

The Suspension of Disbelief

A talk given at the Twelveacres' 2016 Annual Meeting by Michael Mooslin of Los Angeles, CA

Have any of you seen the movie *Alice in Wonderland*? We enter the theater *accepting as real* a premise that is total fiction. In spite of our disbelief in the movie's fictional premise, we set aside or suspend that disbelief in order to enjoy the movie. It's a voluntary acceptance of the "impossible" as reality. In fact the definition of the term *suspension of disbelief* is to "suspend one's critical faculties and believe the unbelievable; to sacrifice realism and logic for the sake of enjoyment."

My premise today is simple: When we accept a *material* view of our experience, we are suspending the understanding of our *spiritual* identity for the enjoyment of, or comfort in, matter. Mrs. Eddy tells us on page 188 of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, "Mortal existence is a dream of pleasure . . . in matter." *Without* our God-informed critical faculty of spiritual understanding, matter appears real, and our spiritual reality seems unreal—or, worse, non-existent. It's a hypnotic habit. Suspending our spiritual understanding, we see matter as able to provide happiness, comfort, wealth, health, power, and life, all the while acknowledging Mrs. Eddy's statement "There is no matter." How many times have we repeated "There is no Life, Truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter"? She tells us that "matter is a fiction . . . sanctioned by society" (SH 170). Now, we all know this, we understand it, we teach it to our young ones in Sunday School.

I am sure you all remember Jack Hubbell's "duck-itis" story about two Christian Scientists who are invited to a party where a hypnotist is the entertainment. One of the Christian Scientists, however, was going to arrive late. When he got there, he saw everyone waddling around the room and quacking. They had been hypnotized to believe they were ducks. His distraught friend came up to him and asked for a treatment. He had "duck-itis" in his webbed feet. His friend looked at him and replied, "You can't have 'duckitis' because you're not a duck!" Well, in the same regard, there is no healthy matter, no sick matter, no deformed matter and no disabled matter. Why? Because, there is no matter to be sick, deformed or disabled! There is just a material *view* in which these conditions appear. Successfully change your viewpoint and those conditions disappear. As we read in this week's Bible Lesson, it's the Genesis 2 view—the mythological view of Life.

How many times a day do we suspend our disbelief in matter and go merrily along in matter's fictional state? This sentence from *Miscellaneous Writings* is useful in this regard: "I earnestly advise all Christian Scientists to remove from their observation or study the personal sense of any one, and not to dwell in thought upon their own or others' corporeality, either as good or evil" (308:32-3). So how do we view and think about each other and ourselves without dwelling on their corporeality?

The answer is in the textbook: "From the infinite elements of the one Mind emanate all form, color, quality, and quantity, and these are mental, both primarily and secondarily" (SH 512:21-24). Emanate from Mind, God? That must mean that man is a spiritual being. So what about this material body? We only have one body and it is spiritual, with perfect form, color, quantity, and quality. It is a material view of body that is hiding the spiritual, true view. When we successfully remove the cloud of materialism, our spiritual identity is revealed.

In order to get back on track, we have to reverse what we see—or "unsee" it. My grandmother loved to tell the story of a little girl who attended a Christian Science Sunday School and hurt her finger while playing. When the girl's father, who was not a Christian Scientist, came home and asked to see the injury, she replied, "Oh, Daddy, please don't see what you are going to look at." In other words, be careful not to be taken in by the human picture or you may be fooled by what you are looking at.

We have to do the *opposite* of suspending our disbelief in matter and refuse to accept matter's fictional state. We have to unmask it and awaken from the dream. Now we all know this. We constantly work to reverse our thinking from the human back to the divine, the mortal back to the immortal. Mrs. Eddy was not the first to teach us to reverse our thinking. Remember Paul's words about "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down _____ and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every _____ to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor 10:4, 5)? We are all able to fill in those blanks, aren't we? Casting down "imagination" and bringing into captivity every "thought" to the obedience of Christ.

Now, the Christ is defined as "the divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error" (SH 583). Incarnate means "in the body." Thus, Paul's words really instruct us to cast down imaginations and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of . . . God's manifestation, thereby destroying bodily error—the error of believing that the form, color, quantity, and quality of our identity, named body, could be material.

Isn't this is the very theme of *Science and Health*? Throughout our textbook, Mrs. Eddy juxtaposes Paul's opposite concepts of "imagination" and "thought" in many different ways, but always underscoring the same theme. For instance, the two cardinal points of Christian Science, in her own words, are "the nothingness of material life and intelligence and the mighty actuality of all-inclusive God, good. These were the two cardinal points of Mind-healing, or Christian Science, . . ." (SH 52). She also contrasts Life vs. death, human vs. divine,

corporeal vs. incorporeal, Truth vs. error, and so on.

