

A Christian Science
Lecture Entitled

**MARY BAKER EDDY: LEADER
OF THOUGHT**

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly one hundred and fifty years ago (1850's) it was a man's world. If women were married, generally, they couldn't work. They were servants of their husbands. They couldn't own any property. They couldn't vote. Their children belonged to their husband. When the husband died, all his wealth went to the eldest son.

Nothing was left to the wife. She was dependent on her son to take care of her, and upon the good graces of her daughter-in-law to continue including her in family life. Home is where women belonged - according to men.

Women weren't supposed to think. Studying law, voicing an opinion, standing up for what you believed in, were frowned upon - by men and most women. Laws prevented women from utilizing their rights. Laws which men wrote. Laws which governed women. But women couldn't cast a vote to change the laws. It was a vicious circle. It made it man's world.

But, not all men were oppressive to women, just as not all women were subservient to men. Someone once wrote, "Earth's actors change earth's scenes..." We all can think of a few men whose lives have had a lasting influence and changed earth's scenes for the better.

Individuals like Abraham Lincoln, who fought for fair homesteading, tariff reform and emancipation of the African American through his state and military leadership. Thomas Edison who invented the electric light bulb, the first sound recording device,

and the motion picture projector. And Eli Whitney, best known for inventing the cotton gin, benefits the world with his standardization of interchangeable parts.

And, we can also think of a few brave women whose lives have had a lasting influence, as well. Women such as Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, pioneers in women's suffrage.

"Earth's actors change earth's scenes..." (02 p.17:13). Those are the words of someone who has changed earth's scenes in religion, medicine, and journalism.

That quote wasn't written by a man. They are the words of a woman. A woman who, a few years ago, was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. She was honored because her words have changed the world. In fact it's been noted that she is "the only American woman to found a lasting American based denomination." This woman is Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.

**"...HOPING FOR A VISION OF
RELIEF FROM THIS TRIAL."**

Mary Morse Baker was born in Bow, New Hampshire, in 1821, the youngest of six children. Her father, Mark Baker, was a farmer and a strict Calvinist. He was an intelligent man who possessed a strong will. Her mother was her anchor throughout childhood and early adulthood.

In 1838 she joined the Congregational Church. And in her early twenties she married George Washington Glover. But within the year he died of yellow fever. Mary was six months pregnant. Because it was a man's world she had no way of supporting herself. She returned to her parent's home to deliver and raise her child.

Because she was frail and unable to take care of her son, he was sent away. Of this experience she writes: "...The night before my child was taken from me, I knelt by his side throughout the dark hours, hoping for a vision of relief from this trial" (Ret.20).

Relief from that trial never came by the return of her child. So, a few years later Mary married again to get her son back. But, with her father's consent the son was moved to the Far West with the nurse's family. Mary tried everything to find him and bring him home. He would be thirty-four years old, with a wife and two children, before she saw him again.

From birth until her mid-forties, Mrs. Eddy suffered from frailty and sickness. She sought long and hard for relief. Through her search for truth she began to recognize that thought acts upon the human mind and body. She writes, "During twenty years prior to my discovery I had been trying to trace all physical effects to a mental cause; and in the latter part of 1866 I gained the scientific certainty that all causation was Mind, and every effect a mental phenomenon" (Ret. 24). She was learning that everything we experience is a result of our thinking, be it good or bad. And she proved this by healing herself of an injury solely through her prayers to God. S

She tells us about her research after this healing when she writes, "The Bible was my textbook. It answered my questions as to how I was healed;... My immediate recovery from the effects of an injury caused by an accident, an injury that neither medicine nor surgery could reach, was the falling apple that led me to the discovery how to be well myself, and how to make others so" (Ret.25, 24).

FOUR ASPECTS

From this "falling apple" experience she gained a glimpse of what she would ultimately offer to the world: a contemporary understanding of Christ Jesus' healing method. A method she recorded in this book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.

