

Upbuilding Church and its Activities

Excerpts from a talk given by Dr. Tom Fuller
at Arden Wood, May 5, 2019

Thanks for being here today. I gave a talk here some years ago when my wife's mom lived here. I've stayed here myself a few times and visited friends residing here. I have received Christian Science nursing care here. It is a great privilege to share this time with you in this beautiful building. But Arden Wood, of course, is far more than a building, isn't it? It's an idea—an idea that includes the beauty, peace, care, and light it offers its guests, visitors, and workers. There's more to say about that later.

You may have wondered about the title: "Upbuilding church and its activities." So did I!

I was struck by Mrs. Eddy's description in her *Church Manual*:

"THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST, IN BOSTON, MASS., is designed to be built on the Rock, Christ; even the understanding and demonstration of divine Truth, Life, and Love, healing and saving the world from sin and death; thus to reflect in some degree the Church Universal and Triumphant" (*Manual* 19:1-6).

We understand the "built on the Rock" part. No building is stronger than its foundation. So upbuilding, of course, begins with the foundation. Jesus taught that we must build on the rock, not on the sand, for our building to withstand the storms. Laurance Doyle observed years ago that sand is just a large number of tiny rocks (quartz). If we build on the oneness of Mind, the only-ness of Mind, we have built on the Rock, Christ. If we build on the assumption that there are many little minds, with shifting opinions, differing expectations, natterings, and so forth—we're building on sand—a perfect recipe for getting washed away in the storm.

Yes, we get that part of the description. But why "designed to be built"? Isn't it already built? Mrs. Eddy states in the chapter, Genesis:

"Creation is ever appearing, and must ever continue to appear from the nature of its inexhaustible source. Mortal sense inverts this appearing and calls ideas material" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 507:28-31).

So, if God also creates church (and, of course, He does), then it must be that, in Truth, church is an ever unfolding idea even while material sense calls it a material structure, a material organizational object—a done deal, so to speak. Speaking of the original edifice, Mrs. Eddy wrote in *Miscellaneous Writings*:

"The diviner claim and means for upbuilding the Church of Christ were prospered. . . . Built on the rock, our church will stand the storms of ages. . . . The First Church of Christ, Scientist, our prayer in stone, will be the prophecy fulfilled, the monument upreared, of Christian Science" (140:25-3).

Upbuilding is a verb. So is **upreared**. Perhaps these verbs point to the *continuing activity*

of Church, the creation that is ever appearing and must ever continue to appear. It's time for a closer look at nouns and verbs.

William Safire won a Pulitzer Prize for his political writing and is widely recognized as a grammar expert for his "On Language" columns in *The New York Times*. He wrote a book for writers, with the charming title of *Fumble Rules*. Each of the 50 Fumble Rules contradicts itself to make a point. Here are some examples:

"Verbs **has** to agree with their subjects.

Don't use **no** double negatives.

Never use a long word when a **diminutive** one will do."

My personal favorite of the 50 *Fumble Rules* is:

"Don't **verb** nouns."

In fact, I considered making the title of this talk "Don't **noun** verbs!" We are in a beautiful building, but, as I said earlier, it is far more than a building; it's an idea. Suppose I just presented this single word to you—"building"—and then asked, "What part of speech is it—noun or verb?" You can't tell without a sentence or context around it. Sometimes physical exercise, lifting weights, etc. is called body building. Mrs. Eddy had something else in mind in this report on one of her sermons:

"Early training, through the misinterpretation of the Word, had been the underlying cause of the long



years of invalidism ... With the understanding of Scripture-meanings, had come physical rejuvenation. The uplifting of spirit was the upbuilding of the body" (*Misc 169:6*).

What is the work of building church? It is already a structure, of course. In fact, it's the structure of Truth and Love. It both rests on and proceeds from its infinite Principle. As witnessed, experienced, by humanity, the church is:

"... that institution, which affords proof of its utility and is found elevating the race, rousing the dormant understanding from material beliefs to the apprehension of spiritual ideas and the demonstration of divine Science, thereby casting out devils, or error, and healing the sick" (*S&H 583:14*).

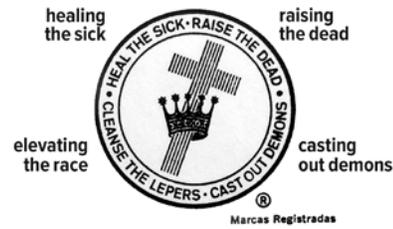
Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm spiritual..." or, "I'm a spiritual person, but I'm not interested in institutional religion"? Have you ever heard a Christian Scientist say that? Have you ever felt that way yourself?

