

# New Birth and Healing in the 21st Century

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Some years ago in a movie sequel to the popular television series, Startrek, the crew of the starship Enterprise travels back in time from their lives in the 24th century to save the whales in the 21st century. Upon arriving in San Francisco, they encounter a man jogging on the Marina Green, along side the San Francisco Bay. He is suddenly struck with a heart attack; while others are encouraging calling emergency to take him to the hospital, the crew remarks on the rather primitive method of health care still in use and proceeds to quickly treat the man with mental means. How far are we away from that bit of science fiction? At the turn of the 21st century we are a lot closer than some may think.

Today there is widespread dialogue about the effect ones thinking has on ones health. Three quarters of the medical schools in this country now offer courses in the Body-Mind connection; some med schools actually offer majors in this study; well over a thousand clinical studies have been performed on the positive effect of prayer and meditation on the quality of an individual's health; books on what is termed "the faith factor" in health care are best sellers in bookstores; hospitals encourage physicians to respond to the mental and spiritual requests of patients. Clearly there is a shift away from treating people through physical means alone, and the realm of thought becomes more and more a consideration. That being said, is this the revolution in healing that one might expect in the coming century?

While we can be grateful that health care professionals are finally breaking out of their materialistic eggs and seeing treatment as something more than the manipulation of matter, we're still on just the cuspis of a much larger iceberg. In some respects recognizing the mental influence in healing is but the other side of a still too unmalleable coin. To many mentality is nothing more or less than the activity of the brain, an entity which is held to transmit either beneficial or deleterious effects over the body. The challenge many of us who have been engaged in spiritual healing have is the presumption that our definitions of terms like mentality and spirituality are widely held. In fact they are not and knowledge of this helps us keep striving to establish in human consciousness what the real revolution regarding healing is.

To get at just what that revolution is, I would invite you to make our own attempt at time travel and move back some 2000 years ago. This is a time that is witnessing what is arguably the most notable event in human history-the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This event, the demonstration over mortality, will provide the stimulus to unlock the most widely cherished treasures of Life itself. Let's say that you and I are fortunate enough to be

present at Jesus' meeting with his disciples just after his resurrection. You can imagine the astonishment that most would hold about this experience. What would you ask Jesus? What would you want to know from this man who exercised the very authority of God? Take a moment to think about that.

Perhaps some of you might ask a question that in fact was asked of Jesus some time before that moment. Maybe like Nicodemus, you would want to know how one could live a life of dominion like Jesus did, how one could access the laws of God. Jesus answered the spoken and unspoken questions of Nicodemus by telling him that to enter into the kingdom of God, this reign of dominion in life, one must be born again. While Nicodemus struggled with how being born again would be possible humanly, Jesus encouraged him to take a totally different perspective. The answer was not in reinventing the human condition but leaving its confines for Spirit. Jesus showed Nicodemus that he must experience the new birth of Spirit; he must lay aside his efforts to manipulate matter and strike out for the new realm of Spirit. He must come to understand himself and experience around him spiritually and not materially.

This is the essence of the new birth, to understand all things from a spiritual perspective. In short that means coming to understand things from the standpoint of God's seeing. The new birth asks us to start thinking out from the standpoint of Spirit, to start reasoning from the logic of a spiritual premise. That spiritual premise means this: if divine Spirit is the reality of all existence then everything that exists must be the evidence of Spirit, must manifest the nature of Spirit. Spirit and matter are opposites, one ceases in our lives as the other is recognized. It is not possible to combine these two opposites any more than it is possible to combine things like light and darkness, ice and vapor, love and hate. Opposites do not combine, even just a little, even just for a moment. Consider the case of a woman that I knew about. She had a growth on her leg that had become quite painful. When she couldn't stand it any more she went to have it examined. The physician told her that her growth was cancerous and that it had metastasized to such extents that if the leg were not amputated immediately she could well lose her life. She thought about the prospect of losing her leg to amputation and told her physician that she just couldn't bring herself to do it. He impressed upon her that if she did not follow through with the operation immediately she could be dead within three months. Distraught, she confided in a neighbor whom she respected for her religious faith. Her neighbor was a Christian Scientist who encouraged her to consider trying prayer to meet her dilemma. The neighbor gave this woman a copy of **Science and Health with key to the Scriptures** and marked some passages in the book to get her started. As she read the book she became less fearful and for the first time could see a way out of her problem. Her family, however, took a decidedly different view of the situation and pleaded with her to follow the physician's advice. She told her family that she respected their concerns and that she realized she had an obligation to them too in this situation. She couldn't however bring herself to accept the consequences of the operation. She postponed the procedure and continued to read,

gaining confidence slowly that God would care for her. Three months passed, then six, then nine, a year. While she still had the growth on her leg, she did not die.

