



“...and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:2

Wherever there's healing, there's CS nursing!

A talk by Christine Irby Williams
October 1, 2016 —The Leaves Annual Meeting

For those of you who haven't heard of BFOs before today, a BFO is a blinding flash of the obvious. I learned about them in a workshop in Washington, DC, back in the '80s. It struck me that it was a BFO to discover BFOs, actually, because think of how many times we have them. Can you think of any Bible characters that had a blinding flash of the obvious that changed their lives? Paul, on the road to Damascus. Here he is, charging out to kill all the Christians, and what happens? He has a blinding flash of the obvious. He's literally on the ground and blinded.

“Why are they persecuting me? Why are they doing this?” Paul asks this voice. “What will thou have me to do?” One of the most important questions we can ask is, “What will You, God, have me to do?” Have you ever started taking a poll to see what your family wants you to do, or what your other friends are doing, or what everybody else wants you to do? We take polls to see what everybody else is doing, but Paul didn't do that. In this instance, he turned to God, and said, “What will You have me—not me and my family, not me and all the other Jews that are part of my clan—but what will You, God, have me, as an individual, to do?” It's a really important question that we all can practice asking on a daily basis.

There's one BFO. Can you think of other Bible characters that had BFOs? The servant of Elijah? Elijah's servant who was on the hillside when they were surrounded by the army, and Elijah says, “Open his eyes that he may see,” and so Elijah's servant, Gehazi, opens his eyes and sees what's been there all along, the protection, the support, the strength of God leading them and guiding them. Can you think of another example? What about Moses? What was his blinding flash of the obvious? He had one or two, maybe three or four...maybe ten! One of the major ones is where he is at the burning bush, but it's not consumed. I envision that he's seeing that the children of Israel, who are burning in this belief of slavery, are not going to be consumed. He's concerned that they're going to disappear from the face of the Earth.

Did he need to be concerned about that? No, because God says what? He says, “I know about this, and I'm going to do something about it.” Oh, good, Moses thinks. I've been concerned about this for 40 years. I've been carrying this burden around of having left Egypt, because of having killed the Egyptian, and I realized I was the one to save them, and now I can't. What am I supposed to do? God says, “Oh, by the way, you are going to.” He goes, “Me? Who am I?” What is God's response to that? “I AM THAT I AM.” Is this about Moses? No. And as soon as Moses says, “Are you sure?” God says, “Certainly I will be with thee;” (Ex. 3: 12). Remember that passage? Certainly I will be with you. This isn't about you. This isn't about whether you're good enough or not good enough.

Have you ever felt like, gee, I made that mistake. Moses had made a big mistake 40 years earlier, and he felt he wasn't worthy. He'd been out in the wilderness, shepherding sheep, and he felt he wasn't worthy now, but God says, "I will be with you." With God, all things are possible, nothing shall be impossible. There are many passages where angels say, "Look, God's with you, and with God, all things are possible." Nothing's impossible. Is God ever not with us? That's a BFO.

I think of this activity here that is this place called The Leaves, but it extends far beyond. It's not about however many acres this is or the fence that surrounds it. I think of it the way that Mr. Harrison described Tenacre. Mr. Harrison was the director of Tenacre at the time and visited The Leaves in 1961 to advise about starting the facility. He described Tenacre as "the outreach of love", and sometimes he would capitalize that "L," and sometimes he wouldn't. I can see why. It's the outreach of God, divine Love, but it's also the outreach of our love, our manifestation, our reflection of divine Love. You can either have it capitalized or not. Take your pick, but think of this place as an outreach of love. That's what it is—it's bigger than any of us or all of us. It's much bigger than this place or this time.

I'm going to be sharing some examples of BFOs that I've had. We've mentioned Paul, and Elijah's servant, and we've mentioned Moses. Mrs. Eddy had a few blinding flashes of the obvious. I'm sure you all have, too. The one that I often use as an example is the "Daily Prayer." How does it end? "Govern them" (Man 41:25). "...may Thy Word enrich the affections of all mankind, and govern them!" (Man 41:23-25). What's following "govern them"? An exclamation mark!

Do we pray it that way, with an exclamation mark? It's such an important thing. Mrs. Eddy doesn't use exclamation marks all the time. When you're reading the lesson, notice these little things. They make a huge difference. Is there any difference between a period and an exclamation mark in Mrs. Eddy's time? I use exclamation marks in texts and in emails like they're water. Mrs. Eddy only used them a few times. She says, "...infinite Love fill[s] all space. That is enough!" (S & H 520: 4-5).