Perhaps such a person feels cramped by rules, by structures. Such folks might want their truth unstructured, natural, individual, tailored to their ideas, not defined or limited by others. What gives a tree structure? Roots, trunk, branches. What would a tree be without structure? A leaf pile. What's a fish without structure? A blob, an oversized amoeba. Of course, even an amoeba has structure and could not move without it.

But such statements about institutionalized religion seem to tar the word **institution** with unfair graffiti, such as stodgy, boring, old, rigid, etc. (Of course, if we eliminate these qualities in our thought, they cannot possibly appear in our church!)

So, is **church building** a noun or a verb? Could we envision the word **institution** as the *action of instituting*? Have you ever noticed how the words **institute** and **substitute** look alike? I looked them up. In law, the first heir to whom an estate is given is the **institute**. If the first heir (*institute*) is no longer alive, the estate passes to a secondary heir (*substitute*). Thus, our church is the intended heir of Truth and Love, the original and not a substitute. We might say it's the **instituting** (*institution*) or constituting of Principle—a constant unfolding of Truth and Love in human experience. It's a verb just as much as it's a noun—perhaps, more so.

How can there be any freedom outside the structure of Truth, the very Truth that makes us free?



And look again at all the verbs in the definition of church: **affording** proof [proving], **elevating** [purifying, uplifting, cleansing], **rousing** [stirring, raising], **casting out evils, healing**.

Moreover, notice how these verbs align with the seal of Christian Science.

Isn't this verb-centered flavor of church hinted at in the *Church Manual*?

"THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST, IN BOSTON, MASS., is designed to be built on the Rock, Christ;" (*Manual 19:1-3*).

Our church is designed to *be* built. This is the word **building** as verb, as doing, as *living* church.

One morning while I was praying by a window, a small bird mistook reflection for sky and crashed hard against the glass. Going outside, I found a motionless crumpled form. Ironically, I just had been praying with two synonyms for God: Life and Principle. I declared that the only Life was God, Principle; therefore, life could not be fragmented or deformed. For Life to turn into deformity or death would be unprincipled. Since Principle is Life, no Principle-sustained idea accidentally fails or dies—it lives! This Principle is not some lifeless, cold principle like the principle of the inclined plane; it's Life itself. It's expressed! It lives, moves, has being! Life that is Principle sustains, supports, upbuilds.

Therefore, the lie of accident and injury must be rejected—set aside as impossible. As I felt the truth of this, the situation naturally corresponded to the thought; the bird stirred and minutes later flew off—demonstrating the vitality and healing power of Life. You might say the bird became less of a noun and more of a verb. But this wasn't the end of the story. I was left with a wonderful sense of impending good—the feeling that this healing pointed to a continuously operating Principle—the Principle that is the foundation of our church (a Principle that is Life, not dead rocks or concrete, but living stones) and that I would revisit its promise later that day. (We notice, of course, that the word **foundation** can be conceived as a verb—the ongoing founding of church, showing Mrs. Eddy's continuing role as Founder.)

Stay tuned—more to come on this channel later!

As long as we're talking about building, what shapes appear in God's architecture—in the superstructure that we're building on this solid foundation? Lines, planes, rectangles, etc.?

"Christian Science translates Mind, God, to mortals. It is the infinite calculus defining the line, plane, space, and fourth dimension of Spirit" (*Misc* 22:10-12).

The city foursquare of Revelation is an example of spiritual architecture. However, I suggest that one primary structure in God's architecture is the **sphere**.

It's time for a geometry lesson. You knew that was coming, yes? I mean, when you hire a math teacher to give a talk, what else could you expect?

"Mind is perpetual motion. Its symbol is the sphere. The rotations and revolutions of the universe of Mind go on eternally" (*S&H* 240:14).

"The real Life, or Mind, and its opposite, the so-called material life and mind, are figured by two geometrical symbols, a circle or sphere and a straight line. The circle represents the infinite without beginning or end; the straight line represents the finite, which has both beginning and end. The sphere represents good, the self-existent and eternal individuality or Mind; the straight line represents evil, a belief in a self-made and temporary material existence" (*S&H* 282:3-11).

