STILL THE TIME FOR THINKERS?

Sharing My Heart with My Cherished Christian Science Friends

By David Brunell

As a young, fourth-generation Christian Scientist growing up in the early 1970s, I often contemplated one of my favorite sentences in *Science and Health*, found right on the first page: "The time for thinkers has come." I bet it may be one of your favorites, too!

I hoped to have good enough thinking to realize my secret career goal. Outwardly, I appeared on track to become a professional musician. Inwardly, I secretly hoped that if I studied and prayed hard enough, I might become a Christian Science practitioner. I yearned to enlist, as Mrs. Eddy would say, "to lessen evil, disease, and death…"[1]

A few years later, like Robert Frost, I found myself facing "two roads diverged in a wood." Like Frost, I took "the one less travelled by…" That decision changed my career goal and my life. One thing that remained unchanged, however, was the desire to live up to Mrs. Eddy's challenge to be as fine a thinker as possible.

I have long wished to tell the story of why I took the path I did. As I attempt to do so here, I find my heart flooded with many memories of so many dear Christian Scientists, whose lives as compassionate, courageous, and faithful friends meant, and still mean, the world to me. Although they have all passed on, they remain very dear to my heart, and I would like to dedicate this to them.[2] A separate document, "Gratitude for Unforgettable Influences on My Life," tells the story of how they impacted me.[3]

SO CONFIDENT AT FIRST

As I reached into the mailbox, I saw the letter. It had finally come! The letter from the Christian Science Publishing Society in response to the article I had submitted was now in my hand! But what would it say? Would it be a rejection? Or might they possibly have accepted it? I was a little scared to open it!

Although I initially had great respect for Principia Upper School faculty member Mr. Jack Eyerly as an amazing choir director and coach, I was subsequently stunned by the brilliance he displayed in his class for seniors, *Humanity: Today's Trends.* There was a feeling in our class that

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Dr. David Brunell is Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Tennessee and a 1972 graduate of Principia Upper School. Bio on page 36.

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[1] Eddy, Mary Baker, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, page 450:19-20. The full sentence reads, "The Christian Scientist has enlisted to lessen evil, disease, and death; and he will overcome them by understanding their nothingness and the allness of God, or good."

[2] These inspiring examples include ***unforgettable educators*:** Philip Booth, C.S., Beth Carey, C.S., Irma Eareckson, Jack Eyerly, Maribel Laufenburg Finley, Malcolm Frager, Mary Kessler, C.S., Howard Marston, Drs. Philip E. and Anabel P. Newman, Willy K. Simon, Eleanor Owers Smith; ***beloved friends and family:*** Margaret French Brunell, Carey Browne, C.S., Charlotte Day, C.S., Nancy Johnston, Carl Losche, André Piot, C.S.; Ralph and Nell Teague, Sue Tyler, ***eminent Christian Scientists**:* Eric Bole, C.S.B., L. Ivimy Gwalter, C.S.B., Horace Edwin Harper, Jr., C.S.B., Virginia D. Skarie, C.S.B., Ann O. Spaulding, C.S.B., Grace Channell Wasson, C.S.B., and Carl J. Welz, C.S.B.

[3] For a copy of this document, contact the author at dbrunell28@gmail.com.

he may well be the smartest man alive – or at least one of the top five! He taught us how to think deeply about issues, and then apply that thinking process to individual projects of our choosing. One of my projects was to write an article for *The Christian Science Sentinel.*

For several years I had been growing increasingly aware of how odd the teachings of Christian Science might sound to the general public, and even to students like me who had been brought up in it. I'm talking about teachings like the one that matter, sin, disease, and death are just illusions and are unreal. "This might sound crazy to people," I thought.

I yearned to see everyone embrace Christian Science, but I thought for that to happen there would need to be some way to explain that Christian Science, when analyzed more deeply, turns out to be very reasonable, even if it seems crazy after an initial superficial glance.

When the opportunity came in Mr. Eyerly's class to choose our own projects, I jumped at the chance and decided to write an article for *The Christian Science Sentinel*. Always a lover of analogies, I decided to compare viewing matter, sin, disease, and death to someone looking at the moon through green sunglasses.

The viewer, at first not aware he is wearing tinted sunglasses that are distorting the view, is alarmed to see the moon green. He wonders if some kind of action can be taken to restore the moon to its rightful color. Then he realizes that the moon was never green at all; there only seemed to be a problem because of his own distorted view! Once he removes the sunglasses, he sees the moon as it truly is.

I argued that that scenario is similar to our seeing matter, sin, disease, and death through the lens of the material senses. I argued that those material senses distort the view just as the green sunglasses did. Once we get rid of distortion by looking through our spiritual senses instead of the faulty, distorting material senses, we will see the universe as it actually is: God's perfect, entirely good, spiritual universe, with no matter sin, disease or death in view any longer.

I hoped so much that the editors of the *Sentinel* would think my article might be useful, and I was elated upon opening the letter to read that it had been accepted. It was subsequently published in the December 23, 1972 issue. Entitled, "A High School Student Writes: Dialogue with Myself," it was written in the format of a dialogue in my mind between two different voices, labeled "First Voice" and "Second Voice." Mr. Eyerly commented to his class that this format had never been used before in a *Sentinel* article.

In addition to the green moon analogy, my article also argued that for a theory of the universe to be true, it must be able to explain all observed phenomena, and that if something comes along that a theory of the universe cannot explain, then that theory would be in trouble. I argued that Christian Science does offer an explanation for all observed phenomena. I expressed confidence that nothing would ever come along that Christian Science would not be able to explain.

THE GROWING NEED FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

But as time passed, my belief that nothing would ever come along that Christian Science could not explain was tested. Additional questions now arose that required further thought.

Was "the time for thinkers" still here? Of course, it was! I found myself entering upon a similar self-dialogue to the one described in my *Sentinel* article—in a searching spirit, honestly confronting hard questions. The first and second voices I would now call "Mr. Traditional" and "Mr. Analytical." It went this way:

***Mr. Analytical*:** After you wrote that article in 1972, you got to meet and talk with the Christian Science periodicals editor at that time, Carl J. Welz, C.S.B. You told him about your brother, Mark, who was born with a severe case of cerebral palsy. Mr. Welz remarked that this disease was just a thing of mortal mind. You confessed that you had never felt you quite understood what Mrs. Eddy meant by the phrase "mortal mind." Do you remember what Mr. Welz said then?

Mr. Traditional: He didn't come right out and tell me what she meant. He said to look up the phrase "mortal mind" in the Concordance to Mrs. Eddy's writings and I would figure out what she meant from its use in context. I must confess I was impressed by that answer.

Mr. Analytical: When you did that, what did you figure out? Doesn't "mortal mind" have to do with negative thoughts—thoughts that are unloving, sad, discouraged, fearful, envious, selfish or sensual? Have you ever had those kinds of thoughts?

Mr. Traditional: Hasn't everyone?

Mr. A: Are you trying to excuse it by saying everyone does it?

Mr. T: Sorry about that. Yes, I will admit I have had some thoughts I'm not proud of. But to get back to the first question, when I used the Concordance and read the uses of "mortal mind" in context I came to realize that when there is an illusion, there has to be a consciousness that experiences the illusion. I came to realize that "mortal mind" refers to the consciousness that experiences the illusion.

Mr. A: Since Christian Science teaches that God, good, is all there is, and everything else is an illusion, does that mean that mortal mind must also be an illusion?

Mr. T: Yes, it would have to be an illusion since God, the Divine Mind is all and is perfect and totally good, totally free from anything like an illusion. There couldn't be room in God's perfect universe for any other mind experiencing illusions. That must be why Mrs. Eddy says mortal mind is unreal (S&H 114:13-17).

Mr. A: So, it sounds as if you're saying matter, sin, disease, and death are illusions held within the consciousness called "mortal mind," but that this mortal mind consciousness itself isn't real either. Even it—the mortal mind consciousness-- is actually just an illusion. Is that right?

Mr. T: Yes, I think that's why Mrs. Eddy says the dream and the dreamer are one and that neither is true nor real (S&H 530:26-29).

Mr. A: Doesn't Mrs. Eddy write things like "…mortal mind must waken to spiritual life…" (S&H 556:26-27) or that mortal mind can experience a growth out of itself? She wrote, for instance, "Academics of the right sort are requisite. Observation, invention, study, and original thought are expansive and should promote the growth of mortal mind out of itself…" (S&H 195**:**19-22). Doesn't that suggest that mortal mind is real? How can something that is unreal "learn" things or "grow out of itself"?

Mr. T: I don't know. But we must remember that in addition to saying mortal mind must waken to spiritual life and grow out of itself, Mrs. Eddy also says, "…there is in reality no such thing as *mortal* mind" (S&H 487:21). And she says the same thing in S&H 103:29. Why does she say that? She explains, "As Mind is immortal, the phrase *mortal mind* implies something untrue and therefore unreal; and as the phrase is used in teaching Christian Science, it is meant to designate that which has no real existence" (S&H 114:13-17).

Mr. A: But how can that be? Are you saying there's a faulty consciousness that has to learn things and grow out of itself but that actually doesn't exist?

Mr. T: I know it sounds strange, but then again, Mrs. Eddy wrote that "error… neither can understand nor be understood" (S&H 555:6-15). Maybe we'll never be able to understand how mortal mind seems to exist but actually doesn't exist.

What about Sinful Thoughts?

Mr. Analytical: Now wait a minute. I'm willing to grant that matter, and disease, and all the things that seem to be going on "out there" could just be an image held within consciousness. As Harvey Wood, C.S.B., said when he spoke to some students at Principia, "Nothing is external to consciousness."

Mr. Traditional: Wait! Can you explain further what that statement means that nothing is external to consciousness?

Mr. A: Yes, but let's put that in a footnote that one can skip if not interested.[4] Anyway, continuing, I'm willing to grant that matter could actually just be an image held within consciousness rather than something external to consciousness. But what about the thoughts that go on in your consciousness? What about sinful thoughts?

Mr. T: Like what?

Mr. A: Well, you mentioned that you had had bad thoughts you were not proud of. Jesus said to look on a woman lustfully is already to commit adultery in your heart (Matt. 5:28). They say pornography is becoming an epidemic. Have you ever looked at pornography and felt lust?

Mr. T: How I wish I could justify it by saying "Hasn't almost everyone?" But I won't say that. Okay, I'm very ashamed to admit it, but yes, there was a time a while ago when I succumbed to that temptation to look at things my conscience told me I shouldn't look at, and yes, I had inappropriate sensual thoughts.

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[4] ***Mr. Analytical:*** There was a philosopher, Bishop Berkeley, who taught the philosophy of idealism, which, if I understand it correctly, states that everything we think of as external to our consciousness, such as the material world around us, isn't really material and external to us at all, but rather is just an image or an event in our consciousness. Most people think that when they see something, such as a chair five feet in front of them, that there is a real chair external to them, and that light is bouncing off that chair, and coming into their eyes and is eventually registering in the brain so that there is a consciousness of a chair that seems to be external to them. But it could be the case that everything that seems to be external to their consciousness could just be a mental event in their consciousness.

Maybe another way to explain it could be this: If we allow for the sake of the argument for a moment the natural scientists' prevailing view that the brain is the seat of consciousness, it could theoretically be possible to feed impulses from some high-tech computer into that brain, impulses that the brain would interpret as a chair five feet in front of them, but which in reality were just being fed into the brain by the computer. That consciousness could experience the chair, and swimming in a swimming pool, eating food – anything you want – but it could all just be from impulses being fed into the brain by the computer. There would actually be no chair or swimming pool or food there, but the computer impulses fed into the brain would nevertheless give that brain's consciousness the experience of the chair, the swimming pool, etc.

Now in Christian Science we don't think of the brain as the seat of consciousness, but I think the illustration still serves to show how something could seem to be external to consciousness but in reality, could just be an image or experience *within* the consciousness.

Mr. Traditional: That helps. I certainly think that illustration helps explain how matter could be seen to be not matter at all but just a mental event held within the consciousness called "mortal mind."

Mr. A: What about the mental event of lust? Even if you didn't go out and commit a sexual act but just felt the mental event of lust, are you saying that that mental event never could have existed due to God's perfect universe being all that truly exists?

