

September 22, 2003—Subject: Reality

**DEAR FRIENDS:** Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from SCIENTIFIC TRANSLATION by John Morgan. For a brief biography on John Morgan, [click here](#).

A very pertinent point emerges from these Gospel healings, and that is the vital “Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind” Can only happen in life. It cannot be done in theory, by listening to others, or reading books — or by writing them. The statements of Truth bear fruit only as our lives are changed; the absolutes of the first translation are validated when we let them live us and transform us in the second, otherwise we have a merely theoretical understanding, which is valueless. “Science is... the infinite law of God; which law is written on the heart, received through the affections, spiritually understood, and demonstrated in our lives (Mis. 172:16). It “comes to our recognition only as our natures are changed by its silent influence” (No 1:4). The way of Science therefore is also the way of life, because we *live* our way out of the physical, through the moral and into the spiritual. So while the emphasis of the first translation is *Science*, that of the second is *Christianity*; the work is done *by* the absolute and impersonal facts of Science but it is done *in* the area of qualities, judgments, relationships, — that is, in the values of Christianity. In working out the dream of being egotistic mortals, we have to grapple with personal feelings, emotions and behavior every minute of the day. Such Christianization is frequently uncomfortable, but it is the only means by which the sublime truths of God and man are proved not to be mere abstractions, (See '02 6:15-22; Mis. 116:11-24)

The purpose of the second translation could be defined in Mrs. Eddy’s words, as “bringing the qualities of Spirit into subjection to Spirit” (Mis 201:5). What this means is that its function is not the destruction of something, but the gathering back of life’s values and functions into their true and original nature. The keynote, then, is redemption, or restoration — of that which was never lost in reality. Clearly this work of resolving human character is no less scientific than that of understanding God, for it is the same Science, which is operating. (See Mis 359:23-26.)

Although the truths of Science have to be incorporated in life in order to be properly understood, it is not so much that we live them as that they live us. Always the initiative lies with Truth, and the human response follows as inevitably as one’s shadow, causing us to adopt the divine and lay off the mortal, often unconsciously. “Eternal Truth is changing the universe” (S & H 255:1), and therefore “the world feels the alterative effect of truth through every pore”. (224:2). Our progress, — that is, our unfoldment, — may be fast or slow, dramatic or uneventful, according to our willingness to respond to the Science of being and be changed by it; but being changed we surely are, and in all directions at once. While Science reveals reality systematically, it is comprehensive in the way we experience it; it unites all periods in the divine design, and therefore transcends time. A beginner may have a truer grasp of these essentials than the established professional, as Mrs. Eddy made plain in her last published message to the field (see My 241:10 - 242:14). If we think of development in a linear way, we make ourselves hostages to time; we imagine, perhaps, that ‘we’ve got beyond’ a certain phase, and by so doing we ensure that our present stage also will become obsolete and have to give way to yet another. Thus each phase of our experience is robbed of its value and joy; we are forever reaching for the promised land but never being there.

Discouragement creeps in if we try to measure our progress by some lineal yardstick like a series of examinations, needlessly. So let us refuse to be intimidated by mortally-based thought patterns! “Jesus required neither cycles of time nor thought in order to mature fitness for perfection and its possibilities. He said that the kingdom of heaven is here...” (Un 11:24).

**Parallel Translations**

If we set out the complementary offices of the two translations in table, we shall not lose sight of the overall perspective when we plunge into the details of the three degrees. Clearly, these examples are not all exact equivalents of each other, but they serve to illustrate the two emphases.

**First**

FIRST TRANSLATION

SECOND TRANSLATION

‘Mind presents the idea of God’ (503:20)

“and thought accepts the divine infinite calculus” (520:14)

Divine Science

Christian Science

The Christ

the Jesus

The divine manifestation of God,

which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error” (583:10)

I came forth from the Father

I go to the Father

Truth revealed: teaching proof

Truth demonstrated: healing disproof

being

doing

real appears

unreal disappears.

noumenon revealed

phenomenon understood

the capitalized terms

the uncapitalized terms

descending

ascending

Gen 1:1 and S & H 502:22-5

Gen 1:2 and S & H 503:6-17

Gen 1:1 - 2:3

remainder of Bible

There are innumerable further examples of these pairs throughout the Bible and *Science and Health*; sometimes they come in the form of characters such as Elias and Moses (Mark 9:2-8; S&H 585:9-14; 592:11-15); or they may come as the two halves of single sentence: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13 see also S & H 172: 12-14). From the textbook comes a familiar pair: “Angels are pure thoughts from God...” (298:28), balanced by, “My angels are exalted thoughts [which] guide to the divine Principle of all good” (299:7). There are also the two kinds of demonstration: Principle forever demonstrating itself regardless, and us embodying and demonstrating the divine power (see S & H 192:19-24; 109:4-10). Finally, the two standpoints are those of *womanhood* and of *manhood*.