Here's another one. "...ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8: 32). Do you see there are often pairings in that way? You'll see them, so that's an important BFO to recognize and work with. Have you noticed that when you have a problem, or when someone is calling you for help, it sometimes feels and sounds as if you know that God is Love, and you know that God is all, but...? That "but" is the first word in the second account of creation. "But there went up a mist from the earth" (Gen 2:6).

What I realized was everything before that "but" is perfect, right? It's perfect. God saw everything He had made, and it was very good—but? "But" means an exception. There's an exception to that? Do you ever feel like a problem that you have might be an exception to the fact that God is all, and God is good? That's what these claims are saying. So what I realized was that all through the Bible lesson, every week, and in every Bible story, and in every account we read, it says, no, no, no. God saw everything, no exceptions. "Thou shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20: 3). All reality is in God and His creation. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex 20:8). "Holy" means whole, complete, no exceptions, no element of anything else.

Okay, so I was thinking about the two great commandments. What are the two great commandments? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22: 37), and there's several versions of it, by strength, by spirit, etc. The interesting thing is that it says "all." No exceptions,

right? Entirely, everything. I was thinking about that, and all of a sudden, it sounded like the Hokey-Pokey to me. I think of it as hokey-pokey love now, that you put your whole self in, no exceptions. You don't leave part of you outside of that love. You put your whole self in, not just your right arm, not just your ear, but your whole self. We're going to do that, put our whole selves into this, and turn ourselves around. You have to turn around, and do that hokey-pokey, and then you see clarity. From top to bottom, inside, outside, you're all love, right? If you love God with all you've got, and that's all that's true about you, then you're all love.

What's the second great commandment? "...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22: 39). It occurred to me that myself is all love now, right? I love my neighbor with all that love, and as myself, as the same image and likeness as I am. I work that way all the time. Early this year, in January, I was in Boston at a conference, and I had been asked to speak on the subject of this conference, which was, "What can we do to work God's work?" Does that sound familiar? From Hymn 82?

It was the first hymn I ever learned in Christian Science. It was the favorite hymn of the person who introduced me to Christian Science, and so I learned it right away. I had already given the talk at this conference, but I was supposed to wrap up each day. And all of a sudden I realized, "Oh, my goodness, that's not the first verse of that hymn. It's the second verse of that hymn." What's the first verse? What's the first word? "God is working His purpose out." And what is His purpose? It goes on to tell us, "That the Earth may be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." Then the second verse starts, "What can we do to work God's work,..." Not our work. Not our purposes. Not our agendas, but God's. What is His work? That the earth may be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. Our work is to accomplish, to recognize that work.

Several years ago, I was on a flight from Philadelphia to Houston, which is a long flight. As I was getting on the plane the phone rang. I talked to a family member who told me that my niece was in the hospital, and when I landed in Houston, would I please come see her. I said, "Of course." I shared some ideas and so forth on the phone, but then I turned off the phone and I was out of communication with everybody but God, which was great. I thought a lot about Moses and other things. In the course of it, I was just transformed to see that I was looking forward to seeing my niece, and there was nothing that I was going to see but God and His idea, and I was really looking forward to it. I got to Houston and drove immediately to the hospital. The room where I found her was filled with attendants, because they were about to move her. She'd made progress and she was about to move to another facility.

One of the RNs was standing there talking to my sister-in-law, her mother. I just came and stood on the other side of the registered nurse and watched. I didn't say a word. The room is full of people. I go and stand next to this nurse who is giving directions, and after she's done, my sister-in-law makes her way through this Red Sea of people to my niece, then my niece waves at me, which melted my heart. It was very sweet. Then this nurse, who was very tall—and I am short, about five feet—turned to me and looked down at me with her hands on her hips, and she says, "What do you do? I hadn't said a word. I hadn't done anything, or said anything. I didn't think I'd done anything wrong, but she wanted to know what I did. I said, "Well, I guess I do a lot of praying." I didn't even finish the word "praying," and she jumped all over me, backed me into this corner, which was right behind me, and she said, "I knew it. You're a spiritual witness." I was shocked. How did she know that? She said, "How do you do it? I want to do that. That's what I want to do." The interesting part about this is that it was not a rhetorical question. She was not going to let me out of that corner until I gave her some sort of an answer.

I found myself saying something about Genesis, chapter one, and that my job is to see men the way God sees men, the way God created man to be. That's about all I got out of my mouth, and she put her arms around me as only a good Texan can do. She picked me up, and squeezed me, and loved on me. She changed my life, because she said to me something that the Bible says to me, that Isaiah says to me, "ye are...my witnesses," (44:8) says the Lord, that I am God." She said it in a way that I had never heard it before. She wanted to know how to do this work, and I realized that's what everybody wants. They all want that.

