

Gaining a better understanding of God

The solution to our problems lies in a deeper understanding of our creator.

Lynn G. Jackson

UNDERNEATH the hustle and bustle of everyday life there can be a lot of fear. Nations fear domination, governments fear collapse, communities fear crime, people fear disease or poverty. Yet despite these apparent multiple causes of fear, we could conclude that, fundamentally, all fear is rooted in a misunderstanding of God, an ignorance of Him. If we were to gain the correct concept of God, we would find our fears dispersing and our increased spiritual understanding propelling us forward.

Any misunderstanding of God, infinite good, limits our experience of His goodness. We may believe God sends sickness to straighten mankind out. Or that He sends death as a punishment. Or perhaps that He allows our business or marriage to fail as a sign of His displeasure. Basing thought on this false sense of God's nature, we may even feel that He is unwilling to help or incapable of doing so.

Christian Science has come to awaken mankind to a better, higher understanding of God, to a more spiritual sense of Him as Spirit, Mind, Love—Biblical terms for Deity—as opposed to a mere anthropomorphic sense of the creator. Anthropomorphism ascribes human attributes to divine Spirit; it portrays God as limited, envious, temperamental. Through spiritual sense, however, we find God to be totally good, always providing for man's needs, as Christ Jesus proved so conclusively in his healing ministry.

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Referring to God as Life and Soul, Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*: "We cannot deny that Life is self-sustained, and we should never deny the everlasting harmony of Soul, simply because, to the mortal senses, there is seeming discord. It is our ignorance of God, the divine Principle, which produces apparent discord, and the right understanding of Him restores harmony."

Prayer helps open our thought to God's goodness and His guidance. And as we study the Bible and the writings of Mrs. Eddy, we learn of God's willingness and power to provide unconfined good. We learn of God's infinitude. This establishes a right understanding of Him, and we stop fearing an awful consequence emanating from Him. We find that God is always present and caring for the needs of His offspring.

Our better understanding of God naturally results in a more accurate view of man, who is in truth God's image, or idea. Man's true substance is found in God, Spirit, so he is wholly spiritual. God and man cannot be divided or separated. Just as the sun shines and the sunbeam simultaneously radiates light, so God is infinite good and man manifests his origin in unlimited goodness.

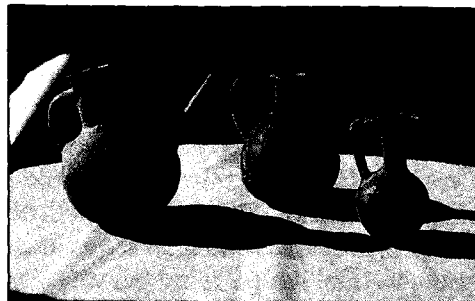
The Bible story of Elisha and the widow (told in II Kings) illuminates spiritual cause and effect in a practical way. After her husband's death, the widow was left in great debt, and her creditor was going to take her sons into slavery to pay off the debt. But the story reads: "And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save

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a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few." She did so and poured oil into all the vessels until they were full. She then was able to sell the oil and pay off her debt, saving her sons from slavery.

Elisha's understanding of God as the eternal source of all good served as a foundation for this healing. Instead of sharing the widow's doubt and fear, he asked her to obtain all the vessels she could, which would indicate confidence in God's goodness. His right apprehension of God helped the widow and resulted in provision for her and her family. God's constant care for His child, and man's reflection of unlimited good, were unmistakably proved.

Once we have gained new ground spiritually, and are exchanging an anthropomorphic sense of God for a spiritual understanding of Him, we realize how unnecessary and unprogressive it is to fear Him—to misunderstand Him. We will see, too, that our "oil"—our God-given provision—is abundant and permanent within our home, our consciousness. Spiritual understanding, once gained, can't be taken away. We can't return to old misconceptions once we know the truth that God is ever-present Love.



Aegean pottery vessels, c. 4,000 years BP.

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A gift for the children

As the month comes to an end, Christmas celebrations are coming to a close. The gifts have been given and all the debris is being cleared away. At long last quiet descends and we have a moment to think. It's the kind of quiet many have been longing for for weeks.

It's a time to think more deeply about an extremely important gift we can give to the children. A home. A home where love prevails. A home where one feels cared for, secure. A home where the child receives the attention he deserves in his or her formative years. It's so easy to draw the ideal, that we can forget how rare it is for all too many youngsters.

Have you talked with a schoolteacher lately? I talked to one the other day who teaches the youngest grades in a rural area in Maine. A few days before, one of her students came into the classroom and started to cry. During the night both her parents had been drunk, and her dad in drunken anger had tried to run over her mom. Another teacher working near New York City mentioned that 40 percent of the youngsters in his school came from single-parent families and new divorces seem almost a daily occurrence.

A home is not always an easy gift to give. And let's emphasize that we are not talking about a place or certain physical conditions, but an environment. Most people yearn to do the