A Lecture on Christian Science

Entitled

Spiritual Achievement Through the Understanding of Christian Science

by

Lucia C. Coulson, C. S. B.
of London, England

Member of the Board of Lectureship of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts

This lecture was delivered in First Church of Christ, Scientist, Baltimore, on April 14. The lecturer spoke substantially as follows:

The desire to achieve is part of the make-up of every normal human being and is certainly commendable. Without it history would probably have recorded very little progress. The purest altruism is the desire to achieve for others, universally, rather than personally or individually. This tendency is even discerned in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, in the upward-reaching, aspiring branches of the trees, in the order and purpose of the ant heap, and the beehive. And why? Because what has been called the divine spark in man is not content merely to toil or to stagnate, but demands advancement and achievement. This is indicated in Browning's familiar saying, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." We can, however, go even further than Browning has done, for since thought must precede action, and action is simply the outcome of thought, man is potentially already there, he is where his reach is. What is needed then in every event is to enlarge our thinking, to remove the limitations from our aspirations.

There are some who keep their desires in the valley of wistful longing, saying, "How I wish I could attain this or that!" adding in the next breath, "But it will never be mine." The more robust and scientific thinker says, "Such a goal is possible of attainment, and so I am already there." The importance of this point is illustrated in a very simple manner in the old English story of Dick Whittington, which most people know. The little ragged country boy had walked up to London Town to look for work, being of an adventurous spirit. All day he tried in vain, no one would listen to him, so at nightfall he turned his back on the city to return to the countryside. At the outskirts he halted discouraged to rest, and suddenly the bells of London rang out, and this is what they chimed: "Turn again Whittington, Lord Mayor of London. Turn again Whittington, Lord Mayor of London." Whittington turned and the prophecy of the bells came true, although this took place centuries ago, when it was not easy for the lowly to rise. This shows what even human hope and faith can do, but human hope and faith unaided are not enough. Today more than ever before humanity is conscious of its own inadequacy to stem the tides of events, to quiet the turmoil on every side and to maintain peace and equity. Therefore today there is a seeking in human thought for something outside of itself, better, higher, more dependable, a turning in this direction and that for help and support. This is good, for such a state of thought indicates receptivity, which is the first step towards the mastery of any problem.

Now there is today a Science of Life which is the same as a Science of being, and because it is Science it is exact, demonstrable. It takes as its premise that God, the creator, is Spirit, and that therefore His offspring, man, is spiritual. Consequently it states that power is spiritual, and the inheritance of man, and that the human being can attain to and utilize this power. Humanity as a whole has never recognized the fact that spiritual means have been shown again and again throughout human history to be the most potent and certain in order to achieve; that spirituality, spiritual understanding, brings opportunity and removes the injustices and inequalities which seem to keep so many from attainment, simply because it is thought to be dependent on money, circumstances, and the like. In other words, spirituality, which is possible to anyone and is no respecter of persons, has made the lowliest great and is more powerful than all the material ways and means so beloved of mortals.

Now to prove this let us turn for a moment to Bible history. The greatest example of the power of spirituality is Jesus the Christ. From all we can glean in the Gospels and from tradition, his people were of simple, humble circumstances. He was spoken of scornfully as "the carpenter's son," and we are told that he had not learned letters, yet he silenced the cleverest scribes in argument. At twelve years the doctors of the law were astonished at his wisdom. He spoke to men and they left their profession and followed him. He fed thousands, he annihilated space, for as soon as he started across the lake he was at the other side. He raised the dead. All this was the result of Jesus' transcendent spirituality. And today, although skeptics and men of the world may scoff, they all have to date their correspondence with his era. Not a business deal is valid unless dated with the era of the Galilean!

It was what Moses knew about God, the measure of his spirituality, that enabled him to lead a people out of bondage. It was what Joseph knew about God, the measure of his spirituality, that made him ruler of the land of Egypt. It was what Jesus knew about God, his conscious oneness with the Father, he to whom the Spirit was given without measure, that gave him his unequaled dominion.

Power is of God. To know God is power. If anyone wants power let him learn t know the facts of Spirit, and the knowing or realizing of these will safeguard his use of power. There is really only one thing you can *know*—Truth. You cannot *know* error. You can accept it or believe it, but you can *know* only that which is true.

