

Beginning Rightly

A talk by Daniel L. Jensen, C.S.B. for
The Principle Foundation's 1990 Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri

Mrs. Eddy tells us that, "To begin rightly is to end rightly."¹ And that's what I'd like to talk with you about this afternoon — "beginning rightly." In our prayers and our treatments, from which premise do we begin — Spirit, or matter?

Mortal mind presents its material claims of disease and discord to all mankind, it seems. And since most of the world is ignorantly deceived into accepting these material sense-pictures as real, it undertakes to heal them in the only way it knows — materially. For a material problem calls for a material solution; a mental problem calls for a mental solution. For that reason, almost the first thing that students of Christian Science learn is that they do not (in the practice of this Science) use material means for healing. Gradually they come to understand something of why they don't — why, rather, they seek spiritual solutions, spiritual understanding. This premise in solution is pretty generally accepted among Scientists. But there is one vitally important area where all too often we go astray.

Any experienced practitioner will tell you that nine out of ten patients come to him/her wanting metaphysical help; but to do what? To heal a material body, a material situation — through spiritual means. What does this effort reveal? It tells us unmistakably that we, too, have been deceived by the primary error — the reality of matter! We have been duped into accepting the wrong premise: that matter is real, that man is mortal, and that therefore it is matter that needs healing. This, of course, is not "beginning rightly." True, we are not using material means to solve our problem; but the problem itself is seen to be a material one. All too often our view of the problem is just as material as is the doctor's. The only difference in our methods is that we attempt to use spiritual means to heal it. Is this Christian Science? No, I'm afraid not. It would probably be classified as a form of "mind over matter;" or psychosomatic medicine (Christian Science style); or, at best, faith healing. But Mrs. Eddy admonishes us:

It is mental quackery to make disease a reality — to hold it as something seen and felt—and then to attempt its cure through Mind.²

In our discussion of beginning rightly, let's consider an actual case. I received a call one afternoon from a man who despairingly told me that the finest clinics in the state had agreed that his mother would be dead of a malignancy within two weeks, and that there was nothing further that could be done medically. So they were turning to Christian Science as a last hope. He then volunteered a detailed description of the medical evidence. As you can see, mortal mind (the playwright) was carefully setting the scene.

¹ *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy 262:28 (only)

² *Science and Health* 395:21-23

I agreed to visit the patient. When I arrived, one element of sense testimony after another was convincingly presented. It appeared that every argument mortal mind could devise was set forth. A picture of incurability and hopelessness was depicted.

Now, consider that you are the practitioner presented with such a picture. You are, perhaps, at the most crucial point in the case. For it is here that the most basic decision must be made (and it must be made correctly in order to facilitate a healing). In spite of the vividness of the sense-testimony and its claim to reality there is a choice to be made. How will you view the problem — which premise will you accept? The one — that matter, the body, is real; that it has substance, life, and sensation, yet is destructible in nature; that it must be restored or repaired in one way or another. Or two — the premise that Spirit is real and that man is totally spiritual, eternal, perfect, and indestructible; that therefore this so-called “matter” is but a mental picture that is unreal and illusory. Which premise is to be accepted at the outset of your work?

Sitting here in the calm of a hypothetical situation the choice of a spiritual premise is pretty obvious, isn't it? But as we all know, we can often be partially or completely deceived by mortal mind's mental picture before we know it, and find ourselves accepting the material premise.

When I went into the Christian Science practice my teacher illustrated unforgettably this point of choosing the correct premise. Early in her practice her infant son became paralyzed from the waist down with a belief of polio. You can imagine how earnestly she worked, hours each day. Then, after her treatments, she would (naturally enough) look under the blanket to see if he could move his little legs. But after four months of the most diligent work nothing had changed. So at this point she went to a practitioner. After hearing of the problem the practitioner smiled and made one simple, unveiling statement: “Quit peeking, dear!” Instantly my teacher saw what she had been doing.

She went home and gave her child a treatment based on a totally different premise. As she said to me, “It never occurred to me to look at his legs again. What did that have to do with it? Nothing!” The next morning when she bathed him he almost jumped out of the pan. No atrophy, no time of recovery! No wonder the false testimony had vanished. She wasn't “peeking” any more, asking matter to confirm spiritual facts. She had shifted to a spiritual premise. Period!

