

# Catch the vision of *Science and Health*

Ronald E. Ballard

When I was a young boy, my grandmother used to speak about how important it is for Christian Scientists to catch the vision of the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. That vision undoubtedly referred to the spiritual insight the Founder of Christian Science had gained through her study of the Bible and her prayer to discover a spiritual method of healing.

For many years Mrs. Eddy had been searching for healing of chronic, debilitating illness. During this search she encountered "alternative" healing practices, including one based on mind cure, or human thought control. Ever since childhood, however, she had held the conviction that God's power to heal, as revealed in the Bible, was still a possibility. It was no surprise, then, that when she experienced a particularly bad fall expected to be fatal, she turned to the Bible for support. She explains the experience in her book *Miscellaneous Writings*: "On the third day thereafter, I called for my Bible, and opened it at Matthew ix. 2. As I read, the healing Truth dawned upon my sense; and the result was that I rose, dressed myself, and ever after was in better health than I had before enjoyed. That short experience included a glimpse of the great fact that I have

since tried to make plain to others, namely, Life in and of Spirit; this Life being the sole reality of existence."<sup>1</sup>

She goes on to explain an implication which followed that vision—that matter is but the subjective state of mortal thought (that is, determined by the collective thought of humanity). Her insights into the allness of Spirit and the consequent nothingness of matter gain all the more significance when we realize that they are entirely consistent with the spiritual meaning of what the Bible teaches. The prophet in the book of Isaiah speaks of God's revealing to him: "I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."<sup>2</sup> This prophecy was repeated by John in Revelation when he saw "a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."<sup>3</sup>

These visions were not so much prophecies of something new to come at some later date as they were confirmations of a present spirituality that underlies, and in fact constitutes, all real existence. Mrs. Eddy, in explaining John's vision, points out: "This testimony of Holy Writ sustains the fact in Science, that the heavens and earth to one human consciousness, that consciousness which God bestows, are spiritual, while to another, the unilluminated human

mind, the vision is material. This shows unmistakably that what the human mind terms matter and spirit indicates states and stages of consciousness."<sup>4</sup>

This kind of spiritual vision becomes the basis of healing. The passage Mrs. Eddy turned to in Matthew for her own healing speaks of Christ Jesus' healing of a palsied man brought to him by the man's friends in hope of his being healed. Jesus was not oblivious of the picture of the physical senses. Yet that picture did not constitute for Jesus the reality of man's life. The Master went beyond what he saw with his eyes and exercised a different kind of sight, or vision.

It is evident that Jesus had a clear sense of God's perspective and nature, so much so that he lived and embodied that nature. And he realized that that nature belongs, in fact, to every one of God's children. In this sense, we might say that Jesus' vision of the man was spiritual.

Mrs. Eddy glimpsed what lay behind Jesus' capacity to heal. She glimpsed that because God, Life, was in and of Spirit, so Life's expression, man, must be in and of Spirit. In truth, man manifests the qualities of Spirit, embodying those qualities in every action, faculty, and function. This vision simply substantiates the Biblical declara-

tion about man's being made in God's image and likeness.

With this recognition came the conviction that matter is not what it appears to be—in her case, a determining and failing factor of her life. She understood, to a degree, that because Spirit and its expression are the reality of existence, matter has to be a mental phenomenon, totally subjective—that is, determined by the thought one holds about it. The thought being held about matter by those around her was that it was injured, quite probably beyond recuperation, and rapidly losing its life. But through her insight into the Bible, Mrs. Eddy saw that matter has no life to lose. She saw that Life is actually God, expressing Himself in His own nature and character. That nature includes all the life, intelligence, and substance there is.

To catch the vision of *Science and Health*, then, is to practice spiritual seeing, divine perception. We can aid our vision by having the humility to challenge the deeply held convictions of the physical senses. As we turn willingly to God to gather the facts of existence, we learn more of true being in proportion as we learn more about the nature of God.

It should be noted that learning more of God is not a mere academic experience. It is not attaining knowledge that is held apart from our own being. Aside from study of the Bible and Mrs. Eddy's writings, learning of God actually comes by silent mental yielding—silent in the sense that it is devoid of human will or ego. Learning of God is another way of saying learning from God. Letting the God who is our Life speak to us in thoughts, ideas, experiences,

is the method by which we learn about God. As we seek this kind of spiritual communion, we turn from mere intellectual endeavor and open our hearts and minds to revelation. Revelations have come consistently to people who have learned to trust God with the unfolding activity of their lives and are not necessarily sitting around with folded hands trying to *make* it come!

Catching the vision does require redemption and regeneration. It calls for putting off the old way of looking, doing, and reasoning, and accepting a new way. In the beginning this new way may appear strange, much as learning a new language seems strange, maybe even awkward. As we learn more of this new spiritual "language," however, we will feel it to be a natural part of our being, or conscious awareness. It develops as something that we have always known and felt but were perhaps unable to articulate. We may, as Mrs. Eddy did, just grasp a glimpse of the vision at first. But it grows and begins touching every aspect of our lives and all the recesses of our thought.

