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## “Here am I; Send me”

Thank you for the invitation to talk to a room full of people interested in Christian Science nursing, even a virtual room. Christian Science nurses understand the power of unselfed love. Like the Good Samaritan, they go where the need is, bind up wounds in the spirit of Paul – “none of these things move me” (Acts 20: 24) – pour in oil and wine, and ensure practical care. (Luke 10: 30-37) We are all here today to sustain that work.

I hope you think of this talk as a conversation. The title comes from Isaiah’s response to a question at the outset of his prophetic mission. “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said, I, **“Here am I; send me.”** (Isaiah 6:8) The job description of a prophet aligns well with the role of a Christian Science nurse. In the Glossary of her textbook, “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,” Mary Baker Eddy defines “prophet” as “a spiritual seer; disappearance of material sense before the conscious facts of spiritual Truth.” (p. 593:4) The Manual By-law for the Christian Science nurse includes three requirements (p. 49): a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, a thorough understanding of the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and proper care of the sick. Could a Christian Science

nurse take proper care for the sick without being “a spiritual seer,” conscious of the facts of spiritual Truth?

We will also consider together the context of this Manual By-law, which anchors the activity of the nurse not merely in human capacity but in spiritual law. At the end of our conversation, I would love to talk briefly about the relationship between Christian Science nursing and The Christian Science Monitor -- two church activities that in my experience are remarkably similar and established by Mary Baker Eddy within days of each other.

Let's begin.

“Here am I; send me.” That earnest desire to help is an essential job qualification for a Christian Science nurse. As a human quality, that fresh, resilient spirit can be fleeting or wear down under difficulties. But anyone familiar with Christian Science nursing has seen the lift to human capacity that comes from unselfed love and an understanding of God.

*Mere human energy shall faint,  
And youthful vigor cease;  
But those who wait upon the Lord  
In strength shall still increase.  
(Hymn 320)*

I began to learn about the power of unselfed love as a young girl. One of my sisters was struggling with warts on her feet. We both went to Sunday School and resolved to pray about it. The first thought that occurred to me was that my sister was forever perfect -- not because of any personal record of goodness, hers or mine, but because it was God's law. The warts were gone by morning. A few months later, I faced a similar condition. But I figured prayer had already cured warts and waited for the quick healing to come. Weeks passed. When I finally got around to a fresh prayer that included God, the thought came to look up the original meaning of the word *love* in a dictionary (Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828). That direction surprised me, because I thought of myself as a loving person already. But I had already learned that ideas that come to us in prayer are not to be ignored. The first meaning of *love* is "to be prompt" – not a quality I associated with myself. Late that night, the family beagle barked to go outside, as always. Someone had to get up to open the door and that someone was never me. But with the first bark came the thought: "Love is prompt." I jumped out of bed to let the dog out. The next time I thought about feet, the warts were gone.

What I remembered most about that experience was how good it felt to respond promptly and with unselfed love. I recalled this healing when, sometime later, I read this passage in Mary Baker Eddy's "Miscellaneous Writings": "A little more grace, a motive made pure, a few truths tenderly told, a heart softened, a character subdued, a life consecrated, would restore the right

action of the mental mechanism, and make manifest the movement of body and soul in accord with God.” (p. 354: 15)

So how can we preserve the spirit of “send me” in our own lives? Can we sustain unselfed love through human will? Does anyone remember Boxer, the massive and ever-eager cart horse in George Orwell’s classic “Animal Farm”? Boxer’s answer to relentless demands on the farm was, “I will work harder.” If you missed out on reading Animal Farm in high school, you may recall the “*Little Engine that Could*” pulling a train of toys up a steep mountain: “I think I can, I think I can. I think I can.”

But Isaiah didn’t will his way to a calling as a prophet. In fact, when we first meet Isaiah, he is convinced that he is not up to the mission, wholly inadequate, and that the nation wasn’t ready, either. What changes this viewpoint is not human will but spiritual law.

