The snake on the garden wall

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As I looked out the window, I could see a small snake hanging, motionless, across the top rail of the garden wall. That evening two young relatives and I looked out through the same window. There was the snake. Oddly enough, it had not moved. "Let's go look at it," the children urged.

Once outside, we all exclaimed in disbelief. Our "snake" was nothing more than a sinuous, real-as-life crack across the top rail of the garden wall. No snake at all! Even the well-formed head was but a twisted pine knot. "You got fooled," the little boy teased. But the little girl was puzzled. "How *could* it look so real from the window?" she wanted to know. "Close up, it doesn't even look like a snake."

This seemed to me to be the perfect time to talk to these two little Christian Scientists about the illusory nature of matter, and to tie it in with our ability to reverse and destroy the illusions and claims of error by facing up to them with Truth and Love. Because God, good, is ever present, I assured them, evil is never present. Really *knowing* this proves that good is real, while anything unlike good is nothing but illusion, a bit like our "snake" on the garden wall. Little did I suspect that within a few hours this incident would help save my life.

The next morning, after the children had gone to play with friends, I again went outside, just past the garden, to turn the hose on a flower bed. Suddenly I felt a stab of pain as the fangs of a rattlesnake sank into my ankle.

Crying out "NO!" to the instant suggestion of fatality, I jumped back. At once came the affirmation "God IS!" with the mental assertion of His allness and my oneness with Him as His reflection. Then more truths came almost simultaneously: "God is my Life. I will not die. I will not consent to death."

As faintness came over me, I had to stop beside the garden wall. Through mists of pain I again saw the snakelike crack on the rail in front of me. The lesson learned from this illusion immediately dispelled the feeling that I was blacking out.

As Truth came more distinctly to thought, I addressed the error aloud: "God never made poison. You can *do*nothing because you *are* nothing. You have no more power to destroy me than this crack has. God, *Life*, is right where you claim to be. I live in Life. Life fills all space, and I am Life's expression."

Once inside the house, I lay on the living room sofa, declaring God's allness and man's inseverable oneness with immortal Life.

Despite constant protests of Truth, it grew more and more difficult to think or speak. While I was struggling against the urge to fall asleep, my nine-year-old relative came in saying that all of a sudden she had wanted to come home to be with me. She would like me to go bicycling with her. I felt this was an angel message to get me off my back, to rouse me, though human sense would have called an attempt to bicycle sheer madness!

Though unable to raise my feet to mount the bicycle, I managed with my hands to raise one foot onto the pedal, then lifted the other leg and started slowly following. Dimly, words and snatches of phrases from the definition of "serpent" in *Science and Health* by Mary Baker Eddy swirled into thought. The citation reads in part: ". . . animal magnetism; . . . the first claim that sin, sickness, and death are the realities of life. The first audible claim that God was not omnipotent and that there was another power, named *evil*, which was as real and eternal as God, good." [1](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-1)

As we reached a woodsy area I fell, unable to go on. The child, seeing me, returned, crying out, "What's wrong? What's the matter with the way you look?"

My own early childhood had been lived in the southwestern United States where rattlesnakes are numerous. Some of my earliest-remembered admonitions in school were those of watchfulness and caution. All at once, I vividly remembered the long forgotten description of a neighbor's appearance just before his death from a rattler's bite. In a surge of strong revolt against this latent picture brought back by the child's outcry, I once more struggled to my feet, rebelling mentally as well as physically against this senseless threat.

I could no longer see. Then, clearly as if it had been spoken, a familiar statement from *Science and Health*came to thought: "A spiritual idea has not a single element of error, and this truth removes properly whatever is offensive." [2](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-2) At this moment these words were illumined in their absolute, radiantly scientific meaning. I was suddenly no longer aware of my body.

Within a sense of immense and ineffable stillness, I saw that Truth "removes properly" the belief (and that is all evil is) there could be *anything* in the realm of all-inclusive Love to harm or be harmed, to poison or be poisoned, to fear or be feared, to kill or be killed, for all is infinite Love and Love's infinite manifestation! I felt God's all-presence as never before. The world was luminous with divine Love. The universe itself could not contain such perfect Love!

Suddenly my vision cleared. There was the little girl at my side, looking up at me. The earth seemed all aglow. I could feel the icy coldness drain from my body. And my body resumed its normal size. In reverent awe, I mounted the bicycle and rode back, wholly free, rejoicing that Life is the only presence, Truth the only power, Love the only liberator.

My heart finds no words to express adequate gratitude for such a healing. Yet the purpose of this article is not to testify to the healing of snakebite per se. This experience illustrates the basic fact that when human life is at stake, *spiritual awakening alone* brings healing.

Wasn't this proved in those desperate moments I experienced? In that radiant instant when the long-familiar passage from *Science and Health* came to thought and was felt in its absolute, primordial Christ-power—rather than in its formerly accepted human soothingness—a "new birth" of spiritual illumination took place. From that second, body, snake, time, circumstance, struggle, and death vanished from thought. Infinite Mind and Mind's infinite idea were literally *felt* as All-in-all. Without process or time to formulate conscious thought, the Christ revealed in luminous clarity that since God is the only cause, effect has to be Godlike. No longer did I feel a "me" separate from God. I realized I was God's expression, the very evidence of God. And this brought about the healing.

The uniqueness and glory of divine Science is to replace one's human sense of self with spiritual reality, with God's pure idea. When God is yielded to as the All and Only, the healing Principle shines forth revealing man, just as the bright sun reveals itself in light. This is revelation. It is the coming to consciousness of that which is.

