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## Mixed media

By Elise L. Moore

Extensive media coverage of this year's US Presidential election will soon be relegated to a page in the history books. Millions of words by thousands of reporters, commentators, and analysts will be forgotten overnight. Only the scent of victory or defeat will remain. Pausing momentarily to grin or grimace at the results, wordsmiths around the world will return to their keyboards to pound out tomorrow's news by today's deadline.

The quantity of published information and commentary available via Internet, radio, print media, and television is practically impossible to assimilate. An individual can sample only an infinitesimal speck of what's published. I read headlines and articles from a dozen Internet news services in two languages and flip through two or three daily newspapers, including *The Christian Science Monitor*. I like to sample articles from weekly or monthly periodicals reporting from various perspectives—US-Hispanic, African American, Native American, alternative/liberal, Christian, and others. While traveling, I've picked up local newspapers in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Peru and found it fascinating to view the world through others' eyes. Each publication has a different flavor and focus on issues. Every periodical reports the truth as its particular writers and editors see it.

The availability of multiple perspectives provides all kinds of benefits. The media employs thousands of people around the world. Furthermore, practically any viewpoint can find a voice. No matter how repressive a society or unpopular an opinion, words find a way into publication through print or the Internet. The volume of words might feel overwhelming, but truth cannot remain hidden or abused for long. Sooner or later, a voice of truth finds a way to speak in spite of darkness and to shed light on any particular situation.

MARY Baker Eddy, the author of *Science and Health with Keys to the Scriptures* celebrated every voice of truth in the media. Perhaps she was thinking of newspaper articles published during the US Civil War when she wrote, "A few immortal sentences, breathing the omnipotence of divine justice, have been potent

to break despotic fetters and abolish the whipping-post and slave market . . . ." <sup>1</sup>  
Or perhaps she was thinking of Father Hidalgo, who began the Mexican fight for independence in 1810 with a few well-chosen words published and repeated throughout Mexico. It seems that publishing the truth, even when it conflicts with popular opinion, encourages steps toward freedom.

Mrs. Eddy understood the value of permitting a variety of viewpoints. Her spiritually revolutionary book, *Science and Health*, was published in an era when women were not accepted as authors or theologians. Its radical Christian theology and practice of Jesus' teachings in daily life ran counter to popular culture and met with some astonishment and opposition. But she didn't compromise her spiritual convictions to attract readers. As she later wrote, "The author has not compromised conscience to suit the general drift of thought, but has bluntly and honestly given the text of Truth. " <sup>2</sup>

The work that resulted from this journalistic integrity, recording her inspiration precisely as she received it, began to transform lives. Readers reported healings that came about through their study of *Science and Health*. Mrs. Eddy published a sampling of these letters in subsequent editions of her book, forming the final chapter, "Fruitage." Soon reports of spiritual healing emerged in local news papers across the US. Talks on spirituality were printed in their entirety. Later, radio and television programs on Christian Science healing were broadcast, and both continue to be produced today in both English and Spanish. What started as a single voice of truth struggling to be heard in a small town in Massachusetts is now a worldwide healing movement spreading far beyond denominational boundaries.

TRUTH in any form has the power to heal and save. But there's a difference between recording one's spiritual inspiration and the reporting of news and factual information. How can a person bring a deeper, spiritual dimension to the popular media? Amid the mass of multiple voices, truth can be lost or be difficult to discern. Whose view of truth is correct? The right or left, the traditional or transitional, the Eastern or Western? People are passionate about their beliefs. But the loudest voice isn't necessarily the wisest. *Science and Health* has helped me be more open to glimpses of truth by encouraging me to use spiritual sense.

Spiritual sense is an element of intuition and spirituality that views with the heart as well as the head. It helps me see that the tone behind a message can be as important as the message itself. What is the motive of the writers? Are they being honest and unselfish in their presentation of facts? Are they willing to consider other points of view? Spiritual sense can help readers—and writers—discern

between fact and fiction, misinformation and intentional disinformation.

*Science and Health* talks about spiritual sense in this way. "The spiritual sense of truth must be gained before Truth can be understood. This sense is assimilated only as we are honest, unselfish, loving, and meek. In the soil of an 'honest and good heart' the seed must be sown; else it beareth not much fruit, for the swinish element in human nature uproots it." <sup>3</sup> This passage speaks to me both as an author and a reader.

As a reader, it says that honesty, unselfishness, meekness, and love are needed in order for me to be a receptive, effective consumer of information. Without these qualities I'm liable to hear what I want to hear and ignore the rest. I become my own propaganda machine, filtering out anything apart from my opinions or interests. To me, that's the swinish element, which pigheadedly sticks to its own views, unwilling or unable to meekly consider additional information. By cultivating honesty and unselfishness, I can bring something to the story as a reader and contribute to it just as effectively as if I were the author.

One person who inspired me to use spiritual sense to be an active reader was Oscar Arias Sanchez, the former President of Costa Rica, whom I heard speak at Vanderbilt University at the end of the Cold War. President Arias gently mimicked the average reader who sees a tragic headline and turns the page, hears about disaster and changes the channel, sees suffering and turns a cold shoulder. His poignant portrayal touched me. I didn't want to be a selfish, uncaring news consumer. Nor did I want to ignore another's pain or be ignorant of the need for healing. Whether I agreed or disagreed with the writer's perspective, I could be a part of the action if I brought my spiritual sense to the news with honesty, unselfishness, meekness, and love. Those qualities would help me discern what was important. They would lead me to effective action and healing prayer.

Soon after this experience, several acts of violence stunned my community. I was invited to a gathering of community leaders. How my name was included on the list I never learned. No other religious representatives were present. To me, being there was a result of my prayer to respond with compassion and unselfishness to the news. That meeting spawned years of involvement with community and governmental organizations. Spiritual sense was my primary contribution. Another result: I began to write a regular column on prayer and the news that ran for years in a local and an African American newspaper. The spiritual sense that helped me as a reader also assisted me in discerning healing responses as a writer.

The way I see it, the wealth of information readily available through the media is a treasure to be cherished. And through spiritual sense, each person can respond to the news as a reader or writer with honesty and compassion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Science and Health*, p. 225. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.