She spent the next forty-five years healing, teaching, writing, lecturing, and establishing her church. She learned how to stay well herself, how to make others well, and taught others how to do it themselves. The effects of her discovery touch some facet of almost everyone's life. In particular, she has been honored for advancing four different constituents of humanity's concerns: society, religion, medicine, and journalism.

Mark Twain tells us most succinctly *what* Eddy did when he writes: "She has organized and made available a healing principle that for two thousand years has never been employed except as the merest kind of guesswork. She is the benefactor of the age" (203).

SOCIETY

During Mrs. Eddy's lifetime the issue of Women's Rights was just beginning. Mary Baker Eddy and her contemporary, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, devoted their efforts to conquer inequality between men and women. But, they saw the solution differently. Stanton saw that women had to be educated about their rights, given strength to stand up for them, and taught how to do it. Eddy saw that men and women alike needed to be spiritually educated about their divine rights, given strength to stand up for them, and taught how to do it.

Stanton spent her life lecturing, writing, and teaching about women's rights. Eddy spent her life lecturing, writing, and teaching about man's rights - man made in God's image - male and female.

Here let me explain, when Eddy uses the term 'man' to describe God's creation she's referring to all of God's creation including women and men. She is by no means simply speaking about the masculine gender. Rather, she's speaking about both genders, masculine and feminine - equally. In fact, the dictionary supports her in her usage when it defines "man" as "a person of unspecified sex, an individual" (OAD, p. 538).

Both women recognize that each one of God's children have inalienable rights that can not be given nor taken by any human being.

These ideas were the topic at the Annual Convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1885. At this convention the suffragist tried to pass a resolution that woman was not "an after-thought in the creation, her sex a misfortune, marriage a condition of subordination, and maternity a curse..." (381). They resolved to "call on the Christian ministry, as leaders of thought, to teach and enforce the fundamental idea of creation, that man was made in the image of God, male and female, and given equal rights over the earth, but none over each other. And, furthermore, we (they) ask(ed) their recognition of the scriptural declaration that, in the Christian religion, there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus."

Stanton and her sisters knew within themselves that 'man was made in the image

of God, male and female' with God-given rights. Eddy knew this, too. And Eddy taught this, and proved it through her healings.

Mrs. Eddy was a 'leader of thought'. She would found a church based upon the God-given rights of all. Women and men alike are able to serve the church equally. There is no inequality - either humanly or spiritually. This is because of Eddy's spiritual understanding of what Stanton calls 'the fundamental idea of creation.'

RELIGION

To Eddy religion isn't something made of creeds and rituals. Rather it is the way she lives. It is a way of thinking, of acting, of doing. And Eddy was wise enough not to let her discovery remain in theory. She tested it and proved its practicality by healing others. There are documented reports of Eddy healing invalids, the deaf, blind, and diseased and the dying.

One healing is recorded in a book titled *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer*. This healing shows the power of spiritual right thought, or prayer. It records: "In 1853, when a small child, Susie (M. Lang) moved with her parents from Boston to Lawrence (Massachusetts) where she attended public schools and graduated with honors from the Lawrence High School. She studied piano and organ after graduating, and became a talented musician....

"About the year 1878 she was afflicted with an illness which her family physician in Lawrence was unable to cure. Her parents took her to a private hospital and sanatorium in Boston,... When Miss Lang entered this hospital she was suffering from one physical disability, but after lingering there for more than a year she was informed by her attending physician that every organ in her frail body was diseased; and she was given up to die. During the many months of her prolonged illness in the hospital she daily read and studied her Bible, confident of God's love and goodness. It was then that God came to her rescue, for 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' Miss Lang and her father, Alfred Lang, then became aware of Mrs. Eddy's system of Christian healing.... Her father went to call upon Mrs. Eddy to ask for Christian Science treatment for his daughter. Mrs. Eddy took the case

and the result was marvelously successful. Miss Lang was perfectly and permanently healed" (233).

MEDICINE

Eddy discovered that the medicine Jesus used was the medicine of Mind, divine Mind, or God. This medicine isn't what we commonly think of today, rather it was Jesus' theology.