Modern geometry teachers use the phrase for "line" in this context. It has beginning and end. Is this a good model for the building that we've been discussing? A line segment begins somewhere, *before* which it *isn't*! Then something is created/constructed from various materials (chalk, ink, etc.), so the line is something for a while. Then it ends, *beyond* which it *isn't* again!

This is the mortal model, isn't it? The model of birth, growth, maturity, decrepitude, decay, death. Whether we apply this to a person, a body, a building, or a church, it's still the mortal model.

Mrs. Eddy writes in the chapter, Recapitulation:

"*Question.*—What is error?

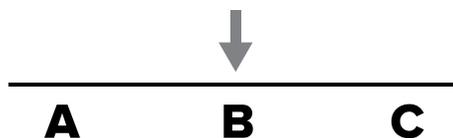
Answer.—Error is a supposition that pleasure and pain, that intelligence, substance, life, are existent in matter. . . . It is that which seemeth to be and is not" (*S&H* 472:13-19).

Have you ever heard the expression, "You're just handing me a line?" What does it mean? It means that you are being handed a **LIE**, a **LiNE**, an error. And what holds the lie? What contains the lie? It's contained in be**LIE**f, that which begins and ends. Included in Mrs. Eddy's answer is, "Error is a belief without understanding" (*S&H* 472:18 only).

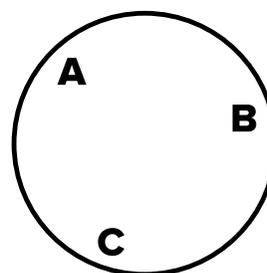
Now, the circle or sphere is entirely different. Where is the start of a circle? Where does it end? It symbolizes

continuous being, unfoldment of already-existing, always existing, ever-existing being.

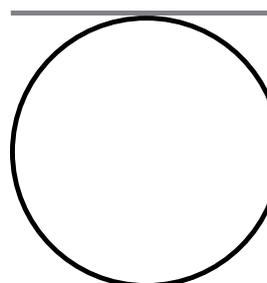
It's possible to order things along a line. We can, for example, say that B comes *after* A and *before* C. On a vertical line, we could say that A is *above* B which is *above* C.



Now try this with a circle. Can we say that B is between A and C? Is it possible to go from A to C without even going through B? Sure. There's no sense of linear order, rank, judgmental comparison, in a circle.



Here a line segment appears to be touching a circle. But as Mrs. Eddy states, "Eternal Mind and temporary material existence never unite in figure or in fact" (*S&H* 282:11).



As we look more closely, the line and the circle appear closer to each other, but at any magnification, the line only touches the circle at a single point. Now, remember back to your geometry class. What is the width of the point? Is it an eighth of an inch? A millionth of an inch? No. The width of a point is precisely zero. Although the line and the circle appear to share something in common, in fact, they have exactly zero span, zero interval, zero space, where they are in agreement.

"Similarly, matter has no place in Spirit, and Spirit has no place in matter. Truth has no home in error, and error has no foothold in Truth. . . . Even though they seem to touch, one is still a curve and the other a straight line" (*S&H* 282:15).

If we spin a circle, we make a sphere. As Mrs. Eddy notes, a sphere—like a circle—has no beginning and no end. Similarly, we cannot order points on a sphere in the sense that one point is before another or after another. The radius of Mind as sphere is infinite. So, at every point, we are at the exact center of Mind, and Mind extends infinitely far in every direction.

“God is at once the centre and circumference of being” (*S&H* 203:32-1).

This spherical architecture of good finds poetic expression in a poem by Peter Henniker-Heaton that is now hymn 591:

“We cannot turn away from God
Because, whichever way we face,
Spirit is there. In every place,
Every direction, everywhere
Spirit is there.

Whether we turn to left or right
To north or south or east or west
We meet with Love—and we
are blessed.

Upward or down, below, above,
We meet with Love”

(*Christian Science Hymnal*, 591).

This “every-directionness” also appears in the city foursquare.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev 21:23).

“Its gates open towards light and glory both within and without, for all is good, and nothing can enter that city, which ‘defileth, . . . or maketh a lie’ [or a line!] (*S&H* 577:24).

Think of that: light within and light without! The sphere of light filling all space, all thought, is an impenetrable shield in every direction against the so-called powers of darkness. Darkness has no weapon against light and cannot defend itself against light. Imagine an arrow or a bullet or a germ made entirely of darkness. It would vanish instantly as it attempted to enter light!