She continued to read and study the book and gradually she began to move from hope that God would heal her to a growing understanding that the real essence or substance of her life was in spiritual ideas. She started identifying herself less as a mortal with cancer and more as a spiritual entity, sustained and constituted of the qualities of divine Spirit. She was particularly intrigued with what the book was revealing to her about the nature of matter and how it was best seen as a mental phenomenon and not a physical one. She began to assert her dominion based on seeing that God provided the only true laws regarding her life. One day while riding on a train to visit her daughter she watched the scenery quickly pass the window; she thought about how quickly one scene passed and another view entered. It struck her that this scene of disease and the threat of death was quickly passing from her thought and being replaced by an entirely new view, a new birth. When she disembarked, her daughter met her and said, "Mother, you've had your healing, I can see it in your face." And her daughter was right; while she hadn't noticed it before, from that moment there was no evidence of the growth. Many years have now passed and the woman has had no more effects. Well, actually that is not entirely true. She has continued to grow in her new birth, in her new perspective regarding life.

Coming back to the questions one might ask Jesus, you might want to know how Jesus healed situations that maybe you felt you couldn't. This question, too, was one that Jesus had addressed with his disciples when they asked how come he could heal a boy of epilepsy that they had failed to cure. Those that know the story will remember Jesus' answer: *"This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."* Mary Baker Eddy, the most prolific spiritual healer of modern times commented about that directive: *"Merely to abstain from eating was not sufficient to meet his demand. The animus of his saying was: Silence appetites, passion, and all that wars against Spirit and spiritual power."* Being new born in the Spirit is not merely a matter of wanting a new life; the first stages of new birth certainly "nourish the hungry hope" but there is so much more to this process. After the initial stages of tasting "heaven come down to earth" there is work to be done. And quite frankly this is what true spirituality is about. It involves regeneration of thought, redemption of character, renewal of motives, aims, and ambitions along spiritual lines.

This quite naturally requires us first to be willing to let go of simply trying to fix matter. The new birth demands that we be willing to give up the conventional, the traditional, and most often the humanly comfortable. This giving up may at first seem unsettling, even a bit scary. But the promise of the new birth is in renewed inspiration, dominion, and fulfillment. We need to be clear that this new birth requires sacrifice, but what we are sacrificing are not ultimately things we'd want to hold onto anyway. We're called upon to sacrifice such things as envy, malice, hatred, lust, selfishness — the things that stand in the way of a

clearer spiritual perception regarding life and health. Some of the most meaningful healings I've ever witnessed have come through this kind of sacrifice and growth.

One fellow I was acquainted with had a mighty struggle with sensuality and lust. Now this man was a kind and considerate person in many respects. He helped many young men with their education, gave them jobs, put them in contact with others who could help them. He had a pleasant disposition, was humorous, and pursued a spiritual path. On the outside you would think he was pretty much the model citizen, and in many respects he was. He was creative, generous, and supportive of many projects in his community. In some respects he was a little like all of us, perhaps feeling that there were enough good things going on in his life that he didn't really need to address the other aspects. However, his sensuality constantly got him into trouble, first with rumors (which actually turned out to be mostly true), then law suits, then indictments and arrests. All the time there was rationales and excuses as to why he ended up in these predicaments but never a real introspective accounting of what might be at issue. At one point, faced with possible imprisonment he fled the country and sought asylum in another country that would not extradite him. He tried to make a new life there and pursue his creative talents. While the problem became somewhat dormant in that his circumstances had changed, it was still not addressed. Then he made a mistake and tried to enter this country with a forged passport. He was taken into custody and landed in prison. He came face to face with the thing that he dreaded most in his life.