When mortal mind gradually or abruptly presents its vivid mental images to human consciousness, its pictures of disease or discord, they appear to be material (just as they do in our night dreams). We must be and remain alert to the fact that these pictures are mental — just as mental as the images and sensations in our night dreams).

This is the leading error, so to speak — the claim of reality in matter. Mrs. Eddy warns us:

Admit the existence of matter, and you admit that mortality (and therefore disease) has a foundation in fact.³

³ *Science and Health* 368:27-29

A woman once came to Edward Kimball complaining that she had yellow canary feathers growing all over her arms. When he tried to assure her that there were no feathers, she tearfully exclaimed, "Look, you can see them and feel them. You've got to help me get rid of them!" How much time do you think Mr. Kimball spent trying to get rid of feathers? His task, he knew, was simply to dissolve a mental illusion. And he did this by acknowledging the spiritual fact that man is the image and likeness of God, therefore perfect now.

In such a case it is comparatively easy to avoid trying to change matter, but rather to "begin rightly" — because it's an accepted fact that women do not grow feathers. Birds grow feathers!

But what if the woman had presented arms that were covered with an ugly-appearing skin disease? Wouldn't it be tempting to start from a material premise and try to heal matter? In reality, however, would the situation be one bit more material? Wouldn't it, too, be just a mental illusion? So wouldn't the same spiritual premise be the correct starting-point? Of course. But it requires consistent alertness to be instantly aware that matter (good or bad appearing) is the illusion; and not be tempted to assume the premise of material reality and try to heal it.

Another help in our efforts to begin rightly is provided in that wonderful short paragraph on page 123 of our textbook. It reads:

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.⁴

Let's look more closely at the reminders contained in this statement. (1) The "verity of Mind" (Truth) shows us "conclusively" (that is, beyond question, decisively, absolutely, categorically) that matter only "seems to be, but is not." (2) It's "divine Science" which enables us to rise "above physical theories", to "exclude matter", and to "resolve things into thoughts"— that is, to see that everything which appears to be material is only a thought, a mental concept. When we see this, of course, the claim is recognized as a mental one, and so can be dealt with. But so long as one believes that he is dealing with "things" (matter) he's not even in the ball game — but still out in the parking lot!

Why is this resolution of things into thoughts so important? Well, in the first place when you are dealing with thought you are dealing with something that can be changed, replaced, corrected. For whoever heard of an unchangeable thought? Do you see what this does to the claim of incurability? Again, whoever heard of an incurable thought?

This resolution of things into thoughts allows us to see discordant "things" as mental illusions, mistakes, or errors, rather than realities or frightful material "conditions." Therefore it keeps us from trying to heal (repair or restore materially) what we now recognize to be mental "illusions," mirages. Have you ever thought of trying to heal the train tracks that look to you (and everyone else) as though they merge in the distance? And why not? Because you have come to know, through

⁴ *Science and Health* 123:11

experience or education, that their “merging” is an illusion. (Imagine trying to get your practitioner to “heal” merging tracks. It would be a little embarrassing, wouldn’t it? The need would be to realize that they never merged in the first place!)

Similarly, Mrs. Eddy makes it so clear that what set Jesus apart in the raising of Lazarus was his understanding that Lazarus had never lived in his body in the first place. (See *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy 75:13.) Talk about beginning rightly!

We never try to heal feathers or merging tracks or anything that we understand to be a mental illusion. It would be silly. The challenge, therefore, is to look through the false testimony of the senses (the material picture presented) and recognize it to be a mental error. And how to do this? You know the answer so well! “Understanding is the line of demarcation between the real and unreal.”⁵

Draw on your spiritual understanding, on the reports of spiritual sense. Dwell on the fact, the spiritual fact (as taught in divine Science). Dwell on it so single-mindedly and resolutely that only this truth has reality to you. The illusion will become self-evident. This is destroying the illusion through divine metaphysics, and not through an act of will-power! It is the power of Truth which heals.

