

## SUBSTANCE

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**I**N definition of the term "substance" Mrs. Eddy has said that "Spirit . . . is the only real substance;" that it "is eternal and incapable of discord and decay;" and that man reflects "the divine substance of Spirit" (*Science and Health*, p. 468). In the chapter entitled "Glossary" the word "substance" is also lexically used, in its spiritual meaning, to define God, Mind, intelligence, and temple. It is also used in connection with universe, God's thoughts, Truth, Life, Love, Soul, reality, man, eternity, infinite Principle. In common conversation this word substance is used to convey the thought of matter, material possessions, that which the senses cognize in the way of material structure, etc.

The student who goes beneath the surface and with the aid of an unabridged Bible concordance notes the many Hebrew and Greek words translated "substance" will reap a rich reward. Mrs. Eddy says: "Acquaintance with the original texts, and willingness to give up human beliefs, . . . open the way for Christian Science to be understood, and make the Bible the chart of life, where the buoys and healing currents of Truth are pointed out" (*Science and Health*, p. 24).

What is here brought out in relation to this word substance is in greater or less degree true of hundreds of other important words used in the Bible. Recent investigation

and research has placed in the hands of scholars a vast amount of new material in the way of manuscripts and inscriptions of various dates which are enabling them to arrive at the clearer, more definite meaning of the original texts, and therefore to a more comprehensive and fuller meaning of the words themselves and of their usage by the original writers.

This sort of study of the Bible is invaluable, for it puts the student in close personal touch with the various shades of meaning of the writers of the Book of books, and he thus avoids the misconceptions and mistakes of translators and revisers and he arrives at his own interpretation free from dogmatic bias and distortion. This interpretation will be of value to the student in proportion to the spiritualization of his thought, for he can perceive only what his thought will allow; but therein is its advantage. For the student of Christian Science is trained, and more and more does he fulfil the condition, to search out the spiritual meaning of each passage. The more closely he arrives at the original and true meaning, the more surely does he find that it elucidates Christian Science; and the more he studies Science and Health the better he is prepared to grasp and assimilate the spiritual meaning of the Bible.

A member of the board of lectureship made a strong point in stating that each one reads the Bible in accordance with his concept of God,

and therefore the higher the individual's concept of God as Spirit, the more spiritual is his thought in interpreting the words of the Bible, and so the more spiritual becomes its message to him. Thus understood it is not latent and inactive, but productive and active. All that has been said does not imply that because one is a student of the Bible he therefore has a higher understanding of the Science of Christianity than others, but it does mean that the more the student of Science and Health studies the Bible in the right way the better understanding he will have of the Science which Jesus practised and the rules for the demonstration of which Mrs. Eddy discovered, as the result of her study of the Bible, and has given to the world through her writings.

Another great advantage of this method of studying the Bible is that it enables the student to detect true parallel passages. Many so-called reference, analytical, and parallel-passage Bibles are offered, but the Scientist finds all too late that they are of little value to him, since they are based on correspondences of words and phrases in accordance with the compiler's view as to their similarity, but the spiritual and true idea of the passage is often overlooked. For instance, one has but to test such a work by examining the references to man in Genesis i:26 and ii:7. He will find them connected as corresponding and parallel with each other, when as a matter of fact one is the true account of the creation of man and the other the false. They have, therefore, no correspondence and are opposites.

Young's Concordance gives thirteen distinct Hebrew words and four Greek words, some of them with quite diverse meanings, which are uniformly translated "substance" in the authorized version. It is evident that if we are to get the English equivalents of these words we must go to sources other than the translation of the Bible commonly in use. It is true that in the majority of instances the difference is of but little moment, but it illustrates the general situation. In a few cases the text is greatly illumined through a translation which brings out the primitive meaning of the original word.

In the parable of the prodigal son, it is stated that the prodigal gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Perhaps because of the reference to his having "gathered all together," and the allusion to his demand on his father for his portion of the patrimony, it is generally concluded that what the young man wasted was his money, but the word used for substance in the Greek of Luke's gospel shows clearly the fact which Jesus wished to emphasize; he wasted his being, his essence, or literally his character, that which makes a man what he is. Along with this, but as a minor consideration, as the Greek word used for substance shows, the prodigal spent his money. It was only "when he had spent all,"—that is, character, respect, health, and money,—that "he came to himself" and said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Thus the original text

clearly indicates the "all" that was spent, and incidentally we learn that the ways of the first century were not greatly different from those of the twentieth.

Let us take one more instance, that found in Hebrews xi:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for." How much clearer is our view of this text as we gain the true meaning of the original! Faith is that which stands under, which gives an assured foundation in thought, firmly sustaining us as we reach forward toward things not as yet brought into experience, but which have been evidenced to us by Jesus and others. The possibility is presented of their attainment through obedience, as shown by those who have attained because they had a conviction, or assurance, that "underneath are the everlasting arms."

When the above study of the usage of the word was under examination by the writer, there came to pass that which so frequently comes into the experience of the Christian Scientist, *i.e.*, as we make a point our own it is illustrated to us, or else we have an opportunity of proving it. He made a visit the same week to a near-by city, where an acquaintance, a former business man of his home city, accosted him on the street and ultimately asked for financial aid. It was evident that the man had been drinking, and as he went away, the Scientist stood for a few minutes declaring the powerlessness of error as affecting man, and man's right to freedom and dominion. While thus engaged he saw the acquaintance, who had gone half a block up the street, turn and rapidly retrace his

steps. Roughly grasping the arm of the Scientist he said: "Are you still interested in Christian Science?" On receiving an affirmative reply, he exclaimed, "What can Christian Science do for a man on his way to hell and nearly there?" All this was very earnestly spoken. A few words of encouragement were given him and eagerly listened to. Thus was the prodigal son instance illustrated.

A few moments later, another acquaintance, also a former resident of his home city, spoke to the Scientist, who knew him to have been brought out of the depths through Christian Science, and as he had not seen him for some time, he asked why he had not been over for a visit. The reply was, "I am too busy; you know I have been given a much more responsible business situation." "Then come over some Sunday?" "I would like to, but I am now a teacher in the Sunday school and an usher in the Christian Science church which I have joined." Here was the idea as given in Hebrews brought home to the writer: this man had found that which truly stands under, an assurance of the government of Principle. Our revered Leader says, "Truth, Life, and Love are substance, as the Scriptures use this word in Hebrews: 'The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'" (Science and Health, p. 468).

What a mine is the Bible! What a joy is Christian Science! Truly, as Mrs. Eddy writes, "Christian Science, understood, coincides with the Scriptures, and sustains logically and demonstratively every point it presents" (Science and Health, p. 358).