

“...to-day is BIG with blessings.”

by Christine Irby Williams

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I LOVE BIG! Even before I knew anything about Christian Science, I have always loved the concept of infinity, eternity, immortality! Big is a BIG subject! It's comprehensive, expansive – makes us stretch!

“Big” means large, full, filled, brimming, swelling, teeming, chock-full, crammed, replete, stuffed, overflowing, satiated, satisfied, momentous, significant, substantial – of great strength, powerful; it even means pregnant, bursting with promise! And, it means NOT empty, not small, not limited.

When I was in high school, I spent many nights thinking about BIG – about infinity and eternity. I felt as if I were at one with these ideas, as if they were bursting in me, stretching me to discover more and more of the universe. I was an ordinary teenager in most respects, but I had these thoughts about “big” that no one could explain to me — until a new friend told me about Christian Science when I was sixteen.

“I’m Forever!”

I married that friend several years later, and after a few years had passed, we welcomed a child into our family. One day, I was out shopping with my best little friend in the world at the time! Our son, Jason, was in a stroller and he and I were meandering through the Princeton Shopping Center, enjoying the spring day. A perfect stranger stopped us for a moment. “Aren’t you cute!” she declared as she stooped to pinch the cheek of my very special companion in the stroller below. Next came a question my little friend had been asked hundreds of times. “How old are you?” As she asked, she rose and looked to me for the answer. I opened my mouth to reply. But before I uttered a sound, we heard a strong and mature child-voice from below belt out with absolute conviction, “I’m forever!” I’ve thought about this every day since then – going on four decades! It rings true. It’s a big idea.

What Jason was saying is that he is not mortal. He was seeing and declaring himself to be immortal! Have you heard that the word “mortal” comes from a Latin root that meant “limit?” The Latin word *morte* originally meant “the boundary, or limit, of a property.” It was used to describe the edge of something. So, when they needed a word for “death,” they



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combined the word *morte* with *vita*, which meant “life,” and arrived at a compound word that meant “the limit of life,” or “death.” But *morte* originally meant “limit.” It is what fences in, bounds, or has parameters. Jason knew that he wasn’t stuck, that he had no barriers of time to restrict his life, his very being. He’d seen that he is immortal, unlimited, not stuck.

Vision problem

What is paraded before us as “mortality” is not another creation. What Mrs. Eddy calls “mortal mind” is not another creator; it’s simply a “limited view” of the one Creator’s perfect and unlimited creation – infinite and eternal! “Mortal man” is not another man than the man God made; it’s just a “limited view” of the only man there is, God’s image and likeness. It’s as if we’re standing in the middle of NYC and looking at it through a peep hole, and then calling what we see The City! It’s like looking at the ocean or the Rocky Mountains or the night sky through that same peep hole! There’s so much more than what we see through a peep hole!

Mortality is a limited perception of what’s there. When something seems wrong or missing (like health, joy, love, or goodness), if we experience problems as we look through this peep hole view, it’s not that anything needs to be changed or that anything’s amiss! It’s a VISION problem. It’s an opportunity to exchange the peep hole for a more expansive view. Look again and see more of what’s been there all along!

Mrs. Eddy uses the word “mortal” exactly that way – to mean

a “limited” or “limiting” sense. She writes: *Mortal man has made a covenant with his eyes to belittle Deity with human conceptions. In league with material sense, mortals take limited views of all things.* (Science and Health 255: 11-14) [Emphasis added]

There’s a great translation in The Message of a passage Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6: 11-13): *Dear, dear Corinthians, I can’t tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. Your lives aren’t small, but you’re living them in a small way. I’m speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!*

Mrs. Eddy puts it simply when she says, *Man reflects infinity...* (S&H 258:11). And, *All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation...* (S&H 468:10-11). These are BIG ideas that STRETCH thought, as Mrs. Eddy says this Science does. As we go forward in Science, she says that thought becomes more “elastic”!!! Like Paul, she challenges us, again and again, to do our mental stretching exercises! I love this paragraph on page 128 of S&H: *...business men and cultured scholars have found that Christian Science enhances their endurance and mental powers, enlarges their perception of character, gives them acuteness and comprehensiveness and an ability to exceed their ordinary capacity. The human mind, imbued with this spiritual understanding, becomes more elastic, is capable of greater endurance, escapes somewhat from itself, and requires less repose. A knowledge of the Science of being develops the latent abilities and possibilities of man. It extends the atmosphere of thought, giving mortals access to broader and higher realms. It raises the thinker into his native air of insight and perspicacity.* [Emphasis added]

As we practice boundless thinking, our experience reflects this broader thought: *This scientific sense of being . . . confers upon man enlarged individuality, a wider sphere of thought and action, a more expansive love, a higher and more permanent peace.* (S&H 265) [Emphasis added]

This is BIG – not small, not bounded! It’s bursting with practical implications! And it’s healing. I tell someone every day, “You are not stuck” ...