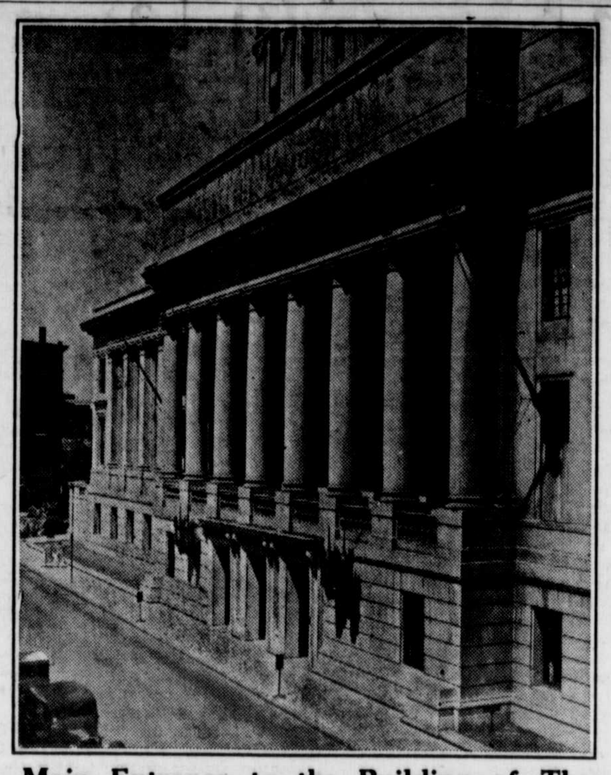
The spiritual dominion of the Master was manifested in a remarkable degree by his immediate followers, and indeed as late as the third century the healing works were continued without a break. From that date, however, they practically ceased and the Christian church became more and more material during what have been called the Dark Ages. Today these healing works have reappeared, and the example of the Master in healing the sick and the sinning is being followed in some measure. This is due to the work of a woman who towards the end of the nineteenth century gave another astonishing proof of what spirituality achieves. She grew up on a New Hampshire farm, amongst quiet, simple, homelike surroundings. The country around even now is sparsely populated, and the wide open spaces, the beautiful distant views and far horizons must have deeply influenced her thought and helped to feed the inner hunger for the ideal and the infinite which was always with her. Her afterlife was one of many trials and of constant seeking for Truth, until finally, as she herself says, her "immediate recovery from the effects of an injury caused by an accident, an injury that neither medicine nor surgery could reach, was the falling apple that led me to the discovery how to be well myself, and how to make others so" (Retrospection and Introspection, p. 24). From that moment she never ceased her search for what she calls "the Science of this healing" (Science and Health, p. 109), and in 1875 she gave to the world her discovery in the Christian Science textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures."

During this time of seeking, her income was very, very small. She had no friends to help her. Moreover, she had the drawback of being a woman in days when women had few rights and privileges. Added to all this she introduced a Science, a philosophy, that roused in opposition both the religious and medical thought of the day. Yet she succeeded! It is marvelous reading, the story of her achievement. What nameless struggles, what nameless faith in God it required, we may never know. How could she do this, alone, unfriended, persecuted by the carnal mind at every step? It was what Mrs. Eddy knew about God, her spiritual understanding of her relationship to God, that enabled her to achieve what no other woman had achieved, the discovery of the Science of healing, the founding of a Church and of a movement that is world-wide.

In the Christian Science textbook she sets forth this Science which will enable those who study it to achieve the spirituality which belongs to them and which is power. Now since Christian Science is Science this book defines for us the being of God, and it may be said that this definition brings a great light into human consciousness. The dictionary states that the word "definition" means "the explanation of anything by its attributes, properties or relations." The definition of Deity in the Christian Science textbook is composed of the seven synonyms, which are given as follows: "Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love" (p. 465). Then these synonyms are further explained and described, and of Mind it is said that there is only one Mind, God. When that great fact was stated it instantly loosed human thought, and this liberation was shown in the extraordinary number of inventions which followed the year in which Science and Health was published. The reason for this is clearly to be seen. The more you know about anything, any art or science, the more power you have in that direction, the more you can use it. Ignorance spells limitation and separation.