This concludes today’s geometry lesson. It’s time to move on to the Astronomy lesson. (If you hire the Associate Director of the Principia Astronomical Observatory, what else did you expect?)

Consider one of my personal favorite spheres—a very helpful sphere—the sun. Imagine that you are a ray of light coming from the sun, a ray that might shine on earth. But the earth is a moving target, zipping around the sun

at about 67,000 mph. Suppose you, the sunbeam, are now shining on the earth. How much does that matter to a sunbeam? What is the identity of a sunbeam? It’s a mix of several million colors that humans can see plus a billion more colors that we can’t see. The beam sparkles, scintillates, among these billions of colors constantly every second. That marvelous identity remains the same, always unfolding from the sun—no matter where the sunbeam shines.

Of course, the earth is still moving in its orbit at 67,000 mph,

so the beam appears to race across the earth. How long will our sunbeam rest on the earth as the earth races through it? It depends on the beam’s path.

If the sunbeam hits the earth at the equator, it will take about seven minutes for the earth to move out of the beam. If the beam traverses the earth through San Francisco, St. Louis, and so forth, it runs off the other side sooner (about 5 and a half minutes) because the earth isn’t as wide there.

If the beam lands close to the North Pole, it may only shine on the earth for a few seconds. But again, the beam is not concerned about where it

lands. It just shines radiantly, and always, out from the sun—illuminating, glowing.

It’s reminiscent of hymn 14:

“Arise, arise and shine,
On thee hath dawned the day;
God is thy sun, and Christ thy light,
Be thou a steadfast ray.”

As we are Christlike, we are a “gentle beam of living Love” (hymn 449).

I had a beautiful and talented high school friend, who was full of earthly promise. She was identified as the best young operatic voice in Virginia and achieved second runner-up for Miss Virginia. She loved children and delighted them with her Donald Duck voice.

While driving in western Virginia one morning, I heard of her passing on the radio. As I drove through the forest, I felt an overwhelming sense of tragic loss and emptiness. She was so young, barely in college, and she had so much to offer. As tears made driving difficult, I stopped by the roadside in the silent forest and prayed for understanding and comfort.

Love quietly sent me an astronomy angel message. I noticed the streams of sunlight penetrating the misty forest. This precious angel persisted, touched me, with a question:



What is the source of these luminous rays? It's the sun, of course. These graceful beams are shining out from the sun. The angel asked again: Where were these rays a few minutes ago? It was just after dawn, so I knew the earth must just be turning into them. Since the earth is moving briskly along its orbit, these rays were shining out into deep space minutes ago (before the earth moved into their path), and after the earth has moved past the rays, they will be shining far out into space again. As we said, they fall on the earth for only a few minutes, and if a ray glances the top of the earth, it may be earthbound for only a few seconds.

The message grew clearer. All the beauty and grace and music and even the Donald Duck voice that made kids giggle were qualities shining out from Soul. These qualities and the exact representation of them that I knew as the opera singer had always been shining out from Father-Mother Love, and always would. Not only are those qualities always expressed, but they are always seen, appreciated, and loved; they are always delighting others because man is both the manifestation and the object of God's affection. And my friend's spiritual identity, the substance of her being, would always be safe, whole, perfect, loved in God. Again, from *Science and Health*:

"Continuing our definition of man, let us remember that harmonious and immortal man has existed forever, and is always beyond and above the mortal illusion of any life, substance, and intelligence as existent in matter" (302:14-18).

Even if the ray barely touched the earth (near the North Pole) for just seconds, it would have existed forever and would remain its radiant self forever, and every other beam would delight in it.

Only the lie of time would suggest that we start one moment and end in another. That was never God's view any more than seven minutes of earthfall is the sun's view of one of its rays. In a paragraph with the marginal heading, "The divine loveliness," Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*:

"Being possesses its qualities before they are perceived humanly. Beauty is a thing of life, which dwells forever in the eternal Mind and reflects the charms of His goodness in expression, form, outline, and color" (247:19-24).

I felt the nearness and dearness of God's specific love for me and for my friend. I felt lifted and warmed and satisfied, basking in the unquenchable light of Life. What a generous and glorious answer God sent to my questing prayer. And how thoughtful Father-Mother Love was to send me an astronomy angel!