Mr. T: Well, I guess I'm more used to denying the reality of disease, but it's true that according to Christian Science, sin is also an illusion.

Mr. A: I think there's an interesting distinction that sin—if not acted out—is a purely mental event in your consciousness, whereas disease seems to be in a body that seems to be external to your consciousness.

Mr. T: Yes, but in the final analysis, sin, just like disease and death, has to be an illusion, since it couldn't exist in God's perfect universe.

Mr. A: Even if a diseased body never really existed "out there" due to its just being a mental image held within consciousness rather than something external to consciousness, how can you say that sinful thoughts in your mind could never have existed? Does your mind not exist? Do you yourself not exist?

Mr. T: I'm not saying I don't exist! Surely that can't be right to say I don't exist! Maybe I'm getting too carried away with all these absolute statements of Christian Science. Everyone knows we're humans and live in a human situation that's far different from those absolute statements I'm using.

Mr. A: I know the terms "absolute" and "relative" have come into use by a lot of Christian Scientists. I believe this happened to try to address the discrepancy between the claims of Christian Science and our experiences in this life that seem to contradict those claims. However, Mrs. Eddy never used those terms that way.

What she did write was that "The starting-point of divine Science is that God, Spirit, is All-in-all, and that there is no other might nor Mind…" (S&H275:6-8). And then on page 492:3-4, she writes, "For right reasoning, there should be but one fact before the thought, namely, spiritual existence." So, I don't think in Christian Science one can be too absolute. Isn't the problem really that people tend not to be absolute enough?

The very next sentence on page 492 underscores the importance of reasoning based on the one fact of spiritual existence. It reads, "In reality there is no other existence, since Life cannot be united to its unlikeness, mortality." Right there, Mrs. Eddy says that in reality there is no other existence other than spiritual existence. So, I don't think you're out of line here as you endeavor to follow Christian Science in the best and purest way possible.

Mr. T: Okay. I guess you're right.

Help from Seeley and Peel

Mr. Analytical: Getting back to how we seem to have sinful thoughts in a consciousness called "mortal mind" -- What about your sinful thoughts? What about Jesus' statement in Matthew 15:19-20? "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander. These are what defile a man, but eating with unwashed hands does not defile him." Isn't Jesus referring to these bad thoughts as things that exist and that can defile a person?

Mr. Traditional: Well, I admit there are some things in the Bible that are kind of hard to understand. I heard one teacher of Christian Science say you don't have to solve everything in a day, and that if things are not clear today, they may become clearer tomorrow.

Mr. A: Do you remember that you talked to one teacher of Christian Science and explained how you were having trouble resolving the question of how mortal mind seems to exist but can't really exist? Or, to put it another way: "How could illusions ever have arisen in God's perfect universe?" Wouldn't it be the case that even illusions couldn't arise in God's perfect universe if God is indeed All-in-all?

Mr. T: Yes, that's true, I did discuss all that with a teacher of Christian Science. It wasn't with my own but with another I also really respected. I mentioned that in my quest to solve this question about how false illusions could arise in God's perfect universe, I had come across an old 1940's *Christian Science Journal* editorial[5] by Paul Stark Seeley, C.S.B., the renowned teacher from Portland, Oregon who had taught the 1961 Normal class.

Mr. A: Wow! You really dug way back decades into old issues! Was Mr. Seeley's article helpful?

Mr. T: He said that when we ask this question about how false illusions could arise, we should ask ourselves who or what is it that is asking the question. He said that it can't be God, since God knows nothing of evil or illusions, and it can't be the man of God's making, the perfect, spiritual man in God's image and likeness, for that man would know nothing of evil or illusions. Therefore, there is nothing left to ask the question, other than "a state of material thinking" which was "my as yet undestroyed belief in a material mind apart from God," which in the final analysis is nothing since God is All-in-all. He seemed to be saying there is nothing that can ask the question; the questioner can't exist and doesn't exist.

I found a related thought expressed in a pamphlet by the great Christian Science scholar Robert Peel. He states, "To the question how such a misconception [illusion] could arise in a perfect universe, her [Mrs. Eddy's] answer was that it could not arise or exist in such a universe; it was outside reality, with no more substantive being than the darkness which vanishes at the approach of light."

Peel essentially indicated that although there is no answer to the question as to how illusions could arise, what we *can* have are healings and demonstrations which eventually will leave no illusions left needing to be explained. The way he put it was, "Thus to the theoretical problem of evil she [Mrs. Eddy] brought the practical answer of healing, as Jesus did. Reality, in her system, is by definition—and, in a degree, by demonstration—all that expresses the nature of God; while all that denies that nature is illusion, error, however real it may seem to the state of ignorance within which it has its fictive existence."[6]

Mr. A: Sounds as if you were really trying hard to find an answer to the question about how illusions, and especially the illusion known as "mortal mind" could arise in God's perfect universe.

Mr. T: Yes, and I explained to the teacher that as hard as I tried to be satisfied with those answers of Paul Stark Seeley and Robert Peel, they just didn't seem adequate.

Mr. A: I know what you mean. The bottom line is that if God is All, the only Mind, it is simply impossible for illusions to arise. Saying illusions will vanish away in the future doesn't solve the problem that we are experiencing illusions now. So, what did she say?

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[5] "A Colloquy about a Question" by Paul Stark Seeley, Christian Science Journal, July, 1947.
[6] "Moving Mountains," the text of a broadcast on Christian Science given by Robert Peel on the "Third Programme" of the British Broadcasting Corporation, reprinted in a pamphlet distributed in the 1970's by the Christian Science College Organization Department, and subsequently reprinted in the September 1, 2013 edition of the *Christian Science Sentinel.*

Mr. T: She said that she thought that if we were really honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that there are just some things we can't understand and have to take on faith.

Mr. A: Did I hear you correctly? Did you say, "Can't understand and have to take on faith????" But doesn't Christian Science always say we have to move beyond faith to spiritual understanding?

Mr. T: Yes, but I guess she was just being very honest that there really isn't an answer to that apparent contradiction.

Mr. A: So how did that make you feel?

Mr. T: Well, I was both kind of surprised, but also really impressed with her honesty.

Ask the Bible

Mr. Analytical: It seems to me that even if matter is unreal, we can't dismiss the sinful thoughts in our own minds as unreal. Doesn't the Bible say we need to confess our sins and repent of them rather than declaring their unreality? What about I John 1:8-10 which says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."

Mr. Traditional: Well I suppose the Bible just speaks from the vantage point of where we seem to be. I mean, we seem to be in a sinful world and have sinful thoughts. The Bible doesn't yet speak from the standpoint of the final revelation of Christian Science that all evil is actually an illusion and doesn't exist.

Mr. A: I'm tempted to use a phrase that might be construed as unkind: "Gimme a break!" That sinful thought of lust in your mind is an event that happened and it's not really intellectually honest just to dismiss it as an illusion that never happened. That thought DID happen in your mind!

Mr. T: I'm not sure how to answer that. Would you mind it if I said that the sinful thought seemed to happen but in the final analysis didn't really happen?

Mr. A: Yes, I would mind it! I think you're going to have to admit there is a self-contradiction here with no resolution – unless you don't exist and this whole conversation isn't existing, and yet we know we're having a consciousness of this conversation. I don't think we can say that this whole conversation and train of thought simply isn't existing.

Mr. T: I don't know what to say.

Mr. A: And another thing I'm wondering is this: If sinful thoughts according to Christian Science are just an illusion in the same way that disease is an illusion, why didn't Jesus heal sin the way he healed disease? He healed many people in remarkable ways of diseases, but when it came to sin, such as the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, he didn't heal it; he denounced it.

Mrs. Eddy explained her view of how Jesus healed when she wrote, "Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appeared to mortals. In this perfect man the Savior saw God's own likeness and this correct view of man healed the sick" (S&H 476:32-477:4).

Mr. T: That's a very good quote. I used it in my *Sentinel* article.

Mr. A: If Mrs. Eddy is correct, and if not only disease but also sin is an illusion, why didn't Jesus' "beholding the perfect man" work for sin, too? Couldn't Jesus have beheld "the perfect man" in regard to

sin, and healed the people of their sin? But in reality, didn't their sin get worse and worse to the point where they wanted to crucify Jesus? Their hatred for him was incredible.

Why couldn't Jesus have "beheld in Science the perfect man", and healed them of their hate in the same way he healed the soldier's ear that Peter cut off the night before the crucifixion when the hate-filled authorities came to capture Jesus?

Mr. T: I have to admit that is a very intriguing question.

Those Troublesome Commandments

Mr. Analytical: Is lust the only bad thought you've had?

Mr. Traditional: I'm suddenly reminded of how a Principia classmate named Tim asked me out on the soccer field if I ever thought about sex, and I didn't want to admit it, so I lied and said, "No." Tim seemed surprised, and a little crestfallen. Oh no! My lie may have made him feel bad about himself. How I wish I could find him today and tell him I lied.

Mr. A: It sounds as if you broke one of the ten commandments—the one that says not to lie: "Thou shalt not bear false witness…"[7]

Mr. T: Well, even though it seems that way, I'm still trying to believe that in God's perfect spiritual universe, sin doesn't happen and man is perfect. I'm God's perfect, spiritual child, and it's just a dream that I lied. In reality it never could have happened in God's perfect universe.

Mr. A: I'll say it again: Gimme a break! Even if matter is not external to consciousness and is "nothing beyond an image in mortal mind" (S&H 116:18-19), that event of deciding to lie that took place in your consciousness is an event that happened! How can you say it never happened?

Non-Christian Scientists could get the wrong idea and think you're suggesting Christian Scientists can live any way they want and it's fine because sin is an unreal illusion.

Mr. T: Of course not! That's not what I mean! Christian Science doesn't tolerate sin. Sin has to be dealt with and overcome. But our approach to destroying sin is to know its unreality.

Mr. A: Most people would probably find that too far-fetched to say the event of deciding to lie that took place in your consciousness is an unreal illusion. Did knowing its unreality help you overcome it or other sins? Can you think of any of the other ten commandments you've broken?

Mr. T: Well, I know the last of the 10 commandments says not to covet.[8] I guess if I'm really honest with myself I'd have to admit that even though I tried not to be envious, I think I may have felt a bit of envy towards another piano student I knew about who was more accomplished than I. Even though I had won a national piano contest, I knew there were others like him out there who had attained a higher level. No matter how hard I tried, I didn't think I would ever be able to reach his level. And I may have felt a little envy.

Mr. A: What about how Jesus said to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself? He said all the law and the prophets hang on those two commandments (Matt. 22:37-40). Do you think you have always been loving to others?

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[7] Ex. 20:16
[8] Ex. 20:17

Mr. T: I want to be loving to others, but I admit I struggle with that. There are some wonderful people that are easy to love, like my one-time Sunday School teacher and family friend, André Piot. He's so loving and kind to me; it's easy to love him back. It seems as if everyone loves him. But when others are mean to me, I have to admit I feel angry with them and I'm not having very loving thoughts towards them.

Mr. A: Do you remember how Miss Eareckson in 10th grade English once wrote in enormous letters that filled the entire blackboard the command, "BE SPECIFIC"?

Mr. T: Yes, I'll never forget it. I always thought writing vague, general comments was easier than being specific, but less effective. Miss Eareckson didn't want to let us get away with the easy and less effective road!

Mr. A: So true! So now it's time for you to be specific! Be more specific about whom you had trouble loving.

Uninvited Visitors

Mr. Traditional: Well, when I went to college at Indiana University there were some other students who came to my door quoting the Bible. They said I was a sinner and to back it up they quoted some verses with which I wasn't really familiar, like Romans 3:23, which says, "…for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." They went on to say that the penalty for sin is death, and to back that up they quoted Romans 6:23: "for the wages of sin is death…"

Mr. Analytical: They actually came to your door telling you those things?

Mr. T: Yes, and there's more! They claimed that Jesus had paid this penalty of death in our place and to back that up they quoted Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." They added that Peter made the same point in I Peter 3:18: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit."

Mr. A: What did you say to all that?

Mr. T: I tried to explain to them that Christian Science had come along with a further revelation, and I even brought out my copy of *Science and Health* to try to give them a glimpse of how much deeper one could go into these concepts. I tried to get them to see how shallow their thinking was, but they were unconvinced. They said I needed to accept Jesus as my personal savior, and that if I didn't, I was in great danger of being eternally separated from God.