Let's see if we can find examples: Virtually every paragraph in the first 500 pages of the textbook juxtaposes opposite concepts. It would not matter what paragraphs we pick. But are these comparisons really opposites? If God is All, then He cannot *have* an opposite. The opposite of all is nothing. So what is the correct term to use? Perhaps calling it the "absence" of the other works, such as darkness being the absence of light. But wait! If God is ever-present, then He can have no absence, either. This must be why Mrs. Eddy uses the term "suppositional absence" (SH 215)—in other words, an *illusion, a fiction*. On page 72, she writes, "God, good, being ever present, it follows in divine logic that evil, the *suppositional* opposite of good, is never present" [emphasis added]. She also writes, "The greatest wrong is but a *supposititious* opposite of the highest right" (SH 368)[emphasis added]. The word "suppositional" is defined as "a belief without fact or proof."

Referring back to *Alice in Wonderland*, remember when Alice said to the White Queen, "There is no use in trying, since one cannot believe in impossible things." The Queen replied, "I dare say you haven't had much practice. When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour each day. Why, sometimes I've believed in as many as six impossible things before breakfast." This is a great quote because it challenges belief. But a belief is simply something we have thought over and over again. Furthermore, it is superficial to use the term "belief" as though it were an actual thing. It's just a word we use to describe unreal mortal thought hiding *our spiritual identity*. Divine logic shows us matter's nothingness, but when we suspend our critical faculty of divine logic (the ever-present spiritual reality), *the unreal appears to be the real, and we imagine impossible things*. Unfortunately, we practice that a lot—and not just before breakfast.

I was once told the story of two class-taught Christian Scientists who were warned by their teacher never to allow themselves to be hypnotized. However, these two ladies were curious about their new neighbor, a hypnotist, who had just moved into the neighborhood. They wanted to welcome him and admittedly were a bit curious about how hypnotism worked. So they made an appointment to come over for a visit. He welcomed them in and asked them if they would like some lemonade. They said "Sure." He then asked them to please go out to his patio and told them that while he was getting the beverages, they could enjoy his beautiful rose garden. They went out to see the roses and looked everywhere, but the roses were not there. Then the hypnotist came out with the lemonade and asked them what they thought of his roses. They turned, and there they were, right in front of them—filling a large and magnificent rose garden! The ladies were disturbed and somewhat frightened by this, so they abruptly left. They went back to their teacher, told him the story, and asked him what had happened. After admonishing them for allowing

themselves to be hypnotized, he explained, "That's one way hypnotism works. It doesn't always make you see something that is not there. It instead makes you *not* see what *is* there!" In other words, something real that is hidden from view and seems not to exist at all.

Again referencing Lewis Carroll, Mrs. Eddy in *Miscellaneous Writings* refers to the Cheshire Cat who "vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone" (p. 216). Was this a witty or a happy hit at idealism to illustrate the point the author makes next—namely: "When philosophy becomes fairy-land, in which neither laws of nature nor the laws of reason hold good, the attempt of phenomenism to conceive the universe as a phenomenon without a noumenon may succeed, but not before; for it is an attempt to conceive a grin without a cat." In other words, an effect without a cause is inconceivable! The whole process of material belief is illusory. Thus, to break the illusion, the conscious or unconscious suspension of disbelief, we must reverse the material picture.

Here are some examples of those who reversed the material picture right in the face of onlookers' skepticism. First, in this week's Lesson, we read about Jesus calling the woman who was bowed over, *to him*. I think the exact words were, "and he called her to him." Who among you would ask an elderly, crippled woman to walk over to you? Why would Jesus have done that? As an aside, do you all know who Mary Alice Dayton was? A student of Christian Science in Mrs. Eddy's day, Mary Alice was healed of the same curvature of the spine as our friend in the Bible. Impressed by this healing, Mrs. Eddy asked Mary Alice to please write an article. Instead, she wrote a poem, which anonymously appeared in the *The Christian Science Journal*. When Mrs. Eddy wanted hymns written by Christian Scientists for her hymnal, she chose Mary Alice's poem—a poem we all know by heart as Hymn 51, which begins: "Eternal Mind the Potter is." How was this healing possible? The poem's first line tells us. "Eternal Mind the Potter is and *thought* the eternal clay", taking us back to form emanating from Mind. God is thinking us, and those thoughts are perfect and eternal.

Next, what about Lazarus? When Jesus said, "Lazarus come forth," who in the crowd expected that the deceased would actually walk out of that tomb alive? Life was hidden from the onlookers who accepted the material picture that Lazarus had been dead three days.

