

Improving Your Models

by Daniel L. Jensen, C.S.B.

A talk given at Arden Wood in 1991



Our leader reminds us:

“We are all sculptors, working at various forms, moulding and chiseling thought. What is the model before mortal mind? ...Have you accepted the mortal model? Are you reproducing it? Then you are haunted in your work by vicious sculptors and hideous forms. Do you not hear from all mankind of the imperfect model? The world is holding it before your gaze continually. The result is that you are liable to follow those lower patterns, limit your lifework, and adopt into your experience the angular outline and deformity of matter models.” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 248:13)

Have you noticed any lower patterns slipping into your experience? Today, we’re going to take a careful look at models and ideals and some of the considerations that go into their selection and acceptance.

Let’s first get a clear concept of the meaning of the word ideals. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as, “a conception of something, or a thing concerned in its highest perfection, or an object to be realized or aimed at; a perfect type; a standard of perfection or excellence; a standard proposed for imitation.”

It would seem that much of our lives are spent imitating standards, holding to certain ideals, and living in accord with particular models. But aren’t most of these standards accepted without conscious consideration, much less prayer? In fact, if we stop and take an analytical look at the operating ideals that we have accepted, we may well be amazed. Where did they come from? What is the basis of their origin? On careful review, are they acceptable? Mrs. Eddy urges us to make the right choice of models in our effort to establish a spiritual sense of health.

She said:

“Dear reader, which mind-picture or externalized thought shall be real to you,—the material or the spiritual? Both you cannot have. You are bringing out your own ideal. This ideal is either temporal or eternal. Either Spirit or matter is your model. If you try to have two models, then you practically have none. Like a pendulum in a clock, you will be thrown back and forth, striking the ribs of matter and swinging between the real and the unreal.” (*SH*, 360:13)

I’m sure you recognize her statement on that. This addresses a most important element in the establishing of our models— that of dualism or the confusion of material and spiritual models.

In her wonderfully clear-sighted summation, Annie Knott, who was one of Mrs. Eddy’s students and an editor of the *Christian Science Sentinel* and *The Christian Science Journal* in her time, deals with this vital distinction. She wrote:

“In one of Mrs. Eddy’s classes, a student remarked that she always endeavored to have the perfect body in her thought when giving treatment. Mrs. Eddy at once asked where she found her authority for such a method. The student unhesitatingly responded that it was from *Science and Health*, and after a little search she triumphantly read the statement on page 407, ‘Let the perfect model be present in your thoughts,’ etc. Smiling, as one would at the mistake of a child, Mrs. Eddy then asked if she regarded the body as the ‘model’ here referred to, and the student said she had so believed up to that moment. With the utmost patience Mrs. Eddy then explained to her students that we can only perceive the divine and perfect model as we are, to quote Paul, ‘absent from the body’ and ‘present with the Lord.’

“Humanity has been slowly yielding up the belief in a corporeal God, but it still clings to the belief in a bodily model for man, while accepting the Scriptural statement that he is God’s likeness. Its model is therefore that of the sculptor who studies the human anatomy, with some regard to the emotions, passions, and tendencies of the carnal or bodily mind. Strictly speaking, we can have but one model, God’s perfect idea, with countless reflections, all governed by the one divine Principle. This does not, however, authorize us to say that there is only one eye, or foot, for when we begin to talk of these we are getting away from the perfect, spiritual model. While it is true that mortals are at present dependent upon the body for the outward expression of their thought and activity, it is none the less true that the eye does not see, nor the ear hear, but that Mind and its idea alone compass seeing and hearing; and because this is true, our revered Leader bids us ‘look away from the body into Truth and Love, the Principle of all happiness, harmony, and immortality’ (*SH*, 261).” (“Perfect

Models,” Annie M. Knott, *Christian Science Sentinel*, January 10, 1914)

So, the question remains: have we consciously and prayerfully adopted the standards and models that we want to apply to our sense of identity? Are they Mind models that Mrs. Eddy alluded to when she said,

“Scientific discovery and the inspiration of Truth have taught me that the health and character of man become more or less perfect as his mind-models are more or less spiritual.” (*The People’s Idea of God*, Mary Baker Eddy, p. 7:27–30)

The way which we identify ourselves is absolutely crucial. At very innocent times, mortal mind knocks at our mental door and suggests a picture of ourselves that is completely erroneous.