- in a mortal body
- in a dead-end job
- in an economic downturn
- in a world of discouraging news or
- in an earthly experience where there seems to be no way out.

You’re not stuck in anything that God, divine Love, didn’t make – and he didn’t make anything that has limits! Every page of

the Bible and Science and Health is about this fact that there’s nothing stuck in the kingdom!

Blessings

On the contrary, there are ALWAYS BIG blessings right at hand. Mrs. Eddy opens Science and Health with a great promise: *To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings.* (S&H vii: 1-2) Think of that!

So what are these blessings that “to-day is big” with? I’ve always thought of them as the things God bestows upon His creation. The first statement in Science and Health has always said to me that those leaning on the sustaining infinite get to see, realize, experience all the goodness of God’s creation – all the health, peace, love, joy, and wonder of living in the kingdom.

We hear about active blessings all through the Bible.

- God blesses His creation.
- Parents bless their children.
- Worshippers bless the Lord.
- Jesus identifies the poor in spirit, merciful, peacemakers, persecuted, those that mourn, hunger and thirst, etc., as blessed.
- We are told by the prophet Malachi that if we *bring all the tithes into the storehouse*, God will *pour us out a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.* (Sounds a little like that first statement in Science and Health –*To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings.*)

To bless means: 1 to ... pronounce holy <and God *blessed* the seventh day, and sanctified it -- Gen 2:3 (Authorized Version)> 3: to invoke divine care for: pray for 4a: PRAISE, GLORIFY: to regard with great favor : approve highly 5: ...confer prosperity upon 6: KEEP, PRESERVE 7: FAVOR, ENDOW: to give approval to [Webster’s]

In Pierre Pradervand’s book, The Gentle Art of Blessing, there’s a beautiful description of blessing: *To bless means to wish, unconditionally and from the deepest chamber of your heart, unrestricted good for others and events; . . .*

When I think of blessing, I think of what God says to Abram when he has left Haran on his way to the land of promise: *I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* (Gen. 12: 2, 3)

Isn’t it great that Mrs. Eddy opens her book with a wonderful, timeless, universal promise that echoes God’s promise to

Abram? *To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings.*

But think about what Mrs. Eddy doesn't say in this statement. She doesn't say,

- To those thinking about (talking about, studying, admiring, etc.) the sustaining infinite ... today is big with blessings.
- To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, tomorrow (or next week, or when the sun comes out, or when everything changes) will be big with blessings.
- To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, today might have a blessing or two in it.

She also doesn't say, to those leaning on the sustaining infinite, today is devoid of challenges.

Identity Challenge

Jesus and those around him hear an amazing blessing loud and clear at his baptism: *You are My Son and I am well pleased with you.* Wow. That's big! So, what happens to this beloved Son, Jesus, right after he is baptized? Matthew's gospel tells us that he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness (see chapters 4 & 5) where he was given an opportunity to prove who he was! I love this definition of the word "challenge" in the dictionary: "an order to halt and prove one's identity!" So a challenge makes us stop and prove our identity — that which never changes about us.

Jesus knew he was the son of God – that was what could never change about him – whether he was at the temple when he was 12, or healing during his three years' ministry, or on the cross at the crucifixion. And he stood by that confident knowing. His demonstration matched his ID.

What happens throughout his ministry involves a great promise to each of us! Immediately after meeting the challenge on the Mount of Temptations, he invites others to join him in what I call the "kingdom business." He SHOWS them that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand by healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.* (Matt. 4: 17, 23) THEN he does something extraordinary. He goes up to a mountain and he tells them exactly how he does all that healing work! *And seeing the multitude, he opened his mouth and taught them just how he sees the multitude! He sees them as blessed! Every one of them! He sees them as peacemakers, as merciful and meek. He sees them all as blessed and blessing. He saw them as the light of the world - as the salt of the earth. That's how he healed them all, no exceptions! He saw them as blessed in a very big way. And that seeing healed! Jesus didn't have a vision problem!*

He also told them that those big blessings do not always come

with smiley faces on them. He saw the poor in spirit, mourning, hungry, thirsty, and persecuted, as blessed, too. And he closes his Sermon on the Mount with a parable. Remember? The parable of the house built on the rock. (See Matt. 7: 24-27) What happens to the house built on the rock of these teachings? The very same thing that happens to the house built on no foundation at all: *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;....*

