



# Achieving the Most Good

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There is in the human mind an attitude that perhaps does most to obstruct the deeper study a Christian Scientist needs to devote to his religion if he is to develop more of its healing potential for himself and society. It is the attitude that one can know a truth even though that truth is not animating his conduct.

This is the attitude Christ Jesus exposed when "a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>1</sup> The lawyer was well versed in the letter of the Scriptures. He may even have been reading them that very morning. So Jesus asked him, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer answered that one should love God supremely and his neighbor as himself. Jesus approved, but he also had to teach the lesson of deeper study by reminding the lawyer, "This do, and thou shalt live."

Mrs. Eddy says, "The error of the ages is preaching without practice."<sup>2</sup> She also writes: "It is Christian Science to do right, and nothing short of right-doing has any claim to the name. To talk the right and live the wrong is foolish deceit, doing one's self the most harm."<sup>3</sup>

The *most* harm? The phrase seems extreme. Yet the lawyer's conduct would appear to confirm Mrs. Eddy's insight. For rather than acting on the truth he felt he knew, the lawyer used his knowledge of Scripture to justify himself, as well as to test Jesus, who was the living fulfillment of the very Scripture quoted.

A Christian Scientist loves the Bible and *Science and Health* by Mrs. Eddy. He relentlessly demands of these books a deepening understanding of how to love God, and his neighbor as himself. But if he is to avoid "the most harm," if he genuinely is to recognize the Christ, or Truth, for which his heart hungers, he knows he must respond to "This do." He knows he must put into practice what he studies each day.

Indeed, our understanding of Truth can make no progress beyond what we are presently living of the Christ, Truth, in our lives. *Science and Health* states, "In order to apprehend more, we must put into practice what we already know."<sup>4</sup> Any increase in our understanding must await growing conformity of our present behavior to the demands of Christ, Truth. Christly understanding and Christly actions always go hand in hand and never occur separately.

No amount of reading God's Word will unfold in us a deeper, more lively sense of Christ, Truth, and its power to heal unless that reading first brings out honesty, unselfishness, affection, meekness, in what we do. One cannot become conscious of God as Truth while acting dishonestly, any more than he can be selfish or inhumane and know Him as Love, or behave egotistically and acknowledge Him as the Mind of all creation.

Deeper study emphasizes actions. This points to an underlying spiritual fact, which Christian Science teaches: that only the good we do accurately describes what we really are. To say that "the new man," one's real identity as God's image, "is created in righteousness and true holiness"<sup>5</sup>—as Paul puts it—is to make a scientifically true statement of man. But that statement does not demonstrate man himself. Man has no existence in words alone. He exists as the very expression of God's being. He is individual spiritual consciousness, and manifests, in his own distinct way, the infinitely various qualities of Spirit, Life, Love, Truth—the one Mind, or God.

And on the human scene this must mean that what we genuinely know of God's man, our real selfhood, is to be proved today in the things we do or refuse to do, the attitudes we hold, the desires we feel. To know deeply enough what Godlike desires are is always to have them. Similarly, to know what His quality called integrity is, is always to act with integrity. To understand what God's, Spirit's, healing and saving power is, is to be radically reliant on that power.

In Science, God and man are at one in being, and the actual consciousness of our God-created sonship will therefore be unalterably evident in actions in accord with divine law, the law through which God expresses Himself in His own likeness, man.

In other words, reading the letter without expressing the spirit—without setting the heart on honesty, unselfishness, love, meekness—as Christ, Truth, inspires those qualities—will not develop the spiritual consciousness that knows the difference between the spiritually right and the materially wrong.



"This do" becomes in Science, then, the Christly imperative of deeper study. It becomes the call to be and to act as the man God has created each of us really to be. It becomes the call to develop spiritual sense by laying off self-centered materialistic thought and conduct and by being motivated and animated by that Love which claims us as its own. In its deeper sense, study will bring out the qualities that go to make up God's image in all that we think and do, and thereby transform the material with the spiritual.

The commission of Christ Jesus was direct: "This do." The capacity to do good is already bestowed. All of us can do good. This may well include the giving up of those false material estimates of self—selfjustification, egotism, animality—which obscure the Christliness in our experience. But to detect false material believing, to get at it through repentance—to deny it, to reject it as unreal, and to regenerate and replace it with Christ-inspired motives and attitudes—is to fulfill the holy purpose of deeper study.

Evil cast out of thought will also be evil cast out of experience. Thought spiritually reborn will be evident in conduct spiritually reborn, a healthier body, a happier home, better relationships, increased usefulness and dominion.

Indeed, the good we can know and do through deeper study is as illimitable as its source. By our putting "into practice what we already know" of God as Love, our sense of Love's presence and power can expand until it knows no limits, is no longer hedged about with bigotry or fear, and heals instantaneously. We can study so to know God as divine Principle, the source of all true government and law, as to rule out of our lives all that does not manifest His justice and mercy.

God is the Soul of man and imparts all the beauty of creation. Thus we can study the nature of Soul so as to overcome all that is boorish, crude, uncivil, in our lives and to express the qualities of Soul instead. We can learn so much of God as everpresent Life that we lose all belief in death and overcome death with the consciousness of man's immortal, indestructible nature. We can learn enough of Truth never to believe a lie or to sin or to be sick again. In deeper study our lives will take on the expanding spirituality of our thought and prove that progress without limitation is feasible.

Our need is not necessarily for more time but to utilize better what we already know of Truth and Love. The doing of truth—acting in accordance with what we now know of God as Life, Truth, Love—is the open door to receiving the added inspiration and encouragement we so earnestly

feel we need.

The Mind which commands "This do" is also the Love which makes ample provision for getting to know our heavenly Father and our glorious sonship at one with Him. A Love-motivated life will have all the time it needs for the right use of study and for quiet prayer, on a battlefield or in the home, wherever we may be.

Let us study more deeply. Let us act on the truth we read and so easily recite, and thus not only avoid "the most harm" but become worthy of achieving the most good. What assurance of progress for ourselves! What hope for a troubled world!

<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:25;↑

<sup>2</sup> Science and Health, p. 241;↑

<sup>3</sup> p. 448;↑

<sup>4</sup> p. 323;↑

<sup>5</sup> Eph. 4:24.↑

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