Entering his cell he found, unaccountably, a copy of **Science and Health** on his bunk. Having nothing else to do, he opened the book and began to read. He could hardly get beyond the first chapter on Prayer. His thought logged on to these sentences in that chapter:

*Simply asking that we may love God will never make us love Him; but the longing to be better and holier, expressed in daily watchfulness and in striving to assimilate more of the divine character, will mould and fashion us anew, until we awake in His likeness. We reach the Science of Christianity through demonstration of the divine nature; but in this wicked world goodness will "be evil spoken of," and patience must bring experience.*

*Sorrow for wrong-doing is but one step towards reform and the very easiest step. The next and great step required by wisdom is the test of our sincerity, — namely, reformation. To this end we are placed under the stress of circumstances. Temptation bids us repeat the offence, and woe comes in return for what is done. So it will ever be, till we learn that there is no discount in the law of justice and that we must pay "the uttermost farthing."*

Now I have opened that same book many times in my life, and I can tell you that mostly when I open it, I find words of comfort and support, something like your mom telling you that everything is going to be alright. But my friend found something else in his reading: words that went right to his soul, addressing the issue that had so long been ignored. Like a surgical knife, those words cut right to the issue, and he saw immediately what he needed to do. Was it what is called an “instantaneous healing?” Yes, in many respects it was but it also was going to be a work in progress. In an effort to assimilate more of the divine character in his life, he continued to read at every opportunity. Some things happened. After that original reading he left his cell for the allotted time for personal hygiene. While in the shower, the other inmates suddenly left and he was all alone. A very large, actually huge, black man came into the shower and stood next to him. He told him that there was an initiation that commonly happened to new inmates. Fearing the worst, he was surprised to see this man smiling at him and saying to him, “God told me to protect you.” This fellow became his constant companion and bodyguard. But even more, he started to bring to my friend other inmates who had questions about God and needed help overcoming the demons that had too long possessed their lives. He remained in prison for about a year before he was released, and his days were entirely filled with conversations and prayer about the redeeming nature of the Christ—God’s relationship to man. Each night he would read more from this book, and each new day he would share what he had been reading. He said it was as if God were simply relaying messages through him; he learned from what he was saying because he truly felt that the words were not his own. Needless to say, when he left that prison, he was a new man; he had experienced the new birth through redemption and regeneration and the issues of sensuality and lust never plagued him again.

To me this kind of healing represents what the real revolution must be like in the coming century. Mrs. Eddy once remarked that physical healing is only the bugle call to the higher mission of Christian Science healing:

*Healing physical sickness is the smallest part of Christian Science. It is only the bugle-call to thought and action, in the higher range of infinite goodness. The emphatic purpose of Christian Science is the healing of sin; and this task, sometimes, may be harder than the cure of disease; because, while mortals love to sin, they do not love to be sick. Hence their comparative acquiescence in your endeavors to heal them of bodily ills, and their obstinate resistance to all efforts to save them from sin through Christ, spiritual Truth and Love, which redeem them, and become their Saviour, through the flesh, from the flesh, —the material world and evil.*

We need this higher mission if we are going to be of real use to our world. This is the “higher range of infinite goodness” that only those who understand the redeeming nature of the Christ can accomplish. Healing sin requires wrestling with ourselves before we can wrestle with others. But this is part of the new birth, and honestly, I don’t know another more qualified group of healers that can accomplish this task. We must not turn our back on Mrs. Eddy’s vision of this healing method; we owe it to her, to God, to ourselves, and to our world to begin fishing in the deeper waters of this emphatic purpose.

How do we accomplish this task without seeming presumptuous or self-righteous? Let’s take the luxury of yet one more effort at time travel and go back in time when we might have had the opportunity to ask Mrs. Eddy a question. Interestingly, at the conclusion of her classes instructing pupils to become healers, students were afforded the opportunity to ask this remarkable woman what questions they might have regarding this healing work; most frequently no one asked a question. One question we might have posed is “what is required of us to become the kind of healers you expect—accomplishing healing that is not delayed, protracted, or guesswork?” Mrs. Eddy actually addressed that question once. Someone had written to her to ask, if her healing method was the same that Jesus employed, why didn’t her students heal as instantaneously?” Here is her reply:

*The reason that the same results follow not in every case, is that the student does not in every case possess sufficiently the Christ-spirit and its power to cast out the disease. The Founder of Christian Science teaches her students that they must possess the spirit of Truth and Love, must gain the power over sin in themselves, or they cannot be instantaneous healers.*

In this Christian warfare the student or practitioner has to master those elements of evil too common to other minds.