Now let’s get down to some bare facts. It’s time for a Saturday night bath, and you’re in the bathroom alone. Of course, you can’t take a bath without taking off your clothes, and as there’s usually a mirror and some pretty bright lights, you are suddenly faced with a very clear, life-size, full-color, 3D reflection of a body—your body. Talk about a moment of stark identification—here it is! It says, “This is me, in person, revealed—fully revealed.” Now what occurs? Be honest. Don’t you almost immediately begin to evaluate this picture according to and in comparison with certain standards? And to what are you comparing it? What are the standards, the ideals, that form the basis of these comparisons? Are these standards material or spiritual?

What is your ideal body? Is there one quality about it, just one, that is spiritual? I think you will find that most ideals or models that pertain to our sense of body, our identity, deal entirely with matter. And wasn’t it exactly this type of material model about which Mrs. Eddy warned us? If we identify with such a model, we might find ourselves feeling something like the little child, who looked at himself peeling after his first sunburn and said, “Here I am, four years old, and wearing out already!”

Now this temptation is nothing new or different. People have been making bodily judgments for centuries. I understand that Queen Victoria, the British sovereign, had a very simple solution—she just had all the mirrors removed from her bathroom. I know many people who take their showers, for instance, with the light turned off just in order to avoid this picturization. But throughout history, the temptation to judge according to material standards has never been as aggressive as it is today. An almost constant array of material models and ideals are being forcibly and blatantly presented to thought. All efforts on the part of the media seem aimed at presenting thought with material models. And, of course, we can never become conscious of a spiritual model, while accepting and identifying with models that picture man

and body as material. It’s hard to turn on the radio and the television without some model of physicality being presented to us. Or we hear about standards pertaining to physical activity, even to the heartbeat, or blood pressure, or something else that is held up as a standard. And if you aren’t in accord with that standard, the world says, “Ooh, there’s something amiss here.”

Correct identification never involves duality: Spirit and matter. Spirit is the actual and only existence, and matter has only the substance of a dream—an illusion. We’re going to talk about that today—about the various means Mrs. Eddy used to get the concept across that we do not live in matter; that there isn’t one atom of matter, not one ounce of matter; that everything about man is spiritual.

Mrs. Eddy tells us that, “*Sleep and mesmerism explain the mythical nature of material sense*” (*SH*, 490:28–29). Now, that’s a very succinct statement. Everyone has experienced what occurs in a dream, how real it appears to us in a dream, and that when we awaken, we instantly realize the dream is an illusion.

Mrs. Eddy refers to the waking-sleeping dream, and she also talks about mesmerism. Well, I doubt if anyone in this room has seen somebody hypnotized or is familiar with it today. But that wasn’t the case in Mrs. Eddy’s day. Almost everybody on the street knew what hypnotism was because it was a part of most vaudeville shows in that day. They would have hypnotists in almost every program, and people got used to this. They had seen people hypnotized and how they were made to see or not to see, to feel or not to feel, to taste or not to taste, to smell or hear things that were not there according to the ordinary physical sensations. And thus they demonstrated the mythical nature of material sense. Now if we can get that concept—that material sense is not true—it helps enormously in meeting a claim. It helps all of you Christian Science nurses care for patients and not stand aghast at what the material senses are trying to tell you. Mrs. Eddy said,

“Now I ask, is there any more reality in the waking dream of mortal existence than in the sleeping dream? There cannot be, since whatever appears to be a mortal man is a mortal dream...the spiritual, real man is immortal.” (*SH*, 250:22)