Now for a moment let’s talk a bit more specifically and focus on the particular challenge of “supply.” For isn’t this largely what The Principle Foundation deals with; and don’t you, in your workshops, seek to handle pictures or claims of finiteness spiritually?

In past years when I served on Boards of various philanthropic organizations our chief concerns were raising money, and then deciding who should receive it. We usually had some criteria for selecting the recipients, as well as the recommendations of a few fund-raisers in our midst who were willing to give us pointers as to how to contact prospective donors and so forth. Everything about our efforts was built on a humanly good motive or purpose, but utilized material methods. And inevitably material methods bring with them their material concomitants of deficiency, scarcity, shortage, fear, and lack. No wonder our Leader advises against the use of such methods. Listen to this:

. . . Christian Science shuns whatever involves material means for the promotion of spiritual ends.⁶

In his *Years of Authority* Robert Peel quotes from an article by Alfred Farlow, our first Committee on Publication, that seems most appropriate here. Mr. Peel writes:

Despite an increasing number of articles on “demonstrating supply” in the Christian Science periodicals in the first decade of the century, Mrs. Eddy was extremely chary of having people turn to Christian Science for the loaves and fishes, and she especially commended an article by Farlow in *The American Business Man*, which said among other things:

⁵ *Science and Health* 505:21-22

⁶ *Retrospection and Introspection* by Mary Baker Eddy 47:10-11

“Sometimes individual prosperity is not rightly grounded, and like a house with inadequate foundation, it must therefore be taken down and rebuilt That which is not rightly done is a misdoing, not a real accomplishment, and, painful as the ordeal may seem to the one concerned, the sooner there is an undoing and a redoing, the better. What appears to be loss under such circumstances is not loss but gain. If our riches are not fittingly acquired they are not really ours, and the sooner we lose them and learn our actual situation, the better.”⁷

Isn't it wonderful that you folks can be part of an effort that is based on a spiritual concept of supply? You are building on the rock! This uplifted premise allows you, as you put your unselfish purpose of giving and sharing into action, to grow spiritually (and to help others, both donors and recipients, grow as well). Isn't this our individual life purpose, our very reason for being? We're not striving to be the richest man in the graveyard, but to progress spiritually in what Mrs. Eddy calls “earth's preparatory school!”

Is this belief of lack basically any different from the other faces that mortal mind wears — disease, sin, turmoil, strife? Do we deal with it as a reality — or simply as an illusion, a false, erroneous belief? Are the rules any different? Do we start out to heal feathers, the delusion? Don't we have to “begin rightly in order to end rightly” — with this error as with any other?

Our Leader provides us with a clear sense of supply when she says:

God gives you His spiritual ideas, and in turn, they give you daily supplies. Never ask for tomorrow: it is enough that divine Love is an ever-present help; and if you wait, never doubting, you will have all you need every moment. What a glorious inheritance is given to us through the understanding of omnipresent Love! More we cannot ask: more we do not want: more we cannot have. This sweet assurance is the “Peace, be still” to all human fears, to suffering of every sort.⁸

Isn't that beautifully simple and direct! “Spiritual ideas”, she says, are what God provides. They come first and “in turn” give daily supplies.

Starting with this realization that there is an absolutely unlimited supply of divine ideas and that the activity of an idea can never be impaired or depleted, we begin to see that we are dealing with INFINITY itself. Why? Because supply is as unlimited and ever-present as the supreme Giver, divine Mind, infinite Spirit.

Mortal mind tries, through its delusion of finiteness, to mesmerize thought into accepting that man has somehow been separated from his creator, from God's inexhaustible flow of ideas. This sense (this beclouding belief) of separation causes one to feel incapable of accepting or seeing these supply-producing ideas — ideas supported and enforced by divine law. So, it is elimination of this befogging belief that we are concerned with, isn't it? We are not trying to create more supply, but are interested in having revealed what is already provided by our infinite source. And

⁷ *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority* by Robert Peel, pages 329-330

⁸ *Miscellaneous Writings* by Mary Baker Eddy 307:1

what alone can remove this murky cloud, leaving revealed this spiritual provision? Well, what allowed Hagar to see the well, and so find help for her child? It was God's angel, His spiritual idea or Christ. And that's what allows us to see the same.

