



I am the Lord,
and there is none else,
there is no God beside me.

—Isaiah 45:5



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

Matter

September
16–22, 2019

from the Responsive Reading

Isaiah 40:26

Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

In the ancient Near East, names indicated character and essence. God's calling elements of creation by name affirms their distinct identities under His government.

The Hebrew term translated *faileth* (*ʿādar*) alludes to lack. "Not one faileth" declares that nothing is missing in the divine creation.

from Section 1

4 | Psalms 135:15–17

The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths.

Virtually identical to Psalms 115:4–6, this candid description of idols is intended to emphasize that "our Lord is above all gods" (135:5). The book of Isaiah applies similar imagery in its detailed proof of the fallacy of graven images (see 44:8–18)—and answers its own rhetorical question: "Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."

from Section 2

7 | I Thessalonians 5:19, 21

Quench not the Spirit.... Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

...

Never damp the fire of the Spirit.... By all means use your judgement, and hold on to whatever is really good.

—J. B. Phillips

The New Testament in Modern English

Paul is urging both inspiration and practice. Prophecy and revelation are to be kept alive and their authenticity tested and proven in daily experience.

Two metaphors underscore the apostle's point. Spiritual inspiration is compared to a fire, which needs careful tending (guarding from worldly influences) so that its flame isn't quenched. Spiritual discernment is likened to the testing of metal to determine its purity.

9 | Amos 6:12, 13

Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

Amos's strong symbols warn about the spiritual deficits that are weakening the people. Taking pride in their own military strength and ease in material riches poisons justice and righteousness—a situation as absurd

An exploration of Bible citations from the *Christian Science Quarterly*® Bible Lessons

“...a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.” —Mary Baker Eddy

as galloping horses over rocks or trying to plough rocks with oxen.

The prophet’s rebuke employs wordplays on the names of small cities Israel had conquered—*Lo-debar* (in Hebrew, *lo-dābār*, “thing of nought”) and *Karnaim* (in Hebrew, *qarnāyim*, “horns”—a symbol of strength). Boasting about these small victories instead of honoring the power of God, he implies, is senseless.

Word Study

gall (citation 9, Amos 6:12) A bitter plant often associated with the poisonous worm-wood or hemlock plants in the Bible.

from Section 3

14 | II Kings 6:5

As one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

In this account, Elisha’s disciples have outgrown their meeting place (see v. 1) and are cutting down trees to build a new one.

Iron was scarce in ancient Israel and was used mostly for military purposes. Loss of the axe head was a serious mishap, especially since the axe was a loan. Through divine power, Elisha causes the iron head to

float (see v. 6), saving the borrower from a debt he may not have been able to repay.

from Section 6

23 | I Corinthians 8:4

We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

Paul’s words are part of his response to arguments that had arisen in the Corinthian church. At this time, much of the meat available at markets had originally been sacrificed to idols. Many Christians felt strongly that this meat shouldn’t be eaten, even when served at social gatherings with non-Christian friends.

The apostle uses this controversy to point out what really matters—worship of the one God. He writes, “Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.” Then he compassionately counsels his readers not to do anything that would offend or weaken others (see vv. 8–13).

23 | I Corinthians 8:5, 6

Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.

Scholars explain that Paul isn’t admitting the existence of deities other than God in his parenthetical statement, but is acknowledging that belief in them is widespread. He may also be referring to those in authority who had declared themselves to be gods.

Resources quoted in this issue

Cit. 7: *The New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips copyright © 1960, 1972 J. B. Phillips. Reprinted in North America by permission of Touchstone, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. All other rights administered by The Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England. Used by permission.

The mistake about matter

From the March 24, 1986, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*,
reprinted from *The Christian Science Monitor*

Sometimes a magazine article or perhaps a resource book on religious beliefs suggests that Christian Science teaches matter, even existence itself, to be illusory.

The fact is, Christian Science teaches that matter *is* very, very real *to the physical senses*. Mortals constantly see, hear, taste, smell, feel, evidence of matter. But there is another issue here. What about the material senses themselves? How real, how valid, are *they*?

There are plenty of times when we dismiss what these senses tell us is real. For example, I recently admired images in a museum of holography. But as substantial as the holograms looked, I knew that when I reached out to feel the images being projected, there would be no “substance” there.

Obviously, the material senses are laced with limitations. They often deceive us in simple little ways. Though we may not want to admit it, they deceive us in larger ways too. Christian Science explains that spiritual sense, rather than material sense, is the truly dependable basis for knowing what is ultimately real.

This goes to the heart of Christ Jesus’ mission and ministry. He saw existence from God’s standpoint, from the standpoint of perfect Spirit, and understood that man is actually the pure child of divine Spirit. This authentic view overturned the diseased and sinning views of material sense.

Jesus didn’t merely brush aside a material sense of existence. He understood how real to people were their sickness and sinfulness. Mary Baker Eddy writes: “Sickness is neither imaginary nor unreal,—that is, to the frightened, false sense of the patient. Sickness is more than fancy; it is solid conviction” (*Science and Health with Key to the*

Scriptures, p. 460). But even solid, mistaken conviction can give way to the awakening influence of the Christ, which reveals man to be God’s beloved child, held in His care.

The blessed purpose of Christianity is to awaken thought spiritually. This is a Christian’s rebirth. It involves an increasing goodness, purity, integrity—a spiritual regeneration that gradually leads to a full transformation of thought. When the Master promised, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35), he wasn’t casually dismissing matter. He was promising that a true sense of substance, brought to light in his words, his teaching, would dawn on human consciousness.

Christian Science does something much more fundamental than merely suggest that matter is illusory. It champions Christ Jesus’ proof that the material senses themselves are mistaken about the nature of reality. He showed that Spirit and its spiritual creation are the reality. That’s why the sick were healed, the sinner reformed, the dead raised.

Existence isn’t illusory; substance isn’t illusory. But to the Christian who is growing in his spiritual sense, substance and existence are vastly more than deteriorating and decaying matter. To him, matter-based views of being, identity, and existence are to be outgrown, even if a great struggle is involved. They “pass away,” and we see all of creation as spiritual. This perfection is Spirit’s view of the universe. As we surrender to divine Spirit, it will become ours.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/the-mistake-about-matter.