

How Old Would You Be If You Didn't Know How Old You Are?

A talk given by **Daniel L. Jensen, C.S.B.**, at Arden Wood in the 1980s



Thank you for allowing me to join in this activity of Love. Over the years, I've been so grateful for the Christian Science nurses that have allowed me to go about my business while they spread a blanket of love and comfort and joy in that patient's room. I'm grateful to be here with you!

How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are? A friend of mine had this thought-provoking question put to her by her son. Now, if you were asked this question, how would you answer? Think about it for a moment, and we'll come back to it later.

Down through the ages with all too few exceptions, mankind has bowed his head in blind submission to the false laws of time and aging. Time has been accepted as inexorable, irresistible. Material sense pictures human life as having a beginning, as briefly flourishing and then disintegrating. This is life as mortal mind conceives it—finite, measurable, going through stages, and inevitably ending. The so-called natural laws are based on the premise of biological birth. For it all starts here, as an ancient Latin proverb states: We start to die when we are born, and the end depends on the beginning.

So, let's look at birth. And what better place than to start with the Bible's three accounts. The first account claims that, "Man is made in the image and likeness of God"—totally spiritual. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). This is, of course, the only true story.

The second account of creation, written simply as an allegory for the spiritually ignorant tribesmen, is the second chapter of Genesis, though most scholars agree that it was written prior to the first chapter. "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2:21, 22). I think you're all familiar with that one. Scarcely anyone accepts this second account as factual, and I doubt if anyone here really believes that she came from the rib or he from a pinch of dust. And since Mrs. Eddy devotes a whole chapter in *Science and Health* to the real significance of this second account of creation, I'll spend some time on the remaining account.

What is this third account, the biological, natural story of creation? "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD" (Genesis 4:1). This attributes material creation to God, you notice, and the whole world, almost everyone in it, learns and accepts this as the true story of man's creation. Then, based upon this biological foundation, other so-called laws are pronounced and accepted—such as Mendel's laws of material genetics, which were, interestingly enough, propounded by Johann Mendel, an Austrian monk, in 1866—the very year of Mrs. Eddy's discovery of the Divine laws of Christian Science.

Isn't that significant? The genuine and the counterfeit making their appearance at the same time, so greatly enlarged. Mendel's laws are today taught the world over as being the genetically controlling laws in all living things. We know them as laws of ancestry or inheritance, and for the most part, we just accept them without much question as natural.

For example, if a mother-to-be has red hair and her husband has red hair, what color do we confidently expect the baby's hair to be? Or if they are both tall, don't we expect their children to be tall? And so on, with dozens of bodily characteristics, including lifespan. Why do you think the insurance companies ask you all those questions about your family and how long they lived? They aren't just nosy; it's because they believe it has something to do with your lifespan. The actuaries may not call it Mendel's law in operation, but that's its technical term.

In regard to our heritage, may I say that we, as children of God, do not derive anything from one another! Because in Truth, man is individually as perfect as the Father and pleads nothing more than to be what he is. If it were possible for a man to derive something from one another, man would not be a reflection but a source—and that isn't true.

If we were to ask, "Which of these Biblical stories of creation is true, the first in which man is spiritual, or the third, the biologically based material account?," most Christian Scientists would answer, "Well, of course, the first for man is spiritual." We say it all the time, don't we? But are we believing it, living it, really identifying ourselves with it? Our textbook makes so clear the importance of this concept when it says, "The foundation of mortal discord is a false sense of man's origin" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, 262:27–28 (to 1st.)).

Think of this. Mrs. Eddy doesn't say that this raises the sense of man's origin is a foundation or one of the foundations, but THE foundation of mortal discord. She apparently made this point repeatedly with her students. Irving Tomlinson says, "... Mrs. Eddy, in speaking of her healings, pointed out many times that the first error held by a patient is the false belief that man created him and that life is here in the form of mortality. Instead, she taught that we have to know that this material birth, existence, and death are all an illusion and the opposite of Truth" (*Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy*).

