

Three Strings and Four Dimensions

Talk by Marjorie Dagnall given at the Morning Light 2016 Annual Meeting

Hi there!

Marjorie Dagnall, here in California, saying hello to all of you out there. And reminding us that “over there” is really just an expanded awareness of “here,” since there is only one spiritual universe. So we are really in the same place, aren’t we? I so often think of the disciples at the Day of Pentecost. They did not come together to be together; they came together because they were together. That kind of thinking is what we will be doing in the next hour. You probably guessed that already from the title – which, granted, is a bit on the unusual side: Three Strings and Four Dimensions! It’s fair to ask, whatever does that mean? What is she talking about anyway? Hopefully, you’ll just ask that about the title and not the whole talk!

Well, now that we are in October, most of the school children in our nation have completed their “What I Did This Summer” essay. A teacher friend of mine asked his class an intriguing variation of this question. He asked, “What were you thinking about this past summer?” Well, I didn’t write the essay, but I did answer the question. I knew exactly how to answer this because I thought a lot about four specific experiences. It was easy for me to recall them. I thought about Itzhak Perlman, a slide show, Bach’s B Minor Mass, an ungiven talk, and the day from Hell. Intriguing stuff. And, perhaps all related and maybe even the same thing.

Some of you might be aware of a most interesting story, which is credited as appearing in the Houston Chronicle many years ago. It was a report of a concert given by Itzhak Perlman, the virtuoso violinist in New York City. The account described Mr. Perlman, who as some of you know, was afflicted with polio early in his life and walks with braces and crutches. Slowly and painfully he made his way across the stage that night, put down his crutches, undid his braces and then began to play. As he played there was a loud snap like gunfire as one of the violin strings broke. The orchestra stopped playing and of course, all eyes were on Mr. Perlman to see what was going to happen. Would he be given a second violin or would he just replace the broken string and then continue with the

concert? According to the report, he did neither. What he did do was described in the following statement:

“...he waited a moment, closed his eyes and signaled the conductor to begin again. The orchestra began, and he played from where he had left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity, as they had never heard before. Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that; you know that. But that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing and recomposing the piece in his head. When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst from every corner of the auditorium. He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet the audience, and not boastfully, but in a quiet, reverent way said, “You know, sometimes it is the artist’s task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have.” Such an interesting and provocative comment.

The writer of this article added: “What a powerful line that is.” And then went on to say, “Perhaps that is the way of life – not just for an artist, but also for all of us to find out how much music we can play with what we have left.”

That is a fairly intriguing comment isn’t it? I wonder how many of us feel as though we are playing with what is left. Left of our understanding, our energy, even our faith? The events of recent years seem to tell us that they have us a bit off balance. We struggle at times to keep clear about world and national situations and our own experiences, which can seem like those “interlaced ambiguities” our Leader talked about. When needing to make a decision about what to do,

Mr. Perlman elected to keep playing with three strings. He didn’t leave the stage or wait for a new violin or a repair of strings. I wondered why he did that? Maybe it was to see if he could do it. Maybe it was just to see how much music he could play with what he had left, or maybe something caused him to see himself differently at that moment or to see the situation differently or to interpret it differently. That is not a particularly new experience. I am sure that we have all had moments when we saw with great clarity something differently than we had seen it before. Often those moments come when we

feel like we were suddenly cut off from something or at some kind of loss, that we were playing with just three strings. That, indeed, one of our strings was broken or perhaps that we were nothing more than a broken string. And yet, as Mr. Perlman, we were able to rise above the event or the experience and to soar o'er time and sense, as our hymn says, into the timeless atmosphere of Spirit. At such moments, we seem to reach beyond the usual limits and conditions which we assume to be man's limited capacity, and realize a dimension beyond – fetterless and free – as that hymn points out. It is this limitless spontaneity of thought which is the 4th dimension of infinity. It is the ever presence of divine, unrestricted intelligence beyond the awareness or analyzation of the physical senses. Mrs. Eddy writes of it in *Miscellaneous Writings* (p. 22) this way: "*Christian Science translates Mind, God, to mortals. It is the infinite calculus defining the line, plane, space and fourth dimension of Spirit.*" When we become aware of this operation it is sometimes difficult to describe what we have seen or felt. The normal three dimensions are gone and we identify our selves in some other way. Perhaps we have become the "*consciousness most imbued,*" as she says in the Message of 01, "*which struggles to articulate itself.*" Struggles because the old parameters are not relevant anymore, and thought is free to express itself in new ways. Much like catching a glimpse of the new heaven and the new earth.

