

# Lecture Outline: Mary Baker Eddy: Lessons of a Healer

## Opening

At the opening of a new millennium, do you know what is considered to be the next great frontier? It's not outer space or the ocean floor. It's **consciousness**. We are looking into thought for answers in the fields which once were considered the sole domain of matter. Science, medicine, communications, even travel explored from a mental perspective. Perhaps no field better represents this kind of searching than does health care: physicians find more and more of their patients turning to alternative forms of healing (up to \_ according to surveys by the AMA) some of which are solely mental; more and more medical schools include mind/body institutes (about 40%) with one university even providing for a major in the field; symposiums sponsored by medical schools explore the relationship of spirituality in healing; and clinical studies proliferate studying the relationship of prayer in healing. In fact one such study recently conducted at St Luke's hospital in Kansas City confirmed an earlier one at San Francisco General Hospital that links improved health to "off sight or remote intercessory prayer." Approximately 1000 patients with "serious life-threatening cardiac conditions" were studied, and those who were prayed for did statistically significantly better than those who did not. Dr. Wm. Harris who headed the study commented, "By 'better' I mean everything that word means." Of course praying for the sick is nothing new; people have been doing that for centuries. What is new is the seriousness with which the health care community is taking this practice, and the fact that this issue is now being considered in mainstream public thought.

A century ago, one woman did as much, if not more, than any one to promote the awareness of the power of prayer to heal. Considered one of the most prolific spiritual healers of modern times, Mary Baker Eddy spent her life exploring the reasons why spiritual healing takes place. By the turn of the century Mary Baker Eddy was considered one of the most famous, influential, powerful, and wealthy women in America. She was a best selling author, the leader of the fastest growing religious movement in America, a sought after social commentator, an accomplished business woman, and a major player in the fields of health care, journalism and religion. Even to one her most famous detractors, Mark Twain, she was "the benefactor to her age." But life was not always so for Mrs. Eddy. Twenty-five years earlier she faced the plight of many women in the 19th century: she was without any means of personal support. She had no job, no income, no savings, no social status, no family support, and no permanent home. What made matters worse, like many women of her time, she had few prospects for improvement. Furthermore, she was at a time of life when most people were ending their careers. Yet through her trust in God and her growing understanding of the spiritually, scientific nature of prayer, she proved that no matter what the human circumstance, solutions are possible.

Ironically, Mrs. Eddy was seeking none of the positions she occupied at the turn of the century. These were the “things that shall be added unto you” that Jesus spoke about when he encouraged people to seek the kingdom of heaven. To understand the life of Mary Baker Eddy and why it can have such meaning to anyone seeking dominion in life, one must understand the mentality of a healer. In Mrs. Eddy’s case that study begins in the early stages of her life. She wrote in her autobiography:

*From my very childhood I was impelled, by a hunger and thirst after divine things – a desire for something higher and better than matter, and apart from it, – to seek diligently for the knowledge of God as the one great and ever-present relief from human woe. (Ret. 31)*

### **Knowledge of God**

Despite the eventual advances in the 19th century, there was plenty of human woe to go around. Life was still harsh for the vast majority of people, and especially so for many women and children. Often relying on God for relief was the only remedy, let alone the religious one. There is no more central theme in Mrs. Eddy’s life than her reliance on God. Before she even knew much about God she had the natural proclivity to lay herself open to God’s direction and care. As a child she struggled with her father’s stern Calvinist approach to religion. More than a doctrinal issue, this struggle would define her sense of God’s healing power. Calvinist teaching held a harsh view of God, one that punished and condemned as well as saved. The doctrines of eternal punishment and predestination gave Mary particular concern, and as a child she rejected them. She told her mother if eternal punishment without hope of redemption was God’s will, then God would find her “a hard case.” Is there any other greater question that occupies human beings than just what is the nature of God? From the beginning of human history, people have sought to understand God. Mostly we have tended to make our sense of God manlike. But the challenge of making God manlike is that in so doing we simply deify our human limitations and in fact give ourselves no way out. We assume that we are limited, therefore God must be limited. Somehow having a God that is just like us is reassuring. But it is not healing. For healing to occur we have to find a way beyond limitations, a way to a different dimension of thinking. To Mary Baker Eddy clearing up the ignorance held about God provided the way out.

