

To get God right, we must get substance right

When we understand that true and lasting substance is spiritual, we gain a clearer understanding of God as the only substance. An article inspired by this week's Bible lesson from the Christian Science Quarterly.

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It could be argued that the plethora of world religions reflects not only the varying concepts of Deity that people subscribe to, but also the varying concepts of substance they entertain. Because God is generally cast as the creator of the universe – of all that is substantial – our concept of substance greatly influences our concept of God.

This week's [Christian Science Bible lesson](#) on "Substance" includes this statement from [Mary Baker Eddy](#) in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures": "Substance is that which is eternal and incapable of discord and decay. 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.' Spirit, the synonym of Mind, Soul, or God, is the only real substance" ([p. 468](#)).

Suggesting to others that substance is spiritual confounds a world fixated on the reality of matter. But if God is truly Spirit, how could substance be material and so unlike Him?

A friend once asked me how a [Christian Scientist](#) heals sickness. She believed, as I do, that God is an infinite, loving God who fills all space. I reasoned with her that if all space is filled with God, who is Love, then there can be no space where anything unlike God, Love, can exist – sickness, sin, and death included. She responded, "How can you make that claim when sickness, sin, and death *are* real?" So we examined the logic behind her question.

If one believes that all space is filled with God, who is Love and all-harmonious, while also advocating for the reality of evil, either the premise or the conclusion has to be changed. Both cannot be true. We may believe that God is good and infinite, but our physical senses might convince us that evil is very real. This puts us in a position of either having to rethink our concept of God to accommodate the existence of evil, or deny the reality of evil to preserve our concept of God.

While some may surrender their concept of God to accommodate what their senses tell them, this is like a student of mathematics who mistakenly writes $2+2=5$ on his paper. The student has two choices. He can either correct

the error because it doesn't align with the law of mathematics, or he can try to change the law of mathematics to accommodate his answer. The latter would be futile and would result in an inability to progress at all. There really is only one logical solution to this dilemma, and that is to correct the error.

Believing in the physical nature of substance requires us to change our ideal of an infinite, spiritual God to a physical, limited one that may take many forms. And since the ideal we hold in thought directly influences our experience, we need to seek and maintain the true view of God and of what we are as God's creation. As we read in this week's lesson, "Human philosophy has made God manlike. Christian Science makes man Godlike. The first is error; the latter is truth" ([Science and Health, p. 269](#)). That Godlike man is purely spiritual, created in the image of Spirit, God.

The claim that substance is Spirit, as Christian Science teaches, derives its authority from the Bible, which says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" ([Hebrews 11:3](#)).

Christ Jesus healed, and taught us to heal, by insisting on seeing the spiritual substance behind the deceiving physical evidence. "Jesus walked on the waves, fed the multitude, healed the sick, and raised the dead in direct opposition to

material laws. His acts were the demonstration of Science, overcoming the false claims of material sense or law," we read in Science and Health ([p. 273](#)). This gave him the spiritual power and dominion over all false, material claims about our substance and nature. And he attributed his power to the one God when he said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" ([John 5:17](#)).

Following our discussion, my friend left pondering the veracity of her own beliefs. And while she didn't become a Christian Scientist, at least to my knowledge, she expressed satisfaction with the logic I shared with her.

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As long as human philosophy and reasoning dictate that matter is substance and therefore man is material rather than spiritual, we will have to contend with the belief in manlike gods and a man that isn't Godlike. When mankind acknowledges Spirit, God, to be the only true substance, and all material claims to be impossible, we will recognize only one God and our pure, spiritual expression of God. Then the sound of "Our Father" will echo throughout the land.

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