

I HAD SEEN MANY PICTURES of the earth before, but this particular one struck me as real. To me, planet earth looked majestic, commanding, preeminent, yet somewhat vulnerable and fragile. Perhaps I concluded this because as a college senior devoted to environmental causes, I carried around a major concern that if we all didn't wake up soon we might not have the planet as we knew it.

With ongoing industrial misuse, global warming, and endangerment of various species, many people have the same concerns today. In fact, we might wonder just how much progress has been made over the last 30 years in protecting this planet. Yet, despite some glaring issues still before us, some advancement in human thought has been made--collectively we are more aware of our role in being good stewards of our world, even if we don't always exercise that role consistently.

One thing I learned in my years of political activism is that all real change comes from a change of consciousness. While programs, causes, agencies, and laws may come and go, only when collective thought comes to realize the *essence* of an idea does it truly manifest itself as change. Hence the importance of searching for and defining essence in all that we perceive. Mary Baker Eddy, a master in essence thinking, demanded a spiritually scientific sense of things. Wide acknowledging in her definition of *earth* in the Glossary of *Science and Health* that "to material sense, earth is matter;" she understood that "to spiritual sense, it is a compound idea" "... a type of eternity and immortality, which are likewise without beginning or end" (p. 585).

Considering the earth from this spiritual perspective is

of earth by focusing on a sense of its vulnerable material nature and actually restrict our interaction with it by assuming its materiality. By changing our viewpoint to a more spiritual one, we can draw some conclusions about the earth's immortality, its eternal nature.

If divine Spirit, Mind, is the source of the earth's identity, then the purpose of earth is to give evidence of this divine source. We should be looking, therefore, for examples of this divine nature in what we now conclude are *merely* material elements. Speaking of this process, Mrs. Eddy wrote: "To mortal mind, the universe is liquid, solid, and aeriform. Spiritually interpreted, rocks and mountains stand for solid and grand ideas. Animals and mortals metaphorically present the gradation of mortal thought, rising in the scale of intelligence, taking form in masculine, feminine, or neuter gender." And elsewhere: "This Mind forms ideas, its own images, subdivides and radiates their borrowed light, intelligence, and so explains the Scripture phrase, 'whose seed is in itself.' Thus God's ideas multiply and replenish the earth." The divine Mind supports the sublimity, magnitude, and infinitude of spiritual creation" (*Science and Health*, p. 511).

Being good stewards of the earth, I believe, is not so much found in the efforts to preserve its materiality as in perceiving its spirituality. This enables us to expel more, because we respect its essence more. Taking a more spiritual view of earth can enable us to find more



revealing, because it suggests that the earth's identity is vastly more than even the most majestic of material views. As idea, the earth's true substance is to be found outside of matter. Its essence as a compound spiritual idea frees it from the current thinking we hold about it as material and vulnerable to destructive conditions.

So much more than what we perceive with our *eyes*, the earth is reflective of its divine source, Spirit. This means that we have much more to learn about the earth than just what we have known of it as a material sphere we inhabit. In a sense, it is not so much that we need to preserve it materially in what we think of as its earthly glory as we need to advance in our understanding toward what it is in its spiritual essence. We limit our views

creative solutions to environmental issues because we won't be imposing our limited knowledge of the earth's essence. Mother earth feeds each one us, not because of its perceived material nature, but because of its inspiring, enlightening spiritual nature-- its manifestation of its source, divine Spirit.

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