



HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

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Reflections on Our Father—and My Dad

This Father's Day reflection by a daughter about her dad's love of God, good, was submitted for publication in the June newsletter.

FATHER. Eternal Life; the one Mind; the divine Principle, commonly called God (*Science and Health* 586:9).

Question. — What is Life?

Answer. — Life is divine Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit. Life is without beginning and without end. Eternity, not time, expresses the thought of Life, and time is no part of eternity (SH 468:25–29).

Mary Baker Eddy's spiritual definitions of Father and of Life, both names for God, resonated deeply with my human father, who was a lifelong student of Christian Science. I understand why, for they ring true to me, too. What my sisters and I can't figure out, though, is *how* our dad became acquainted with Christian Science in his boyhood, growing up as he did in a non-religious family.

The single clue that suggests he learned about Science at a young age is in his prep school files. On one of the forms, he listed Christian Science as his religion. Our dad's college senior yearbook confirms that he remained a Christian Scientist throughout his university years.

Also, we know, by reading his WWII journal, that prayer protected our navigator dad and his crewmates during the 50 missions they flew over munitions factories and railroads in their Liberator bomber. After the war, our father proved his gratitude for The Mother Church by becoming a promotional copywriter for *The Christian Science Monitor*, where he met our mom.

Recently I spent several happy hours remembering the many ways Dad expressed his love for God, for God's children, and for God's Science of Christianity. In my reflections, I traced a golden thread that wove through his life: an appreciation for everything that spoke to him of man's God-made, therefore innate, innocence, goodness, meekness, and morality.

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Here, from his youth, are two examples of what I mean.

— In sports, Dad excelled at baseball and basketball. He followed the rules and put all his energy and intelligence into practices and games alike. (Hence his nickname “Sparky.”) He and his teammates were what we’d call “clean” players: no cheating, no matter how big the stakes; no boasting, no matter how big the accomplishment. Only after his passing did my sisters and I learn that our leftfielder father had helped Princeton defeat Columbia in an historic baseball game—the first-ever sporting event to be played live on television in the United States.

— As for academics, I’m convinced my dad chose English literature as his major because he loved learning life’s lessons through the words and deeds of the ethical characters vividly portrayed in the Victorian novels of Austen, Dickens, Hardy, Elliott and lesser-known authors. Thanks to Princeton’s online archives, my sister and I were able to download his 70-page senior thesis, “Thackeray’s Moral Convictions.” It’s filled with our father’s praise for the novelist’s and the characters’ sound moral sentiments.

Throughout his adult life, my father looked to nature for its treasure trove of teaching moments. He saw evidence of God’s goodness, gentleness, and generosity in the quiet woods and lively stream surrounding our semi-rural house. And, although it didn’t sink in at the time, I now understand why he taught his daughters, by example, to respect the lives of all denizens of the outdoors—to regard them as friendly, deserving-of-our-help neighbors. His no-kill policy extended to even the hungriest creatures who occasionally ate the veggies and flowers my parents planted and tended with care. (Yes, some years Dad resorted to fencing.)

One precious recollection is of how my father, an entrepreneur, treated late-payers. If a gift shop owner, after ordering and receiving a shipment of the stained glass art pieces my dad designed and made, didn’t adhere to the due date, he wasn’t disturbed. He’d wait a few more days before composing an unusual reminder letter: a rhyming verse about tardiness, blending whimsical humor with gentle coaxing. Dad’s dunning ditties charmed delinquent storekeepers into mailing a check on the spot. They never again fell behind.

Though we didn’t save his pleas for payment, my sisters and I held on to the serious poetry our dad wrote. Many of his odes described an aspect of nature that allowed him to make a moral point or metaphysical observation—like this one:



"Seeds"

After rain
a mirror-faced puddle
settled under the tree
so that branches and trunk
reflected their upward
growth in water.

But before skyward sweep
in mirror shown
came seed
with in-known
power of reflecting
what is to come.

Thus to the world
we show clearly in
the looking glass
of our face
seeds of thought
planted springs ago.

As can be seen in "Seeds," my father's poems acknowledged, even if indirectly, God's good creation. They recognized, as Samuel Longfellow put it, "Thy hand in all things . . . and all things in Thy hand" (Hymn 134, *Christian Science Hymnal*).

The graciousness, humility, love of purity, and moral fiber so evident in my father's life and poems are instilled in each of us, men and women and children alike, by our heavenly Father.

I see the same attributes, and many more, reflected by Houston *Journal*-listed visiting Christian Science nurse Susie Petersen.

Just as my dad was patient and gentle with his garden's wildlife guests and his business customers, so does Susie treat her nursing clients with patience and gentleness derived from the same divine source.

Like my dad, Susie shares joy, drawn from Spirit's bottomless well, with everyone she serves.

And, as was true of my dad, Susie's sweet sense of humor brings smiles to clients' faces.

Both my dad and Susie exemplify one of my favorite passages in *Miscellaneous Writings* (110:4):

Beloved children, the world has need of you,—and more as children than as men and women: it needs your innocence, unselfishness, faithful affection, uncontaminated lives. You need also to watch, and pray that you preserve these virtues unstained, and lose them not through contact with the world. What grander ambition is there than to maintain in yourselves what Jesus loved, and to know that your example, more than words, makes morals for mankind!

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