Mr. A: What a terrible thing to say! Did they back that up?

Mr. T: Yes. They quoted John 1:12, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." They said there was a difference between being a creation of God and an actual child of God. To be a child of God, they said, you have to believe in Jesus. They also brought up John 3:18, "Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God."

They also referred to how Jesus himself had spoken in Matt. 8:12 of some being "thrown into the outer darkness" where there would be "weeping and gnashing of teeth," and that Jesus referred to it as "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46). They added that Rev.14:11 says "the smoke of [the] torment" of those being punished "rises forever and ever."

Mr. A: How did that make you feel?

Mr. T: I found myself feeling great disgust, contempt, and maybe almost hatred. I tried to disguise it, however, and outwardly act nicely to prove I was a good person and not the sinner they were claiming I was.

I was really astonished and unsettled by how they seemed so totally certain of the truth of their assertions. The book of John was always my favorite, and it really bothered me how some of the verses they used came right from the book of John. And I hated how they said my views were wrong!

Differing Interpretations

Mr. Analytical: That sounds so upsetting! On the other hand, if they really believed you were in danger, I suppose they were trying to do the loving thing in warning you about the danger even if they were mistaken. If they *really* believed you were in danger but didn't warn you, wouldn't they be guilty of extreme selfishness and lack of caring? Were there any other things about them that bothered you?

Mr. Traditional: Well, it really bugged me how they only acknowledged their own interpretation of the Bible. I mean, they didn't seem to realize that these passages could be subject to differing interpretations.

Mr. A: Interpretation – that's a pretty interesting and important concept! Do you think some interpretations are more valid than others? Do you remember that unusual interpretation that Dad had of Christian Science doctrines?

Mr. T: You mean like the time when Dad said that surely Mrs. Eddy didn't literally mean that matter, sin, disease, and death are unreal? Since he wasn't a Christian Scientist, he was trying somehow to make Christian Science fit in with his view of reality. He tried to say that what Mrs. Eddy must have meant was that matter, sin, disease and death are not permanent or that they will pass away some day.

Mr. A: What did you think when Dad offered that interpretation of Mrs. Eddy's statements?

Mr. T: Well, to tell you the truth, as much as I respect Dad in so many ways, in this instance I had to conclude that he was just ignorant about this. If he had really read Mrs. Eddy's writings thoroughly over a long period as I had he would have known that Mrs. Eddy did mean it literally when she declared matter, sin, disease, and death to be unreal. Since that was just too hard for him to accept literally, he was trying to water it down and make it more palatable.

Mr. A: When those Christians came to your door quoting the Bible, do you think you had studied the Bible as thoroughly as you had *Science and Health* so as to be able to see if there was a problem in their interpretation of the Bible?

Mr. T: Well, I admit that I hadn't studied the Bible nearly as thoroughly as *Science and Health*. But surely their interpretations couldn't be correct.

Mr. A: Why do you say that?

Mr. T: Because they don't agree with Christian Science! Any interpretation of the Bible that doesn't agree with Christian Science has got to be wrong!

Mr. A: If that's true, do you think you at least need to be able to offer an explanation of various passages in the Bible which those who disagree with you might try to bring up? When they quote something that they think is contradicting Christian Science, you could explain how the proper interpretation resolves any apparent contradiction.

Mr. T: I think that's a good plan. It reminds me of how I wrote in my original *Sentinel* article that a true theory of the universe should be able to offer an explanation for all observed phenomena. In a similar way, Christian Science should be able to offer an explanation of how to deal with Bible passages.

Eternal Punishment

Mr. Analytical: Well then, what are we going to do with Matthew 25 where Jesus talks of all the nations being gathered before "the Son of man" (evidently a reference to Jesus, since he kept referring to himself frequently in the gospel accounts as "the Son of man"). He separates the people, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He tells the "sheep" to take their inheritance, "the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." But to the "goats" he says, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Jesus later summarizes, "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." That seems to be teaching that some people go into eternal punishment, which clearly is contrary to Christian Science.

Mr. Traditional: You're bringing up something that has been bothering me. As a Christian Scientist I don't believe in hell or eternal punishment, so I don't understand why Jesus talks so much about them—not to deny them but to affirm them! In addition to reading the Christian Science lesson sermon I decided to go beyond that and read the four gospels as a whole in a modern translation. All the "hell passages" really stood out. This one you brought up is just one of many where Jesus gives warnings about a possible terrible future. I need to try to resolve Jesus' teachings on this with Christian Science. Perhaps instead of *people* going into eternal punishment, maybe it's a poetic way of referring to *false ideas* getting banished away eternally.

Mr. A: If you tried to argue that, I think the Bible-quoting Christians might reply with the story Jesus told about the rich man and the poor beggar named Lazarus.

Mr. T: How does that go again?

Mr. A: It's in Luke. I would imagine they would probably want to quote the entire story, so let's look at it:

> *There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.*
>
> *The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So, he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire."*
>
> *But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."*
>
> *He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment."*
>
> *Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."*
>
> *"No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."*
>
> *He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."* (Luke 16:19-31 NIV)

Mr. A: This story describes the torment of a person in hell. He converses and begs for even a little relief through someone bringing him a drop of water. He expresses concern for his five brothers still on earth. I don't know if we can say all that just symbolizes a "false idea" being banished away. And there's not the slightest hint that this condition is temporary, or that there is any way out. Rather than asking to be let out of that place, the tormented person seems to realize that this is not an option, and the best he can do is to ask for a warning to be sent to others so that they, too, won't end up there. If you still try to argue that this story simply represents "false ideas" being "punished" in a symbolic way, I think I know what the Bible-quoting Christians would say to that!

Mr. T: What do you think they would say?

Eisegesis or Exegesis?

Mr. Analytical: I think they would accuse of you doing *eisegesis* instead of *exegesis*.

Mr. Traditional: What do you mean?

Mr. A: The Merriam Webster dictionary defines eisegesis as "the interpretation of a text by reading into it one's own ideas."

Mr. T: Can you explain that further?

Mr. A: As a teacher I don't allow my students to use Wikipedia as a source in their papers, but in this case I think Wikipedia gives a fuller explanation that nails it down perfectly: "**Eisegesis** (/ˌaɪsɪˈdʒiːsɪs/) is the process of interpreting a text or portion of text in such a way that the process introduces one's own presuppositions, agendas, or biases into and onto the text. This is commonly referred to as *reading into* the text.[1] …

"Eisegesis is best understood when contrasted with *exegesis*. While exegesis is the process of drawing out the meaning from a text in accordance with the context and discoverable meaning of its author, *eisegesis* occurs when a reader imposes his or her interpretation into and onto the text. As a result, exegesis tends to be objective when employed effectively while eisegesis is regarded as highly subjective."

Mr. T: Oh dear, I am a little worried they just might have a point hard to rebut. Do you think what I'm trying to do might possibly be construed as eisegesis?

Mr. A: Yes, that's a serious concern.

Mr. T: Maybe another possibility could be what a philosophy major friend in my Christian Science Org. at Indiana University said.

Mr. A: What was that?

Mr. T: He said that perhaps Jesus never said those things at all.

Mr. A: Oh dear, if you start attacking the actual gospel accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – as unreliable, then I'm not sure how you would still be able to defend Christian Science's claim to be based upon the Bible. I know some people have some questions about passages in the Old Testament such as portions of Leviticus, and some people may think of some parts of the Bible as more inspired than others, but I've always thought of the four gospel accounts of Jesus' life as the pinnacle of the Bible.

My teacher of Christian Science even assigned the reading of the four gospels in their entirety for our Association meeting. That would seem strange to do if they are full of falsehoods and made up stories.

But even if you could manage somehow to argue that some things attributed to Jesus weren't really said by him, there would still be other problems.

Mr. T: Like what?

Mr. A: The account of Saul's conversion. I think sometimes we may forget just what a phenomenal thing it was! You remember how Saul was doing everything he could to stamp out Christianity, by rounding up Christians to haul them off to prison. When Stephen was stoned to death for being a Christian, Saul was there, giving approval to his death (Acts 8:1).

Then what happened to make Saul become a Christian? Would you say the light of truth gradually dawned on him and he came to realize more and more that he was wrong to persecute the Christians, and that eventually he came to realize that Christianity was the truth?

Mr. T: Wasn't it actually something a little more sudden?

How Saul Became Paul

Mr. Analytical: Yes! Let's look at the account in Acts 9. (And by the way, Saul considered this event so important in his life that he continued to tell others about it in Acts 22 and Acts 26.)

> *Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*
>
> *"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.*
>
> *"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*
>
> *The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*
>
> *In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"*
>
> *"Yes, Lord," he answered.*
>
> *The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."*
>
> *"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."*
>
> *But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*
>
> *Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.*
>
> *Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And*

hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ." (Acts 9:1-22 NIV)

Mr. Traditional: How can we harmonize that account with Christian Science? Actually, I'm recalling that Mrs. Eddy did address that account. In *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy*, 3rd series, pp. 64-65, Annie Knott describes a class Mrs. Eddy was teaching, and her commendation of the view that it was not the personal Jesus who spoke to Paul, but rather a subjective experience of the Christ, Truth, even if Paul continued to think for some time that it was the personal Jesus who had spoken to him.

Mr. A: Do you think that harmonizes well with the actual account recorded in Acts?

Mr. T: Well, I'd have to think about that, and would probably need to be prepared to answer some objections.

Mr. A: According to the account, this wasn't a gradual illumination of an impersonal truth. This was a decisive, totally unexpected, intervention by a power that literally blinded Paul for three days, a power that spoke actual words which Paul states in Acts 26:14 were in Aramaic. This power identified himself as "Jesus, whom you are persecuting." According to the account, others with Paul heard the voice as well.

Furthermore, Ananias was given specific instructions to go to Saul and place his hands on him to heal him of his blindness. Ananias states that it was Jesus who instructed him to do this. Ananias didn't say he felt "led by a higher power"; he specifically stated that Jesus instructed him. Then an instantaneous healing occurred.

This miraculous experience—not only the healing, but the whole scenario of being spoken to by the audible voice, being blinded, being led for three days until a Christian disciple came to heal him at Jesus' direction—caused Paul to realize that Jesus had intervened to show him he was wrong to be opposed to Jesus. He was converted instantly and began preaching that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. If you try to take Jesus out of that account, I'm afraid you will again be open to the charge of eisegesis!

Mr. T: At least in Christian Science we honor and revere the Bible. What do you think of how some people claim the Bible is just a bunch of myths and that Jesus never rose from the dead or even existed?

Mr. A: I think such people are ignorant of all the evidence and scholarship available today. I have seen outstanding reference sources such as *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh MacDowell and Dr. Sean MacDowell. It has hundreds of pages of evidence for the reliability of the Bible and the accounts of Jesus' resurrection. And there are many other similar reference sources, such as *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel, a former atheist. In that book he cites over a hundred scholarly resources.

Mr. T: Fascinating! I'll really have to dig in and read those! It's interesting that you bring up Jesus and the resurrection, as I'm reminded of how Mrs. Eddy said, "I do not find my authority for Christian Science in history, but in revelation. If there had never existed such a person as the Galilean Prophet, it would make no difference to me. I should still know that God's spiritual ideal is the only real man in His image and likeness."[9] Even if it wasn't as readily available in Mrs. Eddy's day, it's good to know there is much evidence that Jesus really did live and that the resurrection really happened.

[9] *First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, pp. 318:31-319:4.

Mr. A: Yes, but I must say, I bet those Bible-quoting Christians who came to your door would be really troubled by how Mrs. Eddy said it would make no difference to her if Jesus had never lived. They would probably quote Paul who said, "If Christ is not raised [from the dead] our preaching is useless, and so is your faith…your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (I Cor. 15:14-17).

Mr. T: Well, I can see how Mrs. Eddy's saying that it would not matter to her if Jesus had never lived would upset some people, but aren't they taking it out of context? I think she was just having to reply to Henry Wiggin, her stylistic and grammar consultant for *Science and Health*, since he burst out in her class and asked how Mrs. Eddy could even know if such a person as Jesus ever lived (*First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 318:31-319:4).

Mr. A: Whatever the context, it's still quite remarkable that Mrs. Eddy said that it would not matter if Jesus had never lived.