Think of this. Mrs. Eddy says that material discord is founded upon this false base of our origin. Yet, I wouldn't want to ask even this nice audience how many are celebrating, actually celebrating, a day honoring a material origin—the foundation of mortal discord—honoring this? May I take a moment to read what our Leader says about this? "Never record ages. Chronological data are no part of the vast forever. Time-tables of birth and death are so many conspiracies against manhood and womanhood" (*SH 246:17–20*).

And in *Miscellany*, she speaks about God's creation of man and about birthdays in regard to it. Consider how logically conclusive her reasoning is. Now follow this with me carefully. "Is God infinite? Yes. Did God make man? Yes. Did God make all that was made? He did. Is God Spirit? He is. Did infinite Spirit make that which is not spiritual? No. Who or what made matter? Matter as substance or intelligence never was made. Is mortal man a creator, is he matter or spirit? Neither one. Why? Because Spirit is God and infinite; hence there can be no other creator and no other creation. Man is but His image and likeness. Are you a Christian Scientist? I am. Do you adopt as truth the above statements? I do. Then why this meaningless commemoration of birthdays since there are none?... Let us have no more of echoing dreams" (*Miscellany*, Mary Baker Eddy, 235:15–27; 236:1–2).

Now could anybody ever put anything any stronger than that reasoning? It's absolutely flawless. And for us to allow ourselves to be duped into it is a shame. Perhaps the most subtle activity of all is Mother's Day and Father's Day. We can see how they deny God's place as creator and instead recognize our material origin and with it all the dreaded laws of aging, genetics, and conditioning.

Don't I sound like a killjoy today? Talking about birthdays and Mother's Days and Father's Days? I may have to leave out the back door this morning!

But doesn't what that looks like and is certainly intended to be the sweetest act of kindness and appreciation serve to fasten on and subjugate our loved ones to these cruel, destructive laws of aging, weakness, deterioration, and death? It comes, of course, in the guise of love and gratitude

in order to get by our guard. "Oh, but I'm not thinking about such things! No." Do you remember Mrs. Eddy saying that the cause often lies in unconscious thought—a latent cause producing the effect we see? Also, what thoughts and beliefs do such celebrations evoke in others? What about them and their well-being?

Ask any experienced practitioner how often they have calls from patients closely following a birthday celebration or Mother's Day or Father's Day. Why? Because of an unintended reinforcing of the suggestion of aging, that's why. With all of its false, natural laws of limitation and finiteness. For when a party is over, and everyone has gone home, the honored guest is left alone to consider: "I am getting older." And all the dreaded contemplation of what that means begins to set in. Even with youth, it reestablishes beliefs of lack of judgment, experience, coordination, and reason. In fact, under these material laws, just what is a perfect age? Contemplate that for a moment.

Many of you may know Burwell Harrison from Tenacre. In a *Sentinel* interview a few years ago, he told of an interesting Sunday school discussion he had. He said, "I had a very interesting Sunday School class some weeks ago, when the Lesson-Sermon had the part by Mrs. Eddy about 'Chronological data are no part of the vast forever' (*SH, 246, 17-18*). I asked these kids—fourteen and fifteen years old—'Is there anything that you can't do now that you could do when you were a baby?' One boy very quickly said, 'Yes, I can't put my toe in my mouth.' A girl said, 'I used to be able to do the splits, but I can't now.'

And I said, 'Well, you thought that I was the only one getting old, didn't you?'

And this kind of startled them. I said, 'Right when you were born, at the baby age, the world was pinning on you the suggestion that you were getting older. It claims you've been getting older and older right up to now. But there's something you can do about it.'" (From the July 31, 1971 issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*, "An Interview: on not growing old" with contributions from J. Burwell Harrison.) There simply is no optimum age from a material standpoint, is there?

I understand that someone asked Mrs. Eddy, "When will Christian Scientists quit dying?" Her immediate reply was, "When they quit borning."

Consider the importance that Jesus attached to this. One of the earlier *Christian Science Journals* cites a Biblical historian who reported the Master as saying, "I am come to destroy the works of birth." This is from the December 1946 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*, "I see!" by Noel D. Bryan-Jones.