The sun did not shine on the house built on the rock all the time! The very same storms and challenges came to that house as the other. The only difference is that *...it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

A few years ago, I got a call for help from a friend. Well, I'd had some interesting challenges that day, too – a number of things had seemed to go awry. But I had to laugh when inspiration came in these words: "It gets messy in the middle of demonstration!" It dawned on me that it got messy for Joseph when he was thrown in a pit and then a prison. I remembered a cartoon I'd seen of the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea. There was Moses, out front, responding to a complaint from his side-kicks, Aaron and Joshua, by saying, "Of course it's damp underfoot, but that seems like a petty complaint to make at a time like this!" Yep, it got messy for Moses. It got messy for Daniel. And for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It got messy for Elijah. It got messy for Jesus on the cross and for Paul when he was stoned and shipwrecked and imprisoned.

The kingdom business involves lifting thought above the "mess," listening for the voice of Truth, "leaning on the sustaining infinite," and rejoicing in the big blessing, no matter what!

I'm not advocating for the mess, but it's helpful to think about this. Why? Because sometimes we feel guilty in the midst of challenges. We are often good about not looking for physical causes, but we're not always so good about not looking for mental causes. We have a Bible Lesson twice a year on the subject, "**God the Only Cause and Creator.**" Think about it. Had Jesus done anything wrong to be on the cross? Had Daniel done anything wrong to be in the lions' den?

John, the scribe of Revelation, is a great example. When he saw the new heaven and the new earth, when he heard the message, *I make all things new...write*, the picture of what was going on around him wasn't pretty. He was in prison – a cave with no window and a rock for his pillow. But that didn't stop him from seeing what God saw and hearing what God spoke; it didn't stop him from experiencing it and from writing about it in obedience to the command, despite what appeared so real to everyone else. In fact, it may have inspired him to

look beyond all this to find and know and share with us what is forever – what is complete, perfect, true. And what is always at hand to celebrate – to be grateful for, to realize in healing demonstration.

This is BIG! And it has everything to do with Christian Science nursing.

Christian Science Nursing and Us

I've learned more and more about BIG, thanks in large measure to being so involved with the ministry of Christian Science nursing. Christian Science nursing is BIG LOVE, BIG blessings, BIG thinking, BIG healing, and BIG spiritual growth. There's nothing limited or limiting about it. It's an important aspect of the kingdom business, and we're all going to get to practice it – in fact, it's so important that we must stretch to embrace it! But it's not for wimps, either.

The world looks at nursing through a peep hole, so its concept of nursing is very small, limited, and limiting. For example, the world thinks of nursing as something that's needed when there's a problem. It suggests that because nurses deal with people with problems, it must be discouraging or difficult work.

In Acts 17: 6, Paul and Silas are described as those *who turned the world upside down*. While it was not intended as a compliment, I think it's a great description of what we do as metaphysicians. And Mrs. Eddy has given us a model for nursing that turns the world's concept "upside down."

Christian Science nursing is freeing, healing, and promotes spiritual growth in a very big way. In a very real sense, nursing really has nothing to do with sickness, limitation, problems – except turning them upside down to reveal the truth of being!

Mrs. Eddy wrote some interesting things about her Church Manual in an article entitled, "Mental Digestion" in The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany. Here's just a little part of what's in the article. You may know it, but listen to it anew with me, if you will: *Notwithstanding the sacrilegious moth of time, eternity awaits our Church Manual. . .* (My. 230:1).

The Manual will ALWAYS be there, she says. Forever.

The article continues: *This church is impartial. Its rules apply not to one member only, but to one and all equally. Of this I am sure, that each Rule and By-law in this Manual will increase the spirituality of him who obeys it, invigorate his capacity to heal the sick, to comfort such as mourn, and to awaken the sinner.* (My. 230: 9) [Emphasis added]

Interesting. ALL the rules and bylaws in the whole Church Manual are for EVERY member of The Mother Church – that means YOU and ME.

According to Mrs. Eddy, the bottom line is that there are spiritual demands in EVERY ONE of the bylaws, which increase our spirituality and put that spirituality to use. The Church Manual is a guidebook for our church family as workers in the kingdom business! It doesn't limit our work, but "invigorates" our capacity to heal, comfort, and awaken!!

We are the children of God. Spirituality is our forever nature. The Manual bylaws call forth that forever identity. It's clear that **A Rule for Motives and Acts** does this. And the **Daily Prayer**. And **Alertness to Duty**. And **God's Requirement** for *wisdom, economy, and brotherly love to characterize all the proceedings of the members of The Mother Church*. And so on....

But what about the bylaw for the **Christian Science Nurse** – Art. VIII, Sect. 31?