Mr. T: I think we're getting off on a tangent here. We were talking about the Bible's trustworthiness and inspiration. What do you think about how some people say the Bible has some contradictions in it, showing some places are more inspired than others?

Can We Trust Scripture?

Mr. Analytical: I saw another book, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, by Dr. Gleason Archer, a tremendous scholar of history and ancient languages whose Ph.D. is from Harvard. He discusses hundreds of Bible passages that have been alleged to be contradictory and resolves them in fascinating ways showing there is no contradiction at all.

Mr. Traditional: In light of all this scholarship, it sounds as though I may be on very dubious ground if I try to avoid difficult Bible passages by saying things like "Perhaps Jesus never said that." I'll just have to try to avoid *eisegesis* and try to do proper *exegesis*! I once read an article entitled "To Be a Christian Science Practitioner" in the September, 1972 issue of *The Christian Science Journal* by Grace Channell Wasson, C.S.B., who later in 1977 became the first woman to be elected First Reader of The Mother Church.

It quoted Jesus' statement, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). She interpreted that to mean that if "we are really lifting up the Christ, Truth, in consciousness…tired humanity will find their way to this healing Truth." Isn't that a beautiful and inspired interpretation of that verse?

Mr. A: It sounds good, but if you read the very next verse—verse 33—in that twelfth chapter of John, the interpretation is given right there. It says, "He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die."

Mr. T: "…kind of death he was going to die"? What in the world is that about?

Mr. A: He was "lifted up" on the cross in his crucifixion. Jesus is saying that his crucifixion and death are somehow related to his drawing "all men unto [him]."

Mr. T: Now I'm even more confused.

Mr. A: "Lifted up" appears to have been a polite way to refer to crucifixion. I noticed it is also used in John 3:14: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Mr. T: What in the world is that "lifting up the snake in the desert" about?

Mr. A: I did a little research on that and discovered Jesus was referring to something that occurred in the book of Numbers. Let's look at it:

> *They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"*
>
> *Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.*
>
> *The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.* (Numbers 21:4-9 NIV)

Mr. T: What a bizarre story. I don't like it at all.

Mr. A: I know what you mean. It's tempting to say it's just some weird Old Testament thing where peoples' thought had not yet become as spiritual and elevated as it is thought to have become later in the New Testament and especially with Jesus. But there are two problems with saying that.

Mr. T: Oh really? What are those?

Mr. A: I heard a talk that pointed out that Jesus always upheld the Old Testament. For example, he said, "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."[10] Jesus quoted the Old Testament in his personal life,[11] in his official ministry as Messiah,[12] in public controversy.[13] It is important to note that according to him, what the human writers wrote—be it Moses or Isaiah—was to be accepted as divinely inspired.[14]

Mr. T: And the other problem?

Mr. A: The other problem is that Jesus himself refers back to this story in Numbers and draws a comparison to himself: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."[15] I'm not willing to dismiss what Jesus himself said. He seems to be saying that just as God miraculously cured people of poisonous snake bites and preserved their physical life when they looked at the snake Moses was holding up, so, too, God will miraculously cure people of something that's harming their potential eternal life when they look up with faith to Jesus lifted up on the cross.

Thinking back to the verses you mentioned earlier that the Bible quoters used – it seems to fit together. Rom 3:23 – all have sinned; Rom. 6:23 – the wages of sin is death; Rom. 5:8 and I Pet 3:8 – Jesus took the penalty for sin (death) on himself; and John 1:12 and Matt. 25:46 – those who place their faith in him will receive eternal life. It seems to be saying that sin is a poison keeping one from eternal life, and that the antidote is faith in Jesus who died for sins.

Mr. T: Oh dear, that's just so different and strange to me.

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[10] Matt. 5:18 (NIV)
[11] Matt. 4:4
[12] Luke 24: 25, 44
[13] Luke 10:26, Mark 12:24, 26, 27
[14] See for example, Mark 7: 10, 12, 13; Matt. 19:4,5
[15] John 3:14

Mr. A: Will you at least acknowledge that there is a lot more in the Bible than you might have seen before, and you ought to really study the Bible?

Mr. T: Yes, I do think it would be good to study the Bible. I'm really quite surprised to be finding ideas in the Bible I wasn't aware of. Do you think if I keep studying it, there will be more surprises?

More Surprises

Mr. Analytical: I think so. And I'm thinking maybe even some things that have always puzzled me will become clearer! I've always wondered why all or most of the other churches think Jesus is God when he said he was the *Son* of God. They seem to think "Son of God" means "God." But I've found it hard to understand why they think that. And when Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," why did the Jews pick up stones to stone him?

Mr. Traditional: That reminds me of how Mrs. Eddy says that "I and my Father are one" means "one in quality, not in quantity." She goes on to say, "As a drop of water is one with the ocean, a ray of light one with the sun, even so God and man, Father and son, are one in being" (S&H 361:15-18).

Mr. A: If that's what Jesus meant, it hardly seems grounds for the Jews to want to stone him! Or could it be that the Jews understood Jesus to be saying something else?

Mr. T: In fact, doesn't it say in the book of John that after hearing Jesus say "I and my Father are One," that as the Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus, they said, "We are not stoning you for any of these [miracles] but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, declare yourself to be God."?[16] Why do you think the Jews thought saying "I and my Father are One" meant Jesus was claiming to be God?

Mr. A: I heard that various books, such as C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity,* explain in very helpful ways the historical context in which those statements like "I and my Father are One" were made and why they were interpreted by Jesus' audience in ways different from what Christian Science has said about them.[17] Also very helpful was Lewis' comment about how Jesus was called "the only begotten Son of God"[18] and how it is that "the only begotten Son of God" is interpreted as meaning God.[19]

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[16] John 10:33

[17] in *Mere Christianity*, Book II, "What Christians Believe", chapter 3, "The Shocking Alternative," C.S. Lewis states, "Among pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips." (Page 44 in 40th anniversary edition published in 1981; page 55 in Macmillan paperback edition printed in 1977.)

[18] John 3:16 (KJV): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

[19] In *Mere Christianity*, Book IV, "Beyond Personality: or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity", chapter 1, "Making and Begetting," C.S. Lewis states, "We don't use the words *begetting* or *begotten* much in modern English, but everyone still knows what they mean. To beget is to become the father of: to create is to make. And the difference is this. When you beget you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set—or he may make something more like himself than a wireless set: say, a statue…Now that is the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man. That is why men are not Sons of God in the

Perhaps some research into the historical context in which Jesus was speaking would be in order as one endeavors to do exegesis and not eisegesis.

Mr. T: Yes, I do want to study the Bible with integrity. But I have no plans to leave Christian Science. That would be unthinkable! I've always thought that anyone who would leave Christian Science was a terrible traitor and I never wanted to be around that person.

Mr. A: I know what you mean! On the other hand, have you ever wondered how you would feel if you lived your whole life devoted to a certain system of thought, and at the end of your life when you faced God, you found out the whole thing was a mistake and you had based your whole life on an error?

Mr. T: I wouldn't like that, but I also couldn't imagine leaving all my friends, my community. Christian Science and my Christian Science friends are my whole life!

Pursuing Truth

Mr. Analytical: I know what you mean! I have so many Christian Science friends that I love so very dearly! They are among the dearest, sweetest people on earth. Okay, I know there are a few that can be difficult, but I mean as a whole, by and large, I love them so much. (And I'm trying to love the few that are difficult!) And I hope I can continue to be close friends with them for the rest of my life. But on the other hand, the pursuit of truth must be paramount, even if our friends and family turn against us.

Mr. Traditional: Yes, but I don't think I'll live my whole life to find Christian Science was all a big mistake, and I don't think I need to pursue truth, because healings in Christian Science prove it is true. Mrs. Eddy sums it up beautifully: "Christian Science reveals incontrovertibly that Mind is All-in-all, that the only realities are the divine Mind and idea. This great fact is not, however, seen to be supported by sensible evidence, until its divine Principle is demonstrated by healing the sick and thus proved absolute and divine. This proof once seen, no other conclusion can be reached" (S&H 109:4-10).

Although I haven't seen Christian Science demonstrated in my own family as much as I would have hoped, since my brother, Mark, has never been healed of his cerebral palsy**…**

Mr. A: I'm sorry to interrupt, but do you remember how hard we tried? Mom had a practitioner and teacher do extensive work for Mark when he was little. Later, when I was in college and it seemed Mom had given up, I started calling practitioners. After several declined to take Mark's case, one practitioner and teacher took the case for a while, but Mark never got better. I, myself, memorized much of *Science and Health* while trying to heal Mark.

Mr. T: I know we tried hard without success, but I have heard of some pretty great healings of others, such as those described in the book *A Century of Christian Science Healing*. There's no other way to explain them except that Christian Science is true.

Mr. A: Are you sure? What about how Jesus said that it is possible to perform many miracles but not be a true follower of his? Jesus said:

> *Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons*

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sense that Christ is. They may be like God in certain ways, but they are not things of the same kind. They are more like statues or pictures of God." (Page 138 in Macmillan paperback edition printed in 1977.)

and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"[20]

Mr. T: Wow! I don't think I had ever noticed how Jesus actually calls some miracle workers "evildoers." I think I always assumed ability to bring about "miracles" proved one had the truth.

Mr. A: I think we can clearly conclude from Jesus' statement that the ability to bring about seemingly miraculous healings does not necessarily prove that one has correct theology. Spiritual healings may support one's claim to have correct theology, but they do not *prove* it. After all, many impressive healings have been occurring in traditional Christianity, but that does not mean that Christian Scientists believe that traditional Christianity's teachings are correct.

Do you remember going out of curiosity to hear a Christian weight-lifter who held the "Mr. Indiana" title tell of a complete healing of cancer that had spread through his whole body?

Mr. T: Yes, I was impressed by the healing, but I didn't think it proved his traditional Christian views were correct.

Mr. A: If healings are occurring in both Christian Science and traditional Christianity, how do we figure out if either of them has the truth?

As I said before, the pursuit of truth must be paramount, even if our friends and family turn against us. What would you think about simply praying for God's guidance in this matter?

Mr. T: Do you mean the prayer of petition?

Mr. A: Well, I know that usually in Christian Science we think of prayer as a scientific affirmation of the spiritual facts of the Allness of God, good, and the nothingness of evil. But sometimes Mrs. Eddy used prayers of petition, as when she wrote, "Shepherd show me how to go."

Mr. T: But for me to pray I would need to believe that God exists. And to tell you the truth, after all you've said about healings not necessarily proving that Christian Science is true, and about the apparent self-contradiction in Christian Science—a system which you pointed out teaches how to deal with the illusions of sin, disease and death, but which ultimately teaches that even these illusions never could have arisen in God's perfect universe where God is All, and which furthermore teaches that there is no consciousness or mind to experience these illusions since God, the divine Mind is all that exists—I'm starting to wonder if the teachings of Christian Science may not meet the tests of truth, and may be somewhat mistaken. And if Christian Science is not correct about everything, how do I even know if there is a God? Maybe the atheists are right that there is no God! If there is no God, then prayer makes no sense and is useless. That's probably what Grandmother Brunell would have said. She was quite a counterpart to Grandmother French, a Christian Science practitioner! I'll never forget when Grandmother Brunell declared vehemently that "when you're dead, you're dead!" She seemed to think life just arises temporarily from the body, and when the body stops, it's all over! I don't think she believed in God or the afterlife.

Mr. A: That reminds me of how Dad mentioned recently he was fascinated by some new reports coming out about people who were declared clinically dead when their hearts and brain activity stopped but who later were resuscitated. They reported how they continued to be conscious and had seen many things in the afterlife—many things suggesting that God is real. I think they're calling these "near death experiences." If true, these accounts certainly offer a serious and fascinating

[20] Matt. 7:21-23

challenge to the atheistic position! I believe more and more of these experiences are being reported and studied.

Mr. T: That's intriguing. I'd like to read more about those.

Mr. A: Sounds like a good idea! And in the meantime, I'd like to mention that even if some parts of Christian Science seem contradictory, there's one thing that Mrs. Eddy said that I still think makes a lot of sense.

Mr. T: What's that?

Mr. A: She wrote, "The fountain can rise no higher than its source" (S&H 18:17).

Mr. T: What does that have to do with anything?