Metaphysically speaking, woman starts from the center within and brings it out into expression, while man appears to start from the outside and works his way to the center. As the poet Robert Graves puts it, ‘Man does; woman is.’ They are the complementary halves of the same thing.

What is so illuminating, — and heartening, — about these in-stances is their range, from great sweeps of history to two simple words, confirming that translation is indeed the *modus operandi* of Christian Science in the totality of existence. We can never find ourselves outside its scope and operation, because it functions in life, as *human life*.

Mrs Eddy reminds us of this when she is asked if she believes in translation (see Mis 67:24). This explains why every word in the second translation relates to common life-experience, and leads us to see that the purpose of the “Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind” is ‘to enable us to demonstrate, here and now, that this life is not separate from God.

### **‘In Proportion As’**

In proportion as we love and understand the spiritual, the mortal concept is less real to us, less obtrusive, more of a servant. In the ratio of one’s spiritual growth it is densely opaque, or translucent, or completely transparent. (See S & H 295:16-24.) The textbook has many striking references to “in the ratio of,” “in proportion as,” or “in the degree that.” For instance, we find, “... that the real, ideal man appears in proportion as the false and material disappears.” “In the degree that man becomes spiritually minded he becomes Godlike.” Or, “In proportion as mortals approximate the understanding of Christian Science, they take hold of harmony, and material encumbrance disappears.” (S & H 69:9; No 38:17; see also S & H 209:16-24; 258:19-24; 368:22-24; 397:17-22; etc.)

There is something very wise and comforting in the way the translations operate so gently and kindly. The ‘appears/disappears’ equation is always in balance, like the two cars on a cliff railway; as the one descends, the other ascends. The new birth in Spirit goes on hourly; it cannot be forced or hurried, — nor delayed, in truth, — but is a continuous proportionate exchange. Anyone who has watched a caterpillar or a snake changing its skin knows that it is the growth of the new that puts off the old. The first translation alone would give us beautiful statements but leave a mortal world quite untouched and unresolved by Truth; to try to have the second without the first would condemn man forever to till the soil of human self-improvement.

“The condemnation of mortals to till the ground means this, —that mortals should so improve material belief by thought tending spiritually upward as to destroy materiality” (S & H 545:7). A laudable aim, one would think, and yet tilling the soil is always depreciated in Science. The explanation appears in the next sentence:” Man, created by God, was given dominion over the whole earth.” Mortals are being contrasted with man. Because man in the first translation reflects God’s dominion, in the second he progressively exercises this power over the belief that he is a mortal. No one would claim that it is an easy task, attended as it sometimes is by agonizing self-appraisal, self-doubt and even despair, but the end result is sure because the starting-point is not in the soil but in

### **The Three Degrees**

On the surface, the three degrees of the “Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind” are easily recognized as the familiar physical, moral and spiritual dimensions of human life. But while, to material sense, each is apparently real in its own right, spiritual sense reveals them as gradations of awareness rather than as three realms of being.

One may be tempted to characterize the degrees as bad, better, and best; but this would be misleading, because Science is not concerned essentially with value judgments such as good versus bad or right versus wrong, which so obsess human thought. The classifications in which the Scientist deals are real and unreal, or true and false.

Let us set the degrees out in columns, and consider some examples.

**First Degree**

Depravity  
Physical  
Unreality  
mortality  
mortal mind  
counterfeit  
the material  
illusion  
belief  
opaque  
self-love  
corporeality  
lack  
subjection  
Egypt  
hell  
Cain  
Adam  
Ham  
Judas

**Second Degree**

Evil beliefs  
disappearing  
Moral  
Transitional qualities  
humanity  
human mind  
symbol  
the mental  
thought  
faith  
translucent  
self-abnegation  
body  
supply  
tilling the soil  
wilderness  
world  
Abel  
Jesus  
Shem  
John the Baptist

**Third Degree**

understanding  
  
Spiritual  
Reality  
divinity  
divine mind  
the actuality  
the metaphysical  
idea  
understanding  
clear transparency  
spiritual selfhood  
identity  
abundance  
dominion  
promised land  
heaven  
Seth  
Christ Jesus  
Japheth  
Christ Jesus

**Equivalent steps which illustrate the same three phases of awakening understanding:**

And the earth was  
without form, and  
void;...  
evening  
firmament  
separates  
repentance  
disproving matter

And the spirit of God  
moved upon the  
face of the waters.  
morning  
firmament of  
understanding  
baptism  
improving the human  
(apparently)

And God said, Let  
there be light: and  
there was light.  
day  
firmament unites  
  
regeneration  
proving Spirit

We can recognize in the three degrees the three classes of un-capitalized terms, which, as we observed on page 34, permeate the textbook. Under the impulsion of the “Scientific Translation of Immortal Mind,” human consciousness makes a step-by-step transition from falsity to truth.