Well, in sharp contrast to the world's accepted third story

of material birth and its inevitable laws of aging and decay, let's take a look at man's existence under Genesis 1, the first story and true story of man's origin. Mrs. Eddy puts it so clearly in a statement that you know well: "God expresses in man the infinite idea forever developing itself, broadening and rising higher and higher from a boundless basis" (SH 258:13-15). Isn't that beautiful? And she also says, "God is his Father, and Life is the law of his being" (SH 63:10-11). What a different view of man — this spiritual one, birthless and, therefore, ageless. What a different view of life!

But, what is age? Where is it located? In body? Of course not! Age is never a condition with which we have to deal. There is never a material body that has to be reconstituted. I want to repeat. Age IS NOT a physical condition, but only a mental suggestion that has been accepted and thereby become a belief. And it is based squarely on this belief of time, isn't it? It's recognized now more and more generally.

Someone recently gave me a copy of an article from the *New York Herald Tribune* of July 18, 1948. The article is entitled, "Time is not toxic," and the author makes some interesting observations about our belief in time. Listen to this: "Everyone who thinks that because he is getting along in years, that loss of vigor should be experienced, is suffering from a time neurosis. Every human tissue is endowed with potential immortality when adequately provided with food factors, oxygen, and suitable warmth, and when removal of waste is carefully effected. Time has no effect on human tissues maintained under such conditions or indeed on human tissues under any conditions. Vigor does not necessarily vary inversely with the age of an adult. Belief in the effects of time tends to reduce ambition. Therefore expectations and endeavors are curtailed. All those who develop a time neurosis subscribe to the prevalent supposition that time is in some way a poison."

It reminds me of the young woman mentioned in *Science and Health* who, on losing her lover, ceased to age (SH 245:1-17). It illustrates the rule that the mental state governs the physical. "Impossibilities never occur" (SH 245:27 (only)). Now remember that. "Impossibilities never occur. One instance like the foregoing proves it possible to be young at seventy-four; and the primary of that illustration makes it plain that decrepitude is not according to law, nor is it a necessity of nature, but an illusion" (SH 245:27). "Impossibilities never occur!" This woman just gave up all sense of time, didn't she?

Here's another experience that proves the fallacy of the belief of age and again demonstrates the possibility of becoming young at 74 or 90. It's from an early *Christian Science Journal* and is apparently a reprint from an article from a Florida newspaper. The headline reads, "Has become a boy again." "At the age of 90, George W. Goff, who lives near here, has

grown young again. Up to a year ago, Mr. Goff was blind, partially deaf and bald, and had been so for many years. About that time, however, he suddenly recovered his eyesight and hearing, and his hair began to grow. Now Mr. Goff hears and sees as well as he ever did, and his head is covered with a growth of black hair. As his eyesight strengthened and his hair grew, a remarkable change occurred in Mr. Goff's physical condition, and from being a decrepit man, hardly able to walk, he became as strong and active as a youth of 20 years. The wrinkles on his skin disappeared, and he now looks fresh and youthful. The case has puzzled the physicians. They say the man is entirely rejuvenated and may live ninety years longer. They asserted that the old tissues have been replaced by new and that physically Mr. Goff is not more than 20 years old. So youthful did Mr. Goff feel that last week he married a handsome young girl. To look at the couple one would never suspect that there was any difference in their ages, though the groom is seventy years older than his bride. Mr. Goff was born in Georgia, in 1805. He fought in the Indian wars under Andrew Jackson, and remembers 'Old Hickory' well. He also was in the Mexican and Civil Wars and was wounded in the battle of Buena Vista." Now this was taken from the *Boston Herald* and it's in Volume 13 of *The Christian Science Journal*, page 384.

I think it's an excellent certification that "impossibilities never occur."

Seeing this bugaboo of age as belief rather than as physical condition is imperative. May I illustrate? How would you as a Christian Science practitioner deal with the patient who came to you in tears and said, "I've just got to get rid of these yellow canary feathers that are growing all over my arms"? When you looked at her arms and reassured her that there were no feathers, she broke into angry sobs and said, "Well of course there are. I can see and feel them." Now Mr. Kimball was faced with just such a patient.

I want you to stop and think of yourselves as a practitioner facing these things and how you would deal with them. Would you try to get rid of the feathers? Well, of course not; that would be silly. And why? Because you would know absolutely there were no feathers to get rid of. You would see that there was only a false belief of feathers — an illusion or delusion, mentally entertained, and you would, without hesitation, immediately concern yourself exclusively with removing the false belief, wouldn't you?