Mr. A: Do you remember when our family went on road trips and we would come to various towns that had water towers?

Mr. T: Sure. I always wondered what the purpose was for putting the water so high up in the air like that.

Mr. A: Having the water up high in the tower makes it higher than the faucets of the homes in the town, and that creates the water pressure one experiences when turning on the faucet. It only works because the water source is higher than the faucet. It wouldn't work if the water source was lower than the faucets. I've heard that the scientific principle involved is called Bernoulli's equation.

Mr. T: What does that have to do with prayer or the existence of God?

Mr. A: Well, doesn't it seem reasonable to think that if the universe contains something as highly developed as a human mind that could write Beethoven's 9th symphony or that could formulate Einstein's theory of relativity, that there would be a source to that universe even higher than the human mind? A source that makes possible the human mind?

Mr. T: Well, it's true that I always thought that it was hard to see how matter – even if it does actually exist—could somehow make the leap into consciousness.

Mr. A: Yes! You can organize matter into computers that can make tremendous calculations and store huge amounts in their "memory," but they're not really conscious in the sense that a human being is. Even if we made a computer in the future a thousand more times more powerful than what we have now, and we put it into something looking like a human body and programmed it to talk and respond just like a real person, it still would not be a living human being with a real consciousness.

Mr. T: I agree! Just as you can't get blood out of a turnip, I don't think you can ever get consciousness out of matter! I know the non-Christian Science world that believes matter exists says the brain is a phenomenal computer. The actual consciousness element, however, must surely have a different source beyond the matter in the brain. I know many attempts have been made by natural scientists to explain how the matter in the brain makes the leap into actual consciousness, but I have a hunch they'll never be able to solve it because something else other than matter must be involved.

Mr. A: Yes, exactly! Wouldn't it make sense to believe that there is a source of the universe that IS conscious, and that's how we're able to have consciousness? And wouldn't it make sense to believe that this source of the universe is higher than the "fountain" it produces--, that is, vastly greater and more brilliant than the greatest human mind? But if the source of the universe is nothing more than

mindless, irrational matter, then for a genius human mind to be produced out of that is like trying to get the fountain to rise higher than the source.

Mr. T: Yes, I think that makes a lot of sense. It reminds me as well of a story one of my philosophy teachers at Indiana University told me.

Mr. A: Oh, do you mean the one about the desert? Tell that again! I love that one!

Mr. T: Sure! In your travels you come to a desert island and you're searching to find signs of intelligent life. All you see, however, is sand and rocks. Just as you're about to conclude there's no intelligent life there, you come upon an expensive camera with a very fancy lens. You realize there had to be intelligent life there as this camera just couldn't have come about on its own. Someone very intelligent had to design and make that camera. Then it dawns on you that the lens in your eye viewing the camera is even more complex and wonderful than that of the camera. Just as the camera pointed to an intelligent maker, so too does your eye's lens point in that same direction.

Mr. A: I remember the professor called it the teleological argument for God.

Mr. T: Another class that made a big impression on me was the science class that talked about entropy.

Mr. A: Refresh my memory about the meaning of "entropy."

Mr. T: Entropy is the amount of disorder in a system. A rule of physics is that the entropy of a system always stays the same or increases. If the whole universe is considered a system, entropy would mean the universe is not getting more ordered but is either staying the same or getting more disordered. It's sort of like – on a mundane level – how your room gets more and more messy and disordered if you just let it slide and don't keep straightening it. I asked the professor how it is, then, that something so orderly as living organisms could come about on earth if the general tendency is towards more and more disorder.

Mr. A: What did he say?

Mr. T: He said the order of the living organisms would have to result in more disorder elsewhere in the universe so that the total level of disorder still stayed the same or increased. But he didn't really address how orderly living organisms could come about when the general tendency of the universe is to get more disorderly.

Mr. A: I remember that. It again gave me the strong feeling that there had to be some force at work in the universe other than mindless, irrational matter to bring about orderly life and especially conscious life that can conceive of something so glorious as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or Brahms' First Symphony, which has been called Beethoven's Tenth!

Mr. T: It reminds me of the old saying that it takes more faith to be an atheist than to believe in God, or at least some kind of intelligent source to the universe. I used to think that was a silly statement, but now it's starting to make sense.

Mr. A: Then that means you really could pray believing that there actually is an intelligent source of the universe hearing you! You could reach out to that Source of the Universe and ask to be led how to go—how to think; what to believe—in these three vital areas:

- the apparent self-contradiction in Christian Science regarding how mortal mind and its experience of illusions seems to exist but actually cannot and does not exist according to Christian Science

- your commitment to read the Bible more deeply and thoroughly and to consider how it is difficult sometimes to harmonize Christian Science with the Bible
- what to do with your sin
  You admitted you had sinful thoughts and did sinful actions including lying to Tim. And that's only what you admitted. Could there be more? You need to decide what to do about your sin. In the past you declared its unreality based on the Allness of God, and the unreality of evil, and that didn't seem to help much. Even just the small bits of the Bible we've looked at suggest that sin is very serious, and if not dealt with properly, can lead to severe eternal consequences.

Mr. T: I think the prayer of petition to be led how to go is a good idea.

Both: I think we're in agreement: Prayer is the way to go!

HOW GOD ANSWERED MY PRAYER

Thank you, dear reader, for coming this far with me in this dialogue. Since you came this far, you may want to know what happened next. There came a point in my life where we – I – did pray the prayer of petition as described above. It was actually an anguished cry to God—or to the Source of the Universe, as I phrased it then-- as I was very distraught over some of the issues that were raised in this dialogue. The answer came quickly and was not what I was expecting.

I wrote down my experiences and how I was led to God's unmistakable answer in a 25-page essay entitled "My Spiritual Crisis and Resolution" in 1979. When I shared it with Jack Eyerly, he surprised me by telling me he agreed with everything I had written except my conclusion. That conclusion emerges in the later part of the essay. I reproduce parts of it here to illustrate how my thinking had developed.

A Conversation with Steve

Shortly after my prayer for God's guidance, I had a conversation with Steve, a fellow music student. He had been brought up in a Christian home, had later almost accepted Christian Science, but had ultimately rejected it. Some people have supposed that I was brainwashed or that my arm was twisted in some way, but that is not true. Steve simply contrasted Jesus' simple statement: "I am the way, the truth, the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6) with how Christian Science would probably rephrase it: "No man cometh to the Father but by Truth."[21]

As my discussion with Steve continued, I could see that he had become what I usually called in my disgust "one of those Christians." (Occasionally people had come to my door telling me they were Christians and that I was a sinner and needed to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. I was very offended by this, especially by their attitude of being so absolutely certain of the correctness of their own view and the falsity of mine. I thought them stupid, self-righteous, and offensive.) As Steve made it clear that Jesus was his Savior and that he had a personal relationship with him, I felt a disgust rising within me. Outwardly I was polite, but inwardly I determined never to associate with Steve again.

Pondering John 14:6

After my meeting with Steve, I couldn't stop thinking about John 14:6: "**I am the way, the truth, the**

[21] See e.g. *Science and Health* 286:9-11.

life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."[22] These words of Jesus reminded me of the uneasiness I had sometimes felt about Mrs. Eddy's treatment of the personal pronouns which Jesus used. In itself, I had found the distinction Mrs. Eddy makes between "Jesus" and "Christ" appealing, but it puzzled me why Jesus in the gospel accounts seemed to be misleading people by approving Peter's statement to Jesus: "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16).

Jesus could easily have corrected Peter and said, "No, the Christ, Truth, is what I have declared and taught, but you must not use 'Christ' as a synonym for me." Why didn't he correct Peter? Why did Jesus make statements that misled the Church for nineteen centuries until Mrs. Eddy explained what he meant?[23] Was the distinction between Jesus and Christ really so difficult that the world was not ready for it until the 19th century?

I also wondered about Paul. Why did he claim that his revelation had come from "Jesus Christ"?[24] Paul said that after Jesus ascended, Jesus personally spoke to Paul and identified himself, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."[25] I found this hard to reconcile with Mrs. Eddy's approval of the idea that Paul's experience was not a personal one, but was impersonal.[26]

Jesus' statement, "**I am the way, the truth, the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,"** kept running through my mind. If Jesus really lived and said this and proved his claims by the resurrection, wouldn't he have meant what he said? Wouldn't the pronouns "I" and "me" refer to himself rather than a truth he taught which was not to be equated with his personal self?

I also thought about a verse the Christians like Steve were fond of quoting: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). A look at the context showed that the speaker was identified as "him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again" (Rev. 2:8), and as "the Son of God" (Rev. 2:18), and as "the ruler of God's creation" (Rev. 3:14). Obviously, the speaker is Jesus. It was clear to me that these statements meant what they plainly said.

Turning my Life over to Jesus as Lord and Savior

I knew that the Christians like Steve who believed these statements of Jesus in their plain meaning also believed that God gave man free will, and that man used it to disobey God, thereby producing the moral evil we have in the world today. All my life, of course, I had been trained to believe that God could not have created a man who could disobey God.[27]

I decided to pray about the question of whether I have free will or not. I earnestly asked God to give me light on this subject, and the answer was extremely clear: I had sometimes used my will to choose things that my moral sense told me were wrong. Incredible as it seemed, God had evidently given me enough freedom to walk away from him if I wanted to. I did not want to believe this, but was unable to conclude otherwise.

Because I had also seen enough evidence to convince me that Jesus had lived and said and done the things recorded, including the resurrection,[28] I could see only one proper course of action: to get down on my knees before Jesus, "the ruler of God's creation," "the First and the Last," "who died and came to life again," and ask him to come into my life.

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[22] John 14:6
[23] See e.g. *Science and Health* 137:16
[24] Galatians 1:12
[25] See Acts 9
[26] See *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy*, 3rd Series, pp. 64-65
[27] See *Science and Health* 475:28-31
[28] See the appendix for this evidence plus more I found later.

What a joy it was to talk to Jesus and know that he was hearing me, to confide in him and admit my wrongdoings, to feel his forgiveness, and to know that he would help me to be better. I realized I did not need Mrs. Eddy to tell me who Jesus was; Jesus himself was revealing himself to me. I soon found this verse:

> He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and *will disclose myself to him* [emphasis mine] (John 14:21 NASB).

Tears of Joy

"He who has my commandments…" Did I not have his commandments in the gospel accounts? I started reading the gospels to find out everything I could about Jesus' teachings. It was so refreshing to read them on their own, and not have to try to force them to harmonize with what somebody else said about them. I remembered Mrs. Eddy had written, "Follow your Leader, only so far as she follows Christ."[29] I thought that if somehow, after all this study, God revealed to me that Mrs. Eddy was right about Jesus after all then I should follow her teaching, but that now it was imperative to study Jesus' own teachings thoroughly.

The first week with Jesus in my life in this new sense was incredible. My prayers brought tears of joy; I had never known such amazing happiness. My prayer had been answered; I knew what God wanted for my life: to surrender to Jesus and follow him. I had done so, and Jesus filled my heart with his love.

Satisfying Answers

Then a surprise came. About a week later I began to have emotional anguish. Could an infinitely good God really have allowed evil? Could he really have allowed me to "sin"? I prayed about this, but rather than growing more frustrated as I had as a Christian Scientist, this time satisfying answers came immediately! I picked up a book from my shelf that I had bought years ago called *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. This book showed why God would give man free will even though free will makes evil possible. It made me stop and think about what it would be like not to have free will. Can you imagine it? Lewis wrote:

> Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then did God give man free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing which makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight…And for that they must be free.[30]

I saw that the view that man has the free will to make choices is taught in the Bible, for Jesus had said, "If any one chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17). I also remembered a verse I had heard from Deuteronomy, "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live…." (Deut. 30:19).[31]

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[29] *Message for 1902*: 4:3
[30] *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis, p. 53
[31] See also Deut. 5:29, I Kings 20:42, Isa. 1:19-20

Questions about the Bible's Reliability

But what about the Bible? Could I really trust all of it or just parts of it? So far, I had trusted only the gospels. If I read some promise attributed to God in, say, the Psalms, was it really a promise from God, or was it just some poet's idea?

I noticed that various Christian churches I had visited had different approaches to the Bible. Some believed II Tim. 3:16,17, which says:

> All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Others believed that parts of the Bible were inspired by God, but that other parts were products of human error and prejudice.