Then, to understand more of God is to understand and to express more of power, to understand and to express more of intelligence, to understand and to express more of Love. For the first time the Being of God has been scientifically and systematically defined. As we study this definition, as we contemplate these synonyms, we learn more about God and therefore more about ourselves. Since man is manifestation or reflection it is for us to identify ourselves in our true being with the divine nature expressed in these synonyms. To learn that there is only one Mind is to unite ourselves with the power and capacity of that Mind. To learn that God is Principle gives at once a profound sense of the perfect, unvarying law and government controlling man who is the idea of his divine Principle, and so is held in complete security. To learn that divine Love is universal shows us that our affections cannot be limited to loving this or that person, but that it is natural and possible to let our love embrace all, shining forth as the sun shines forth impersonally, universally. This does not mean less tenderness for every individual, because the sun warms and illumines equally every little daisy, every tiny leaf, every blade of grass.

A further contribution to revelation made by Mary Baker Eddy is that she speaks of God as Mother. Always from everlasting God has been the Father of all, but Jesus first taught men to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Always the great I AM has included the feminine qualities of Mind, but it remained for Christian Science to give to us the tender, comforting title of Mother by which to know Deity. No consciousness is complete unless it includes both the masculine and feminine qualities. This has not been recognized. Human beings have sought to gain completeness from without rather than from within, but God being all, man in His likeness must express all, and so possess potentially all the qualities. When each one claims the qualities of thought expressed in true manhood and womanhood they will find themselves complete and satisfied, and each sex will understand the other better. Therefore without the title



Main Entrance to the Building of The Christian Science Publishing Society in Boston, Massachusetts

of Mother our concept of God is incomplete. Furthermore, this word helps us to a clearer vision of the nature of Love. We all know how a mother longs for her child to be happy, makes little plans constantly for its happiness, is concerned in all the details of its welfare, feeds and cherishes it without any thought of herself. Thinking along these lines makes God seem closer, more intimate. It makes us feel how dear our happiness is to the heart of God. It makes us realize that God, the divine Mother, wants us to be happy, just as much as He wants us to be good. How could the mother-love of God, whose nature it is to feed and cherish, ever let us lack any good or needful thing? From all this we see that the relationship of man to God is that of beloved child, the idea of divine Principle, the representative or radiation of Life, Truth, and Love. This higher sense of the nature and character of man as scientifically understood is demonstrated when by it the sick are healed.

It is sometimes asked how we dare to claim spiritual perfection for man when on every side there are evidences that he is both sick and sinful. The answer is that we do not claim this for a mortal. This distinction is made so clearly and convincingly by Christ Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus that it is worth while to consider that story. When the ruler of the Jews came to him and questioned him, Jesus said that to see the kingdom a man must be born again, or as the exact translation has it, "be born from above." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," he continued, "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." One is mortal, the other immortal. These two never mingle, although like the wheat and the tares they seem to grow side by side. That which is of the flesh remains mortal, imperfect, that which is of the Spirit, sinless, stainless, immaculate. Therefore we do not make a mortal good, but let the mortal give place little by little to the immortal. In so doing what appears to take place is the emergence of a better, happier, and healthier human being. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? It means that the Christ-idea awakes in us, which from then on is the governing factor of our experience. It means that the intellectual acceptance of Truth bows before a knowing of Truth's actuality, which is beyond all argument and beyond all doubting, because it is an inward conviction of that which *is*. Its first fruit is joy, and with it comes always a lessening of the trust in materiality. The mortal has begun in however small a degree to withdraw. That which is born from above has nothing of the human about it. Being spiritual only, it is indestructible.

Is there any experience equal in importance and desirability to this new birth? Without it we have only the letter, therefore without it heaven is not opened. With it the divine possibilities begin to unfold and even our human experience is bathed in a new and fairer light. If that light sometimes does not seem to last it is only because a further rebirth is necessary, for as Mrs. Eddy tells us, the new birth goes on continually until we reach eternity. Commenting upon his own words Jesus said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." How true that is! Caiaphas had a high position but he had not been born again of the Spirit. The woman of Samaria had and so had the Roman centurion. Truly we cannot tell of the Spirit whence it cometh or whither it goeth.