We catch the vision as our lives become more spiritually oriented, open to farther horizons of thought. We develop new aims, refine ambition, purify our affections, reorient our ideals. All the minutiae of human experience eventually are permeated. Speaking of this action, Mrs. Eddy writes, "The divine ruling gives prudence and energy; it banishes forever all envy, rivalry, evil thinking, evil speaking and acting; and mortal mind, thus purged, obtains peace and power outside of itself."<sup>5</sup>

This vision, while deeply religious, was not and is not parochial. It belongs to no particular sect but is the divine birthright of every one of God's children.

As we catch the vision, God becomes to us more of what He always has been, the central fact of our existence. Catching the vision, then, is an opening up to who we really are, spiritually—the way God knows us. The Bible states, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."<sup>6</sup> What greater joy could anyone want than to know oneself as he or she is known by God? This is the vision that reveals selfhood, all selfhood, in its original and ultimate form, in the form in which God created it. This is the vision of *Science and Health* and the vision that will allow all of us to demonstrate spiritual truths in our daily lives.

Catching the vision carries with it a demand for action, a responsibility to put what we know into practice. Mrs. Eddy did not keep this vision for herself but recognized the call to share what she saw with others.

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When one catches a vision that is universal, it lifts thought from the penury of self-absorption into the majesty of un-

selfed love. Mrs. Eddy's life exhibited such power and love that it could not turn away from humanity's call wherever she heard it. Her giving took many forms—the writing of books, the healing of the sick and sinning, contributions to community projects, even the enlightenment of human thought through the media of her day. All of these forms had a common motive and purpose—

healing based on a vision of man and the universe as the idea of God. That profound spiritual vision must still be caught, experienced, and lived today.

<sup>1</sup> *Mis.*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Isa.* 65:17.

<sup>3</sup> *Rev.* 21:1.

<sup>4</sup> *Science and Health*, p. 573.

<sup>5</sup> *Mis.*, pp. 204–205.

<sup>6</sup> *1 Cor.* 13:12.

## Science and Health: Heart to heart

There's a pastor all spiritual seekers can claim as their own: the Bible and *Science and Health* by Mrs. Eddy. These books comfort, guide, instruct, heal, regardless of gender, social status, nationality, race, or time of day.

A woman in Pennsylvania writes: "*Science and Health*, along with the Bible, has been my helper and keeper for almost fifty years with blessings infinite. What better acknowledgment than to make available to others this same blessed outpouring of care and security. Opportunities have come to give copies to individuals halfway around the world as well as

to nearby neighbors through these many years."

She didn't even know the word *shortwave* when she first received a letter in 1987 asking Mother Church members to support metaphysically the Church's shortwave radio effort. Now her view of the world has changed. Her neighbors include pen-friends around the world. She tells of giving copies of *Science and Health* and the Bible to a woman in her own community and to pen-friends in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Another woman gave a copy of *Science and Health* to a cabdriver in New York City, saying that studying this book with the Bible would bring blessings. She also gave a copy to a man asking for money in a subway station, saying that if he studied the book with the Bible, his needs would be met. "When I left, he was thumbing through the book. We do have a lot to give." She explains that such gifts need to be backed up with prayer: "The prayerful work supporting sharing needs to be foremost in our thinking both before and as a follow-up."

A woman in Boston says: "I have been working on being very willing to share copies of *Science and Health* or the Bible as we give renewed thought to the value of the pastor in our lives and our communities, and I have been able to keep my goal of sharing three copies of *Science and Health* each month for the past three months."

She feels that making her pastor available is a significant way to help people find homes, food, and jobs. "Sometimes it's been to individuals on the subway, and other times it's been to individuals who have asked me for money, individuals who are appearing homeless. To one man I said, 'I have a book that I'll be glad to share with you. It's been helpful to me to find homes and jobs.' And the guy was just very receptive, and he said, 'Listen, I'll try anything.' Another instance was a fellow who said, 'You don't understand. I don't have a home, and I don't have a job.' And it just came to me to be firm, not with him, but with the idea of his *homeness* instead of his *homelessness*, and I said, 'But you can read, can't you?' And he said, 'Yes.' And I said, 'Well, this book will help you find that home and that job.' And he just immediately turned about, and he said, 'God bless you. Thank you.'"

As thought stretches outward, multiple opportunities to share the textbook emerge. Tempered with real listening and gentle discretion, our love for the pastor—the Bible and *Science and Health*—serves as a gateway for other spiritual seekers. Have you shared Mrs. Eddy's book? Please send your experiences to Office of the Publisher of the Writings of Mary Baker Eddy; One Norway Street, P-711; Boston, MA 02115-3122 U.S.A.



LEADING THOUGHT  
INTO THE  
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CENTURY