In place of this harsh God, Mary found a God of love, a God that is Love. And this God that is Love became the foundation for healing. Relying on the teaching of the Bible, particularly the examples of healing in the New Testament, Mary Baker Eddy discovered the laws of healing that stemmed directly from a clear understanding of God’s nature as Love. She would write in her landmark book on healing, **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures**, “The divine Love, which made harmless the poisonous viper, which delivered men from the boiling oil, from the fiery furnace, from the jaws of the lion, can heal the sick in every age and triumph over sin and death.” (243) Think how many people suffer under

the delusion that they deserve the problems they have, and worse yet, that God either has brought those problems or would not be of help in solving them. To those people when material methods fail, there is no way out. Jesus centuries earlier taught that God was an ever-present help and that nothing could stand in the way of God's care for us. When faced with a man that had been born blind and was believed to be suffering his blindness as a result of his or his parents' sinful nature, Jesus countered with "Neither has this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be manifest in him" and healed the man. In other words, Jesus affirmed the fact that each of us has divine rights that we can invoke and that stem from a caring, loving God. He taught that individuals have a right to be free from sickness and sin, that the culprit in discord is neither God nor man, but the evil that often tries to occupy our lives. This teaching did not stand him in good stead with the current theological theories of his day that clearly held that God was a God of good and evil and punished men and women for their sins, often severely. To Jesus God was Love, unconditional Love, which always stood ready to bless when sought, just like the prodigal son discovered about his Father once he turned his face homeward. Mary Baker Eddy firmly believed that God always stood ready and never more so than when there appeared to be no hope.

From early childhood Mary healed, first farm animals that her father would bring to her, then relatives who were suffering from one form of malaise or another, and eventually anyone who's case seemed hopeless. It was not uncommon for this woman to reach out to those she encountered in her daily experience. She once healed a crippled man who she saw on the street; his one leg was drawn up to his chin and the other positioned behind his back. She spoke to him of God's love for him, and he got up and walked, perfectly straight. In another instance, she healed a fellow who came to the door asking for money; he was so crippled his legs could not touch the ground, and he had to walk with crutches. Mrs. Eddy gave him what money she had but more than that healed the man. When asked how she performed that healing she remarked that her heart went out to him with "unspeakable pity and prayer." Years later she wrote in her book **Science and Health**,

*The physician who lacks sympathy for his fellow being is deficient in human affection, and we have the apostolic warrant for asking: 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' Not having this spiritual affection, the physician lacks faith in the divine Mind and has not that recognition of infinite Love which alone confers the healing power." (366)*

### **Spiritual affection**

Spiritual affection, then, is a natural outcome of being connected with divine Love, but just what is spiritual affection as contrasted with human affection. Human affection might very well get us to the point of caring and having sympathy for others, but we all know that that does not result in the kind of healings we just talked about. Spiritual affection goes further in our love for others. Spiritual affection requires that we cherish our spiritual integrity, that is, our oneness and expression of God. Mrs. Eddy once healed a child she encountered one

day while out walking. He was being wheeled down the street by his brother in a cart. She stopped the boy and asked what was wrong with his brother. The boy told her that his brother had never walked. She looked into the younger boy's eyes and said that she saw so clearly the sense of the perfect child of God. The boy jumped out of the cart yelling, "See me run." That's spiritual affection – an affection that sees in others their connection and expression of God. Speaking of Jesus' ability to heal, Mrs. Eddy wrote, "In this perfect man, the Savior saw God's own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick." (S&H 477) By seeing the likeness of God in others and ourselves we are seeing the reality of our being. We have a choice how we see; we can be fixated on what the material appearance is or we can use our spiritual perception and look for God's likeness. This kind of seeing doesn't use the physical eyes but the mental sight of thought, feeling, and intuition. We must see with the heart of divinity, the heart that yearns to know what is real.