At any rate, I think Mr. Perlman played, not with what he had left, but with what he always had. The music, after all, is not in the string but in the Mind that has always brought it forth. When what appears to be a sudden loss is correctly seen, the operation of Spirit has begun at once to adjust our viewpoint so that we can continue seeing what is eternally true – not what our physical senses are reporting, but what is eternally true. Our hymn reminds us "when all material streams are dry, Thy fullness is the same." Might it be that his modulating the passages to accommodate 3 strings was really modulating the thought to accommodate the fullness of the music's complete fullness? Perhaps what caused Mr. Perlman to continue playing was the divine fact that while his string was broken, the divine law of completeness was not. It was only a material sense of things that aggressively suggested that the music could be stopped. Who or what can stop the idea which presents itself as music? It is always present and Mr. Perlman, who by the

way, has reported that he sees sound rather than notes, understood that the continuity of the sound presenting itself as music could not be interrupted by the breaking of a string. Its rather like numbers in the mathematical system isn't it? The number 7 for instance is an idea in this system. We have a symbol for seven which we use to designate this particular idea. If we were to print a large 7 on a sheet of paper and then stamp on it, or tear it up, or paint over it, we would have done nothing to the idea. The symbol might be messed up, but seven goes on uninterrupted. It has not been altered, nor changed in any way.

I love to think about this when cherishing that wonderful discourse that John tells us of in his gospel – of Jesus instructing us that he is the true vine. I used to think of that as 'true' as opposed to 'false.' But in one of those moments we earlier mentioned, I understood that Jesus was telling us that he was the actual, not the symbol – the reality. That regardless what was done to the symbol, it could in no way touch the reality or the actual. That no matter what was done to his so-called material body (the symbol) it could not change his being (the actual) in any way.

In continuing to think about this, we might rightfully ask: What is it that moves us beyond the confines of our limited thinking? Why, on some occasions, has each of us done this? Certainly I don't know the answer anymore than I can explain why, after many days of prayer, a healing takes place when it becomes a reality to us, even though it had been there all along, but we hadn't seen it. Well, maybe it's the extremity of the experience. After all our textbook says, "*Man's extremity is God's opportunity.*" But God does not need opportunity. God is opportunity. Divine action is not dependent on a mortal or a material circumstance in any way, nor does God withhold the infinity of his Being until man finds himself in a predicament, or until he gets himself 'ok' enough to accept it. Infinite Good does not cooperate with suffering, or evil, or extremity. This wonderful statement of our Leader shows us that it needs no sudden sally, as she says, to provide it. Man's opportunity is always present. The extremity is man's opportunity, not God's. Perhaps Mr. Perlman saw this opportunity and took it. It was therefore opportunity, not extremity, that he responded to and there appeared to be no resistance to accepting this. After all, Truth leads us. Error does not. The imperative is always on the side of good. Truth is always urging on mortals its resisted claims, as our Textbook says.

And what was the opportunity? To keep going. To keep going knowing that what he needed was present, and it was not dependent on him.

Now as we think about Mr. Perlman and his just going on, we could rightfully surmise that he had faith in himself because he had been in sticky situations before and he came through them. That might lead us to believe that his experiences have made him what he is. That is such a common belief isn't it? We hear people say something like, 'That was a pretty rugged experience I went through, but it made me what I am today.' Absolutely not! We are not made through, or by, our experiences. We are what we are, as our beloved Paul says: "Through the grace of God." It is God who gives us our nature. After all, we are the image and likeness of God, are we not? Where does experience come into that?