Let’s look carefully at the sequence of events that leads up to his remarkable declaration, “Here am I; send me.” First, Isaiah sees “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.” Above the throne, he sees seraphims who sing to each other: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” But instead of drawing inspiration from this vision of the glory of God, Isaiah is, at first, dismayed by it. “Woe is me! For I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

Let's pause here. Why is Isaiah convinced that he is not fit for a prophetic ministry? What appears to separate him and his nation from God, from the standard of holiness?

While you're thinking, a quick word on seraphims, those celestial figures with six wings who voice only holiness. This passage in Isaiah 6 is the only reference to seraphims in the Bible. But there is a similar reference to six-winged creatures in the book of Revelation (Rev. 4:8), also associated with prophecy. In this vision, the Apostle John also sees a throne in heaven with God upon it. Four six-winged "beasts," "full of eyes within" (all-seeing) surround the throne. They "rest not day and night" (all-acting). And, like the seraphim, they repeat "Holy, holy, holy" -- adding "Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (omnipotence, omnipresence). This vision appears just before the opening of the seven seals of a book that uncovers the nothingness of evil and proclaims the victory of Truth. (Rev. 5-8:1)

The seraphim play a key role in establishing the prophet who faced down the Assyrian Army and gave the world the most detailed prophecy of the Messiah or Christ in Scripture. "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and the sin purged" (Is. 6: 7) Immediately, Isaiah volunteers for the assignment. The healing of Isaiah's sense of inadequacy or separation from God wasn't a process of building up his personal sense. Rather, it's

purification from personal sense straight from the altar of divine Science.

The prophet Jeremiah was also convinced that a prophetic mission was beyond his capacity. “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak for I am a child,” he said. But God rebuked that answer, then “put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth.” (Jer 1: 6, 7, 9)

Moses, also, doubted his fitness to take up God’s call to lead the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God replied: “Certainly, I will be with thee.” And God reveals to Moses His name: “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel. I AM hath sent me unto you.” (Ex 3:11, 12,14)

Like prophets, Christian Science nurses do not work alone. “I can of mine own self do nothing,” Jesus said. (John 5:30) When a Christian Science nurse walks into a sick room, it’s not just to feed a guest or bind up a wound. It is to seek and see the spiritual status of man, or as experienced Christian Science nurses sometimes say: to watch God work. No human personality, however eager to help and do good, could act with such spiritual authority.

Here is an unexpected visual reminder. While preparing this talk, I was prompted to jot “HERE AM I” on a 3x5 card, then hold the card before a mirror. What I saw was “I MA EREH,” which was not helpful. What was helpful was realizing that, in reflection, the words also reverse. Isaiah’s inspired answer to

God, “Here am I,” in reverse, reflects God’s answers to Moses: I AM here. And isn’t this the heart of what Isaiah saw in the vision set him on a prophetic path? Keenly aware of his own limitations and the difficulties facing his nation, Isaiah embraced his mission only after seeing that God -- the great I AM, the only Ego, all-seeing, all-acting, omnipotent, omnipresent – is here, “on the throne,” and the whole earth is full of His glory. Then he could say, with his whole heart: “Here am I; send me.”

### Nursing and the Church Manual

***Christian Science Nurse. SECT. 31. A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick.” (p.49)***

The By-law establishing Christian Science Nursing is located in Article VIII of the Church Manual, along with essential rules for the Guidance of Members, including A Rule for Motives and Acts, Daily Prayer, and Alertness to Duty. Mary Baker Eddy makes strong claims for Manual By-laws. “Of this I am sure, that each Rule and By-law in this Manual will increase the spirituality of him who obeys it, invigorate his capacity to heal the sick, to comfort such as mourn, and to awaken the sinner,”

she wrote in 1903. (My 230: 10.) Each By-law, then, can be held to the standard she expected for all of them. Just before the Table of Contents in her Church Manual, she includes an extract from a letter also reprinted in “Miscellaneous Writings” (p. 148: 8-10). Here she shows how these simple, scientific rules increase spirituality and invigorate the capacity to heal, comfort, and awaken. As we work through items on this list, consider how each one can be applied specifically to Christian Science nursing.

