, one might rightly ask? Pure Christian Science healing is not left on the sidelines. The practice of Christian Science healing and Christian Science nursing are distinct, but inseparable. They are Love exemplified. It is really **Love** that outweighs all else, **infinite Love that is paramount**. Christian Science healing and Christian Science nursing are like two hands working together. We could also think of them as the two pedals on a bicycle. They work concurrently in perfect unison, both propelling forward progress. They are also like Love seen through a prism. The colors are unique, but all come from the same source. Together the practice of Christian Science healing and Christian Science nursing bless mankind with what it needs most: a conviction of the law of God in operation; (also known as a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice); a

discernment of need (practical wisdom); and hands to do the work (proper care). It's for all of us. As we cherish this, Love supplies the wherewithal— "... the wisdom and the occasion for a victory over evil!" (SH 571:16–18)

Thank you, and God bless you all!

References used in this talk:

Mis. 148:8

John 13:35

Matthew 25:31-46, New Living Translation

Man. 49:7

Lev. 19:18 thou

SH 583:10

Isa. 6:8

SH 494:11

Luke 10:30-37

Mark 14:22-33

Acts 9:36- 42

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Mis. 250:14

SH 392:24 Stand (only)

Mark 7:15, New Living Translation

Ps 91:1, 10

Prov. 30:5

SH 97:2 2nd They

SH 571:16–18