One always needs to be cautious with these allocations because often they should be regarded as a sliding scale and not as fixities. The conventional categories of mortal, human and divine are convenient as a beginning, but they are not watertight divisions. ‘The human,’ for instance, refuses to fit neatly into a narrow classification for although it is, rightly, focused in the Second Degree, in practice it spans all three. Under the impact of divinity, the mortally human is being exchanged for the divinely human, as we can see with the experience of Jesus. He exemplified the truth that humanhood is not Adamic but is Christ-generated. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Cor 15:22). Adam represents the human forgetting his original nature and dreaming that he is something else, whereas Jesus typifies the human conscious of his divine nature, or Christ. Adam therefore is *counterfeit* man, while Jesus is the *symbol* through which can be seen the Christ *actuality*.

It is not only 'the human' that is found to be constantly translated. Frequently the textbook treats 'mortals' in the same way, usually regarding them as a dead loss but sometimes as redeemable. "Mortals, ... Take divine Science" (559:19), for instance, would seem incongruous if we approached the book with a preconceived sense of three separate and mutually exclusive realms. How inspiring it is, though, to discover that even the mortal, as we might say, is constantly in transition! (For other positive references to 'mortals,' see S & H 85:23,24; 227:3-13; 228:11-19; 262:7,8; 306:25-29; 316:3-7; 327:17-21; 469:17-20.

'Thought,' also, must be used with care, for it is all too easy to assume that it is a neutral sort of term, neither one thing nor the other. Thoughts that are merely a reaction to the illusions of the first Degree, — non-violence, for instance, — indeed lack power. But those same thoughts, if understood to derive from the spiritual reality of the Third Degree, are a potent moral and spiritual force. In the textbook therefore, 'thoughts' are clearly differentiated according to their origin, and are found plentifully in all three degrees; the Concordance lists mortal thoughts, Gods thoughts, as well has those in between.

'The material, the mental, the metaphysical' is a set calling for comment, because although it is valid from a materially human viewpoint it is questionable in metaphysics. In Christian Science, all three degrees are mental in nature anyway, and the entire trans-lation process is worked out mentally. Moreover, there is a danger in substituting 'mental' in order to avoid using 'moral,' because unless the mental has a moral content it is still First Degree.

'Egypt, wilderness, promised land' traces the transition made by the children of Israel. It reminds us that the wilderness (where the law of God was given to them in the form of the moral law) is a region which has to be entered and traversed by all spiritual seekers, but which must not be unduly loitered in nor mistaken for the goal. Only when the law is embodied subjectively are we able to enter the promised land.

That last set has a parallel in 'Judas, John the Baptist, Christ Jesus,' in that John lived and baptized in the wilderness. John preached by the wayside, while Christ Jesus was the way. Of him Jesus said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Mat11:11). If we believe that we originate in mortal conception and have to work our way towards the spiritual John 's splendid morality is the limit to our achievement, whereas the least understanding of our spiritual status (Third Degree) would give to the 'body' of our experience a 'head' that cannot be lost. Realizing this, John himself said of Christ Jesus, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. He that cometh from heaven is above all" (John 1:15; 3:31).

Lastly, we could focus on Adam's three sons, 'Cain, Abel, Seth.' The Bible writers portray these stages with such precise spiritual insight that we recognize their familiarity with the translation idea. Appropriately, Cain means to strike, violence, or acquisition; Abel means transitory; while Seth means substituted. Cain,type of the First Degree, rises up against his brother Abel and slays him. Our sympathy tends to be all with Abel, but it is just as erroneous to let oneself be killed as it is to kill. While Cain is the doer, Abel is the done-to, and because the human sense of good does not know the divine source that sanctions it, human good succumbs to human evil. It is error to believe that man is a victim so, in the story, Adam and Eve start again with Seth, substituting for the physical and the humanly moral a spiritual sense of humanity; later in the Bible, Jesus is born of the line of Seth, type of spiritual regeneration.

Like Abel, it seems that the innocent Jesus is killed by Cain, but whereas Abel’s murder is final, Jesus’ death is swallowed up in his resurrection, for he knows that his life and humanhood originate not in the physical First Degree but in the spiritual Third Degree and is therefore indestructible. Wherefore the blood of Jesus “speaketh better things than that of Abel” as we read in Hebrews 12:24. (See also No 33—38.)

We see the whole story epitomized in the “Glossary” definition of Jesus: “The highest human corporeal concept of the divine idea [of the first translation], rebuking and destroying error [First Degree] and bringing to light man’s immortality [Third Degree]” (S &H 589).

In every one of these examples the crucial requirement is that we understand the divine origin (Third Degree) of humanity (Second Degree), so liberating it from the mortal concept (First Degree).



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