

“Ham, Shem, and Japheth – lessons for today” –
a talk by *Christine Irby Williams, reported by Linda Gray*

Former President of the Tenacre Christian Science nursing facility in Princeton, New Jersey, Christine Irby Williams has had a long career in Christian Science Nursing. Her love for Christian Science Nursing, along with her wealth of experience, makes her well-qualified to speak on this inspiring subject at Glenmont’s Annual Meeting. If you missed her talk, here are a few notes highlighting some of the main points. Most of this talk was spontaneously given (Chris shared from her heart and without notes), so what follows here is a compilation of recollections from those who heard the talk on November 21, 2010.

The talk evolved around five points of emphasis:

1. **Let’s expect and heed BFO’s** (Brilliant Flashes of the Obvious). She keeps a “BFO’s of the Day” journal – a record of the simple, profound ideas that knock on the door of thought each day – because she realizes that it is important to pay at least as much attention to these ideas as we do to the calls on our smart phones! These ideas have the power of angels to counteract the beliefs of limitation/mortality.
2. **Let’s identify with “BIG”!** The first sentence in Science and Health sets the stage for our lives, work and demonstration – “To those leaning on the sustaining infinite to-day is big with blessings.” One of the definitions of “big” in the dictionary is “pregnant.” So let’s let our lives give birth to new ideas, new blessings, new views of divine goodness and love, each day! That’s what BFO’s are! Immortality, the boundless reality of being, is our very nature – so let’s accept and demonstrate it more and more.
3. **Let’s recognize when we’re looking through peep holes** – then put them aside, stretching our views and experience of reality, infinite being. Chris shared the original meaning of the Latin root for the word “mortal” – “morte,” which meant “boundary” or “limit.” “Mortal mind” is not another creation or creator, but simply a limited view of what is always at hand to be seen and realized. It is an imaginary peephole through which we are invited to view “infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation” (S&H 468:10-11). “In league with material sense, mortals take limited views of all things” (S&H 255:12-14). Mrs. Eddy’s paragraph with the marginal heading, “Practical Science” on page 128 of Science and Health is illuminating here.
4. **The Kingdom Business.** Chris told us that she thinks of her work as “the kingdom business” – bearing witness to the unlimited and unlimiting kingdom of heaven at hand, no matter where she is or what God is leading her to do.
5. **“Wherever there’s healing, there’s nursing.”** This BFO came to her some 40 years ago and has proven to be true through each experience since then. Someone once said that nursing is “the presence of God expressed.” She shared several healings illustrating that nursing and healing are inseparable – one shortly after the angel message about the simultaneity of these ideas came to her, and two others of recent injuries to her hand and to her back.

During the talk, Chris shared an editorial in the Institute for Global Ethics’ online weekly, Ethics Newsline, in which Rushworth Kidder, President and Founder of the Institute and fellow Christian Scientist, wrote of his fascination with an archeological find in Egypt. Some years ago, there was unearthed the ancient remains of what today we call a battery, which had enormous potential for pushing that civilization into a new era of life-altering application. But the only application they used it for was electroplating jewelry. Chris encouraged us to ask if we are doing all that we can with what we’ve been given – the truths revealed in the Bible and the revelation of Christian

Science. The potential for the advancement of thought for *good* is amazing to consider. This BIG is unlimited has unlimited potential. Are we realizing this and shedding light on the blessings with which God has endowed His creation?

She also quoted Paul Stark Seeley's comment to a friend: "I believe that the Infinite Unseen, in His immortal wisdom, will perpetuate and extend His revelation." We, too, can trust "the infinite Unseen" to care for His church, for Christian Science nursing, and for each of His multitudinous ideas.

A football analogy was very helpful to those who attended the talk. Peep hole views often come as what Mrs. Eddy calls "aggressive mental suggestion," and every Christian Scientists knows that "[i]t shall be the duty of every member of this Church to defend himself daily against aggressive mental suggestion, ..." (Man. 42:4). Chris reminded us to take a look at the order of words in the phrase, "aggressive mental suggestion."

1. It's "aggressive," yes. Some of the synonyms in the dictionary for "aggressive" are "ambitious, self-confident, militant, assertive, self-assertive, pushing, pushful." It's "in your face," scary; it looks very real, feels very real, sounds very real!
2. But it's **mental**, not physical! It's not something with weight and bulk that can knock you down. It is not a tangible wall or personality blocking progress. It is simply mental.
3. And it's **suggestion**! It has no power to do anything, only to suggest! Remember Jesus on the pinnacle! The devil can only suggest! Poof!

Chris heard Barbara Vining, CSB, mention in a talk that it's important to ask ourselves why Mrs. Eddy uses the word "defend" instead of "protect" in "Alertness to Duty." Mrs. Vining used a football illustration: What if a coach told his defensive linemen to go out and "protect" themselves? They're faced with 300+ pound offensive linemen, and if told to "protect" themselves, they might huddle together in a corner somewhere – getting out of the way instead of doing their job of defending their territory!

Shortly after hearing Mrs. Vining mention this, Chris met a young man who had just won a football scholarship to University of Kansas as a defensive linebacker. His job is not to let the guy with the ball get across the line of scrimmage. His job is to defend his team's territory. When Chris saw footage on YouTube of him doing his job, it brought alive what true "defense" is. Time after time, the footage showed that whenever the ball was snapped, Vernon fearlessly went after the it, reaching and tackling wherever it was, tackling whoever had it, again and again. He LOVES his job! He welcomes every new opportunity to do his job with joy and courage, throwing the whole weight of his mental focus into each effort. And every single time he gets to the guy with the ball, he celebrates, jumps up, gesturing with his arms and shouting, "YES!" Chris told us that now she goes around doing this! It's our job to defend our mental territory! Not to let anything claim this BIG space for thought and action that God has provided. "Yes!!!!!" We live in "the land ... where fetters fall and the rights of man are fully known and acknowledged!" (S&H 226:32). And "aggressive mental suggestion" does not belong in this territory! We are all over it! We are anything but discouraged! In fact, we are exhilarated! We love our job! We love BIG, and we're here to defend it with joy, understanding and dominion! "Yes!"

In closing, Chris shared a revelation which came to during a workshop with nurses at Glenmont last year. It involves the account from Genesis of Noah's challenge after the flood (see Genesis 9:18-27):

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

Those in the staff workshop realized that the definitions of Ham (and his son, Canaan), Shem, and Japheth from the "Glossary" of *Science and Health*, correlate directly with the three degrees in the Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind (S&H pp 115-116). Because of their responses to his need for nursing, Noah prophesies blessings for Shem and Japheth, indicating that Japheth "will dwell in the tents of Shem," while proclaiming that Canaan will be cursed (Gen. 9:25-27). Mrs. Eddy's Glossary definitions indicate that Ham (and his son, Canaan) correlates with the "First Degree: Depravity"; Shem correlates with the "Second Degree: Evil beliefs disappearing"; Japheth correlates with the "Third Degree: Understanding." Christian Science nursing is a manifestation of Japheth/Third Degree "wisdom, purity, spiritual understanding, spiritual power, love, health, holiness" dwelling in the tents of Shem/Second Degree "humanity, honesty, affection, compassion, hope, faith, meekness, temperance." The staff at Glenmont have been finding this idea very helpful in their healing practice of Christian Science nursing.

Christine's enthusiastic love of Christian Science and its nursing ministry is inspiring. We now see that, "Wherever there is healing, there is nursing." This fact is so obviously important to the world and us.