Mrs. Eddy’s comparison of the sleeping and waking dreams is extremely helpful. Let’s consider it. Is there a single thing—location, condition, feeling, sensation, action, reaction—which you can see or experience in a waking state or a waking dream that you can’t and don’t feel in a sleeping dream? Anything that you could experience in a waking experience, you could also experience in a sleeping dream. This affords us, as she noted, a unique opportunity for careful comparison, and a means of gaining insight into our waking dreams. That’s the dream that

causes us trouble, the one we are in right now. Everyone has experienced the apparent reality of a sleeping dream. Let's say that when you fell asleep last night, you had a dream, and in that dream, you were told you had been born in a certain place at a certain time and that certain people were your parents. In your dream, you went about your business working and playing, laughing and crying, rich or poor, sick or well, young or old, hot or cold, wet or dry, experiencing the entire spectrum of conscious existence. But what if I asked you during this dream, "Can you see yourself lying there in the quiet repose in the darkness of your bedroom?" No, you can't—not as long as you remain within the purview of your dream. Why? Because an interesting phenomenon occurs in a dream—let's call it the dream context. And remember this because it applies to the waking dream also. It's as though there was a high, impenetrable wall that is suddenly erected around the dream, so that all you can see is what is taking place within the context of your dream. What you are apparently experiencing within the dream seems to be all that exists. That's why we actually cry out in pain or pleasure, joy or fear, etc. We just can't see over the mental wall of that dream illusion. If we could, would there be any cause to fear—to be afraid of the illusion called a dream? No! There would be no reason for fear.

Now, let's look at another circumstance that occurs within the dream. Let's say that you're experiencing a frightening physical problem. You think you have gone blind. It scares you so much that you wake up, and your heart is pounding. And you open your eyes a little bit, and you peek around, and you see the light coming in through the curtain, and you say to yourself, "Phew, thank goodness, it's only a dream!" And your heart quiets down. You didn't awake fully, only just enough to see that you weren't blind, so you slip back into your previous dream. Everything's the same—the same carpet, the same wall, curtains, people, everything's the same in that dream. Except you are no longer blind. Your dream has changed in that respect. It changed in direct proportion to your glimpse of reality. You glimpsed a little bit; you woke up enough to see you weren't blind. And that glimpse of reality changed your dream. Now we all know that's true because we've all experienced nightmares. And we've all learned the knack of waking up not just partially but fully. Because we've learned that if we wake up fully, the dream disappears—totally. And we can go back to sleep and not be troubled by the horrors of that bad dream.

Let's remember what Mrs. Eddy tells us: *there is "no more reality in the waking dream than in the sleeping one."* Now I ask you to open the third series of *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy* and turn to page 44. This is a letter Mrs. Eddy wrote to Calvin Hill when he was going through a claim of what he considered to be a lung problem. In it, she recommends that he go to *Science and Health* and turn to page 188, paragraph 3. This discusses in detail the waking, sleeping dream. And it also

points out that there is no more reality in the waking dream of mortal existence than in the sleeping dream. It's interesting to know that he never told Mrs. Eddy he was having a problem. She intuited this, and she gave him that letter because she knew that's where the problem was. Now remember, doesn't what we see, feel, and hear seem just as real and material in the sleeping dream illusion? But tell me, what happens to all the pain and discord we feel in the sleeping dream, the instant, the very instant, we awaken? The painful discord stops immediately, doesn't it? Why? Simply because we suddenly see and understand with certainty, with certainty, that it is an illusion. Even if our dream of disease or injury appears so serious that we believe we are at the very point of death, it disappears immediately when we awaken, and we are in happy, good health. We see that it was all an illusion—a mental illusion. And with this awakening, of course, it disappears.

Mrs. Eddy wanted everyone to understand that we are dealing with a mental illusion. She required the members of her household, when they had a physical problem, to put the words "belief of" in front of the claim. If they had a stomachache, they had a "belief of a stomachache," a "belief of a headache," etc.