We are not the products of the things that happen to us. We do not do what we do, or be what we be, because of what happened to us in the third grade, or high school or yesterday or even today! We must look beyond fading pictures of ourselves and look beyond what we have been told, beyond the physical senses and the material, beyond the 3 dimensions of our world – to find identification beyond our current measure. It seems to me that the only way we can articulate that which is imbued in consciousness is through living it. It is articulated in our lives for us and as us, as we reach beyond the pale limits of a false sense of reality. After all, we live the ideas we entertain.

This reminds me of a delightful experience that a friend of mine had. He told me that he was in a position to help an educational program, which he believed had merit, by presenting it to members of the local Chamber of Commerce in the hopes that they would support it financially. After securing a spot on the program at the group's breakfast meeting, he approached the head of the school and asked him to send a teacher and some slides to explain the program to the members. On the morning of the breakfast, the teacher arrived just as the meeting was about to begin. My friend greeted him and asked for the slides, as the projector was set up and ready for action. The teacher announced that he had no slides and that he was there for support only and had no intention of explaining the program. My friend took a deep breath. While this was certainly not the equivalent of a broken string, it certainly felt like it to my friend. Understanding the situation, a man in charge of the projector said he would put it away since it would not be

needed. But my friend heard himself say, “No leave it.” At that point my friend felt a certain quietude in his consciousness, perhaps a calm resolve – I am certainly not sure – but what he did was absolutely delightful! Not only did he give the talk spontaneously, he used the nonexistent slides to make his point. He simply asked for slide number 1 and then began to explain what was happening in that slide. When someone finally called out, “But there is no slide in the projector,” he replied, “Well of course there’s not. You have to imagine it. Now, next slide please.” He said he talked about different slides, explaining each one. At one point he looked out and saw the audience all-staring at the upper right hand corner of the blank slide where he was pointing. And of course, there was nothing there. Yet every one of those people was involved in creating their own scenario of that program based, not on the content of the slide, but on what they heard. Mr. Perlman heard a string break and continued to make music. My friend saw no slides and yet continued to present the program.

Might that not be what each of us does in every experience? Is it not our nature that determines the experience? Each individual was viewing beyond what the blank slide presented. Each imagined the contents of the slide based on what he was being told. But when we can change imagination to image, when we image forth instead of imagining, then our God-given nature experiences far more than three dimensional experiences. Mr. Perlman was hearing beyond something his physical senses were telling him. He was playing by this hearing. My friend was telling that audience something beyond what he knew. And they were both articulating beautifully with what was left. Three strings, a projector and the 4th dimension of Spirit took care of a broken string, missing slides, no preparation time, no prepared text and even no involvement with the program.

How exciting is this? The knowledge that something is going on beyond what we perceive in our three dimensional world and that it is going on in everyday affairs like this simple talk to the Chamber of commerce.

Of course, we are well aware of these happenings as noted in Scripture. Jesus appeared to his disciples twice in rooms where the door was locked. He fed the five thousand with a few loaves of bread and a few fishes. He was instantly on the shore. Peter was lead out of prison by an angel, and on and on. To me the marvelous thing is

that Mrs. Eddy noted these experiences and took them seriously. She did not delegate them to a category called miracle or to something that just happened 'out of the blue,' so to speak, but recognized that they articulated some lawful activity beyond what we cognized as law. The burning bush was not destroyed – not because of an attempt to get Moses' attention – but because there was a law in operation ready to be recognized. And even more than this, Mrs. Eddy herself received the revelation of Truth from beyond the three dimensions of thought. This revelation was present, ready to be recognized, but it took a thought unencumbered with personal sense to receive it. The point is simply that it is not beyond comprehension that our living includes a conscious awareness of life in and of the 4th dimension of Spirit, and that as we accept its possibilities we will see its manifestations.

I have enjoyed the following quote from a fellow Christian Scientist:

"In the present stage of mortal thought we must of course be modest in our claims to understand and use the fourth dimension of Spirit. Yet we can all begin by refusing to believe that supply, substance, healing, thinking, or any other good can be limited to three dimensions and a visible world – by realizing the objects of the present dream world, necessary as they may be for temporary use, are only poor counterfeit presentations of the real objects which we shall fully know."

