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## THE TLC THAT NEVER FAILS

BY JANET CLEMENTS

Recently the White House proposed adding more than 52 million dollars to the Caregiver Initiative Programs that provide financial aid to families caring for elderly relatives. The fact that the number of Americans caring for elderly family members has tripled over the last ten years shows that it's a prime consideration of our times. And it's heartening to know that there are growing numbers of people engaged in this selfless work.

This might encourage many to pause and think more deeply about caregiving from a spiritual perspective. From this vantage point one could ask: "Isn't there really only one constant caregiver, God, divine Love, sustaining and maintaining all creation?" The tender, loving care of the heavenly Father-Mother is a love that embraces us all and never fails. As the Bible puts it, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" ([Jer. 31:3](#)).

To begin to grasp the idea that God is *the* caregiver of each one of us, opens new views of the source of all the loving care we express, as well as the energy supporting it. Unselfed love and giving don't originate in us, but come from God. Like a prism refracting light and displaying a rainbow of colors, so all the tender deeds of caregiving point to the spectrum of Love's loving. Our myriad acts of caring for our relatives really have their origin in Love, and as such are empowered by the Divine. As a ray of light doesn't try to shine on its own, but is energized by the sun, so we as caregivers shouldn't be trying to fulfill this role through our own initiative. The Love that motivates us is that same Love that energizes and sustains us.

The Bible speaks of "the God of all comfort." This God "comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" ([II Cor. 1:3,4](#)). Understanding this can bring relief from fatigue, which one caregiver told me was one of the most challenging aspects of her role. It's demanding to be on call 24/7. But, leaning on the sustaining presence of God, who is Life, she finds the strength and comfort she needs. Divine Life is infinite, indivisible. Strengthened by the divine energy of Spirit (another helpful name for God), no one need ever be subject to exhaustion.

It's interesting to note what Mary Baker Eddy wrote of those engaged in the care of others: "It is proverbial that Florence Nightingale and other philanthropists engaged in humane labors have been able to undergo without sinking fatigues and exposures which ordinary people could not endure. The explanation lies in the support which they derived from the divine law, rising above the human. The spiritual demand, quelling the material, supplies energy and endurance surpassing all other aids, and forestalls the penalty which our beliefs would attach to our best deeds. ... Constant toil, deprivations, exposures, and all untoward conditions, *if without sin*, can be experienced without suffering. Whatever it is your duty to do, you can do without harm to yourself" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, [p. 385](#)).

Understanding the power and presence of divine law precludes the possibility of a penalty for benevolence. In fact, if we are obeying the divine law in helping a dear one—family, friend, or casual acquaintance—this can only result in good to the giver as well as to the recipient. We can lift caregiving out of the realm of merely physical labor and understand it as supporting the Christliness and dignity of every man, woman, and child.

Another challenge one may face as a caregiver is stress. We may be trying to juggle the care of several people at the same time; or, in the case of close relatives, even helping them pay their nursing home or assisted-living bills. Stress connotes two forces going opposite ways. For instance, if we push two fistful hands against each other, there is stress and pressure. But take

away the force of one of the hands, and the stress is gone. As we realize that there is just one power in our lives, we see that everything can work together harmoniously. Spirit, God, is the only animating force, and Spirit works in such a way as to synchronize and dovetail every aspect of creation in a symphony of harmony. Acknowledging this coordinating Principle as the intelligent power in our lives, can take away the stress. A well-loved hymn puts it this way:

Take from us now the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.

(John Greenleaf Whittier, *Christian Science Hymnal*, [No. 49](#)).

In praying for those in need of care, it's sometimes helpful to be aware of current news headlines—such as the half million official reports of elder abuse reaching authorities each year, including gross neglect. In response, we can confidently declare that in divine Love, the only Mind, there is no source for unscrupulous action. There's no valid reason why one person should try to take advantage of another. Think of this beautiful promise in the Bible: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" ([1 Peter 5:6,7](#)).

Sometimes, in caring for our loved ones, we may find that they have chosen to rely partly or fully on medical treatment. Even though we might choose to rely exclusively on prayer for healing in our own lives, I find it important to respect others' decisions. This sometimes provides further evidence of our loving regard for them, while we quietly ponder which approach seems likely to help them the most. Keeping our own thought about the other person on a spiritual basis is a perceptible way of blessing him or her.