It's what I wanted 50 years ago this year. Not only was The Leaves founded 50 years ago, but that's when a friend shared Christian Science with me. I'd never heard of it before, and I was so ready for it. That's our work. You are my witnesses that I am God. How do we do it? It's what we all want to be and to do. It's why we're here today, because we want to know more about how to do that kind of witnessing. Fifty years seems like a long time. It's half a century, but Peter says, "...be not ignorant...that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (II Peter 3:8). Be not ignorant. I love the word "ignorant." Think about it, how else can the word "ignorant" be pronounced? Ig-nor-ant. Don't ignore this.

I had an instantaneous healing with Mary Baker Eddy's statement, "It is our ignorance of God, the divine Principle, which produces apparent discord..." (S & H 390: 7-8). I was brand new in Christian Science. It was in the Bible Lesson, and it helped me. I had stepped on a nail. An hour later, there was no mark of that nail at all. I was healed because I thought about that statement, "It is our ignorance of God, the divine Principle which produces apparent discord, and the right understanding of Him restores harmony" (S & H 390: 7-9). I thought, "I'm not ignorant anymore. I understand God a little bit, but enough to see that this is not my nature. This is not true about me." And so with that, I was healed instantly.

How could Peter say that a single day is as a thousand years? Think about all the things he saw Jesus do in a single day. In Matthew 14 and 15, there is a single day. It takes two chapters to show it to you, basically, but it's a single day, and Peter was there. It's the day that ends with Peter walking on the water 'the fourth watch of the night.' What happened at the beginning of that day? Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded. He heads out to a mountain apart to pray for himself, and for the movement, and for John, and to get a little quiet time.

What happens? Does he have a day, or a week of quiet time, paid time off—PTO? No, because the people find out where he is, and they all come to him and find him. What did he do? He went to "a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth...and was moved with compassion..., and he healed their sick" (Matt. 14:13, 14). Next time you see that in a lesson, think of the context, because it's big. He went forth and saw this need.

"...when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past" (Matt. 14: 15). What happens now? He feeds 5,000 people at the end of this day. What's wrong with that statement? Five thousand men besides women and children. And they took up 12 baskets full, afterwards, and then he sends the disciples away, and he stays and blesses everybody. Then it says, "...straightway, Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away" (Matt 14: 22) When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and he was there alone, finally.

Until between three and six in the morning, because it says in the fourth watch of the night. That's when he "went unto them, walking on the sea" (Matt 14: 26). And what was going out on the sea? A big storm, right? He walks to them on the sea and says, "...it is I; be not afraid" (Matt 14: 27), and Peter says, in so many words, "Well, if it's you, then call to me, and help me walk on the water." Of course, Jesus helps him, and says, "Oh, thou of little faith" (Matt 14: 31), and the wind ceased, and the ship was on the other side.

That's one day. Did you count the healing testimonies, the major sort of events in that day? Peter could say one day is as a thousand years. Think of that for us, the promise of that for us. Twenty-four hours with Jesus. Think about what he could accomplish, what the Christ enables us to accomplish, because with God, nothing shall be impossible.

Do you see how this is expanding our sense of what is possible here and now, that that is what it's all about? Do you know the story that The Leaves is named after a passage in Revelation? "...the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations," and that same passage, Revelation 22:2, says that the tree "bare twelve manner of fruit." "...and yielded her fruit every month." Have you ever seen a tree that bears twelve different kinds of fruit? Even a different one every month, but much less, all 12 at one time? Constantly? Every month? Does that expand your sense of what's possible here and now? Is that BFO-worthy? Think about it. We're expanding our sense of love, expanding our sense of time, expanding our sense of now/here, that so much is being done. That's what's going on here, and that's what's possible for us.

It expands our sense of God's work, because this is about God working His purpose out. We get to be the witnesses to see this—no exceptions—if and as we recognize that we have to put our whole selves in, and no exceptions to that. Okay, so we've talked about several BFOs here. When we have these BFOs, these angel messages, do we always appreciate them right away? I have to admit that I don't always.