Which view did I take? I was inclined to believe the second view that parts of the Bible have error. I recognized, however, that taking this view would create the problem of distinguishing what God was saying from man's own ideas. I wondered how well I could draw the line. What if I made mistakes? Was my success in Christian living dependent upon *my* ability in drawing the line correctly? I envied the easy faith of people who accepted all of the Bible. They just believed it all; they didn't have to evaluate the validity of each verse. But then I remembered that Jesus could help me, and that I must pray for guidance.

Jesus Responds with Guidance about the Bible's Inspiration

My prayers for guidance concerning how to view the Bible were wonderfully answered, and once again in a way I was not expecting! At one of the churches I visited, I heard a former Indiana University math professor teach an adult Sunday School class.[32] I was impressed by the combination of his keen intelligence and gentle, Christ-like manner. I wanted to hear him teach some more, and learned that he led a Bible study group on Friday nights. I decided to visit it. Hundreds of topics must have been covered in the years that the group had been meeting, but the topic that night was precisely the subject about which I had been praying! How wonderful it was to hear such an intelligent approach to this question of the inspiration of the Bible!

The professor's view that II Tim. 3:16 is correct in declaring all Scripture to be inspired by God, was different from what I felt inclined to believe, but I could not help being impressed by his defense of that view. He described two different approaches to defending the accuracy of the Bible. The first is the *defensive approach*, which responds to three types of challenges: historical, scientific, and philosophical. After giving examples of responding to specific challenges in those areas he stated that although it is valuable, the defensive approach is not sufficient. What is sufficient, he declared, is the second approach known as the *offensive approach.* It consists of what he termed the *linear argument* for the authority of the Bible.[33] Since the *linear argument* takes a lot of space, I have put it in an appendix and will give only a brief summary here.

The *linear argument* begins by establishing that the historical accounts of Jesus' life are historically accurate. It does this through extensive internal and external evidence. It then argues that the miraculous works of Jesus, including his resurrection, prove he is indeed the Son of God, and that he speaks with

[32] The professor had given up his former career to do full-time Christian work.

[33] I believe the professor used the term *linear* to contrast the argument with the useless circular arguments which one sometimes hears. For example, one circular argument begins in this way: "How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? Because Jesus says it is, and he is the Son of God." Then the circular argument continues, "How do we know Jesus is the Son of God? Because the Bible says he is!"

God's authority. It then examines in detail what Jesus taught about the Old and New Testaments. It concludes that Jesus endorsed the entire Old Testament as divinely inspired and that the New Testament has the authority of Christ behind it. Please see the appendix for the fascinating and compelling details.

The *linear argument* convinced me that the entire Bible is indeed God-inspired. Just as I never had thought I could accept Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord, so I never had thought I could believe in the entire Bible as true. The *linear argument*, however, showed me conclusively that surrender to Jesus as Lord includes an acceptance of the authority of the entire Bible.

As I studied the Bible with this new-found faith in its truth, what joy I had! When I came across puzzling passages, prayer and further study resolved the problems time and time again. I also found satisfying answers to common scientific, historical, and philosophical objections to the Bible. I was helped by such books as Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* for historical objections, C.S. Lewis's *Miracles*, *The Problem of Pain*, *The Great Divorce* for philosophical objections, as well as by papers by Dr. Varughese dealing with scientific objections.

With my acceptance of the authority of the entire Bible, the answer to my original prayer for God to show me the right path in life was complete. Truly God had said to me, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21).

The Bible's Message: the Kingdom of God

Please permit me to share just a little of what I found in the Bible as I honestly sought its own message. (Incidentally, I have found no contradictions in the Bible.) The Bible showed me that God loves us so much that he wants our life to be abundant and eternal (John 10:10; John 3:16), and that God has a plan to establish his perfect kingdom.

> John 10:10: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
>
> John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Some of the kingdom can be experienced now as a present spiritual reality, (Rom. 14:17; Luke 17:20, 21)

> Rom. 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

but there are facets of the kingdom that will be experienced only in the future (Matt. 25:31-34; Matt. 13:40-43; Matt. 8:11,12; Matt. 7:21-23; I Cor. 15:50-54).

> Matt. 13:40-43: As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let him hear.
>
> Matt. 7:21-23: Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

Sin Gets in the Way

God desires all mankind to be saved for his kingdom (I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9), but he does

> I Tim. 2: 3-4: This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

not force this on anyone; he allows people to refuse (Matt. 22:1-6). In more basic terms, the

> Matt. 22:1-6: Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are *all* butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."' But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them."

Bible said that God does not force man to obey him, but allows man to disobey (Gen. 3) and that all have done so (i.e. sinned). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It showed the tragic effects of this disobedience (Gen. 3; Rom. 1:18-32) and the futility of life without God-centeredness (Ecclesiastes). It said that nothing sinful can enter God's kingdom (Rev. 21:27) for sin would spoil it. Perfection is God's standard (Matt. 5:48). It said that no matter how hard we try,

> Rev. 21:27: Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

we cannot overcome all sin by our own efforts (Rom. 3:20; Isa. 64:6, Rom. 7:14-25).

> Rom. 3:20: Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

> Isa. 64:6: All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags…

Furthermore, it showed that our present practice of sin is not the only problem but that our past sins are a problem, too, since the penalty for these sins is death (Rom. 6:23). Thus, there is no human solution.

God's Solution through Jesus Versus the Sad Alternative

Although there is no human solution, God offers a way. "I am the way, the truth, the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," said Jesus (John 14:6). Whoever receives Jesus Christ is given the right by God to *become* a child of God (John 1:12), which in some way (see below) prevents him from perishing and gives him eternal life (John 3:16).

Whoever rejects Jesus, however, will not see life (John 3:36). (If he had wanted God, God would have shown him the truth of Jesus' teachings—John 7:17) but will face its alternative, which is described by

> John 7:17: If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Jesus in three ways: first, as everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46); second, as destruction or perishing (Matt. 10:28; John 3:16); and third, as privation, exclusion, or banishment into "the darkness outside" (Matt. 8:12; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 25:30).

> Matt. 25:46: Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.
>
> Matt. 10:28: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
>
> Matt. 8:12: But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These three descriptions may appear somewhat contradictory, but see the chapter on hell in C.S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* for a fascinating analysis of just what state could be properly described in all three ways.

How Faith in Jesus Solves our Sin Problem—Part 1

The Bible showed why receiving Jesus as Lord and Master gives us eternal life. For eternal life we need deliverance from everything hindering us from being in God's kingdom. That means we need forgiveness for our past sins (and even any future sins we might commit), and an overcoming of our present sinfulness, or what has been called our sinful nature.

Concerning the first need, the penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). God, being just, demanded the penalty to be paid, but as he is merciful, he paid it for us through his own Son, and forgave us.

This doctrine seemed very strange to me, but I found it again and again in the Scriptures. "For Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God (I Pet. 3:18). "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Because of Jesus' death, believers in Jesus Christ are forgiven their sins. The night before his crucifixion, Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28).

Just as lambs had to be continually sacrificed in the Old Testament for forgiveness of sins (Leviticus; Hebrews 9, 10), so Jesus was the Lamb of God whose blood redeems us once for all (I Pet. 1:18-20; John 1:29; Heb. 9:28, Heb. 10:1-18).

> I Pet. 1:18-20: For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed…but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.
>
> John 1:29: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

How Faith in Jesus Solves our Sin Problem—Part 2

At first this doctrine of Jesus' death paying the penalty for our sins disturbed me, but when I discovered that Jesus' death served another function, things began to fall into place.

Forgiveness is not enough! Perfect obedience to God is also necessary (Rev. 21:27; Matt. 5:48) since nothing sinful can enter God's kingdom of heaven. "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

The Bible said this attitude of Jesus should also be our attitude (Phil. 2:5). Paul exhibited this attitude when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

God had made our obedience and this killing of the old sinful nature possible through the perfect obedience of Jesus. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). How? Part of the Bible's answer was that because Jesus was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), he is able to come to our aid when we are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

Jesus' Help for Those who are Born Again

How is Jesus able to come to our aid when we are tempted? Receiving Jesus enables us to *become* children of God (John 1:12); that is, to have a spiritual birth, or to be born "of the Spirit" (John 3:3-8).

> John 1:12: Yet to all who received him to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Jesus said (Matt. 7:22,23) that good works alone cannot enable us to enter the kingdom of God (God does not grade on the curve!); only through being 'born again" can we enter the kingdom (John 3:3-8). Why? After being born, we start to grow up! Perfect Christ-likeness is the ultimate destination (Rom. 8:29), thus satisfying heaven's requirement of complete obedience to God. (See also II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:190; Phil. 1:6; I John 3:2.)

The process is not completed this side of the grave; God refers to it as an on-going process (II Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:15; Phil. 3:13; I Pet. 2:2). And yet, because it is God who is doing the work in us (Phil. 1:6), reaching the destination is assured (Rom. 8:29; John 5:24; I John 5:13) and God already speaks of our salvation as complete (Col. 2:10; Eph. 2:6; Eph. 2:8; I John 5:13).

Meaning of RECEIVING Jesus

What does it mean to "*receive* Jesus Christ?" The Bible said we must receive Jesus Christ as "our Lord" (Rom. 10:9). Lordship, I learned, means ownership and the authority to command full obedience.

Intellectual assent to Jesus' claims is not enough (James 2:19). There is a story of the tightrope walker who crossed Niagara Falls with a heavy sack on his back. A crowd watched him. After he was through, he asked the crowd, "Do you believe I can do it again?"

"Yes," they roared.

Dropping the sack, he said, "All right, who wants to get on my back?" No one had enough faith to entrust his life to him. Jesus said that the faith we have in him must be of this kind (Luke 14:25-33). True faith manifests itself in action (James 2:14-17).

Luke gave three illustrations of refusal to become a true disciple (another term for "Christian" – Acts 11:26):

- the person who loved earthly comforts above Christ (Luke 9:57-58)
- the person who put his job and responsibilities before Christ (Luke 9:59)
- the person who put earthly ties before Christ (Luke 9:61-62).

They all obtained this verdict from Christ: Not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Their problem was contained in the phrase they used, "Lord…me first…" Actually, it is a contradiction to address

Christ as Lord and then say "me first."[34] "Lord" means that he is first. That made sense to me, for how could Christ change us into his likeness unless we gave him control over ourselves.

Meaning of Receiving JESUS

So far, I have discussed what I saw as Biblical teachings about *receiving* Jesus, but what does it mean to receive *Jesus*? Who is he? Jesus contrasted himself with us by saying "I am the vine; you are the branches" (John 15:5). He said he existed with his Father before the world existed (John 17:5), whereas we were created after the foundation of the world (Gen. 1).

How can this be? John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the *Word was God…*The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us [emphasis mine]" (John 1:1, 14 NASB). Since the Word is God, it is *God* who became flesh and live for a while among us as Jesus Christ.

It is not a contradiction of Jesus' deity to say that Jesus was the *Son* of God; rather, it is an affirmation of it for several reasons:

- First, the Jews understood it to refer to Jesus' deity (John 10:33; Mark 14:61-64).

  John 10:33: "We are not stoning you for any of these [miracles]," replied the Jews, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

- Second, after reading the chapter, "Making and Begetting" in *Mere Christianity,* by C.S. Lewis, what I had never realized became clear: to make something is to make something different from yourself; to beget something is to produce something like yourself. For example, man *makes* ships, houses, etc.; God *made plants, animals, man* (Gen. 1); however, ducks *beget* ducks; horses *beget* horses; walruses *beget* walruses. Man does not *beget* houses or ships; man begets man. What God begets is God. Jesus is called "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14).

Jesus a Member of the Trinity

I saw that the Bible clearly teaches that God has a son, but this son is referred to as God in the Bible (Heb. 1.8)

> But about the Son he [God] says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions…"

In this verse, the Son is addressed as God. This does not mean that Jesus the Son is the same as God the Father. In this verse, God the Father is addressing God the Son. Furthermore, we are told that Jesus, "the Word who became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:1, 14) was both God and *with* God (John 1:1):

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God…
> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NASB)

Thus, the words in Genesis, "Let *us* create man [emphasis mine]" (Gen. 1:1) took on new meaning for me. Both the Father and the Son appear to be speaking in the creation account!