But there's more! We don't *relate* to each other by our own efforts or by heredity or by the line of time. As they say, we're joined at the hip. Or more accurately, we are joined at the Sun. At our very Soul. I am joined to that opera singer and to every one of God's children at my very Soul, at my Mind. And so are you! And so is all of church. How could there be a discordant relationship in church? Or anywhere? Joined at the Soul, and *nowhere else*, joined by Mind and by *nothing else*, we are assured of perfect harmony, even with our limitless originality and individuality.

(And, of course, another name for Sun is Sol!)

"The sinless joy,— the perfect harmony and immortality of Life, possessing unlimited divine beauty and goodness without a single bodily pleasure or pain,— constitutes the only veritable, indestructible man, whose being is spiritual..." (S&H 76:22-26).

This is also true of church, the veritable, indestructible, church, whose building is spiritual.

Another friend joined at the Soul, Gil Ives, was perhaps my closest and most helpful birding buddy. We birded together dozens of times. He gave a testimony in church decades ago that touched me deeply. He passed off the earth some years ago, as has his son, but I was able to reach his granddaughter just a month ago. She had never heard her grandfather's testimony, was very grateful to hear it, and was glad to have it shared with you today.

Gil fought in World War II. He was captured by the Nazis and thrown into a prison camp. The conditions were unthinkable bad. Over a hundred men were jammed into a cell that might have barely allowed a couple dozen to lie down. The sanitation was dreadful and the stench worse. Disease was rampant. A viciously contagious disease found its way into the prison cell. Men caught it and died in a couple days. The prison guards would drag the bodies out each morning. Gil was a devout Christian Scientist at the time and prayed for himself and his fellow prisoners constantly. Nonetheless, he caught the disease.

He was soon very sick, close to death, passing in and out of consciousness. In a lucid moment, he thought: "If only I could call a Christian Science practitioner, I could be healed." An angel message came: "There are very many Christian Science practitioners praying for 'man' all around the world, in the US, in Germany, in Japan. They are praying for those in service, and they are praying for peace."

A second message came: "*You are that man*. Those prayers are *effective*, and you can see the *results*."

Gil says: "I was healed in two hours. I *never* lost consciousness again since that time. That was more than 60 years ago.

I came home not long thereafter [when the prison camp was liberated by the Allies], and completed the recovery, but I never lost consciousness again, and I declare for myself constantly: Prayer is effective, and I can see the results."

So, how does this testimony relate to **nurse**—another word that's both noun and verb! Especially, the Christian Science nurse? Just as surely as there were and are Christian Science practitioners praying, watching, healing at every hour, there are Christian Science nurses doing so as well.

A friend, not a Christian Scientist, had many occasions to see Christian Science nurses at work. He was amazed at their coordination, quickness, mental and physical athleticism. He commented on their ability to come into a room where there was a need—fully fresh, not riveted to the condition, but alert, mentally awake, ready to determine the tactical need, make a plan, take the steps required, and then move on to the next need. He said, "This is the Navy SEAL Team Six of the Christian Science movement!"

I think the Navy SEALs would be proud. So would Gil. Mrs. Eddy observes that Jesus introduced the teaching and practice of *Christianity* in an age of "ecclesiastical despotism" (SH 473:18). Are we still in such an age? Are we currently introducing the teaching and practice of *Christian Science* in an age of "ecclesiastical despotism?" Perhaps our Ecclesia, our prevailing church, is the church of *materia medica*. And what Mrs. Eddy called our "systematized centers" are daily on the front line to free mankind from that despotism.

Christian Science nurses are at the ready 24/7/365: trained, prepared, alert, and ready to meet the need. In homes, facilities, schools, camps, our movement's SEAL teams are always at their post, and we are grateful! And we prove ourselves most grateful when we go and do likewise!

Speaking of 24/7/365: **Time** is another example of being handed a line, a lie. It definitely has limits, "befores," and "afters." **Eternity**, on the other hand, is not linear; it is a sphere. As we keep thought in tune with the infinite, we build for eternity.

"My noble students, who are loyal to Christ, Truth, and human obligations, will not be disheartened . . . They build for time and eternity" (Misc 264:3-6).

"We should consecrate existence, not 'to the unknown God' whom we 'ignorantly worship,' but to the eternal builder, the everlasting Father, to the Life which mortal sense cannot impair nor mortal belief destroy" (S&H 428:15).