Some people don't think this bylaw belongs with all the rest. I've talked with long-time Christian Scientists who don't get why it's even in the Manual, much less what it has to do with them! It seems to them like a compromise, an admission that there might be things that can't be or aren't healed in CS, an indication that we need a fallback position. Some members think Mrs. Eddy put it in on a bad day, when she was discouraged about less than stellar healing work among her students; maybe even that it was an admission of failure on her part. They presume that *...eternity awaits our Church Manual* – with the decided exception of this bylaw, which they believe will not be needed once we've all reached the point of being able to heal instantaneously, and certainly once we've reached perfection!

But I am 100% sure that none of that is the case! Nursing is an aspect of reality. It's forever. Just listen to how the dictionary defines the verb, to nurse: Etymology: to nourish 3a: to promote the growth, development, or progress of 3b: to cultivate (a plant): to cause to develop 5: to hold in one's heart or mind 6: to hold or grasp carefully or firmly. Synonyms: CULTIVATE, NURTURE, FOSTER, CHERISH [Webster's]

How could any spiritual idea not nourish? Spiritual ideas ALWAYS promote growth and progress – that's the law of God! It's not possible to practice Christian Science without nursing – without cultivating, nurturing, cherishing, promoting progress, development.

Nursing is an aspect of all true being – of our identity. It's

forever. Every spiritual idea nurtures, blesses, promotes growth. Nursing is divinely natural and it ALWAYS accompanies reality, healing, and growth. No exceptions! I challenge you to look for it and find it – all around you! Then appreciate it – and watch it bless you!

Wherever there's healing, there's nursing. I've noticed that Jesus' healing work was always accompanied by or expressed as this BIG sense of nursing and the practical manifestation of it.

There are lots of examples of his nursing practice. He fed the multitudes; he told those who stood by in awe at the raising of Jairus' daughter, to "give her something to eat;" he pulled the disciples aside to give them rest; he taught them patiently, washed their feet, made sure Mary would be cared for after he was gone, returned after the resurrection to encourage the disciples to get out and do what he'd taught them to do and stayed with them until they were ready to do so. And there are many more examples of his nursing ministry.

Mrs. Eddy opens her chapter on "Christian Science Practice" in Science and Health with six pages of discussion about this big concept of nursing as the essential foundation for one's healing practice, beginning with a foot-washing example – the woman who interrupts dinner to wash Jesus' feet at Simon's house. Take a look and see what's in those pages, including, *The tender word and Christian encouragement of an invalid, pitiful patience with his fears and the removal of them,...*(S&H 367:3) and *The poor suffering heart needs its rightful nutriment, such as peace, patience in tribulation, and a priceless sense of the dear Father's loving-kindness* (S&H 365:31). And consider how much our church and the world needs this nurturing Principle of Christian Science practice to be understood, lived, and demonstrated by each one of us! It takes practice, and it must undergird our healing work!

And, in the same chapter on "Christian Science Practice," she lists qualities requisite for nurses, identifying these qualities as *Aids in sickness* in the marginal heading: *The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, – receptive to Truth and Love* (S&H 395: 19). Do you see how each one of these qualities requires the practice of Christian Science and are required of every practitioner of this Science?

The problem is that the true concept of nursing has been hijacked. It's been redefined by mortal mind as a limited and limiting "job" of care-taking, rather than as the healing ministry that is reflected so clearly in the dictionary, Mrs. Eddy's bylaw, and in wonderful examples all through history. It's now associated pretty universally in world thought with taking care of sick people – when it's really about cherishing, promoting growth, holding in one's heart!

What's really illuminating is to see that the world's concept of "nursing" is "care" based. And the dictionary definition of "care" involves those very things that Mrs. Eddy says are in the elimination list for the nurse: *An ill-tempered, complaining, or deceitful person should not be a nurse* (S&S 395:17). Remember when Jesus said of Martha that she was careful and troubled about many things? (Luke 10:41)

Listen to this, straight out of the dictionary. The noun "care" comes from roots that mean "lament" and "to chatter". And here are the definitions: 1: suffering of mind : GRIEF, SORROW 2a: a burdened or disquieted state of blended preoccupation, uncertainty, apprehension or fear, and consideration of expedients 3: ... attention accompanied by caution, pains, wariness, personal interest, or responsibility. Synonyms: SOLICITUDE, CONCERN, WORRY, ANXIETY: Care designates a troubled, preoccupied, or oppressed mental condition induced by responsibilities and duties or by doubts and apprehensions. [Webster's]

The verb "care" includes the definition to feel resentment or irritation.