This experience with the snake also illustrates the mesmeric deceptiveness of the waking dream, which constitutes the aggregate beliefs or dreams of life in, or as, matter.

Obvious mental illusions such as night dreams, or optical deceptions like the "snake" on the garden wall, are easily dismissed. But educated belief makes the universal aspects of the waking dream seem to have a genuine reality because of our unchallenged acceptance of material life, constituted of birth, substance, intelligence, pain, disease, and death. This deceived and deceiving belief, asserting its verity as matter-experience, is far more than optical illusion or imagination. It is, as Mrs. Eddy says of sickness, solid conviction.[3](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-3) But its conviction is total falsity! Reality (all that is eternal) is divine. Awaking to this fact, we progressively eradicate the educated belief that has so entrenched matter-experience as solid conviction to the human consciousness.

Mrs. Eddy, who discovered and founded Christian Science, strips away the lie of evil's reality with this cogent declaration about mortal thought: "That which never existed, can seem solid substance to this thought." [4](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-4)She also affirms: "That which material sense calls intangible, is found to be substance. What to material sense seems substance, becomes nothingness, as the sense-dream vanishes and reality appears." [5](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-5)

Isn't the question for each one of us, "What am I accepting as real?"

We all know that the dream sense calling itself matter-substance and matter experience cannot be eradicated by our ignoring it, by "mind over matter," by wishfully exchanging a suffering concept of body for a harmonious sense of body through "positive thinking," by a determinedly cheerful holding of "good thoughts," nor by the mere unthinking repetition of all we can quote from the Bible or Mrs. Eddy's writings. Though some people feel benefits are effected through these methods, genuine and permanent change must be the result of *scientific* healing, through the infallible laws of divine Science.

One may hear a troubled statement such as, "I don't respond to treatment the way I did when I first came into Christian Science." Or, "It seems that Christian Science isn't healing the way it used to." Even the physical sciences demand a degree of proof. How much more so the Science of being! Who would even think of saying, "It seems that in base ten, two plus two isn't making four the way it used to"?

To remove the doubt, a change of mental base is requisite. In treatment we must rise above a human sense of good and recognize that anything less than God's perfection infinitely manifested is a mortal dream. Fear and discouragement are destroyed through spiritual awakening—through childlike self-surrender to the reality of God's allness and man's inseverable oneness with Him. This divine awakening is at hand for anyone who accepts with scientific conviction that "all is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all," [6](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-6) as we read in *Science and Health.* Then, and only then, God, the one Mind, is *felt* as our Mind; God, Life, is *felt* as our Life. It is then that we know what our Way-shower, Christ Jesus, meant by his supremely scientific affirmation, "I and my Father are one." [7](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-7)

Moses also felt and yielded to this oneness when he glimpsed God's omnipotence through His majestic self-revelation, "I AM THAT I AM."[8](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnote-8) Though at first he fled in terror before his rod that had turned into a serpent, he was able, through spiritually transformed consciousness, to fearlessly obey God's command to take the serpent by the tail, whereupon it again became a staff in his hand.

It was this scientifically inspired consciousness that enabled Paul to shake into the fire the viper that had fastened onto his hand, and to feel no harm, to the surprise of the islanders who had received him after his shipwreck.

It is the same Christly consciousness that enables us today to annul the sting of the "serpent" which, as quoted earlier, is ". . . animal magnetism; . . . the first claim that sin, sickness, and death are the realities of life."

When human believing yields, the might, majesty, and utter tenderness of divine Love take over. Exactly where we are in our thinking is where the infinite is revealed. Never from outside, revelation is always within consciousness. In fact, God reveals Himself just where Christ Jesus promised we would find the kingdom of heaven—within. In proportion to our awakened realization of the real, the waking dream thins away. At last, that which has been our earth is transformed to be what in divine reality it has ever been—our heaven. This is the Science of being understood, lived, and demonstrated.

1 [*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 594](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=.+.+.+animal+magnetism%3B+.+.+.+the+first+claim+that+sin%2C+sickness%2C+and+death+are+the+realities+of+life.+The+first+audible+claim+that+God+was+not+omnipotent+and+that+there+was+another+power%2C+named+evil%2C+which+was+as+real+and+eternal+as+God%2C+good.&book=tfccs.main.sh)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-1" \o "Return to text)   2 [*Ibid*, p. 463](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=A+spiritual+idea+has+not+a+single+element+of+error%2C+and+this+truth+removes+properly+whatever+is+offensive.&book=tfccs.main.sh)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-2" \o "Return to text)   3 See *Ibid*, 460:14-16[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-3" \o "Return to text)   4 [*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 5](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=That+which+never+existed%2C+can+seem+solid+substance+to+this+thought.&book=tfccs.main.pw.misc)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-4" \o "Return to text)   5 [*Science and Health*, p. 312](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=That+which+material+sense+calls+intangible%2C+is+found+to+be+substance.+What+to+material+sense+seems+substance%2C+becomes+nothingness%2C+as+the+sense-dream+vanishes+and+reality+appears.&book=tfccs.main.sh)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-5" \o "Return to text)   6 [*Ibid*., p. 468](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=all+is+infinite+Mind+and+its+infinite+manifestation%2C+for+God+is+All-in-all%2C&book=tfccs.main.sh)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-6" \o "Return to text)   7 [John 10:30](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=I+and+my+Father+are+one.&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-7" \o "Return to text)   8 [Ex. 3:14](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=I+AM+THAT+I+AM.&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)[↑](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1981/4/99-4/the-snake-on-the-garden-wall?s=e" \l "footnotelink-8" \o "Return to text)