How do we gain the new birth? Nicodemus laid down prejudice, and was ready to learn and to inquire from one who had less authority and learning humanly than himself. And it was night when he came to Jesus. If it is night with you, be of good cheer, for that is the moment when the mortal is most ready to yield and when the idea of beauty and glory which is your true selfhood is most likely to appear. It is this man "born of the Spirit" which Christian Science claims for each of us as perfect and spiritual and demonstrable. The maintaining of this truth about man brings the spiritual idea into view and results in healing.

Christian Science being Science also defines for us the nature of the Christ and defines it as Truth, as Saviour, as "The divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error" (Science and Health, p. 583). This divine Christ was the spiritual selfhood of the man Jesus and was expressed by him in his mighty works. Christian Scientists have sometimes been accused of not according to Christ Jesus the honor and reverence of other Christian denominations. But this is a misapprehension of the doctrine of Christian Science. The greatest honor we can accord another is to follow and obey him. Jesus himself said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This Christian Scientists are endeavoring to do even to the extent of obeying his command to heal the sick. It may be said of all true Scientists that they adore the Christ.

One Christmas Eve, I remember that I was listening to carols sung by waits and trained choirs who were assembled to celebrate the festival, and crowds were gathered to listen and join in the chorus of the beautiful "Adeste Fideles," which is "O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord." As I listened I suddenly wondered how much meaning there was in the singing. International strife was acute at the time. The greed for gold and for possession was much to the front, and yet everyone was professing adoration of the Christ Child. The title given to him was Prince of Peace, and the salient characteristics of the Bethlehem babe were most certainly meekness, harmlessness, and simplicity. Indeed, looking upon the beautiful picture of the babe lying in the manger, one might say that "the harmlessness of being" was expressed.

This brings to mind some words of the Master that have been little commented upon, and surely little practiced. They are these: "Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Further, "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me." What remarkable words and what a new light they throw on the nature of God and His Christ! It is worth while pausing to consider the inner meaning of these words. The thought of innocence is always associated with a little child, and the true nature of innocence is not ignorance but rather the *unconsciousness* of evil. It is defined in the dictionary as "the condition of being free from evil, from that which corrupts or vitiates." On page 585 of the Christian Science textbook the definition of the river "Euphrates" is given in part as follows: "The atmosphere of human belief before it accepts sin, sickness, or death; a state of mortal thought, the only error of which is limitation." Is this perhaps a reference to the child-thought of which the Master speaks? What is the reason of the spontaneous joyousness of the little child? Why does it skip as it walks, laugh and shout with that gaiety which has none of the pose that adults manifest when they try to copy it? The reason is because it is not weighted down by the belief in evil, the consciousness of discord and sin and sickness which makes the steps of the adult slow and heavy. Now we begin to see why Jesus said we must become as little children to enter the kingdom. We must lose the belief in evil, our dream-consciousness of wickedness and suffering—not by ignoring them, but by overcoming them. And Christian Science shows us how to do this, because it teaches us the unreality of evil—unreal, that is to say, from the standpoint of reality as divine and eternal, which involves the denial of sense testimony. In so doing it bestows on those who accept it a joy and lightheartedness undreamed of before. It lifts the weight, it lightens the burden, it says to the captive, "Go free."

Let me emphasize here that this Science being Christian and compassionate does not teach us to heartlessly ignore suffering in any form, but on the contrary to go to the suffering ones and fixing our gaze on the divine perfection to avail ourselves through prayer and faith and understanding of the power of God to heal and to transform. You remember how Jesus did this. He was so certain that God would hear his prayer that he said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me," even before he told Lazarus to come forth.

Again, the little child is impartial and free from prejudice and never afraid of the future. Of course it will have all it needs tomorrow and the next day and the day after, because its father and mother will take care of it. It does not pause to worry or be anxious. How like the consciousness of the man who said, "Take . . . no thought for the morrow," "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Do we despair of attaining this state of trustfulness and innocence? We need not do so, for in the heart of each one of us is the little child. No matter how weary or wicked we may seem, the child is there, hidden perhaps by the mists of error, but waiting to be uncovered by the sunlight of Truth. As that Truth penetrates our consciousness, all that is young and glad and unsullied by the world springs forth again, and we begin to become as a little child.