[34] For this point I am indebted to Dr. T. V. Varughese

In addition, another Person identified in the Bible as "the Holy Spirit," is also called God[35]. Thus, at first it might sound as though there are three Gods. However, the Bible is very clear that there is only one true God (Deut. 6:4):

> Hear O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Thus, even though it is hard to understand, the Bible appears to be teaching there are three persons in one God. I learned that theologians coined the term, "Trinity" to refer to this doctrine. Although the word "Trinity" is not used in the Bible, the concept is there. I found the chapter, "The Three-Personal God" in *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis to be of immense help in understanding the sensibility of this doctrine.

I noticed that Jesus accepted worship as God (John 20:28), that Jesus is worshiped by angels (Heb. 1:6), and that he was addressed in prayer (Acts 7:59). He also called himself "I AM" (John 8:58), and "The First and the Last" (Rev. 1:17, 2:8), names for God in the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14; Isa. 41:4; Isa. 44:6).

Jesus claimed to be one with God the Father (John 10:30). Why were the Jews so horrified that they tried to stone him? C. S. Lewis gives a very clear explanation:

> Among pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips. (*Mere Christianity*, p. 55)

Practical Help from Jesus' Dual Human and Divine Nature

In considering Jesus' two-fold accomplishment of paying the debt (or penalty) for our sins and making possible our becoming Christ-like, I said earlier that the pieces began to fall into place. Jesus' deity is another very important part of the picture, and it relates in fascinating ways to the other pieces. The following passage not only brings this out, but also gave me something to think about in its implication that these two particular accomplishments of Jesus—paying the debt for our sins, and providing the means for perfecting us—are very closely related:

> Repentance…means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death. In fact, it needs a good man to repent. And here comes the catch. Only a bad person needs to repent; only a good person can repent perfectly. The worse you are the more you need it and the less you can do it. The only person who could do it perfectly would be a perfect person—and he would not need it.
>
> …Can we do it if God helps us? Yes, but what do we mean when we talk of God helping us? We mean God putting into us a bit of Himself, so to speak. He lends us a little of His reasoning powers and that is how we think: He puts a little of His love into us and that is how we love one another…But unfortunately we now need God's help in order to do something which God, in His own nature, never does at all—to surrender, to suffer, to submit, to die. Nothing in God's nature corresponds to this process at all…

[35] The baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 includes the Holy Spirit with the Son and Father, when Jesus commands "to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…" A passage in the Book of Acts calls the Holy Spirit God: "Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit…You have not lied to men but to God'" (Acts: 5:3-4).

> But supposing God became a man—suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God's nature in one person—then that person could help us. He could surrender His will and suffer and die, because He was a man; and He could do it perfectly because He was God. You and I can go through this process only if God does it in us; but God can do it only if He becomes man…That is the sense in which he pays our debt, and suffers for us what He Himself need not suffer at all. (*Mere Christianity*, pp. 59, 60)

THE FINAL CONCLUSION

Through much study of the Bible I learned something of the meaning and importance of receiving Jesus Christ as Lord. Just as Jesus prophesied (Matt. 24:24), many systems use the name of Jesus, but teach someone else's teachings. II John 9 says, "Whoever runs ahead and does not continue in the teachings of Christ, does not have God."

How Far to 'Follow Your Leader'?

It became clear what must be my response to Mrs. Eddy's statement, "Follow your Leader, only so far as she follows Christ." (*Message for 1901*, 34:25-26). Although I admired many of her teachings, I found serious departures from Jesus' teachings on such vital points as the process of salvation, the identity of Jesus, and the nature of man, as described in the previous section.

Many False Claimants to be the Final Revelation: How do they Treat the Bible?

I was fascinated to discover that Christian Science is not the only teaching that claims to be the final revelation which will correct all the errors of the historic Christian faith. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Swedenborgians, and members of such modern groups as the Unification Church (Moonies), The Way, Armstrongism,[36] and others all deny the basic doctrines of historical Christianity and believe their teaching has been sent to set things right. In many cases they believe that the introduction of their particular teaching into the world marks the second coming of Christ.

These groups claiming to be the final revelation all undermine the authority of the Bible. The Mormons say the Bible is full of translational errors, but that the Book of Mormon is direct from God. Also, until stopped by his death, Mormon founder Joseph Smith worked on an extensive revision of, and insertions into, the Bible to correct it.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, rather than studying the Bible itself, tend to rely on their own tracts and study guides, which, according to former members, use Bible verses taken out of context which are thereby given inappropriate meanings. Furthermore, they have their own Bible with a number of key changes that disrupt basic Christian doctrines—changes which appear to have no legitimate basis.

Likewise, Christian Scientists accept the contention of *Science and Health* that error has darkened and crept into the Bible's record of truth (S&H 139:15-22) and that only through a spiritual interpretation can truth be gained (S&H 547:23-25).

One claim Mrs. Eddy makes is that there are "thirty thousand different readings in the Old Testament, and …three hundred thousand in the New…" (S&H 139:17-19). This claim I found to be refuted in such

[36] After this paper was originally written, Hebert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God made history in becoming the first church classified as a cult by traditional theologians to return as a church to the historic Christian faith.

scholarly sources as *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell, *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Geisler and Nix, and *Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version* by Schaff.

Are CS Failures One's Own Fault?

I also saw that Christian Science not only produced critical departures from Jesus' teachings, but that it produced a practical approach to life's problems that was, for me, unsatisfactory. Christian Science says that just as we cannot pray to the principle of mathematics to solve problems for us, so we cannot ask the divine Principle to do anything, for His work is done (S&H 3:7). The task, the work, rests *on us*. Failures to demonstrate Christian Science are seen as the results of insufficient spiritual understanding. This was frustrating, for it would follow that my numerous failures were the result of insufficient spiritual understanding. I would think, "I must work 'harder, harder, harder' (Message for 1900: 2:7). Will certain severe problems of another person dear to my heart[37] ever be healed? The more than a dozen relatively young Christian Scientists I know who have died must not have worked diligently enough.

"Perhaps if my understanding were as great as Mrs. Eddy's…but even she had failures, as Robert Peel's *Mary Baker Eddy: Years of Authority* discloses." As a result, a certain negativism and frustration developed which surfaced in unpleasant ways from time to time. One might say to me, "Your problem was that you didn't understand that in Christian Science it is not we but God who does the healing." But the very words, "You didn't understand," illustrate my point.

Joyful Life as a Christian

My life as a follower of Christ Jesus or "Jesus Christ," as the Bible more commonly refers to him, has been so different and wonderful! Gone is the negativism. Gone are my fears of what negative things might happen to me if my spiritual understanding is not big enough to prevent them. Friends remarked on a great change in me. My attitude is more positive, confident, and joyous.

I began to see some of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) manifested in me. I simply *trust* God's wisdom in handling events on this earth (including my problems), about which he definitely knows, and I trust his promises to enable me to obey his commands.

God has answered my prayers in wonderful ways. For example, when I came to believe that the Biblical command to tithe applies to me today, I did not see how I could do it. My monthly graduate assistant paycheck was already less than my monthly dormitory payment. Making that payment each month was very difficult. How could I give up 10% of that paycheck?

I saw no human way, for I really did not have time to take on another job, and I had not been able to find any private piano students. But I trusted that since God had asked me to do something, he would provide a way. So, I stepped out in faith and started giving that 10%. I see all through the Bible that this is the attitude of trust that God wants.

What do we think of someone who claims to love us but does not trust us? Through testing our faith and trust in him, God shows us whether our love for him is genuine or not.

Very shortly after I started giving 10% of my income to God's work—I believe it was within a week—I was singled out from over fifty piano graduate assistants and offered a job as part of the administrative team over those 50 assistants. The job not only gave me all the additional money I needed, but provided much better students to teach, a studio of my own in which to practice (an unheard-of luxury for a student at Indiana University), a marvelous addition for my resume, and it did not take any more time! God had not only honored my trust in him for funds but had blessed me with much more.

[37] A reference to my brother Mark, born with a severe case of cerebral palsy.

Finding a Church Home

This largely completes my story. Some may wonder about my church affiliation. My allegiance is to Jesus Christ, not to a denomination. I have been attending a non-denominational, independent church which accepts the authority of the Bible. Although accepting the basic doctrines of the historic Christian faith, it does not dictate what its congregation must believe about secondary issues, such as baptism, speaking in tongues, etc., nor does it dictate which Bible passages should be interpreted literally and which figuratively.

At our church, such matters are left to the individual's own judgment, application of sound hermeneutics, and divine guidance. Thus, the congregation includes both Arminians and Calvinists, amillennialists and premillennialists, etc., but all are united in Christ's love and their dedication to his gospel.

Unashamed of the Gospel

My attitude (concluded the young David Brunell in 1979) is that of Paul (Rom. 1:16): "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes…." Since writing the above passages over forty years ago (adds the David of today in 2024) I have remained a committed follower of Jesus Christ. I still believe now everything I wrote back then even as my family and I have experienced many changes.

Family Updates

My beloved brother, Mark, passed away in 1983, but several years earlier he had accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior as I had. What tremendous joy to know that he is now with Jesus, free of his debilitating condition! A year or two later, my mother developed symptoms she suspected were signs of breast cancer. After many months of practitioner work with no improvement, my dad convinced her to consult a physician for diagnosis. He confirmed her suspicions and said, "If only you had come sooner." By then it was too late for traditional treatments to help much, and she passed away in 1987. Although usually very resistant when I shared the message of salvation through Jesus, one time as she was lying on the bed very weak, I said, "Just trust Jesus," and she nodded. Later in the 1990's my dad prayed a prayer to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He passed away in 2000, on the 59th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack that propelled the United States into World War II, a war in which he had fought.

Although I have been the only surviving member of my original family for over 23 years, I now have a family of my own. I married my wife Jeanne, in 1981 and we recently celebrated our 42nd wedding anniversary. We have three grown children, Melanie, Laurel, and Eric, a son-in-law Andy, and two grandsons, Axel and Atlas. Life has had many challenges, as it does for everyone, but the Lord has seen us though, and has shown His loving care.

A Clearer Perspective as the Years have Passed

Some things have become clearer over the years. As a Christian Scientist I had heard "God is All" often and it sounded very lofty. Much of Christian Science is based on Mrs. Eddy's contention that God is All. It was very significant, therefore, to realize that historic Christianity does not hold that "God is All," but rather sees a distinction between God the creator, and God's creation. In that view, God is not all, because there are other things distinct from Him that He has made, such as the world, and all living things including humanity.

The view that God is all or that God is everything is called *pantheism*, a view that is incompatible with the traditional Christian distinction between God the creator and his creation. (Such a distinction is also found in Judaism and Islam.) Mrs. Eddy's teaching that God is All resulted in accusations of pantheism. However, there is a big distinction between Christian Science and traditional pantheism. Traditional pantheism says that God is in the trees, and the bushes, and ultimately in the entire material world. On the

other hand, the Christian Science view of God as infinite Mind and good includes a dismissal of the entire material world and evil as an illusion. (Even the consciousness that experiences the illusion is also dismissed as an illusion!) Because Mrs. Eddy did not believe the material world exists, she objected when Christian Science was accused of being pantheistic. Some writers, however, have described Christian Science as pantheism in a higher, spiritualized sense since it declares that God is All but with the caveat that God is not in the material world since it doesn't exist. (See, for example, *Christian Science and Philosophy* by Henry Steiger.)

Mrs. Eddy wrote that it was "self-evident" to her that God is All (S&H 113:16). I began to wonder why she believed the Allness of God to be so self-evident (especially since most others in the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions have not believed that God is all, let alone that such a belief should be self-evident.) A clue is found in her statement which she evidently considered so important that she italicized it in the Recapitulation chapter of *Science and Health*: "*God is Mind, and God is infinite; hence, all is Mind*. On this statement rests the Science of being" (S&H 492:25-27). Mrs. Eddy reasons from "infinite" to "all." When something (namely God or Mind) is infinite, Mrs. Eddy believed it follows that the infinite thing is All. Hence, for Mrs. Eddy, God is All.