In her teaching Mrs. Eddy made a distinction between mortals which are apparent to material appearance and immortals which are apparent to spiritual perception. She taught how to distinguish between the two. This difference has always been a point of contention with people – some just refuse to believe that there is anything more to them than what is apparent to physical appearance. Others believe that trying to claim for yourself that which is not evident is blasphemous. In an interesting interchange that appeared in one of the Christian Science periodicals, this issue surfaced. Let me read it to you because it raises an important point about how Mrs. Eddy healed and instructed others to do so. The writer had referred to herself as an immortal idea of the one God and was criticized for doing so because she still lived in the flesh. Mrs. Eddy's reply:

*You are scientifically correct in your statement about yourself. You can never demonstrate spirituality until you declare yourself to be immortal and understand that you are so...Unless you fully perceive that you are the child of God, hence perfect, you have no Principle to demonstrate and no rule for its demonstration. By this I do not mean that mortals are the children of God, – far from it.*

Mrs. Eddy did not believe that human beings were perfect but she did hold that there was more to an individual than appeared. Based on the first chapter of Genesis in the Bible, she held that one's true identity was the spiritual expression of God and understanding one's real identity brought healing. The fact of the matter is that this theology brought results. It healed – quickly, permanently, and dramatically. People, of course, will always debate theological points; the purpose here is not to enter into that debate. The purpose is to explain how the stunning healing works of Mary Baker Eddy were accomplished and how they have been duplicated over the last century. While Mrs. Eddy did not equate herself with Jesus, she did hold that the healing method she used and taught was the one that Jesus used. The results seemed to confirm her claim. Looking to see in others and

ourselves God's own likeness, looking away from material appearance, has gained results in thousands of lives. Since the turn of the century, over 55,000 healings have been recorded in the annals of the Christian Science periodicals; they represent only a fraction of the experiences that people testify to every week in Christian Science churches. Since 1970, over 15000 healings have been recorded in these periodicals; 80% of them have been of physical healings and over 25% of those have had some medical confirmation. Cases of malignancy and cancer, polio, tuberculosis, pneumonia, heart and kidney disorders, broken bones, meningitis, appendicitis, cataract, diabetes, blindness, multiple sclerosis, the list is almost endless. They all have one thing in common: they occurred because the individuals involved caught a glimpse of their spiritual identity, their likeness to God, a God of love.

### **Role of spirituality**

The immanent episcopal bishop of Trinity Church in Boston, Phillips Brooks, once wrote:

"God has not given us vast learning to solve all the problems, or unending wisdom to direct all the wanderings of our brother's lives; but He has given to every one of us the power to be spiritual, and by our spirituality to lift and enlarge and enlighten the lives we touch."

Mary Baker Eddy once wrote: "The secret of my life is in the above." To Mrs. Eddy the power to heal lies in one's spirituality. Spirituality is not how much theory we know, how much doctrine and dogma we believe, not how many rituals we follow. Spirituality is what we live of our understanding of God, what we put into practice of that understanding in our lives. Our spirituality is what happens not so much in churches, mosques, or synagogues, but in the day to day interactions with life experiences. God needs to be made evident in how we conduct our lives. Speaking of her discovery of how healing happens, she wrote:

*I had learned that thought must be spiritualized, in order to apprehend Spirit. It must become honest, unselfish, and pure, in order to have the least understanding of God in divine Science. The first must become last. Our reliance upon material things must be transferred to a perception of and dependence on spiritual things. For Spirit to be supreme in demonstration, it must be supreme in our affections, and we must be clad with divine power.*