The moment you do that, the moment you regard it as a "belief of," what have you done? You've converted it to a mental cause instead of a physical cause. Now with sense testimony, the difficult thing is to believe that pain or sensation is not emanating from the body. If it appears your leg hurts, it's difficult to think that that pain isn't there in that leg. But IT ISN'T, of course. In a sleeping dream when you were dreaming that you had a pain in your leg, what happened the instant you awoke? It was gone. But it couldn't have been gone if it had been in the body. Mrs. Eddy tells us the same thing. Listen:

"Now I ask, Is there any more reality in the waking dream of mortal existence than in the sleeping dream? There cannot be..." (SH, 250:22–24)

And so, what seems to be an experience in the body, is not in the body at all; it's a part of the mental illusion. And that's what we're doing—we're learning to deal with mental illusion. A discordant physical condition appears, even hurts. We can understand and declare right at the outset, that it's not a physical condition, but simply a wrong belief, a wrong thought that must be dealt with. What enables us to know this so certainly? What we have learned and observed from the sleeping dream confirms it, namely that everything in that dream is composed of thought and no one disputes this fact about a sleeping dream. As in the sleeping dream, so in the waking dream—there is no matter, no things, only thoughts that we call things. A table feels solid and real, but there is no matter. We are seeing a mental image that we have named podium, shoe, watch, hat. They are mental pictures, folks, and that's why we have to deal with them in that way. Now from

this discordant belief we awaken for a moment to the true state of man's perfection, of his spiritual identity. And we find that as we do, we become aware of our real selfhood. Even in part — as we catch a glimpse, so to speak, of what constitutes our spiritual body — then our waking dream changes proportionately. And if you want to read some wonderful statements about that, go to your concordance and look up proportion, proportionately, and proportionably. They are real meat-and-potatoes citations. There's nothing pabulum about those. Study them carefully and you can begin to see how in proportion as we see the spiritual real, in that proportion, does the material dream become less real. And isn't that what we're doing in our study — the spiritualization of thought? And in proportion as we accept this, it changes our waking appearing dream, and we call it a healing!

So, healing really means waking up, doesn't it?

At this point, I think it may be appropriate to stop and recommend to you the first testimony of the March 1918 *Christian Science Journal* by Anna S. van Leeuwen. I recommend it to you because the way in which this woman reads the textbook illustrates this concept of at least a partial awakening and its side effect of healing. I think you'll find it to be one of the most remarkable testimonies you have ever read. Now I don't want to tell you all of it because I don't want to spoil it for you. But the background on it is that this woman had become subject to a claim of tuberculosis. She had been in a hospital, and she ran out of money, and she had to leave the hospital. She had no place to go except to this friend's house, someone she had grown up with. And this friend was a Christian Scientist. But she wouldn't go until she made her friend promise that she wouldn't talk to her about Christian Science because she didn't want to be told that she wasn't sick when she knew darn well she was sick. When she got to the friend's doorstep, she collapsed. Her friend helped put her to bed, and then the sneaky Christian Scientist put the textbook on her nightstand and said, "Here's a book you can read if you can't sleep." The woman was lying there thinking about this and going over the fact that her friend, this Christian Scientist, had had such a different life than she had had. The only thing she could think that was different, really, was that she was a Christian Scientist. And so, she picked up the book and began to read. Now her eyes were so weak (she had big thick glasses) that she could only read a line or two at a time. She would read a line, not thinking that it would heal her. She just wanted to see if this was the truth. So, she'd read a line and she'd stop and think about it, and she'd turn it every which way. And every time, she came to the conclusion that it was true. By then her eyes had recovered enough where she could read another line. And she did the same thing, line by line, for 20 minutes. At the end of 20 minutes, she got up from that bed healed. She threw away her glasses because she couldn't see through them anymore. When she arrived at her friend's house,

she had been at the point of having a nervous breakdown. After reading, she said her nerves heard the command, "Peace, be still," and she was perfect.

Now I won't go through all the things that she was healed of, but she was healed of the tuberculosis right away, immediately, and was able to go back to teaching. But wait until you read the part about her ears! I won't tell you — you can read it. It's the way in which she read and pondered each line of the textbook that I'm recommending to you. If you can read like this, you're going to find a whole new book in *Science and Health*. Read as she did, and you can be confident of a change of at least a partial awakening. It's inevitable.

From beginning to end, it becomes increasingly clear that there simply is no matter to be healed, but only a real appearing waking dream to be aroused from through a glimpse of the Christ, Truth. Then we see what we were, what we are, what we shall be — for we have glimpsed our uninterrupted state of coexistence with God.