About 40 years ago—and I'd been involved with Christian Science nursing at that point for about ten years—an angel told me one Friday afternoon, "Wherever there's healing, there's CS nursing." And I didn't get it right away. It was a blinding flash, but it wasn't so obvious to me at the time. I'd been at a Christian Science nursing facility, and I thought about it during the day off and on, but I didn't really get it. The next morning, I went for a bike ride in an area that was very hilly around Princeton. It was the first really hot day of the year in May, and I was pumping up hills, and I wasn't in great shape from the winter. I get to this point and find myself waking up from being unconscious. I don't know exactly what happened. It doesn't matter, but there I was, lying on the ground by the side of the road, coming to. I was grateful that I was on a country road. There wasn't a lot of traffic and there wasn't anyone around. As I thought about it, I was grateful because I was unhurt. I rested for a few minutes and thought about being grateful for the protection, and for the freedom that I had. I was able to get back on my bike with no problem at all.

The next morning, as I reflected on this experience, which seemed to me to be a healing experience, I thought, well, okay, let's put this angel message to the test. If wherever there is healing, there is CS nursing, where was the CS nursing in that situation? There was no CS nurse there. I was kind of shaking my finger at the angel as though that angel must be wrong. I drove back to the place where this had happened. You know what I found? I found a tree there. I told you it was the first hot day of the year, really hot. I'd fallen under the canopy of this tree, under the shade of this tree, and it sheltered me, and nurtured me, and helped me. It didn't really do anything to me. It didn't talk to me. It didn't pick me up. It didn't hold my hand. It didn't bring me a cup of cold water, even. It didn't do anything except be what it was. It had its roots. The roots were growing deep into the

ground to stabilize and strengthen it. The trunk was growing up. The branches were going out, and I thought about all of the others that had been nurtured and blessed by that tree, maybe squirrels and birds that had nested in it, maybe children that played in it, maybe an artist had been inspired by it.

I was grateful for this tree as a nurse. I didn't know it at that time, but the tree has become a symbol to me. The tree nursed me not as a person or an action. There were no words exchanged at all, but it explained to me, began to sort of open my eyes to this thought, that wherever there's healing, there's CS nursing. We think of Elijah being nourished, being fed, by the widow woman. Was there healing there? Wherever there's healing, there's CS nursing. Always, no exceptions.

Several years ago, a friend told me that he wanted me to focus on a passage that we all know. It's Jesus' promise. It's a promise because it's got the word "shall" in it. You know what the word "shall" means? If you look it up in the dictionary, the first definition is "must." So keep that in mind. The second definition is "able to." Shall. The "truth shall make you free" (John 8: 32). It must make you free, and it can—is able—to make you free. "Ye shall know the truth" (John 8: 32). You must know the truth, and you can know the truth. Shall. Whenever you see that, start doing this. It's very, very helpful. This is another passage that has "must" in it. It says when Jesus is talking to his disciples at the Last Supper. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do [must and can] he do also" (John 14: 12) Is that the end of this statement? No. "...and greater works than these shall he do." Must and can.

I have always kind of stopped at the first comma. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do". That was enough for me. Am I raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, walking on the water, having the ship at the other side? That's enough to strive for, but the "and greater works than these"? What could be greater than that? What didn't Jesus accomplish? Did all of his disciples get along with each other? No. He didn't accomplish world peace, much less the peace of his own disciples. That's one greater work that I have taken on. By the way, it's not greater in number. It's not greater because there are more of us, because it says, "he," and if you look it up in any Bible reference book, you'll find that it's "works that I do shall he do also," not they.

It's not all of us combined that are going to do bigger and better things. No, it's each of us individually. That's where Mrs. Eddy has given us the wonderful design for church, for our church, for the church that "...is designed to be built on the rock, Christ" (Man 19: 2-3) and is found—doing what? Healing and saving the world from sin and death. That's the purpose of our church. That's a big purpose. Is that a greater work? Think about it. We can't avoid this anymore. It's time for us to do it. What is going to enable us to do that? Guess what? It's Christian Science nursing. Where is the Christian Science nurse in the Manual of The Mother Church? Article VIII, Section 31. It's the last bylaw in Article VIII.

What else is in Article VIII? A lot of things. The chapter title is "Discipline," and the title of the article is "Guidance of Members." What's in that article? First thing, "A Rule for Motives and Acts." Then all kinds of things that you're familiar with—"Alertness to Duty," "Daily Prayer," "No Malpractice," "Per capita tax," "Practitioners and Patients"—is in there. "Testimonials" is in there, and how we're supposed to seek and share this truth at church and in our publications. Lots of things are in there that are for everybody.

Do you think she put something at the end of that section that's not for every member? Do we read it that way? Could this be a BFO? She's given it to us in order to help us as members accomplish those greater works that

we have to do to heal and save the world. She defines church as doing that. What's going to help us do that? All those things, everything in the Manual, but it's so interesting to notice that the by-law about the Christian Science nurse is not in a separate section for Christian Science nurses alone, like lecturers are, or the Board of Education is, or some other things are. "Christian Science Nurse" is under "Guidance of Members," to help us accomplish what we are to accomplish as a church, as a collection.