Also, consider Moses, who went *into the water* to get on dry land. His crossing has always meant a great deal to me. I had my own Red Sea experience once. Many years ago, while vacationing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, my grandson and I were attempting to climb over the rocks at the point of Baja, California, that separated the rough waters of the Pacific Ocean from the calm Sea of Cortez. My grandson had no problem,

making it over like a mountain goat. Granddad, on the other hand, couldn't get himself up over the first rock. I decided instead to make a run for it around the rocks when the waves went out. Bad move! The waves came in quickly and violently and took me out to sea like a soda can, bobbing me up and down, throwing me into the rocks, only to wash me back out to sea, again and again. After several minutes of being tossed to and fro, I started to find myself going under and gasping for air. I struggled until I was completely out of breath and too weak to continue. The thought came to me to pray, "Father, lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Ps 61). I also thought of Moses going into the sea to be on dry land. The angel message was clear. "Go out to sea." I went down for the last time and decided to grab the ocean floor and crawl farther out. I then lost consciousness. I awoke on dry ground on the other side with a kind Mexican fellow and my grandson helping me. Evidently when I crawled further out, the next wave that came took me on a different trajectory to the other side of the rocks.

Here's one last example—one more akin to a developmental challenge. First, let's define that term. A developmental disability is considered "a chronic condition due to mental or physical impairments." We all remember from John 9 the individual with a single chronic impairment (not by definition a developmental disability but nonetheless useful). I am referring to the blind man on the side of the road. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Examine the slight but profound difference in the wording between being blind from birth and being born blind. The disciples saw a man that came into the world already blind (born blind), whereas Jesus saw a man who was blind only *from* his birth, not *prior* to his birth. His knowledge of man's pre-existing perfection is what allowed Jesus to heal the man. He saw the man's true being. Blindness as ever having been part of the man's identity was one of those impossible things.

I grew up with an impairment of my own—a developmental speech impairment. I had such a bad lisp and was so self-conscious of it as a very young child that I developed an entire vocabulary to avoid words that had an "sh," "ch," "tion," "sion" or "j." For church, I would say "sshhurcshh." About forty years ago, I felt that it might be my time to read in my branch church. I had been runner-up on the previous election for First Reader. An intuitive sense told me I should be prepared for such a calling. But the idea of standing up in front of a congregation every week to say, "This church is a branch of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts" was not a pleasant thought.

The same year, I was the session chairman for the Annual Meeting at The Mother Church. The individual charged with organizing the meeting suggested that I see a friend of hers in my area, Glen Smith at Orange Coast College. I sought

out Glen and, as it turned out, he had been raised in Christian Science. He understood the problem, including my desire to read aloud clearly, but informed me that my impediment was one of the worst he had heard. Nonetheless, he promised to do his best. After many months of exercises and therapy and testing on tape machines, he sadly informed me that there had been no improvement whatsoever and that there was nothing more he could do. The elections were the next night and I knew that I had no choice but to remove my name if it appeared on the nominating ballot.

Well, my name *did* appear on that ballot, but I remembered the last part of the story of Moses from Exodus 4:10-12: ". . . and Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, . . .but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? . . . have not I the Lord?" Now here is the part I remembered that evening: "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." With that I took a big gulp and let my name stay up, saying, "OK, Father, it's in Your hands." Sure enough, I was elected. I stood up to say a few words. Afterwards, a friend came up to me—someone who worked with school children who had speech problems—and told me that she had been aware of my problem for many years (in spite of the fact that I hid the problem from most people by my carefully constructed vocabulary). She added, however, that when I got up to speak my lisp had disappeared. I didn't believe it. I had lived with the problem for 30 years! I rushed back to Glen the next morning and had him put me on the machines to hear it for myself. The impediment *was* gone! I had been instantaneously healed of a lifelong limitation during that meeting.

As an aside, the first morning I read, Glen was in the front row beaming and unable to control his tears of joy, realizing he had done nothing—God had done it all.

Now let me go to a more accurately defined developmental challenge. You all are familiar with the healing in the Bible of the man with the withered hand? Let me now tell of a contemporary version. I shared this experience at a talk I gave in Virginia last year at the Association of Organizations for Christian Science Nursing (AOCSN) conference. The story shows how discerning the truth about a person's spiritual identity destroys the material falsehood labeling that person. I was president of a national fast food chain with about 12,000 employees. I was spending a lot of time at one particular restaurant to implement some new systems.

One day a developmentally challenged young man named Eugene applied for work. In addition to some noticeable physical impairments, he had one closed and paralyzed hand and the claim, voiced by his social worker, of a very low IQ. The manager was going to politely turn him away. Knowing that great companies are made up of great employees, I decided to step in and talk to Eugene. I observed in him qualities of value that could qualify him to do some of the

needed tasks. I instructed the manager to give him a try. At first, the staff was upset, standoffish, and uncomfortable. But over time they warmed up to Eugene's wonderful smile and helpful, eager attitude. We saw less of the label of disability and more of his abilities. As we did, he started to take on more difficult tasks, in contradiction to the claim of a low-functioning IQ.