We have nothing holding us back. We have seen that what propels us is our own expanding awareness of completeness. Our completeness reflects the completeness of the entire universe. The whole picture is from the divine, isn't it? From the calculus of Truth and Spirit operating despite the flesh, operating through its own modes and its own channels, doing its own work, establishing Truth and uncovering the belief that there is something besides itself.

And of course, we see this in the events of our lives, maybe not yet to this degree but we are making room for this. There is opportunity. Mrs. Eddy gives us this piece of knowledge in Miscellany, which is so hope-giving, *"Whatever needs to be done which cannot be done now, Love prepares the way for..."*

And now the last of the three things I thought about this summer – that of Bach's b minor Mass. I have long loved this work. I sold my bicycle when I was 10 to purchase a

recording of it. It has long been a close companion of mine. I realized this summer that not only was this work never performed in Bach's lifetime but he never had any hope that it would ever be performed. Indeed, it was not performed until 100 years after he died. Yet he lovingly worked on it over his lifetime, not really adding new music but reworking the themes he used. I think these might have been themes that he really loved, which he borrowed from his other works. I thought about what drove him to keep working on this, making it better and better for years, knowing that no one would ever hear it. And then quite suddenly I realized how wrong that conclusion was. Of course it would be heard. Surely Bach wrote this in the 4th dimension and there it was performed and there everyone heard it. It was only when I insisted on seeing it in a limited three-dimensional atmosphere of thought that I saw it as curious or even sad. Yet the demand, if you will, of the music itself that it be heard, was in operation – as was its completeness. The idea and the manifestation of the idea can never be separated, nor can they ever deviate from their original purpose. These are things we don't pay much attention to, nor are we particularly interested in them. They seem to be a bit out of our ordinary way of thinking. But when our string breaks, or the slides don't arrive, or we have had a hellish day, we are able to carry on because they yet are always there because they undergird reality. When we begin to trust the invisible more than the visible, the invisible becomes our reality and we see it more clearly. As we un-self, as we reach beyond the limits of our own shallow thought, we realize a new heaven and a new earth every day. And why not?

One day a few months ago, I had what many Christian Scientists would describe as a challenging day. I would describe it as the day from Hell. I won't describe it because it was all a lie anyway, but it sure seemed real as one after another, things seemed to go awry. I didn't even reverse any of this at night – I just went to bed and covered my head. In the middle of the night I woke up and seemed quite alert. I fixed a cup of tea and sat quietly in my bedroom. I wasn't rehearsing the things of the day; I didn't want to go there. But quite clearly I heard a voice in my consciousness say, "Oh! This has been such a lovely day." Well I knew for sure that that was not my voice, and certainly not my evaluation.

I did not argue. I didn't say, "Yeah! Little do you know." Let me tell you what happened. I quickly realized that I was being called to a higher dimension of thought and

an entirely new way of thinking about my day. I saw that yes, Soul was having a lovely time with Mind, and that Principle was so enjoying Love, and on and on, and I actually saw that indeed it had been a lovely day. I was viewing it from an entirely different standpoint. And this change in view changed my experience. For several days, I saw the synonyms working together right where the material was showing itself. When for example, I went to pick up my youngster from school, I passed through a section of road which is always beautiful as the branches of the redwood and other trees form a canopy overhead. But this time, and for several days after, when I drove under them I knew that this was Soul forming an alliance with Life, beauty bearing witness to freshness and vitality, and as I arrived at the school and began the process of picking him up – which looked very much like a long line of cars, a 20 minute process and a hot day – it presented itself to me as Mind's intelligence having a lovely time with Principle's organization and on and on.

When this new way of discernment came it brought forth no resistance, as I mentioned. There was no self, arguing for its perception, its memory, its misery. No self willfully insisting on rehearsing error, no self satisfying its own Ego. It came with its own willingness to be accepted. Soul has infinite resources with which to bless mankind. But it is Soul that blesses mankind, not us. We are not the medium through which God works. God needs no medium. Oh! So often we want to be the middle man – the one that does the good, knows the truth, provides the solution, is the all time great healer and so we, in our zeal, actually think we can. And sometimes we can! Yet Jesus said, "Of mine own self I can do nothing." We tend to think that yes, we know that, and God channels his goodness, his will to us and we do the work. But is that so? Man is not a medium. God is not separate from the wisdom he bestows. God is the action, substance and all of each and every bestowal. Maybe that is what Mr. Perlman knew and my friend knew and Bach knew.