(At this point a Christian Scientist might reply, "But in Christian Science there *is* something besides God! There is man in God's image and likeness, the reflection of God, or the idea of the Divine Mind or Principle!" Even here, however, Mrs. Eddy's doctrine of the Allness of God is not contradicted when one understands "man" as the "idea" of God, because Mrs. Eddy wrote that "Principle and its idea is one, and this one is God…" (S&H 465:17-18). Adding Christian Science equivalent terms in brackets produces the following statement: "Principle [God] and its idea [man] is one, and this one is God…")

I have come to believe it is a mistake to reason from "infinite" to "all." The number line is infinite. One can keep going to higher and higher numbers forever. It does not follow, however, that the number line is all that exists. Similarly, it may be that outer space is infinite. If it is, it would not follow that outer space is all that exists. Thus, it would not necessarily be the case that an infinite God is all that exists.

Believing "God is All" in the higher, spiritualized sense that denies both the reality of the material world and the consciousness which experiences the material world results in unresolvable intellectual tangles, contradictions, and frustrations as the earlier dialogue section attempted to show. But it is not necessary to believe that "God is All" in order to worship and honor God and to turn to God for healing. I don't need to believe "God is All" in order to agree with much of the definition of God in the Glossary section of *Science and Health*: "God, the great I Am, the all-knowing, all-acting, all-wise and eternal…" I can believe that God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and infinite without needing to believe He is All. In fact, the God I now worship is so omniscient that He knows about all my problems, not only things like illnesses or financial problems or other negative circumstances, but also where I have fallen short and not loved God and my fellow human beings as well as I should, (in other words, how I have sinned). On the other hand, the Christian Science God who is All knows only His (or Its) own infinite perfection and can't know about my problems since they don't exist according to the "God is All" view. The God who is not All actually knows more than a God that knows nothing but Itself!

I don't need to believe that "God is All" in order to ask God for healing, provision and guidance and to experience His answers (which I have experienced many times!) How truly blessed I am to be able to understand from the Scriptures that God knows everything we are going through; God cares deeply about what we are going through; God wants us to draw close to Him in prayer, both in the happy times, and the challenging times.

Dear reader, I would ask you to consider turning to the God of the Bible, the God who knows about your problems, the God who loves you and cares about you. May I suggest a prayer along these lines:

"Dear God, I thank you that you know everything about me! Jesus said that even all the hairs of my head are numbered! I believe you know every thought that has passed through my mind, both the good and the

bad. I believe I shouldn't dismiss my bad thoughts as an illusion any longer. I'm sorry I haven't lived up to loving you in the way Jesus described: with all my heart, and with all my soul, and all with my mind. And even though I've tried, I know I haven't loved others as much as I should have. I know I've fallen short of your perfect standard of love. I don't believe I can dismiss this falling short as an illusion any longer. But I believe that you provided a way for me by sending your son Jesus. I believe that you are so holy that you can't just overlook my sin and pretend it doesn't exist. It has been appealing and tempting to think of my sin as an illusion, but I can't dismiss my sin that way any longer. I believe because of your holiness you must deal with sin, and I believe the Bible when it says that the way you dealt with sin was to send Jesus to die on the cross for my sins, and to rise again. I thank you for your promise that those who place their trust in Jesus will have their sins forgiven and will be empowered to become more like you and overcome sin and live with you forever. I want to do that now, to place my faith and trust in you, Lord Jesus. Help me live the rest of my life for you, to love you and serve you with my whole heart."

If you prayed that prayer or don't feel ready for that quite yet, but would like to know more, I believe you would be blessed by the organization, *Fellowship of Former Christian Scientists*, a loving community of Christians with a background in Christian Science. I encourage you to visit them at https://ffcsministry.org/.

The biblical truth I've shared here has made all the difference in my life.
I believe it could make all the difference in yours.
Thanks for your consideration!

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APPENDIX: THE LINEAR ARGUMENT FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

based on material compiled by Dr. T. V. Varughese

The linear argument has the following sequence of steps:

I. The gospels can be shown to be historically accurate. (What we are establishing here is not the inspiration of the gospel accounts, but their historical accuracy.) The original New Testament manuscripts are not in our possession because all ancient writings were on perishable material, such as papyrus. Hence, there are two things to check:

Do the copies faithfully duplicate the originals? (Transmission)
Are the originals an accurate record of events?

A. We start with the earliest manuscripts in our possession:

Existing N. T. Documents	Number	Date
Greek MSS.	4,000	130 A.D. up
Latin Vulgate	8,000	400 A.D. up
Others (esp. Syriac)	1,000	400 A.D. up
	13,000	

The earliest manuscripts include the following:

John Ryland MSS (130 A.D.) Contains portions of *John.* Discovered after liberal 19th cent. Theologians argued that the 4th gospel was not written until 160 A.D.

Chester Beatty Papyri (200 A.D.) Contains major portions of N.T.

Bodmer Papyrus II (150-200 A.D.) Contains most of *John.*

Diatessaron (a harmony of the Gospels done by Tatian about 160 A.D.)

Codex Sinaiticus (350A.D.) Contains all N.T. except Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11 as well as over half of the O.T.

Codex Vaticanus (325-350 A.D.) Contains nearly all the Bible (in Greek).

Representative secular works which have been accepted as reliable history

Author	When written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of copies
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 A.D.	1,100 A.D.	1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny the Younger (History)	61-113 A.D.	850 A.D.	750 yrs.	7
Herodotus (History)	480-425 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 yrs.	8
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1,100 A.D.	1,400 yrs.	5 (of any one work)

B. There is more than sufficient evidence for accuracy in transmission from authentic original manuscripts, according to current standards:

1. There is remarkable agreement between the various extant N.T. MSS. The variant readings that are there are not of a serious nature. (For more specific information see *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Geisler and Nix, and *Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version* by Philip Schaff.) This points to the existence of a common document as their source, and to the accuracy of transmission.
2. This documentary source of our N.T. must have been in existence by the end of the first century A.D. or by the early half of the second century. (Extant MSS date from 130 A.D. up.)
3. The writings of the early church fathers, such as Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, Papias, Justin Martyr, Iraneus, etc., show that the church was in possession of the same N.T. as ours at the turn of the second century. Their writings contain 36,000 N.T. quotes and these cover the whole of the N.T. except 11 verses. (However, it should be pointed out that quotes were sometimes used without verbal accuracy.)
4. The continuity of the church from the Apostles to the early fathers by contemporary existence or by overlapping succession makes it highly difficult for any fraudulent writings to become accepted as the official Apostolic writings DURING THE PERIOD 50-110 A.D. (Note that documents were publicly shared and read.)
5. The church fathers and early Christians believed the Apostolic writings to be Scripture—the Word of God—so they were extra cautious about their authenticity. Note that writings of people who were not Apostles or close associates of Apostles were considered NOT Scripture.
6. The copying practices of the Jews were quite rigorous, especially for Scripture, which was considered sacred and unalterable.
7. Compared with secular works from that period, which are well accepted as reliable historical documents, the N.T. has so much more historical support. (Compare the two tables above.)

So, if the N.T. is rejected on MSS evidence all the other secular historical documents from that period would also go.

C. Concerning the original manuscripts, we do have reason to believe the apostles wrote accurate accounts

1. The credibility of the writers, by internal and external evidence is the highest possible (e.g. their character, the seriousness they had about their belief to the point of being willing to die for their claims—which most of them did, the testimony of their listeners who believed them, etc.).
2. They were eye-witnesses and close associates of eye-witnesses and they claim to be writing what they know to be true first hand (Luke 1:1; I John 1:1-4; II Peter 1:16).
3. The apostle's oral testimony preceded their writings, and Christianity was firmly established by the oral gospel. Thus, the writings could not contradict what was common knowledge for all.
4. The oral gospel was proclaimed in public soon after the resurrection to people familiar with Jesus, both friendly and hostile people. If the stories were false, they could have been exposed. Remember, Jesus' ministry was quite public.
5. The Apostles were promised special help from the Holy Spirit to remember everything Jesus had told them (John 14:26).
6. There is supporting evidence from secular historians of the time (such as Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Pliny, etc.) and from archaeology. For example, a number of details in Luke and Acts that at one time were questioned have now been confirmed by archaeology. (E.G. A census at the time of Jesus' birth for which everyone had to return to his ancestral home, Quirinius' being the governor of Syria at the time, the implication that Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia and Iconium was not, the existence of "Lysanias the Tetrarch of Abilene," and many more.) See *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by McDowell for more details.

II. The historicity of the Gospel accounts means that Jesus said and did the things we read about in the gospels. But what Jesus said and did is enough evidence that he is indeed the Son of God, and speaks with God's authority.

III. Hence, the teachings of Jesus concerning the Old and New Testaments are authoritative. No human being can be higher authority than Christ.

IV. Jesus endorsed the entire Old Testament (which was the Jewish Scripture in use in his time) as accurate and divinely inspired. He accepted it as God's communication to man (obviously through human agencies). He used it—

In his personal life (e.g. Matt. 4:4)

> Matt. 4:4: Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

In his official ministry as Messiah (e.g. Luke 24:25, 44; Matt. 5:18):

> Luke 24:25, 44: He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" …He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
>
> Matt. 5:18: "I tell you the truth until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

In public controversy (e.g. Luke 10:26, Mark 12:24, 26, 27):

> Luke 10: 26: "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

> Mark 12: 24, 26, 27: Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? …Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

It is important to note that according to Jesus, what the human writers wrote—be it Moses or Isaiah—was to be accepted as divinely inspired (e.g. Mark 7:10, 12, 13; Matt. 19: 4-5):

> Mark 7:10, 12, 13: "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' …you no longer let a man do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the *word of God* by your tradition that you have handed down…" [emphasis mine].

> Matt. 19:4-5: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'..." [The quote is from Gen. 2:24.]

V. The New Testament has the authority of Christ behind it:

A. The apostles were the N.T. equivalent to the O.T. prophets (see Eph. 3:5; Eph. 2:20) and were appointed by Jesus for the special task of teaching his teachings (Mark 3:14; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 10:16):

> Mark 3:14: He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send then out to preach…

> Matt. 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations…teaching them to observe all that I commanded you…"

> Luke 10:16: "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

Note: See I Cor. 9:1; 15:7 for the reason for Paul's status as an apostle. See also Acts 9:15.

B. The apostles were given special inspiration from the Holy spirit (or Holy Ghost or Comforter, as the King James version sometimes puts it) so that they could remember Jesus' words (John 14:26):

> John 14:26: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

(The apostles were the ones being directly addressed in the above passage. See Acts 2 for the fulfillment of the promise to send the Holy Spirit.)

C. The apostles knew well that introducing any teaching other than Christ's was damnable heresy (II John 2:9; Gal. 1:8):

> II John 9: Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God…
>
> Gal. 1:8: But if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Look how John and Paul would have been condemning themselves if they taught anything other than Christ's teachings!

D. The apostles claimed openly that their teaching was not theirs but Christ's (I Thess. 2:13; I Cor. 14:37-38; Col. 1:5; I Thess. 4:2):

> I Thess. 2:13: And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God…
>
> I Cor. 14:37-38: If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.
>
> Col. 1:25: I have become the Church's servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.
>
> I Thess. 4:2: You know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

E. Finally, we know that the early church accepted the apostle's teaching as having divine authority (Acts 2:42):

> Acts 2:42: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Remember that the canon of the New Testament was decided on the basis of whether a book was written by an apostle or by a close associate of an apostle. The New Testament, then, has the very authority of Christ himself.

CONCLUSION: Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the divinely inspired "Word of God." That is, God guided the writers so that what they wrote is the truth. (This is claimed only for the original autograph, the contents of which, however, can be determined by the wealth of extant copies.) It follows from II Tim. 3:16, 17 that not only is the Scripture divinely inspired, but that it is also meant to be our infallible guide so that we may be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" through "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (that is, through knowledge and behavior).

NOTE: All Scripture is FOR us. But not all Scripture is TO us in the sense of responding to the various ethical commands. Many commands are addressed to specific individuals or groups and do not have universal force. An example is the command for animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. However, we have much to learn from God's dealings with man in those days. We have the same God; human nature is the same, and God's solution for our problems through Christ is unchanged. God's Word is therefore relevant for all times. It must continue to be our infallible guide and authority. Let us remember that "the grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the World of the Lord abides forever" (I Pet. 1:24). "Forever,

O Lord, They Word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).