Let’s take a look at two elements in that reply: what is the Christ-spirit and what are the elements of evil too common to other minds? The spirit of the Christ is something more than just argument or theory. Entertaining the Christ spirit in our lives is tantamount to living the kind of life Jesus lived. Now most of us are not going to run off to the Holy Land and trek around the dusty hillsides of Judea. But that is not really the life that Jesus lived. Jesus lived a life connected with God. That meant that he acknowledged in his life not a single capacity that was separated from God working in him. Jesus, in a sense, challenged the mortal theory that one has a selfhood, a personality, which is separate from God. In so doing he became a very clear transparency for good, for God. His power over human discord came by individualizing infinite power, being the individual expression of God’s might. This capacity is open to everyone but it does require challenging the claims of mortal personality—egotism, human will, self-love, self-justification. As long as there is a moment of self-glorification in our attitudes, just as long do we sacrifice the divine power.

There is no greater need than challenging a sense of personality in one's healing work. Man is not the healer; God is the healer and man only heals when governed by God. In the new birth we are awakened to this fact: that spirituality is not some factor of the human mind, it is the manifestation of the divine Mind. Spirituality that is not defined as connection with and manifestation of divine Spirit is not spirituality at all but merely a phase of the egotism of the human mind. This egotism will not heal, no matter how dramatically it parades around and impresses human thought. The more that the would be healer asserts himself, the less will be the healing effect. Mrs. Eddy gave this admonition to her students: *I earnestly advise all Christian Scientists to remove from their observation or study the personal sense of any one, and not to dwell in thought upon their own or others' corporeality, either as good or evil.*

Many years ago when I first began my healing practice, a woman began to call me frequently. She responded quite quickly to the treatments given and rarely required more than one. She was healed of migraine headaches, psoriasis, and manic depression. We were on quite a roll. But as time went on, she began to call at every turn of event in her life. It was becoming pretty obvious that she was looking to me to be the major support in her life. While I was becoming increasingly concerned about this issue, and at times mildly irritated, I did not really address it in any meaningful way. One night I got a call from a physician in the emergency room at the General Hospital. He told me that this woman had been in a car accident and was brought to the hospital emergency room, and she was lapsing in and out of consciousness. She had no family to speak of, and during one of her moments of lucidity, she asked the physician to call me. The physician called to tell me that her vital signs were failing and that they wanted permission to operate immediately or she would surely lose her life. I told him that while I certainly did know this patient I was hardly in the position to give him any permission to do anything for her. He said, "I'll take that as a 'yes'" and hung up the phone.

Well, here I was in a very personal situation: presented with the personal responsibility for making decisions for someone I had no right to be making decisions for. Fortunately, I realized immediately this was the consequence for not doing something that I should have done long before; I needed to challenge the issue of personality—the sense of a selfhood apart from God. I knew that this individual belonged to God, that God made all the crucial decisions regarding its own ideas, and that my job was to see her evidencing the presence of God, divine Love caring for her in every vital way. Jesus' remark came to thought, "of mine own self, I can do nothing." It occurred to me that Jesus might very well have believed that, right down to the breath that he took. Not a single function, faculty, or activity of man or woman could go on without the divine presence; we have in ourselves absolutely no capacity that is independent from God's manifestation. Within a very short period of time I received another call from the emergency room. It was the physician who said that they had wheeled the patient into the operating room, hooked her up to the monitoring devices in preparation for surgery, and much to their surprise found the vital functions to have

normalized. He commented, "I don't know what you Christian Scientists do, but I certainly want to know more about it." She was released the next day to the local Christian Science care facility where she had a complete and rapid recovery. I made sure that the doctor got a copy of Science and Health.

I want to be very clear about one point here: I see this healing as taking place because of my need to address the issue of personality in my practice. It has been a lesson not lost on me over the years. It is also a lesson that I get to revisit many times. Every time a patient remarks about how wonderful the healing work has been, every time a pupil comments about how terrific class or association has been, every time some one writes and says how clear an article has been that I wrote, or a lecture that I have given, every single time I must face the evil of personality. And why? Because if any element of personal satisfaction or glorification enters my thought and takes root, my healing ability as a transparency for God is compromised. The assignment for our coming together this afternoon was the reading of Mrs. Eddy's article on The New Birth in her work **Miscellaneous Writings**. There is a passage in that article that I would like to reference and leave you with as a charge for new birth and healing in the years to come:

*Between the centripetal and centrifugal mental forces of material and spiritual gravitations, we go into or we go out of materialism or sin, and choose our course and its results. Which, then, shall be our choice, — the sinful, material, and perishable, or the spiritual, joy-giving, and eternal?*

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