*The Rules and By-laws in the Manual of the First Church of Christ, Scientist:*

- *“...were not arbitrary opinions nor dictatorial demands, such as one person might impose on another.”* Has caring for another ever felt like being at the receiving end of arbitrary opinions or dictatorial demands? These are ruled out of the practice of Christian Science nursing by the authority of spiritual law.
- *“...were impelled by a power not one’s own.”* This is the song of the seraphim. God is all-knowing, all-seeing, all-acting, all wise, all-loving. We can of our own selves do nothing.
- *“...were written at different dates, as the occasion required.”* God supplies “...the wisdom and the occasion for a victory over evil.” (S&H 571: 16-18)
- *“...sprang from necessity, the logic of events, -- from the immediate demand for them as a help that must be supplied to maintain the dignity and defense of our Cause.”*  
How does Christian Science nursing help maintain the



dignity and defense of the Cause of Truth? The necessities and immediate demands nurses face in their work may appear as physical needs. But the real imperative is the spiritually indispensable -- what God knows. (The word "must" is not available in Concordances to the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, but is searchable on Concord.)

In the Historical Sketch in the Manual, we learn that the Church of Christ, Scientist was organized to "commemorate the word and works of our Master, which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing." (p. 17)

How does Christian Science nursing commemorate the word and works of our Master? Let's look again at the parable of the Good Samaritan. One strategy some modern hospitals are using to avoid medical errors is for doctors and nurses to follow a checklist to make sure that no essential steps in care are missed. Let's review the example of care by the Good Samaritan in that light. Which of his activities would make the list of essential practices in modern nursing?

- Come to where the patient is? CHECK
- Bind up wounds? CHECK
- Pour in oil and wine? (a treatment for wounds in Biblical times) CHECK
- Have compassion? (PAUSE HERE)

Is compassion an essential element of care? Does ignoring the necessity of compassion compromise proper care of a patient? Mary Baker Eddy gives us guidance on these questions in her definitions of "oil" and "wine" in the Glossary of her textbook:

- Oil. Consecration; charity; gentleness; prayer; heavenly inspiration. (S&H 592:25)
- Wine. Inspiration; understanding. Error; fornication; temptation; passion. (S&H 598:17)

Christ Jesus healed without material remedies. Compassion, charity, gentleness, prayer, heavenly inspiration, understanding aren't just pleasant human traits to sooth patients in distress, they are the essential qualities in Christian healing. Mary Baker Eddy writes: "Our system of Mind-healing rests on the apprehension of the nature and essence of all being, — on the divine Mind and Love's essential qualities. Its pharmacy is moral, and its medicine is intellectual and spiritual, though used for physical healing. (S&H 460: 5-10). Like a prophet, Christian Science nurses look beyond the material sense of a case to discern the conscious facts of spiritual Truth – and act accordingly.

I recently had the opportunity to see this radical approach to healing in action after a fall on a mountain. The nurse was hours away from the site of the fall, and I was several steep miles away from the parking lot. But in the brief contact with a practitioner and a Christian Science nurse on a cell phone, I felt that I was already in Christly care. When we arrived at our rendezvous point, just minutes apart, the nurse told me that we were not covering anything but rather uncovering the unfolding of good. The atmosphere in the "sick room" – the back seat her car in a fast-food parking lot – was calm, expectant of good, and even joyful. At no time did I feel like an injured person with a

set time for recovery. The healing was accomplished without pain, shock, or any lingering fear of steep slopes.