From time to time, I know that also. One time I travelled to a distant city to give a talk to a Christian Science organization. I prepared this talk prayerfully and lovingly. But as I met with the group immediately before my talk and listened to what they were thinking about, I began to realize that while this talk I was about to deliver was metaphysically sound, it did not address the issues that were of deep concern to the organization at the

time. As such, it did not appear to be particularly helpful. I became increasingly aware that perhaps I needed to be open to new ideas and fresh insights. Obviously, such thoughts were not in the laboriously prepared talk I brought along with me. As I was being introduced, I was debating what to do – perhaps as Mr. Perlman did. While my string was not broken, I certainly didn't feel as though I could continue playing the music which had been selected. I calmly told the audience of my thinking and asked that we be quietly prayerful for a few minutes, after which I closed the prepared text, leaned on the lectern and began to speak. At that time, I probably would have taken those blank slides my friend used or anything to focus my thought. I didn't have a clue what I would say or where the talk was going, but I didn't have to. As I began to talk I suddenly realized that I didn't need a new talk, I just needed to see the old talk from a different viewpoint. I found that the ideas from the ungiven talk outlined themselves in my thought in a newly arranged order. I spoke for over an hour and a half as the talk began to transform itself into a solution. Ideas began to flow quickly and reasonably. Everything that was needed was already there; it just presented itself in a new way. The opportunity was there.

Needless to say, we all remember that day as a day of resolution and inspiration, and the talk was of enormous benefit to all of us and to me especially as I reached beyond anything I knew to focus on that which Mind knew.

Now as we near the end of today's talk, we hear one more thing from Mr. Perlman. He later elaborated on what was reported to be his initial statement after playing with the broken string, by saying nearly the same thing but in a different way:

“Perhaps our task in this shaky, fast changing, bewildering world in which we live is to make music, at first with all that we have, and then when that is no longer possible, to make music with what we have left.”

Making music with what one has left, it seems to me, is a very good thing. Because what is left has been refined and it is no longer possible to play with what one had before. Such refinement no longer throws itself with great passion and zeal into the vain dreams of a material world and of a personal self. The divine nature of man begins to shine forth more clearly as he welcomes the purity, restraint and the temperance of the unselfed life which our Leader talks about in the very first sentence of our textbook, and then again on

page 192 when she instructs us that *“whatever holds human thought in line with unselfed love, receives directly the divine power.”*

Let’s remember that the appearance of Truth is always in spite of the human, never because of the human mind. What we call the appearing of Truth is really the disappearance of some of the mist of ignorance, because all the Truth there, is there anyhow. That word “is” is Science isn’t it? Truth is, health is, consciousness, is. If we allow that, if we say “oh yes” to it, it begins to reason us out of mortality. It reasons us out of it. Truth is reasoning itself, and in reasoning itself, it reasons us out of error. Truth operates in human experience through the correlative of Spirit to correct, to alter, to ameliorate, to be whatever is necessary to vindicate the allness of Truth. The allness of Truth showed us a completed concert, a completed slide show

Often in the lesson we have the Galatians’ reference to the fruit of the spirit. You remember it says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” I have looked at that with the sense of the last shall be first – I have concluded that temperance is the first and most important thing. When the light of Christian Science’s reality first dawns on us it often brings great passion and we are filled with an enormous love, as well we should be, and we want to heal everything, everywhere, immediately. But we begin to see that this Love demands to be understood and demonstrated as divine Love – not human, as the actual and not the symbol. We find it harder and harder to manipulate and easier to let God control. We find it harder to trust our will knowing that human will is tenuous, tedious and treacherous. We begin to commence, to start to learn the actual meaning of all those fruits-of-the-spirit qualities and as we do, we begin to appreciate and value temperance.