And, finally:

"Remember that a temple but foreshadows the idea of God, the 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . .'" (My 194:6).

Nehemiah faced "time robbers" even before he undertook the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall.

"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, the God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (Neh 2:17-20).

Portion implies a *present* occupancy. **Right** implies a *claim* on the property—a *future* presence. **Memorial** implies a *past* occupancy. In denying evil a past, present, or future, he shattered its claim to power or presence and opened the way for upbuilding the wall.

Similarly, the introduction that opens the way to the Bible Lesson every Sunday specifically affirms its "application to all ages: past, present, and future" (*Christian Science Quarterly*).

And we're regularly reminded to "daily watch and pray to be delivered from all evil, from prophesying, judging, condemning, counseling, influencing or being influenced erroneously" (Man 40:11). Think about those first three verbs: What does erroneous *prophecy* point to: a misunderstanding or misperception of the future. Erroneous *judging* points to a misperception of the present; erroneous *condemning* points to a misperception of the past.

Or as Mrs. Eddy put it in the chapter, Teaching Christian Science:

"Judge not the future advancement of Christian Science by the steps already taken, lest you yourself be condemned for failing to take the first step" (S&H 459:8).

One of the healings in the chapter, Fruitage, includes this wonderful line:

"I will never forget this morning, . . . the forever coming of Christ to consciousness" (S&H 680).

The morning or dawn metaphor appears so often in the Bible and in a number of articles over the years. Here's an example from an article by Julia Michael Johnson in the

Christian Science Sentinel. Although written in the third person, this describes her father and herself:

Her Dad awoke her well before dawn one morning and asked if she wanted to see God's power. She eagerly arose, got dressed, and walked with her Dad to the apple orchard. As dawn drew close, her Dad explained that the sunrise is like God's power. "There is no noise, no pushing, no fighting, no destruction with it. It is so gentle that it cannot hurt a blade of the orchard grass when it touches it, and yet so mighty that nothing can stop it. The light as it unfolds touches everything, everything that you can see, and much that you cannot see. Wherever it comes, the darkness goes. The dawning is so still, so beautiful, so sure, so near, as is the power of God" (CSS, August 2, 1930, "The Power of God" by Julia M. Johnston).

I love to watch the dawn (and photograph it). As an astronomer, I know how fast dawn approaches: almost 800 miles per hour in San Francisco, faster than the speed of sound!

If all 7.7 billion of earth's citizens yelled as loudly as they could, "There is no light," by how much would that delay dawn? Not one second. Nothing can delay our individual advance into the light, nor the collective advance of our church into the light—not by a second. At this speed, we effortlessly leave fear and resistance far behind.

Flash! We interrupt this presentation for an interview with one of our city's most distinguished citizens: **Mr. 2+2**. The interview begins:

Tom: Good day, 2+2.

Mr. 2+2: Hi Tom.

Tom: How's life treating you these days?

Mr. 2+2: Well, frankly not so well, Tom. As you know, I used to be 4. Now on my good days, I'm barely 3.7. Last week the best I managed was 3.1.

Tom: Sorry to hear that, 2+2. Say, I see a photo on the mantle. Tell me about that.

Mr. 2+2: That's me in my youth when I rowed on the college crew, rowing in position 4 naturally. Those were wonderful days. I was 4 every day, all day, right as rain. But it's been a long time since I was 4.

Tom: Well, age catches up with all of us.

Mr. 2+2: I know; If this keeps up, in a few years I'll be down to 2.8, and all too soon, down to 0.

So ends the interview with Mr. 2+2.

But something is not right here. What is so impossible about this scenario for 2+2? Does 2+2 diminish over time? Does 2+2 age into something less than 4? *No!* Why not? Because it's *an idea!* An idea doesn't age. So are you also an idea; so are we all! So is church. We don't exist in the confine of line, the entwining vine of time. As ideas, we can *only exist* in Mind, in eternity! Our church, our building (verb) only exists in eternity. It has no counterpart, counterfeit, in finiteness. 2+2 is as timeless as Truth.