In order to find our true childhood with which to enter the kingdom, we need the understanding of prayer. Through prayer we learn at first hand, so to speak, more of the facts of being. The Christian Science textbook gives us many stages of approach to the divine facts. Because we are dealing with an exact Science these stages and the nature and function of prayer are scientifically defined. The first simple definition given us is (p. 1), "Desire is prayer." The strong desire, the fervent petition, is a form of prayer never to be despised. Let no one think such prayer is unscientific. It is the appeal of the child-thought to the great Father, the great Mother, of us all. The Master used it in his deepest hour of trial, and again when he said, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." A second higher form of prayer is given us in the textbook (p. 14) when it is said of Jesus that his prayers were "protests of Truth" or affirmation. This form of prayer is much used by Christian Scientists. They affirm the facts of being, the present power and availability of good. But the highest form of prayer, the textbook tells us, is demonstration. Now demonstration is primarily the result of communion, or the consciousness of our oneness with the divine. It is said of Moses that he talked with God "as a man speaketh unto his friend." God talked also to Abraham, to David, and even to Solomon. Jesus conversed with his Father constantly, and God's answer to His beloved Son was actually heard on one occasion by the bystanders. To their ignorant sense, however, it seemed to be thunder. Jesus, you remember, had said, "Father, glorify thy name," and then came a voice from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Then the people that stood by heard it, but they said that it thundered!

Let us talk to God with our thoughts. Let us, as the Psalmist did, "commune with [our] own heart . . . and be still." Only when we have stilled the restless turmoil of mortal thinking can there be communion. A vivid word picture of how this is achieved is given us in Mark's Gospel, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." First there was the arising, lifting thought on high, and this was done early, a great while before day, while consciousness seemed dull, and there was no spiritual light, which is what day stands for. So, rising out of that belief of gloom, he departed into a "solitary place"—a place far from the clamor of mortal thought, away from the insistent demands of friends and patients and disciples, a place where he would be undisturbed, solitary, alone, for the true meaning and derivation of the word "alone" is all-one—one with God. Then it was, in such an environment, that he prayed.

Now, it may be asked, How are these truths about the nature of God, of Christ, and of prayer applied to the healing of the sick in Christian Science? In other words, how is the healing accomplished? It is by gaining the Mind that was in Christ Jesus, or the divine consciousness. As we claim that Mind it changes our thinking, and thought takes on its natural, original purity and intelligence. The divine consciousness is not cognizant of sin, sickness, and death. God saw and sees His universe as very good. Lifting our consciousness to look out with God upon our universe, we see it as He sees it; and to see as God sees, to know as God knows, is to bring healing to our universe, for it is to avail ourselves of the divine Mind and power. A change of concept means a change of experience. Truly that which we conceive we bring forth. To conceive rightly is to bring forth rightly. To conceive spiritually brings spiritual consequences. If someone comes to be healed of sickness, his concept of himself as sick needs to be changed, to be lifted and exalted. The practitioner then needs to be careful not to accept the patient's false concept but to reject the sense testimony and accept God's concept of man, for God conceives man in the nature and character of Himself. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," said Jesus, and there can be no disease in infinite omnipresent Spirit. God is conscious of each one of His ideas all the time, and this may be said to constitute their preservation and perfection. Therefore we may say that God is conscious of us always as we are, for God is everlastingly conscious of His creation. As we recognize this fact it offsets the results of false beliefs and induces or confers healing.

Here let a word be said as to the mistake of trying to mix methods, or to give Christian Science treatment and the treatment of materia medica at the same time. We yield to no one in our appreciation of the selfless toil and sacrifice of the best sort of physicians, but their standpoint is entirely material and ours is entirely spiritual. When two people are walking in opposite directions they do not meet. To try to mingle these methods means, generally speaking, success for neither and leads to much misunderstanding.

Now, in healing the sick, Christian Science teaches that all error is impersonal, and this at first may seem hard to understand, but as we recognize it, it enables us better to overcome it. I once had an experience which showed me this very plainly. I had just started in the practice of Christian Science in London when one morning I woke with a sense of great depression. Nothing seemed worth while, and I turned to the Christian Science textbook for help, but what I read seemed merely words. That morning I had to go early to my office, and I remember feeling that I was not fit to help my patients, but still I had to go. The first person who came in was a lady who told me she had never felt so depressed in her life, indeed life didn't seem worth living, and so on. I had to declare the truth to her, and in so doing I felt better myself. The next patient was a business man who said he was in the very depths of depression, everything seemed dark and hopeless, with more of a similar nature. To cut a long story short, I saw about six people that morning and five out of the six told me exactly the same story. When the last one started I burst out laughing. "You must excuse me," I said, "but I have heard this same story five times running this morning, and so I can assure you that it is not *your* depression." I have always remembered that lesson. Today the nations are swept by waves of fear, depression, and anxiety, and people not understanding the impersonal nature of these suggestions think it is their fear, their depression, their own personal problem, when it is nothing of the sort. As we see that the error is impersonal, reject its suggestions, and lift our concept of the universe to approach that which God saw as very good, we shall not only help ourselves but the whole world as well.