I think this poem, ‘Neophyte,’ by Max Dunaway says so much about our growing understanding of spiritual power and how our zeal becomes tempered. I think it was what Mr. Perlman said: to make music at first with all we have, and when that is no longer possible with what is left.

NEOPHYTE by Max Dunaway

When first the dawn burst on his sight
he felt his being filled with light
He looked at all before him spread

and vowed that he would raise the dead,
wrench gates of hell from off their bars
and laugh and fling them at the stars.

The years passed by; no dead were raised.
No mighty wonders, man-appraised,
rewarded him. Hell's gates remained,
unshaken by hopes once entertained.
The light still shown, but with less fire
than flamed his ardent first desire.

His thoughts turned to the little deeds,
the common tasks of meeting needs.
He lifted up a fallen child
and wiped her tears until she smiled.
He helped a tired and burdened crone,
Someone whom he had never known.

He sat beside a dying friend
and gave him courage till the end,
then sought to soothe the aching heart
of her who felt grief's sting and smart—
to say a word, put forth a hand,
or just be still and understand.

And years of living to be kind
brought greater love and peace of mind.
He learned to serve within his place,
Growing in gentleness and grace.
And, being forgotten, the gates of hell
in their own weakness toppled and fell.

In *TRIUMPH and OTHER POEMS*, p.74, E.D. Abbott Co. 1963

And what is left is a dimension of thought in which the gates of Hell no longer call us to enter, no longer lurk within the shadows of our own superficial imagination because the new heaven and the new earth present themselves as actual, as real. And we see that three strings don't matter in the actual fourth dimension of Spirit.

So there we have it – not the essay about what was done this summer, but the exploration of what was thought this summer – four things helping to explain 4 dimensions, and three strings helping to get us there.

Now let's take a look at what has been said in this time we've been together:

1. We started with a violinist who reportedly took the opportunity of a broken string in his concert to continue playing by using the three strings that were left.
2. We determined that because, as Mrs. Eddy has taught us, Christian Science translates Mind, God, to mortals as the infinite calculus defining the line, plane, space and fourth dimension, the presence and power of this dimension showed itself as the law of completeness which never had been, nor could be, broken – hence, the violinist was translating the broken back into the unbroken.
3. Soaring over time and space is something not that unique and many of us know that experience.
4. However, when the normal three dimensions are thought to be the absolute limits, the consciousness which pushes past those limits, struggles to articulate itself.
5. It can only articulate itself through the life that sees it. Hence it must be evidenced through living.
6. It was only a material sense of things which aggressively suggested a broken string could stop the music, which was not in the string but in the Mind which created it and cannot be stopped
7. That numbers like notes start with Principle. The symbols might be messed up but the actual is never touched by the symbol – as Jesus showed us by presenting himself as the true vine, the actual, not the symbol.
8. That our experiences really do not form or mould us because our natures are given to us of God. We take our nature into our experience, so to speak. Our experience does not cause our nature.
9. That opportunity, not extremity, leads us into all truth.
10. That the blank slides we call ‘us’ reflect the divine when we image ourselves after God’s likeness, rather than imagine ourselves to be that likeness.
11. That Biblical scripture gives us numerous examples of fourth dimension experiences.
12. That our beloved Leader was led by this dimension of Spirit to recognize these and understand that they were not “out of the blue” experiences called miracles but the actual presence of law.

13. That we can cherish and reach forth for these laws by refusing to believe that supply, substance, healing, thinking or any other good can be limited to three dimensions by our customary thinking.
14. That whatever needs to be done, but cannot be done now, Love prepares the way for.
15. That while we don't pay much attention to these things we've said today, their presence is always available to be seen.
16. That the evaluation of the day from Hell was done away with by the overriding thought of Mind's measurement, and a lovely day showed itself as the new heaven and the new earth.
17. That 'unselfing' evidences man's nature, which shows the fruits of the Spirit as moving from passionate love to temperant righteousness.
18. That his temperance shows the gates of Hell fall of their own accord and the new heaven and earth become apparent.