Why do you think it is in this article? What does it demand? If you look at it, you see what it demands. First you have to be a member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself and who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice. Let's talk about that for just a minute. A demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice. How does the chapter on Christian Science practice in the textbook begin? Are any of these BFOs for you? Are you seeing things, and connecting the dots in a little different way?

How does the chapter "Christian Science Practice" begin? Mary Magdalene. Is there any nursing in that story? Who nurses? She does. Anybody else? Jesus. Jesus nurses her. And does he nurse Simon? Does he promote his growth? Does he feed him with some ideas to think about? Is he nurturing that infant thought there, and is he helping Mary, and is Mary nursing him? Absolutely. By washing his feet and coming in, she's teaching lessons, too. There's a lot of nursing that goes on there. Not only that, but if you look at the pages following. The first 5 pages of the chapter "Christian Science Practice" are loaded, and I do mean loaded. There is a drumbeat of nursing qualities. Listen to this. "The poor suffering heart needs its rightful nutriment,..." (S & H 365: 31-32). Wherever there's healing, there's CS nursing. It's required.

What's at the end of the chapter? The 12 pages right at the end of "Christian Science Practice" are all about the trial. Who's the star of the trial? The central figure is a nurse. One who goes to the sickroom of his friend and is charged of being "guilty of benevolence in the first degree" (S & H 433:21). Does that describe Christian Science nursing? I want to be there. I want to be charged with being "guilty of benevolence in the first degree." If you think about it, that's the way the chapter begins, continues, and ends. Do you see that?

In the same chapter in the Manual that we were talking about the article where the Christian Science nurse is authorized, Article VIII, is also an article "Practitioners and Patients." And do you know what the last statement in that article is? Article eight, Section 22? "A Christian Scientist is a humanitarian; he is benevolent, forgiving, long-suffering, and seeks to overcome evil with good" (Man 46:26-3).

Go and learn this, because you can quote this if somebody says to you in an elevator, "Oh, you're a Christian Scientist. What is that?" You can say this between the second and the third floor, or the lobby and the mezzanine. Does that sound like CS nursing? That's in the section on practitioners and patients. Wherever there's healing, there's got to be this benevolence, like that man at the bed.

We need to be alert that we don't think we are guilty. I did. I used to be guilty of this. Have you ever had a problem and thought, "What have I done wrong?" Ever done that? Did Jesus say, "Well, you know, if you have a problem, that's because you did something wrong." Think about how he ends the Sermon on the Mount, with the house built on the rock and the house built on the sand. The house that's built on the rock—had it done anything wrong that the waves came, and floods, and the wind, and all of that? The same description happens to this house as happens to the house built on the sand. Same description. The rains came, and the floods, and the wind, and all of that. The very same description happens to both houses.

Is that because the house built on the rock had done something wrong? No. Let's not judge ourselves, because if we're doing that, it's kind of symptomatic of how we might look at others, and is that a good basis for Christian Science nursing, or Christian Science healing? Wherever there's determination of what's wrong, then there is healing? No. Or wherever there's healing, there's a determination of what's wrong, and some finger pointing, and all that? No. It's love. It's all above love. So let's keep growing, like my tree, and stretching out our arms, and letting ourselves be so solidly growing that we can't help but help each other.

"To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings" (S & H vii: 1-2). We can't help but bless one another. Can we bring the confidence, the sweet assurance of that, to nurse our communities, our families, our friends, and the world? Let's nurse the world.

A Christian Science nurse "...thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in the sickroom..." (Man 49: 11-12). Where's the sickroom? Everywhere that we can help transform, uplift, remove the veil, and see that it's not a sickroom.

That's what 50 years is about. That's what my experience has been about, and each of our experiences here—that good is just multiplying. I want to close by reading from a passage, a wonderful tribute that Mrs. Eddy wrote, and it's included in The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany:

"Love lived in a court or cot is God exemplified, governing governments, industries, human rights, liberty, life. In love for man we gain the only and true sense of love for God, practical good, and so rise and still rise to His image and likeness, and are made partakers of that Mind whence springs the universe" (287: 12-18).

If you're reflecting divine Love, there's got to be healing, right? There's got to be this freedom. Wherever there's CS nursing, there's healing. Wherever there's healing, there's CS nursing.

We invite you to share this talk with your family and friends.
You may **download a PDF** at www.theleaves.org/annualmeeting2016
or email us at info@theleaves.org