A 1947 article in The Christian Science Journal asks a question especially appropriate for Christian Science nurses: "...what can be done when error is handled properly, as nothing instead of as something?" (J. Woodruff Smith, "[The proper handling of error](#)")

Consider another reformer in the field of nursing, Florence Nightingale – a near contemporary of Mary Baker Eddy. Her work in military hospitals during the Crimean War (1854-56) established the value of higher standards of sanitation, nutrition, ventilation, light, and quiet in promoting healing. She also aimed to lift the popular image of nurses as women of disrepute. Nurses must be "chaste and sober," she wrote in her "Notes on Nursing." (1859). The discoverer and founder of Christian Science credits Florence Nightingale in her textbook: "It is proverbial that Florence Nightingale and other philanthropists engaged in humane labors have been able to undergo without sinking fatigues and exposures which ordinary people could not endure." (S&H 385:1-5) But Mary Baker Eddy takes the practice of nursing well beyond improving human conditions. Look again at her definition of "wine," an ancient remedy used in healing. Misused and misunderstood, wine is associated with fornication, temptation, and passion. These qualities express personal sense and are a lie about the true practice of nursing, which requires inspiration and understanding. Mary Baker Eddy supported the temperance movement before her discovery of Christian Science and must

have seen the limits of achieving temperance by human pledges. She bases her concept of proper care of the sick on God's activity, presence and power – and the words and works of Christ Jesus.

One last point of comparison between these reformers. Florence Nightingale hoped to train all women – not just registered nurses – to develop a knowledge of nursing. Women are the caregivers, whether of infants or invalids, she wrote. “If, then, every woman must, at some time or other of her life, become a nurse, *i.e.*, have charge of somebody's health, how immense and how valuable would be the produce of her united experience if every woman would think how to be a nurse,” she wrote in the preface to her “Notes on Nursing.”

By placing her Nurse By-law in Article VIII, Guidance of Members, is Mary Baker Eddy inviting all of us – men and women -- to think like a nurse? To strive for a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice as well as the practical wisdom to take proper care of the sick? Like the prophet Isaiah, when we see God's dominion, Love's power and willingness to meet every human need, our heart can say, “Here am I; send me.”

### Nursing and The Christian Science Monitor

On Nov. 16, 1908, Mary Baker Eddy dictated the Christian Science Nurse By-law to her secretary, Adam H. Dickey. The Christian Science Board of Directors approved the By-law the

next day. On Nov. 25, 1908, the first issue of The Christian Science Monitor was published. These were the last additions to her Church, established nine days apart.

Commenting on her approach to these decisions, Mr. Dickey wrote that she “constantly watched” the growth of her Church. “The needs of her Church were frequently met through the enactment of some By-law, which, though it startled the Christian Science field, yet it seemed to be the imperative demand of Wisdom made upon our Leader.” (“Memoirs of Mary Baker Eddy” by Adam H. Dickey, C.D.S, p. 117. Courtesy of The Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity.)

Mary Baker Eddy had been cherishing the idea of a newspaper published by her church for some time. “Looking over the newspapers of the day, one naturally reflects that it is dangerous to live, so loaded with disease seems the very air. These descriptions carry fears to many minds, to be depicted in some future time upon the body. A periodical of our own will counteract to some extent this public nuisance; for through our paper, at the price at which we shall issue it, we shall be able to reach many homes with healing, purifying thought. A great work already has been done. A greater work remains to be done. (Mis. 7:17)

Like the practice of Christian Science nursing, The Christian Science Monitor goes where the need is, but not just to amplify human want and woe. I recall a meeting of Monitor staff early in the morning of my first day of work. David Anable, the then-managing editor, asked us to think about Africa. “There’s more

going on there than famine, pestilence and war, and I want you to find it," he said. The wounds of humanity may take different form than the wounds a nurse binds up in a sickroom, but both require pouring in compassion, inspiration, and understanding. The job description of a worker at the Monitor aligns well with that of a prophet and a Christian Science nurse: a spiritual seer. The anthem of both Christian Science nursing and The Christian Science Monitor – both its workers and its readers -- could well come from Hymn 6:

*"...with clear eye the present scan,  
And hear the call of God and man."*

And when that call comes, we can all answer, with inspiration and understanding: "Here am I; send me."