An almost final story: A friend was interested in philosophy and later in Christian Science. I shared *Science and Health* with him, and we discussed it occasionally. He was fascinated by the concept of eternity but had a hard time grasping it—as do many of us, I suspect. After many attempts to explain it, an odd new approach came to my thought. I told him that the general notion of eternity is a long time line—a sort of stretched out sequence of seconds, hours, days, years, centuries, It came to me to say that eternity is entirely different from seconds, or from any measure of time. If time is blue, eternity is not a "really, really lot" of blue, but eternity is yellow. This latched on to something inside him. He got it. He was deeply grateful. In later years, he closed his letters to me with the line: "Eternity is yellow!"

Eternity is not a really, really long timeline; it is a sphere. A church built for eternity is building on a completely different basis—on the Rock, Christ.

Here's a final story to silence the lie of time: Remember the healing of the bird who crashed into the window (at the beginning of this article)? And the *promise* that this insight, this healing, would be revisited later that day?

That afternoon, I heard a loud crash and a scream from our toddler. In the same second, the thought came: "This is the promise!" I was filled with the conviction that I'd felt that morning—filled so quickly that there was no opportunity to fear or doubt. I took her in my arms. She had fallen face first and was bleeding freely from cuts both inside and outside her mouth. I denied—cast out—the ugly picture as completely impossible. I sang a hymn ("Feed my sheep") quietly through the screaming. I rejoiced in the unity of Life and Principle—in God's unwavering allness, wholeness, only-ness, and tender immediacy. I wholeheartedly rejected the notion that Life was fragmented or that the child of infinite Principle was the helpless victim of an accident.

After some seconds, the screams quieted to crying, and in perhaps a minute, she wimperingly joined me in singing. Soon she was singing full-voiced. In another minute, she hopped out of my lap to get back to playing. As I cleaned her and she got down, I saw that each gash had been replaced by a fully-sealed, thin red line; the bleeding had stopped.

When I next noticed—a few hours later—the red lines themselves had vanished. The truth of the situation was so immediately evident that the injury never established itself in my thought or in hers. Thus, it vanished quickly, timelessly. Why was this healing so quick, so *timeless*? Perhaps because the lie of accident hadn't gotten very far into thought; thus, it didn't have far to go out. It never could establish itself as a fact or event or truth. "This is the promise," not line, not time, but the sphere of allness, the completion, completing of God's promise, His building (*verb*).

How big is our church, the church we are building, the church we occupy, the sphere of its reach and its domain? As they say: "The church within is the church you're in." Remember that Mrs. Eddy refers to the temple erected first in the hearts of its members:

"More love is the great need of mankind. A pure affection, concentric, forgetting self, forgiving wrongs and forestalling them, should swell the lyre of human love" (*Misc 107:11*).

A *concentric* affection hints at our sphere, doesn't it? This is a love that radiates outward in every direction.

"Hold perpetually this thought,—that it is the spiritual idea, the Holy Ghost and Christ, which enables you to demonstrate, with scientific certainty, the rule of healing, based upon its divine Principle, Love, underlying, overlying, and encompassing all true being" (*S&H 496:15*).

This is a church of individual beams of living love, all joined at the very Soul, all engaged in building church, engaged in the verbs of church, in *doing* church. A good question arises: What does each beam do for church? Or bring to church?

"The sunlight glints from the church-dome, glances into the prison-cell, glides into the sick-chamber, brightens the flower, beautifies the landscape, blesses

the earth. Man, made in His likeness, possesses and reflects God's dominion over all the earth. Man and woman as coexistent and eternal with God forever reflect, in glorified quality, the infinite Father-Mother God" (*S&H 516:16*).

"Hitherto, I have observed that in proportion as this church has smiled on His "little ones," He has blessed her. Throughout my entire connection with The Mother Church, I have seen, that in the ratio of her love for others, hath His love been bestowed upon her; watering her waste places, and enlarging her borders" (*Misc 127:1*).

"The same affection, desire, and motives which have stimulated true Christianity in all ages, and given impulse to goodness, in or out of the Church, have nerved her purpose to build on the new-born conception of the Christ, as Jesus declared himself,—namely, 'the way, the truth, and the life.' Living a true life, casting out evil, healing the sick, and preaching the gospel of Truth,—these are the ends of Christianity. This divine way impels a spiritualization of thought and method, beyond doctrine and ritual; and in nothing else has she departed from the old landmarks" (*No and Yes, Mary Baker Eddy, 12:13*).

The last word is from Isaiah:

"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (*55:12*).

With all those trees clapping, we don't need any other clapping. Instead let's take a couple minutes to quietly think about what we've just heard and are hearing. Thank you for your stillness. 🍃



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