Our Leader promises:

As a cloud hides the sun it cannot extinguish, so false belief silences for a while the voice of immutable harmony, but false belief cannot destroy Science armed with faith, hope, and fruition.⁹

God's laws are perfectly reciprocal, laws of Being that coordinate and are fitly joined together. What is apparent to human thought as one person or thing supplying the need of another person or thing, is actually the reciprocal law of Being reflecting the wholeness of itself. We should, more and more, recognize and utilize this reciprocal law of Being that is ever in operation in our behalf — and in behalf of those with whom we deal.

It is sometimes said that we do our work in the absolute (the spiritual) and it manifests itself in the world of symbols (humanly). One thing we do know is that we don't start out to heal "lack," or "feathers," or "disease," or any other illusion (delusion) — metaphysically, or otherwise. We practice the Science of the Christ by denying understandingly the falsity of the belief, and affirming with confidence and constancy the truth of man's continuing relationship to God, of the Christly sense of sonship. This truth dissolves the misleading lie of mortal mind. It's all that can or does destroy the false belief and leave revealed man's unbroken unity with God. We call this "healing," but its results are simply the "side-effect" of this affirmation of what is real!

In short, lack isn't truly overcome by getting more money, education, or possessions — but by relinquishing the belief of limitation. Supply isn't found by accumulating, but in eliminating the beclouding belief of lack. Real supply isn't found in things coming to us; rather, it's discovered in ideas which appear through us; through the transparency (the clarity, purity, and spirituality) of enlightened thought.

I trust that the spiritual nature of supply, of God's provision for His idea, man, has become a bit more apparent. As it does the "means and methods" of the work of your Foundation will become proportionably clearer. These spiritually-based activities of yours must bless everyone they touch.

Mrs. Eddy tells us that ". . . matter, examined in the light of divine metaphysics, disappears."¹⁰ Of course it does!

Our books provide this wonderful healing light through their inspired statements of spiritual truth. For instance, isn't this a practical way of dealing with mortal error. Think of this carefully: "The counter fact relative to any disease is required to cure it."¹¹ How often I've turned to this and begun the dissolution of the mortal claim by making a list of the "counter facts" of a specific lie, then going to the Concordance to learn more about each counter fact (truth). The wealth of specific truths just

⁹ *Science and Health* 298:4

¹⁰ *Science and Health* 274:31

¹¹ *Science and Health* 233:28-29

pours out, and brings “the light of divine metaphysics” directly to bear. This is particularly effective when we feel overwhelmed or when mortal mind’s opiate of apathy or discouragement suggests itself. This process may be almost mechanical at first, but soon the inspiration begins to flow.

Or we work with Biblical truths, such as:

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?¹²

What does this say to mortal mind’s demand that we heal matter? “Cease ye!”

We all know of these, and hundreds of other familiar spiritual tools, and have used them often in our healing work. But it behooves us to be alert at the outset, at the first onslaught of mortal mind’s picture, so that we begin rightly, from the spiritual premise; and do not think we are using these spiritual truths to try and heal matter. This is the constant challenge, isn’t it?

Before we close let me tell you the outcome of the real-life example we mentioned earlier. When the patient reported that every vestige of the disease had vanished, for a moment I tried to think back a week to when I first saw her. I then realized that the important thing about this healing was that, for the life of me, I could not remember seeing a single physical symptom or appearance of that problem, so completely free from matter had become my view of her. Not for one moment had there been an effort to heal or repair a material body. Every denial and affirmation was single-mindedly devoted to dissolving a lie, and seeing in its place the perfect idea of God. (I wish I could do this consistently.)

Our Leader sets this forth in a statement you know so well:

Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the Saviour saw God’s own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick.¹³

Once again, healing is simply the practical application of the rules of this Science of the Christ, and “beginning rightly” is one of the rules. It is pretty well summed up in this: we’re not trying to see mortal man as the image and likeness of God; we are trying to see the image and likeness of God instead of mortal man. Doesn’t that make our goal in healing clear? And that’s “beginning rightly”!

Thank you.

¹² Isaiah 2:22

¹³ *Science and Health* 476:32-4