In a 1948 *Journal* article, Milton Simon touches on this concept of dream and relates it clearly to our sense of body. He writes,

"...any difficulty with what is termed the body is not in the body, but a belief of something untrue that never touches God's man. ... This is strikingly illustrated when one considers that a dream never becomes part of one's body. If you dream you are in pain, only while you dream are you in pain. Your body remains unharmed. Awakening from the dream you see there is no pain to destroy. A woman who had been injured when a young girl suffered for 16 years. Reputable physicians said that the spinal nerves had been injured and that she had tuberculosis of the spine. They averred that decay had set in and that she had only a short time to remain here. When she turned to Christian Science, her practitioner secured for her a copy of *Science and Health*. Commencing earnestly to read it, she gladly accepted many statements about the perfection of God and man. The fourth day, while she was reading, it became clear to her that God had not created her diseased condition, nor did He see her in it. She glimpsed so clearly her perfection as God's child that she determined no longer to accept the difficulty, saying to herself: 'If God does not see me in this condition, I refuse to believe it. He sees me only as His perfect child.' That day the pain in her back ceased. The next morning, she was able to arise, dress herself, and walk downstairs to the astonishment of her household. This healing has proved to be permanent. The writer has found it helpful to analyze this experience because if the disease had been a condition in matter, if the physicians' diagnosis had been correct, if the so-called laws of material medica

really governed man, this ailment called incurable could not have been healed through spiritual means. The conclusion then must be that disease was not God-created, that no law of His was regulating it, nor was any intelligent mind cognizing it, for the one Mind, God, could not and did not see it ... When the woman accepted her God-given dominion and refused to believe the illusion, it ceased to be. It did not exist to be taken away; it needed only to be disbelieved. The intelligence of divine Mind so enlightened her consciousness that fear and false belief could not occupy thought ... But through Christ, Truth, we are casting out the belief that disease is real." ("All is Mind and Its Ideas," Milton Simon, *The Christian Science Journal*, September 1948)

Mrs. Eddy reminds us of the mental nature of all things when she says,

"The verity of Mind shows conclusively how it is that matter seems to be, but is not. Divine Science, rising above physical theories, excludes matter, resolves things into thoughts, and replaces the objects of material sense with spiritual ideas." (*SH*, 123:11)

I know you've all read that many times, but when you read it, think about it, turn it around. Let the truths within that come clearly. Be like Jacob—refuse to let go until it blesses you. You know she tells us the Truth has a healing effect even when not fully understood. Be aware that these statements have the power of the Christ, Truth, within them and it's that Christ, Truth, it's that Christ, Truth, it's that Christ, Truth, that destroys the lie!

Now what about this resolving of things into thoughts and replacing the objects of material sense with spiritual ideas. How do we do it? Mrs. Eddy instructs us, "*Mortals must change their ideals in order to improve their models*" (*SH*, 260:19–20).

"*Mortals must change their ideals in order to improve their models.*"

I'm repeating on purpose. When I was in college, I had a professor who, every day when we came to class, would begin the class by saying, "Mere repetition does not ensure learning. Mere repetition does not ensure learning." That's the only thing I remember from that course. And so, if I repeat things, folks—that's why I'm doing it!

May I take a moment to share with you an approach that I often use with basic statements of Mrs. Eddy? After reading a spiritual fact that she puts forth, I stop and endeavor to become very quiet mentally. I turn the idea round and round, thinking about it, in order to enjoy the lovely uplift it affords my ideals. For by even briefly considering and dwelling on the spiritual gist of many of her inspired statements, we find our ideals gently uplifted without a conscious effort that occurs. It is important to dwell on them, turn them this way and that way,

savor them, and realize that they contain the Christ, Truth. For it is this Truth which heals, destroys the lies, the false beliefs, the demons, as they were referred to in the times of primitive Christianity when they were regularly raising the dead. And if you'll turn to page 17 of our *Manual of The Mother Church*, you'll find out that that's what our Church was patterned after—primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing. And that's what they did—they destroyed the lies, they called them the demons, and when the demon was gone, the condition was gone.