Christian Science nurses – and that would include every one of us, because each rule and bylaw is for "one and all equally" – must be alert to the imperfect model of "care" as a counterfeit of nursing which the world is holding before our view!

We need to reclaim, redeem, and restore the right idea of nursing – and Mrs. Eddy is basically telling us this in her bylaw. We don't have to eliminate the word "care" from our vocabulary, but we do need to be alert to what we mean by it and how we use it. This helps us understand why Mrs. Eddy put the word "proper" in front of the word "care" in the bylaw for the CS Nurse:

Christian Science Nurse. SECT. 31. *A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick.* (Church Manual 49:7) [Emphasis added]

Everything about this forever standard (remember, she said that *eternity awaits our Church Manual*), lifts us to what is forever, and calls forth our spiritual identity, that which never changes.

Animal magnetism has substituted a fake for the true concept it has hijacked. And we need to reclaim, redeem, and restore what's true about nursing. This will bless the entire world - in

a very big way - by demonstrating that nursing is a HEALING ministry!

It's up to us to see that Christian Science nursing is NOT an accommodation, not a compromise, not a concession, and not merely a health care system. Christian Science nursing is NOT a temporary fix. It's not really any of these. It IS a CALL to EACH member of The Mother Church – to learn to love like Gabriel! And to learn to fight like Michael!

When we “love like Gabriel” and “fight like Michael,” we shine forth the Love that is Life and Truth – a living love that is spiritual, prayerful, and very practical. This blesses and heals. It is powerful! It blesses everyone! It increases OUR spirituality, invigorates our capacity to heal, while blessing the world with living love!

When we – all of us! – practice nursing in this way, when we let our forever identity as Love's likeness be expressed in practical ways, the false concepts of self, labor, and care get blown away! This demonstration of life and love breaks through limits! It's a very important aspect of the kingdom business!

Christian Science nursing is NOT about “taking care of another” until we get the “healing” part of our practice right! It's not about compensating for missing the mark ... or about waiting it out until we awake to spiritual perfection.

Because nursing is not a temporary thing! It's not based in imperfection, neither does it condone imperfection. Nursing is forever. It springs directly from divine Love. It's pure and perfect. We're going to have to embrace it – sooner or later! – because it's really about cherishing the right identification of all being.

So, Mrs. Eddy is giving us a “heads up” and a “head start” in the Manual bylaw!! Christian Science nursing is a ministry which every student of Christian Science should embrace and support – and in which more Christian Scientists CAN and SHOULD participate NOW! I am convinced that Mrs. Eddy gave it to us, at least in part, to call forth the remembrance and demonstration of who and what we are!!!

I'm also convinced that she gave it to each one of us – NOT to some SUBSET of us! – to bless our families, our neighbors, fellow church members, and the world through what seem like difficult periods when we're tempted to indulge in blame or self-pity. She gave it to us as a blessing, which we discover when we lean on God for help in the face of the storms or tribulations that Jesus tells us we encounter in the world.

Conclusions

There are lots of messes in the Bible. But there are lots of those who lean on the sustaining infinite and discover big blessings right in the midst of those messes. And there are lots of those who serve as nurses.

Even Christ Jesus needed nursing support. Remember him asking for his disciples' support when he was tried? *Can you not watch with me one hour?* (Matt. 26:40) Aren't you grateful for those who have watched with you in the middle of a demonstration?!

In the Amplified Edition of Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer, there's an excerpt from a letter Mrs. Eddy wrote to Judge Hanna when he was struggling with what was to him a serious physical condition. She says, *You, dear one, are God's appointed... Not but you can go apart to pray – this we all need to do, and I want you to do it. But note this, do not go where, if you get frightened, you have no one well-skilled in truth to encourage you and neutralize error with Truth.* (Christian Healer, 234-235)

This was written to him in 1897 – more than 10 years before she'd added the bylaw for the CS nurse. But she's telling him to get the help of someone who will stand by him – just like the Christian Science nurse in each of us and which she describes in her bylaw. Watching with and helping others actually lifts us up – it is a blessing, not a burden! Mrs. Eddy tells us that... *whatever blesses one blesses all...* (S&H 206:16). She doesn't say what blesses one, burdens others, or what burdens one, blesses others!

Final Word - Leaning

To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings. (S&H vii: 1-2) This is a big subject, and we've only really touched on it. But the kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed, so hopefully even just a little glimpse of this idea holds in it a big blessing for you, and for your family and friends, and the world! Will you join me in continuing to think about it in relation to your own healing ministry and to the healing ministry of Christian Science nursing?

And please join me in thanking our Christian Science nurses who lean, each and every day, on the sustaining infinite, and whose leaning blesses them and the world!



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