Now, how? By breaking the hypnotic spell, of course, for nothing else could or would free her. And would you even bother to look at her arms again to see if and when a healing took place? Now think of this as actually happening. You would almost chuckle at this, so confident are you that there is absolutely nothing about the body to be concerned with, to be healed. Right?

Now, let's change the circumstances a bit. Suppose a patient came to you complaining of a skin disease on her arms, a condition which she said had been in her family for generations. Would your response be the same and as confident as it was in the case of the feathers? Would you turn at once from the body and simply deal with a hypnotic thought? Now stop and think of that. Uh-oh! Why not? Is the nature of the problem any less mental? Is it? Absolutely not! Then what would cause one to falter, to doubt, to hesitate? Because you're operating under a premise of that third story of creation. For its belief in a material body causes us to falter, doesn't it?

If, at the outset, we choose that biological foundation—a man beginning with and as a material body—we have, without realizing it, accepted the so-called laws of nature said to govern man. Since nature declares that canary feathers don't grow on people's arms, it is comparatively easy to resist that false suggestion. But since hereditary skin disease is said to be included in the laws of nature, you might be inclined to accept it as a condition of the body—as a reality rather than just another hypnotic suggestion to be dissipated mentally.

What a different story when we begin looking at man as described in the first account of creation as spiritual. Then we can see clearly that neither the suggestion of hereditary disease of any kind relates to a spiritual idea any more than canary feathers could. It follows so surely, then, that this is the premise of our understanding of man's nature. Recognizing how easily we dealt with the canary feathers, we gain a little insight into the continuous freedom afforded by beginning with the premise of Genesis 1:27. How enormously important it is to our well-being and spiritual growth, for, as Mrs. Eddy says, "To begin rightly is to end rightly" (*SH 262:28* (only)).

Think of that—that little thing of birth, of beginning rightly—the difference being you could handle a belief of feathers with no problem. Well, why couldn't you handle a belief of a hereditary skin disease with equal ease? We come to see that identifying ourselves as the image and likeness of God establishes not only our perfection, harmony, joy, intelligence, divine purpose, strength, and freedom—but it establishes our immortality and all that that entails. We see ourselves as birthless—and therefore ageless, deathless, diseaseless, indestructible—"as never born and never dying" (*SH 557:20-21*).

Jesus was our Wayshower. So let's look at what his life teaches on this subject of man's beginning. The circumstances of the virgin birth enabled him to demonstrate that man is created spiritually and not materially. When we see how Jesus' birth occurred with the same purity and sanctity of Mary's thought, we ask what the lesson is for us. Mrs. Eddy

writes, "The illumination of Mary's spiritual sense put to silence material law and its order of generation, and brought forth her child by the revelation of Truth, demonstrating God as the Father of men" (*SH 29:20-24*). Again, Jesus cast the light ahead of us. As the Wayshower, he demonstrated that man's origin should never have been through the material process or human birth. Man is a spiritual idea created by God in His image and likeness—a perfect likeness of a perfect God. And it's so important for us not to be taken in by the counterfeit account of man's origin and birth.

See how important it is to keep that simple acknowledgement of man's origin right? Mortal mind attempts to delude us through the convincing process of human birth. But we can look past that myth and consider the lessons of the virgin birth. And from his very beginning to the crucifixion and resurrection, he brought to light his and our immortality (*SH 41:37*).

The concept of the virgin birth was important enough that Mrs. Eddy expected her followers to accept it. Here's an account given by Robert Peel that gives evidence of that: Mrs. Eddy wrote more than 40 of her staunchest students, asking them for subscription of a thousand dollars each to the building fund—a staggering figure for people who were living, for the most part, in very modest circumstances. For her and for whom such a sum was more than ten thousand in the money values of the 1970s and much more now. With heroic good cheer, they virtually all rose to the occasion and sent in the money. The accompanying letters recounted with awe the conditions that came from their efforts to accomplish the seemingly impossible. In turn, their names were placed in the cornerstone of The Mother Church and its walls of New Hampshire. The real building blocks in her view were spiritual. When it came to her attention, for instance, that one of her students who sent in a thousand dollars in response to her appeal was not a believer in the virgin birth of Jesus, she returned the money with a brief explanation: "The virginity of Jesus' mother is a cardinal point of Christian Science. I did not know your views until after my invitation for you to contribute to our Church fund, or I would not have written as I did. Sometime, dear one, you will grow to a higher sense of Divine Science, and meantime I am as ever your loving teacher." Wasn't she loving?