So often in Christian Science, we think wrong thinking has caused a condition. It hasn't caused a condition. If we think that then we're going to think that the body is where the condition took place, and that isn't true. It's simply a mental illusion and that's why the Christ, Truth, destroys it. No lie can remain unaffected in the presence of the Truth. No lie can remain unaffected in the presence of the Truth. And that's why it behooves us to be consistent, to work at it. We may not see it right away, but that Truth is having its effect, whether we know it or not. For example, in answer to the question, "What is man?," Mrs. Eddy outlines ideas of Soul, spiritual ideals of man, which deserve this kind of thought-taking. Never lose sight of the fact that this textbook is inspired, that Mrs. Eddy studied it herself. She used to just clap her hands together and say, "Listen to this! Listen to this!" She'd get so excited about it.

If you read the story of how she wrote *Science and Health*, and how she added to it, you come to see that it was directly from Mind, and so it's a treasure house of these lovely statements. Here are just a few of them on page 475:

"What is man?"

"...man is made in the image and likeness of God."
(*SH*, 475:8–9)

Now think what is there to be dealt with. You can deal with what God is, you can deal with what the "image and likeness" means, that man was made, how he was made, how he didn't come into being through birth, how he began when God began. We can take a simple statement like that, and turn it, and think about it, and let those Truths do their work.

"Man is spiritual and perfect; ... He is the compound idea of God, including all right ideas; ... [he] has no separate mind from God; [Man] has not a single quality underived from Deity;" (*SH*, 475:11, 14–15, 19-20)

Think of that about man. What kind of an image, what kind of a model, are you holding of man?

"...[he] possesses no life, intelligence, nor creative power of his own, but reflects spiritually all that belongs to his Maker. (*SH*, 475:21-22)

And it goes on, one statement after another after another. Throughout her writings we find our Leader's detailed, spiritual

description of what she refers to as, “*the absolute ideal, man*” (SH, 520:7–9). She gives us so many ideas of Soul with which to replace the apparent objects of sense, which we see everywhere.

Early on in my study of Christian Science, I just tried to find any kind of a paper written by somebody. I thought, boy, I'm going to get the secret way, the quick way, into understanding. I've come to see that if we'll just turn to our textbook and to the Bible, there is so much there that you don't have time for anything else. If you'll just stop and think about what you're reading, read it like that woman did for 20 minutes who was healed, imagine the results.

I remember a particular application of one of Mrs. Eddy's statements on page 463 of the textbook,

“A spiritual idea has not a single element of error, and this truth removes properly whatever is offensive.”
(SH, 463:12–13)

It's such a powerful statement. I'll take a minute and tell you of an experience about that.

Early in my practice, I had a man come to me with a problem. He had been repairing a camera and his eyes were down close to the shutter mechanism when a powerful spring slipped and threw a tiny brass screw into his eye, and it got behind the eyeball. He hadn't slept in about 10 days, his eyes were all swollen shut, his head was twice the size of normal. And I said, “What have you been working with?” And he said, “Well, I've been trying to know that the divine Mind will remove properly whatever is offensive.” Well, I can understand that. If you had something in your eye and it was hurting like that, that's what would be in your thought to get rid of it. But I pointed out to him that her statement was much fuller than that. Her statement was, “*A spiritual idea has not a single element of error, and this Truth...*” Now what Truth was Mrs. Eddy referring to? To the first part of the sentence, “*A spiritual idea has not a single element of error*” (SH, 463:12-13). It's “*this Truth that removes properly whatever is offensive*” from thought. You see he was trying to get rid of a material object from a physical body. Now I know it appears that way and if they'd taken x-rays, it probably would have shown a brass screw there. But you're simply looking at an illusion whether you're looking at it through an x-ray plate or with the naked eye.