Healing is not a matter of formula, of just the right words or arguments; it is a matter of spiritual growth and regeneration, of letting spiritual attitudes be supreme in the affections. To the healer that failed, Mrs. Eddy counseled it was because he or she had not lived the life of the Christ more in one's own life. To students who came to her with cases they had not healed she frequently healed the case and then reminded them that, in Jesus' words, "this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting." In other words, healing ability

comes with putting spiritual things first and turning away from materiality. Once Mrs. Eddy and a member of her household went on a shopping trip for new carpet in a Boston rug emporium. The man who waited on them had his face partially covered with a bandage. After a few moments Mrs. Eddy seem to lose all interest in the purpose of their trip and asked to leave. Several days latter Mrs. Eddy's friend returned to the store and the man asked who the woman was that had accompanied her the first day. He said that he knew that she had something to do with what happened to him. He said that not long after the two of them had left that first day, his face began to heal rapidly. The affliction had been cancer and his face this day was perfectly clear. Spirit was supreme in Mrs. Eddy's affections that day and the material things were not.

But it is not just the healer that needs to let Spirit be supreme in the affections. Many people healed by this method will testify to the wonderful spiritual regeneration that accompanied their healing. Jesus once asked a crippled man living by the pools of Bethesda if he wished to be made whole. The question was not whether he wanted to be free of his physical ailment, but whether he wanted to be whole, morally, spiritually, intellectually as well as physically. Healing is an invitation to that kind of growth. In fact one of the special characteristics of spiritual healing is the ability to see in one's thinking what is the mental malady. Speaking of this need in **Science and Health** Mrs. Eddy writes:

*We approach God, or Life, in proportion to our spirituality, our fidelity to Truth and Love; and in that ration we know all human need and are able to discern the thought of the sick and the sinning for the purpose of healing them...This kind of mind-reading is not clairvoyance, but it is important to success in healing, and is one of the special characteristics thereof.*

Mrs. Eddy healed a man named John Scott of enteritis and bowel obstruction. He had been under the care of a physician but nothing could be done for him and he was given up to die. The physician had administered Croton oil in an effort to produce vomiting. That practice gives you some insight into medical practice of the time. Croton oil was an allopathic remedy, where a toxic was introduced into the system in an effort to suppress the undesirable symptoms. Medical practice at that time focused mainly on changing symptoms in an effort to heal rather than considering causes. When Mrs. Eddy arrived at the Scott's home, John was in agony and was cursing God. Mrs. Eddy told him that if he calmed down she would heal him. In about an hour he was well. However, as notable as the physical healing was, the real story is told in his wife's remarks that were published in the paper. His wife told of a remarkable transformation in her husband's life. He had never been particularly affectionate with his children, but that night he called them to him and hugged each one and told them he loved them. With tears he told his wife he would be a better man. In thanking Mrs. Eddy his wife remarked, "Oh, how I thank you for restoring my husband to health, but more than all, I am grateful for what you have done for him morally and physically." Around the same time she healed a boy who had died of what was called

brain fever. Although her son had died, the mother wanted Mrs. Eddy to see him. Mrs. Eddy asked the mother to leave the house for an hour and then began to pray for the boy. Soon he revived but immediately protested that he was sick and tried to strike out at Mrs. Eddy. She made a plaything out of some spools and left the boy to play with it. The mother returned to find her child alive. Several days later she returned to give thanks to Mrs. Eddy and while she expressed great joy in her son's revival, she was most excited about the change that had occurred with his temperament but he had always had an awful temper and was particularly perverse.

In both of these instances what was healed was not enteritis or brain fever but rather the moral obstructions that kept these patients from seeing and accepting their real spiritual selfhood. Mrs. Eddy did not fix these moral failings on the patient anymore than Jesus had fixed sin on the man at the pools of Bethesda. Individuals have a right to be free from all imperfection; none of it has a place in their spiritual selfhood. While some would say to those struggling with sin that you must first deal with your sin and then come and be healed, this primitive Christian healing recognizes the right of the individual to be free of both sin and disease. Sin and disease are seen to be the criminals, not the individual. For to both Jesus and Mrs. Eddy there was no more validity to a sinful individual than there was to a sick one. Both individuals have the right to be free.