About six months went by, and when I was visiting the restaurant again, Eugene came up to me to show me that his hand was opening up and he could use it! The paralysis was disappearing. About two years later I got word that Eugene, now a much-loved and valued employee, had given notice and was leaving us. I drove to the restaurant to find out what happened. He explained that his father, who operated a shoe repair store, had passed on and he was leaving to run the business and support his mother. His low IQ as well as his closed hand were a thing of the past. While not a Christian Science healing per se, this event had a profound impression on me. His improvement was a direct result of the entire staff's concept of Eugene. When that changed, Eugene changed. Eugene ceased to be a developmentally disabled employee and was simply an employee, a friend, an equal. Perfection was true of Eugene, and it is of course true of every resident at Twelveacres.

This experience inspired me to implement a hiring program I called Hire and Higher—H-I-R-E and H-I-G-H-E-R. I joined the board of the Elwyn Institute, which operated sheltered workshops in Southern California and Pennsylvania. We raised nearly \$200,000 from our major competitors like McDonald's and Jack in the Box and built a café within the sheltered workshop, which I dubbed, The Good Helping Café (pun intended). There we implemented a restaurant training program for the workshop clients, and the donor restaurant chains all agreed to hire the graduates. This mainstreaming of the so-called disabled from the sheltered workshop to the public workplace is what ultimately led to my efforts to lobby Washington to change the law, as it was applied unfairly to the disabled. Their health-care benefits were eliminated as soon as their earnings went above \$270/month. We were able to raise the earnings threshold to \$780/month. Our success in changing that law led to hundreds of thousands of jobs for the developmentally challenged.

We are all familiar with Mrs. Eddy's statement, "We must look deep into realism instead of accepting only the outward sense of things" (SH 129). Here is a story I heard that illustrates her point. It is about masterpieces being lost forever when the owners covered them up by painting another scene over the original painting—either to keep the work of art from being taken or to avoid taxes or to hide them from the enemy during war. Or maybe they were painted over by art thieves to hide their crime. One collector who searched out these hidden masterpieces, looking for hints in the framing and the backs of

the canvases, bought one such painting at an auction. He then went to work seeing if he could remove the newer painting from atop the masterpiece he suspected might be underneath. Since the newer painting was softer than the original, he gently rubbed off the fresher paint and discovered that, in fact, there existed a signature of the master painter underneath. For the sake of the story, let's say it was Rembrandt's signature.

Now let me pose a question to you. If you owned that partially revealed masterpiece, would you concern yourself with the subject matter of the painting covering the Rembrandt? What if it was a really beautiful painting that you just loved? Would that matter? Of course not! It would be irrelevant. Every time you looked at your painting, you would only focus on the original masterpiece underneath. Every time you thought about it, you would be thinking about the masterpiece. Every free moment you had would be spent uncovering more of the masterpiece.

Didn't I have to see the masterpiece in myself and others? The process of "seeing," or praying, is really about being receptive, expectantly listening for the needed inspiration, followed by obedience to that angel thought, whether it was seeing a legislative pathway in Washington or seeing my ability to speak clearly or seeing my path to dry land while drowning or seeing my beautiful friend, Eugene, as unlimited by the false label of disability.

Our Leader tells us in *Miscellaneous Writings*, page 277:23-24 "No evidence before the material senses can close my eyes to the scientific proof that God, good, is supreme." And no evidence before the material senses can shut our eyes to the masterpiece that is our life and the lives of every one of God's beloved children. Every individual is God's masterpiece. Once we start revealing God's signature on His masterpiece, man, we can never be impressed again by the material view hiding the true "identification with what dwelleth in the eternal Mind," to quote the last line of *Unity of Good* (p. 64).

Let's hold to the spiritual view and reverse every claim that attempts to hide it. Let's recognize the magnificent rose garden. Let's all go into the healthful waters of Spirit to be on dry land. Let us all consciously refuse to suspend disbelief—refusing to suspend our critical faculty of reason and logic and knowing spiritually man's true nature. The suspension of disbelief in the theater of the material cannot prevail when we replace the fictional, material story with the spiritual facts of being. Closing this talk from *Retrospection and Introspection* (p. 86), let's "cleanse every stain from the wanderer's soiled garments, wipe the dust from his feet and the tears from his eyes, that we may behold the real man, the fellow-saint of a holy household" and do our part to support and fulfill Twelveacres' all-important mission, "Overcoming developmental challenges through Christian Science."