Well, he got the glimpse of that. I remember him saying, “Oh, I see.” And he went over that in his thought. All of a sudden, he was no longer dealing with trying to get rid of a brass screw. He got a glimpse. He said it was instantaneous, his recognition that there was no brass screw. He never did find it. By the next morning, his eyes were normal, and his head was normal, and he was back at the office. Now if we had been trying to get rid of a brass screw from the physical eye by metaphysics we'd still be working. It was a lie and that truth, that simple

truth that “*A spiritual idea has not a single element of error,*” that's all that did it. See how powerful these statements can be if we just apply them?

Our job then, when mentally confronted with material models, is to be willing to make the exchange and deliberately replace them with specific spiritual facts, with ideals. What if we stopped and thought about them? Really thought about them and accepted them as fact? What do you think it would do to our ideals of man, to the models we fashioned our thought after, and consequently to our lives?

When we mistakenly identify ourselves as material and set about by one means or another to heal or create a physical body, what are we doing? Well, it's as if you were going on a train trip. When you arrive at the station, one of your friends is there, and he goes onto the track, and he looks down the track, and he comes back in genuine alarm and says, “You can't get on those tracks. Those tracks go together right outside of town.” And 20 pairs of eyes look down those tracks to see, and sure enough they go together, they merge. Now only a fool would get on a pair of tracks when it's clear that the train is going to tip over pretty soon. Your eyes are also seeing those tracks go together. Or you could rely on what you know through education and experience, not on what your eyes see, get on the train and move on down the tracks, unafraid.

Now when this friend insists that the train is going to derail, you have three choices: (1) you could pick up your suitcase and go home, (2) you could get on the train, relying on what you know, not on what you see, or, (3) you could all go down to the tracks and hold a prayer meeting and try and heal those tracks.

Now we can laugh at that, but isn't that what we do so often? Try to heal the tracks — an illusion? We try to heal an illusion.

The God we speak of is invisible. John said, “*No man hath seen God at any time;*” (John 1:18). Jesus confirmed this, declaring, “*Ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape*” (John 5:37). And Paul speaks of, “*the image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1:15).

So, if God is invisible, and He is, then His image and likeness must be invisible. Thinking of God as invisible may make us feel something like the little girl whose father was putting her to bed. When they went into the dark bedroom, he felt her little arms tighten around his neck. “I'm afraid, Daddy.” And he said, “God's right here with you, honey.” “I know, Daddy, but I want somebody with skin around them.” Aren't we often like this — thinking we want something with skin around it? Actually, thinking of man as invisible puts us in a whole different ball game, doesn't it? See what it does to disease. No one ever thinks of disease except in connection with a visible material body. And the same thing with sin, age, lack, and the like. They just can't continue when man is seen as spiritual, materially invisible, can they? It makes it easier to see through

the claims of mortal mind when there is no material body for them to inhabit or affect. We can more easily see man as immune, untouched by mortal mind's claims, indestructible and eternal. Now that's not so hard to do. You live by that all the time whether you realize it or not. The dearer somebody is to you, the less you're aware of their body.

What about honesty, what color is it? Is it a liquid, solid, or gas? We realize, of course, that honesty is invisible, yet our entire lives are built upon it! If there wasn't honesty, if even one percent of the people writing checks were to be dishonest, our entire commercial banking system would collapse. We couldn't get in a car and drive on the highway if there weren't Principle and Love—all of which are invisible. Man is made of invisible qualities—that's what constitutes man. When we give or receive letters of reference, how much do we include in the way of a physical description? Does it make any difference to us whether the individual has blue eyes or brown eyes, is tall or short? It's their qualities that we're talking about. Even if it's for a basketball center—are not other characteristics of more importance than the physical structure or prowess? How valuable is his mental discipline and his sense of team cooperation?

Thinking and living out from a premise that man is indeed invisible to the physical senses puts us on the right track when we are tempted with models of beautiful, desirable, glamorous appearing matter or with frightening material images. The minute we see that man is invisible, it doesn't matter. Obviously, every single thing that makes our lives worthwhile is a mental state that is discernible entirely through spiritual sense, totally invisible to the physical senses. As our identification and attention shifts to these qualities and to the activity of God's image and likeness, we are proportionately less impressed with the material. And our expectancy of healing increases!