Mary Baker Eddy shared this idea: "Beloved Christian Scientists, keep your minds so filled with Truth and Love, that sin, disease, and death cannot enter them. ... Good thoughts are an impervious armor; clad therewith you are completely shielded from the attacks of error of every sort. And not only yourselves are safe, but all whom your thoughts rest upon are thereby benefited" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, [p. 210](#)).

Our charge as caregivers impels us to bring to the work the most uplifted state of thought possible. While we don't provide specific metaphysical treatment to one receiving medical care, we can steadfastly know that God's love encompasses everyone, always. Our hands may be engaged in ministering to the human needs of those in our care, but our heart and our thought can rest securely on divine Love's all-embracing care for all Her children. We can deeply cherish everyone's true being—made in the likeness of God—as healthy, whole, and strong.

Although the picture of men and women as material—and thus subject to aging, handicaps, and deterioration—may present itself to us, we can affirm that this is not their true life at all. It's a misconception. This is an opportunity to exchange the material sense for the spiritual sense, revealing one's real body as wholly spiritual. The Bible calls upon us to consider this truth: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" ([I Cor. 6:19](#)). Surely, our true being is the embodiment of God's law of harmony, and the control of our true body never leaves God, its originator.

As caregivers, we can guard in thought our loved ones' spiritual being—complete, radiant, and expressing the full range of the qualities of God. Each of these loved ones is a reflection of God, ever at the point of wholeness. Right where the forces of matter claim to diminish us and break us down—right there—the only real force is God, who is Life. This is a force for good, an adhesion and cohesion that holds every aspect of men and women complete, and sound, and harmonious—for eternity!

These caregiving times invite us to take to heart the Bible command, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh" ([II Cor. 5:16](#)). We can begin to push back against the picture of humanity as merely flesh, and deeply cherish the true, spiritual nature of us all, reflecting the evergreen of Soul.

Christ Jesus invited us to be reborn, to see ourselves with no beginning point called birth, and no ending point called death. In speaking with Nicodemus about being born again, Jesus likened it to the wind in which we see no beginning and no ending point (see John 3:1–15). So we can think of our loved ones in terms of infinity. In Mrs. Eddy's writings there is a beautiful

description of God's caregiving: "This is the Father's great Love that He hath bestowed upon us, and it holds man in endless Life and one eternal round of harmonious being" (*Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, [p.77](#)).

We can hold up the light of Life for our loved ones, even when they may be advanced in years. The world view suggests inevitable death. Yet, a careful look at Jesus' teachings shows us that God calls for the expression of everlasting life. As caregivers, we can unite with the message of the Christ, which confirms everyone's conscious oneness with Life. Therefore, there is no one individual—nor, collectively, a world—consenting to death, because there is only one Mind, with its infinite expression.

Several years ago, I was asked to pray for a woman who at that time was 104 years old, and was suffering some discomfort. The daughter caring for her was not a Christian Scientist, yet she wished to honor her mother's choice by calling for Christian Science treatment when needed. When I first received this call, I went to the home to visit the woman. Walking into her room, I found the atmosphere to be one of solicitude and reverence, and I found the most tender and loving care was being given to her by her relatives. They remarked on her longevity, and I discerned that they expected that her discomfort would be healed spiritually during my visit.

I spent some time with the woman, praying and keeping in thought the light of Life. I ended the visit by inviting her to pray the Lord's Prayer aloud with me. Her praying was done with utter conviction, and with heartfelt fidelity to its meaning. Truly, in those moments we felt the healing activity of the Christ, bringing newness of life. When I left, she was feeling well, happy, and at peace. I visited with the woman several more times over the next few years until I moved away from that city. With each visit she continued to express great fidelity to God, and to demonstrate spiritual poise and grace. How heartening it was for me to be able to rejoice in this fact: "Man, in Science, is as perfect and immortal now, as when 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy' " (*Unity of Good*, [p.42](#)).

Just as a rising tide lifts all ships, so, higher, spiritual views of humanity serve to uplift thought from matter-based thinking to a plane on which one can see everyone—caregiver and care receiver—as sustained by Love. Divine Love provides everything requisite for our well-being,

for eternity. Love cannot fail or forsake us.

Letting *our* caregiving blend with the Divine, we meet the human need with grace. We cherish our loved ones as forever held in the tender arms of inexhaustible Love, and sustained by the power of everlasting Life. Now that's TLC!CSS

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### **About the author**

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