### **Divine rights**

In one of the more stirring passages in her book Mrs. Eddy writes:

*Exercise this God-given authority. Take possession of your body, and govern its feeling and action. Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good. God has made man capable of this, and nothing can vitiate the ability and power divinely bestowed on man. (S&H 393)*

Claiming one's divine rights was an essential element in healing to Mrs. Eddy. Having rights without claiming them did little good and she spent much of her time helping others claim what was rightfully theirs. This was not always easy or wanted. To those struggling with hopelessness, it can seem quite implausible to claim rights that seem to be denied to you. For someone to tell you in the midst of suffering that you need to stir yourself can seem unsympathetic but sometimes that kind of stirring is just what is needed. As we have seen, Mrs. Eddy was a healer all of her life. She always had a conviction that God was the healer but did not know precisely how the healing took place. After a life-threatening accident she began to see what the science was behind spiritual healing. It was actually at the behest of a doctor that she finally spent the effort to articulate it in a book. In May of 1868 she received a telegram from the family of Mary Gale. The telegram asked Mrs. Glover (Mrs. Eddy's name at the time) if she would come to New Hampshire to attend to the dying Mrs.

Gale. Packing her bags immediately, Mary Glover made the trip and found Mary Gale dying of pneumonia, given up by her doctors. Entering her room, Mrs. Glover found Mary Gale propped up on pillows, made comfortable for her death. Mary Glover immediately tried to arouse her by taking away her pillows and encouraging her to get up. To the surprise of her family, Mary Gale got up and got dressed and was immediately free. Later one of Mary Gales' doctors told Mrs. Glover that Gale had been addicted to morphine which she was taking for her consumption which was also healed at the time of the pneumonia. Mrs. Glover prayerfully treated the addiction which was cured within three days. This doctor asked Mrs. Glover how she healed Mary Gale. When Mary said she only knew that God was the healer Dr. Clark encouraged her to write it in a book so the whole world could benefit by it. She learned the need to arouse the individual to accept his or her divine rights just as Jesus had demonstrated centuries before when he required individuals to take up their beds and walk. Through a process of treatment which argues the divine facts pertaining to one's experience, this arousal carries us to consider prospects which material reason and logic consider impossible.

Mary Baker Eddy was a healer, a teacher, a lecturer, a writer, an administrator. Through it all, however, her passion was to show the world how to perform the healing works found in the Bible. Her life was not about being famous; it was about setting down the science of healing so that anyone who wished could learn it. She aroused patients to accept their divine rights of freedom but at the core of this effort was the desire to arouse the world to the recognition of what she called "practical operative, Christian Science." In **Science and Health** she gives definition to this passion:

*I saw before me the sick, wearing out years of servitude to an unreal master in the belief that the body governed them, rather than Mind. The lame, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the sick, the sensual, the sinner, I wished to save from the slavery of their own beliefs and from the educational systems of the Pharaohs, who to-day, as of yore, hold the children of Israel in bondage.*

This occurred she believed because of ignorance of divine power. Mary Baker Eddy did not consider herself an inventor of this healing method, nor did she claim to have a corner on the market of spiritual healing. She simply claimed to have discovered how Jesus healed and how others could imitate that healing ability. Whatever criticism can be laid to Mrs. Eddy, the fact remains that she accomplished that task. She healed others quickly and decidedly and this healing method continues today for those who have learned her method. Skepticism about the claims of Christian Science healing has persisted through the decades. One of the most vocal critics of spiritual healing encourages readers through his writing not to accept these accounts of healing just because someone claims it happened. Mrs. Eddy would probably agree with that, but her answer to that challenge was to find out for yourself, prove to yourself if what she said is true. Her book **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures** shows any interested and honest seeker how to accomplish these healing works. Today, whether you know nothing about this healing method or have been



practicing it for years you can take this book, open it to virtually any page and begin thinking – not just reading, but thinking. It will show you how to find new possibilities in life, new freedoms, it addresses the yearning heart.