Now, what is unique about these bettered and corrected models and ideals we've considered today? Lofty human goals and aspirations have served admirably to better man's existence for centuries. In bookstores, I'm always looking for and finding collections of quotes and anecdotes that express these ideals. But our Leader lifted even the highest of these human yearnings when she wrote,

“In divine Science, man is the true image of God. The divine nature was best expressed in Christ Jesus, who threw upon mortals the truer reflection of God and lifted their lives higher than their poor thought-models would allow,— thoughts which presented man as fallen, sick, sinning, and dying. The Christlike understanding of scientific being and divine healing includes a perfect Principle and idea,— perfect God and perfect man,— as the basis of thought and demonstration.” (*SH*, 259:6)

The ideals of a Christian Scientist are spiritual—totally spiritual. Perfection underlies them and makes their attainment possible. So, my dear fellow sculptors, I trust that watching and then establishing models and ideals more spiritual in nature will hereafter hold a greater priority in your lives.

Then we can expect the fulfillment of what Louise Knight Wheatley described so well in a *Sentinel* article in which she said,

“To bring every thought into obedience to the law of Christ is not the work of a moment. The sculptor sometimes chisels away at his rough block of marble for weeks and months before the beautiful statue of his dreams shines out in all its resplendent loveliness. The perfect man of God's creating will be discerned as soon as the wrong thinking which seems to obscure it has been taken away...It is our work to keep steadily on, refusing to listen to any outside suggestions that these hours of slow, faithful, painstaking chiseling are not accomplishing anything. Sooner or later we will have the reward of our patience. Each day a little more of truth will be gained, a little more of error lost, a little more of God remembered, a little more of self forgotten, until the long looked for moment will come when the Christ-ideal, the perfect man, will stand revealed in all the purity and sublimity of spiritual completeness.” (“Ministry of Patience,” Louise Knight Wheatley, *Christian Science Sentinel*, April 3, 1915)

And that's our goal. Thank you! 🍃



ARDEN WOOD

445 Wawona Street, San Francisco, CA 94116-3058
(415) 681-5500 www.ardenwood.org

© 2023 Arden Wood, Inc. All rights reserved. The leaf-bird is a trademark of Arden Wood, Inc. Arden Wood is a nonprofit, charitable organization, and your donations help make our work possible. Thank you.

Arden Wood Contact Information

Rest & Study and Overnight Stays

reservations@ardenwood.org
(415) 681-5500

Arden Wood offers guest rooms for Rest & Study and overnight stays for Christian Scientists in an environment ideal for spiritual renewal, inspiration, and healing in the heart of San Francisco. Come for a visit!

Residential Programs

Stephanie Boyman, Director
sboyman@ardenwood.org
(415) 379-2320

Christian Science Nursing Services

Lebechi Odenyi, Director
lodenyi@ardenwood.org
(415) 379-2224

Christian Science nurses are available round-the-clock to provide exceptional care in private rooms with comfortable, modern amenities. Patients must work daily with a Journal-listed Christian Science practitioner.

SHELTERED CARE

Sheltered Care is for those who need light assistance with personal care and daily activities while maintaining their expression of dominion and independence. There is an expectation of full healing without a time limit on the length of one's stay.

Visiting Christian Science Nursing Service (VCSNS)

Aicha Langel, Director
vcsns@ardenwood.org
(415) 740-0460

VCSNS provides assistance in the home, workplace or other venue for up to 2 hours per visit. Visiting Christian Science nurses will assess care needs as well as provide care and support to patients, new moms, or anyone who would benefit from a care visit.

Christian Science Nurses Training

Forest Denson, Manager
fdenson@ardenwood.org
(415) 379-2150

CSN training is available to Christian Scientists who wish to pursue the role of Christian Science Nurse, as outlined in the Church Manual By-law (Article VIII, Section 31). Our multi-year program includes classroom work and mentoring from highly skilled, Journal-listed Christian Science nurses. Arden Wood trainees are paid and receive full employee benefits.

Human Resources and Operations

Franklin Harris, Director
fharris@ardenwood.org
(415) 379-2106

General Information

Amelia West, Development Manager
info@ardenwood.org
(415) 379-2108