Here it may be asked, Can we in a measure help and heal the conditions of unrest and conflict and turmoil that are all about us today? Does spiritual understanding help here? It would be hard to say what else is sufficient for these things. What is the reason of the present state of the world? I am convinced that fear and suspicion are at the bottom of it all. Now in healing sickness we saw it was necessary to change the false concept for a higher, truer conception of man as God made him. The same thing needs to be done here. There is a place in the book of Exodus where Moses is told by God to make beautiful garments for Aaron, his brother, garments "for glory and for beauty." Let us make beautiful garments for the nations, our brothers. Let us clothe them with garments of trust and good will, of honesty and confidence. If in so doing we find ourselves thinking better of a nation than it deserves, or than we think it deserves, that need not trouble us greatly, for that will in itself make it easier for such a nation to become worthier of our confidence. It is only our own poor sight, our material vision, that sees men and nations as wicked and unworthy. God does not see them so.

Let us dwell on the thought of peace as a divine fact which can therefore be realized in human experience. To do this we must have peace in our hearts, and that in turn means the elimination of fear and suspicion. You cannot separate peace from the good will to men which goes before and after it. The first message—the salutation—of the risen Christ to his followers each time he met them was "Peace!" They were gathered together in a little upper room, with shut doors, for fear of the Jews. Frightened and bewildered they hardly dared to hope, when suddenly they were aware of a presence in their midst and these were the words that greeted them, "Peace be unto you." The resurrected thought of Jesus, so close to heaven, so conscious of the divine reality, evidently discerned the greatest need of humanity, and the first effect of divinity, to be peace. This word "peace" comes from an old Latin word meaning to make an agreement. Jesus was aware of the perfect agreement between God and man in His image, and the power resulting from this awareness spake and it was done. The waves of the sea were stilled when he spoke to them, and the turbulent waves of human consciousness were likewise stilled. As consciousness rises to the Master's concept of perfect God and perfect man we too shall be able to say to the tumult, "Peace, be still."

From the human standpoint, when an agreement is made there must be give and take. Each must yield something of his point of view. To stand upon one's rights, refusing to yield an inch in any direction, accomplishes nothing. Therefore the practice of the royal law, "Give, and it shall be given unto you," enters largely into the noble work of peacemaking. This work can only be done effectively, however, by those who are individually practicing peace in their daily lives. The book of Revelation tells us that in the midst of the throne of power is the lamb. That consciousness which is innocent of guile, of resentment, and of greed is the consciousness of the true peacemaker.

The understanding of Christian Science can also be applied to the problem of lack or unemployment, to what is termed the pressing problem of earning a living. Here thought must be lifted from the limited, finite concept of things to the realm of the infinite. Blake wrote, "If the gates of perception were cleansed, everything would appear as it is—infinite." Starting from this standpoint we can reason more scientifically.

Can the infinite, eternal, self-existent Being that is God be conceived of as needing to earn a living? Infinite Life, filling all space, is the only "living" there is, and this is not earned, but a free gift, the natural state of existence. Man individualizes the infinite and self-existent, therefore he simply has to *be*. As we realize this, it manifests itself humanly in what is termed "a living."

Man then, in reality, has not got to earn. He simply has to *be*, to be what he is, and this being includes all that is needed for a "living." Fundamentally from the human standpoint earning a living simply means being active, and active being is the nature of man. What, then, if error should say, "You can't be active; there is no work for you"? Such a lie could obtain only on the material plane of thought. From the metaphysical standpoint the scope of man's activity is immense and perpetual, and is in fact infinite, for it is to express the infinite individuality. This is his tremendous and satisfying employment. Anyone pondering and realizing this would be bound to find work, for to express the infinite