Now, why was this so important? It was necessary to accept him as the Christ. She glimpsed the fact that Jesus had to be seen as having no birth process—that he was the creation of God, and he was the creation of God purely. This is a basic concept of Christian Science. It's as important for us to have as the crucifixion and the resurrection, for it demonstrates that life comes from God, and God is the only author of man. It allows us to see that we are spiritual as well and that it

is the counterfeit man that is held out as beginning through human birth. The value of the virgin birth isn't just showing that Jesus came from God; it's proving that man comes from God.

Now, our identification with the first account of creation requires consistency in looking to a spiritual model, doesn't it? If we are not consistent, we're like a sculptor who started out to carve a statue of a kangaroo. Every other day a prankster, who knew the sculptor would be a little forgetful, put a picture of a warthog on his easel where the picture of the kangaroo had been. The sculptor failed to notice and went physically on with his work. One day, he looked at a kangaroo model and the next day at a warthog model. Well, you can well imagine the odd results—probably the highest jumping, two-legged warthog you ever heard of!

Well how about the mental switching that goes on in the identification of ourselves? One hour looking to and through spiritual sense and identifying as the child of God, and the next hour looking to and through a physical sense at a material model and so believing that we began with material birth. Is it any wonder that we get discouraged, confused, and tired with our efforts and results? Isn't this dualism trying to serve two masters, Spirit and matter?

Annie Knott, one of Mrs. Eddy's early students, gives us an interesting concept of choosing the right model in an early *Christian Science Sentinel*. Let me read you a section of that article: "In one of Mrs. Eddy's classes, a student remarked that she always endeavored to have the perfect body in thought when giving a treatment. Mrs. Eddy at once asked where she found her authority for such a method. The student unhesitatingly responded that it was in *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 that 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'" (II Corinthians 5:8).

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. Accepting this scriptural statement that he is God's likeness, strictly speaking, we can have but one model—God's perfect idea, with countless reflections, all governed by the one divine Principle.

We come to see how important it is for us to have an ageless, spiritual model and to look at it continually, as Mrs. Eddy says. It is, of course, of particular importance for those of us who are active in the care facilities to maintain a clear, consistent, continuing, spiritual basis—a birthless one—before thought. Since many of our guests come to us sound asleep in a dream of material beginning, our awareness and understanding of their true origin will mightily assist in their early awakening, sometimes referred to as healing.

Someone well past middle age might ask, "Is it too late for me?" May I let Mrs. Eddy answer this through her answer to a similar question published in *The Christian Science Journal*? The questioner asked, "Is it possible to change the aged form to one of youth, beauty and immortality, without the change called death?" Mrs. Eddy replied: "In proportion—in proportion!—as the law of Truth is understood and accepted, it obtains in person and character. The deformities and infirmities said to be the inevitable results of age under the opposite mental impressions disappear. You change the physical manifestation in proportion to your changed thoughts of the effect of accumulated years. Expecting an increase of usefulness and vigor from advanced years with as much faith as you look for decrepitude and ugliness, a favorable result would be sure to follow. The added wisdom of age and experience is strength, not weakness, and we should understand this, expect it, and know that it is so. Then it would appear." (From the August 1884 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*, "Answers to Questions" by Mary Baker Eddy.)

Think of it. We are birthless, ageless, deathless, and we live progressively ascending all the time. So, "every day is your birthday, dear; every day in all the year, the loving Father gives to you birthday gifts all fresh and new; joyous life that cannot cease, blessed truth that bringeth peace, love that doth all good increase. Every day is your birthday, dear, every day in all the year!" (Clinton Burgess, *Christian Science Sentinel*, April 29, 1905)

Now, let me ask you again, "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are?" 🍃



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

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