## **Conclusion**

Today I've taken some of the words and the works of Mary Baker Eddy in an effort to show you who this remarkable woman was and to give you some idea about this form of Christian healing takes place. We explored some of the founding points and practices of this healing method. First we started with the need to understand the nature of God and particularly focused on the nature of God as not being manlike but being divine Love. Recognizing God as Love gives the foundation for why healing takes place: because there is a Source to all of us that cares. We then discussed the natural outcome of this Love to be spiritual affection and defined spiritual affection as caring enough to see in each individual their spiritual integrity. Spiritual integrity is our likeness to God, so we need to see in each one God's own likeness. This kind of seeing and acting led us to the next point which was the role of spirituality in healing. Spirituality was defined not as our theory about God but our practice of God, that is the putting into daily life the divine nature which must animate each of us. We discussed how spiritual issues must become supreme in our lives and must outweigh the tendency to see and pursue life materially. This kind of growth that leaves the old for the new is what is called the "new birth." But we don't need to be overwhelmed about this need; spiritual regeneration goes on with each hour, each right endeavor, every right thought and act. We don't suddenly awaken into spiritual perfection but enjoy the journey and ambition. Finally we talked about accepting our divine rights. As we journey we need to learn to claim our rights, to argue in our behalf for what is good, and right, and true about our natures. We need to be vehement about what is divinely bestowed on us, to participate in a spiritual rebellion against the persistent claims that all we will ever be is material.

Healing is not the reward at the end of the journey. Healing goes on as the encouragement to take the journey. Many people feel that they have to be totally together spiritually to be healed, otherwise God will take no account of them. Mary Baker Eddy had an interesting attitude about that. She felt that healing was an invitation to spiritual growth, an experience that would so impress human consciousness that it could not wait to find out why healing happened. In a comment to a student who once professed to Mrs. Eddy that she did not heal a patient because he did not believe in the Christ, Mrs. Eddy ask her if it ever occurred to her that if she had healed her patient he might have wanted to find out about the Christ. Healing is a right that each one of us has a right that comes from God; God gives that right to everyone unconditionally. We all have lessons to learn and healing is often times what guides us to those lessons.

There are a thousand ways of telling the story I have shared with you today. There are so many lessons that Mary Baker Eddy's life has to share with others. Most of us who have

studied her book and the life of its author have favorite passages and experiences. In closing I want to share with you one of mine. It is the story of young George Norton. Mrs. Eddy met George for the first time when he was seven years old in May of 1866. Only a few months earlier the then Mrs. Glover had been healed of the fall that she marked as the point of discovery of Christian Science. She was just beginning to put the lessons of that experience together, to figure out what she was going to do with her discovery. One day while walking on the beach at Lynn, MA perhaps deep in thought about where she was going to go from this point in her life, she came upon George who was sitting on a blanket with his legs covered. George's mother had left him there for a few moments while she went to hitch up the buckboard to drive them home. Mrs. Glover asked George why he was not playing with the other children. He told her that he had never walked, and then pulled the blanket back to show her why. He had been born with clubfeet, so distorted that they both pointed backwards. She put her arms under his and despite his protests to the contrary told him to stand. Then guiding his feet with hers, she encouraged him to take some steps. When George's mother came back to pick him up and take him home, George was not on the blanket. Looking down at waters' edge she saw her son walking with Mrs. Glover. Can you imagine what that experience meant to young George? Can you feel the yearning that boy must have had to be able to run and play with the other children? And perhaps the sadness of realizing that he would never know what that would feel like? One afternoon in the sun on a beach encountering a woman who yearned to share with others the majesty of God changed George's life. Mary Baker Eddy lifted George to fulfill his dreams. She has done that for thousands of others who have met her through her book. What are your dreams?

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