**THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS**

By Robert Ellis Key From the [September 1949 issue](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1949/9/67-9) of *The Christian Science Journal*

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus to Christianity took place on the road to Damascus. Saul, who proudly styled himself "an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee" ([Phil. 3:5](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=an+Hebrew+of+the+Hebrews%3B+as+touching+the+law%2C+a+Pharisee&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), was an unlikely subject for conversion judged by his religious upbringing.

Saul, zealous for the welfare of his own faith, had asked the high priest at Jerusalem for letters to the synagogues at Damascus authorizing him to bind and bring to Jerusalem men and women who had adopted the teaching of the Nazarene. "Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" ([Acts 9:1](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Breathing+out+threatenings+and+slaughter+against+the+disciples+of+the+Lord&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), he had taken the highroad to Damascus armed with ecclesiastical authority.

Suddenly, as he journeyed, a light shone round about him, and he heard a voice calling him by name. "Who art thou, Lord?" he asked. "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" ([Acts 9:5](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=And+the+Lord+said%2C+I+am+Jesus+whom+thou+persecutest%3A+it+is+hard+for+thee+to+kick+against+the+pricks&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)). The spiritual experience blinded Saul. Helpless and humble, he was led into Damascus.

Three days of mental and physical darkness followed—days when he prayerfully groped, as it were, on the threshold of a new world. Then an event occurred which indicates that physical healing is inseparable from spiritual redemption. A Christian at Damascus, Ananias by name, one of those, no doubt, whom Saul had been sent to bind and persecute, received a summons from God. Obedient to the call, he entered the house of Saul and saluted him with the kindly greeting, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." At that moment scales of intolerance fell from Saul's eyes, and he was healed.

Saul's conversion was not only redemptive, but remedial. Redemption of the mind includes renewal of the body. The change from the material to the spiritual view of life brings clear-sightedness and health. From the moment of Saul's redemption cruelty gave place to humility, kindliness, tolerance, and righteous zeal. He no longer lived for himself, that is, for the indulgence of self-esteem and self-righteousness. He lived for the cause of Christ—to heal, to bless, and to redeem. This zeal carried him almost to the boundaries of the known world; he took the teachings of Christianity even into the pagan strongholds of Greece and Rome.

A new man was born during the spiritual experience on the Damascus road. Saul of Tarsus was no more, but Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, appeared. Through this new birth he found a new selfhood, God-given, God-guided, God-controlled. "For to me to live is Christ," he said ([Phil. 1:21](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=For+to+me+to+live+is+Christ%2C&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)). The old self was swept away, and a new man, obedient to the Christ, God's idea, took its place.

Mary Baker Eddy says in the textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" ([p. 326](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Saul+of+Tarsus+beheld+the+way%E2%80%94the+Christ%2C+or+Truth%E2%80%94only+when+his+uncertain+sense+of+right+yielded+to+a+spiritual+sense%2C+which+is+always+right.+Then+the+man+was+changed.&book=tfccs.main.sh)): "Saul of Tarsus beheld the way—the Christ, or Truth—only when his uncertain sense of right yielded to a spiritual sense, which is always right. Then the man was changed." Today through the inspired teaching of Mrs. Eddy this redemption of mind and body awaits all who are found ready to yield to the Christ.

A new view of man and the universe is imperative, a view in which creation is seen to be spiritual, the work of Spirit, God, and not of matter or mortal man. New motives, new ambitions, new aims, characterize the new man. The man of God's creating does not fear or regret the demise of the old self. He recognizes that his real life is hid with Christ in God, eternal, perfect, spiritual.

Paul did not acquire the primary understanding of his God-given manhood by slow and painful stages. According to the Scriptural narrative his redemption began immediately and moved progressively to crown a glorious and indelible career. His spiritual regeneration enabled him to see things as they really are. He began to view creation as God sees it.

The redemptive Christ, as exemplified by Jesus, is present on our road wherever we may journey. When we learn to yield to the Christ, we experience a full release—mental, moral, and physical.

Saul of Tarsus at first resisted the teachings of Jesus because he did not understand them, but his resistance accomplished nothing; it disappeared with the advent of Truth. His mental darkness was dissolved at the touch of Love.

The march of Mind goes on with its redemptive mission among mortals. The lesson learned by Saul on the Damascus road is a lesson we must all assimilate. It is the lesson taught by Christ Jesus and reiterated in Science, the lesson of the new birth, the discovery of our God-given selfhood. It comes at God's directing, not through human opinion, but through divine law; not to a select few, but to all prepared to receive it. Blessed indeed is that one who can, like Saul, throw off his former prejudices and reservations and come as a little child in a new birth to the threshold of Christian Science.

It is in the inspired teaching of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook that one may learn of the God-created man, the manhood and womanhood established in divine Principle, perpetuated by divine Life, sinless in Soul, and secure in Love. The one who recognizes his sonship with God moves free and fearless among earth's shadows; he is in the world, but not of it. He possesses the spiritual inheritance to which he is called and enjoys the new view of life to which he has been awakened.

The redemptive power of the Christ is collective as well as individual. A nation that is treading the long and thorny path of materialism can awaken to its spiritual responsibilities. The Christ will then replace chaos; suspicion and fear will pass into oblivion, and the government of the redeeming Christ will appear. The naturalness of collective redemption may surely be admitted into our calculations and included in our prayers.

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