Eddy taught that medicine isn't a mere combination of substances that produce certain (and sometimes uncertain) effects. Rather, to her, medicine is a practical, systematic theology. It is an understanding of God and man's relationship. She reasoned, "It is plain that God does not employ drugs or hygiene, nor provide them for human use; else Jesus would have recommended and employed them in his healing"(S&H 143).

So, Eddy began to test her ideas. In her book, *Science and Health*, she tells us the results of her theory: Practicing homeopathy she attenuated common table-salt until it was completely dissolved. Then she gave her patient a glass of water combined with the mixture every three hours. Doing this she healed her patient in the last stage of typhoid fever.

She says of her findings, "...it may be learned that either human faith or the divine Mind is the healer and that there is no efficacy in a drug" (153).

She continued her healing work. And she healed, simply through her prayers over and over again. For example, in 1884 she healed a spiritualist of gallstones who had interrupted her lecture because of the pain. That healing was public – taking place in front of a large and somewhat skeptical audience. And the interesting thing to me is that this healing took place the year before the NWSA called for divine rights to be recognized by the clergy. Mrs. Eddy did recognize the divine rights of all and she was proving it through her healing works. (MBE: *Christian Healer*, p.260).

Because of her healing results she would come to write, "A miracle fulfils God's law, but does not violate that law" (S&H 134). So, she devoted her life to the medicine of divine Mind, God. Over and over again she proved the laws of God are effective for

those who glimpse their God-given spiritual freedom.

One hundred and twenty-five years ago Eddy recorded what she learned, tested, and proved. It's in this book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Today, many people are testing the contents of this book on their own lives and finding for themselves the power of the medicine of divine Mind.

This book is widely read. The author's philanthropy and her contributions have affected almost every field of study. She has been called "One of the most powerful, influential and controversial women of the 19th century."

Mrs. Eddy was controversial. She was controversial because she went against the conventional ways of looking at life, at thought, at God.

The last one hundred pages of this book are filled with testimonies from individuals who were healed simply by reading this book. And today the world is filled with individuals who can testify to the healing effects of Mrs. Eddy's discovery.

JOURNALISM

Because of all that Eddy did, her healings, her teachings, her lecturing, her writing, it's no puzzle that by 1900 she was an international phenomenon. By 1910 1/2 million copies of *Science and Health* had been sold. (Today over 9 million copies of this book have been sold).

She was sought by the press, by the pulpit, by all who had the slightest curiosity to the greatest admiration. By the early 1900's Mrs. Eddy was accustomed to seeing her name in the paper praising her for her philanthropy and for the spiritual impetus her teachings had given to the world. Her writings were reaching the world and the world responded. Many were healed and turned to Christian Science permanently. In turn, they healed others. However, some were not as willing to accept these healings and teachings as genuine and felt that Eddy was a fraud. That's why some newspapers often reported lies concerning her and all she had done.

In 1906, a Christian Scientist who was a freelance journalist in New York, wrote to Mrs. Eddy to warn her of an upcoming plot to discredit her. The letter read: "Mr.

McClure, who is the owner and editor of McClure's Magazine and of McClure Syndicate... has been here a good deal lately; and among other things he has told me that McClure's Magazine is going to start a crusade against Christian Science.... They are to take up every phase and development of Christian Science and do what they can to ridicule and destroy it. This information is authentic. I heard it from Mr. McClure's own lips" (Peel, Authority, p.261).

If this wasn't enough another American journalist was preparing to get the jump on McClures. A biographer writes, "With rumors afloat that Mrs. Eddy was either dying or dead and that McClure's was digging up sensational facts in her past history, Joseph Pulitzer... convinced himself that it was his public duty to be the first to get the story out" (ibid).

What followed was a series of newspaper articles full of lies. However, Eddy saw that this yellow journalism not only affected her but all those who were in the public eye. She saw the need to protect the world from such misrepresentation flying through the papers of the day. Eddy responded by establishing *The Christian Science Monitor*, in 1908.

She wanted a newspaper that would enter the home reporting the things of the world that didn't have a sensational slant. She wanted a paper that didn't take people apart and lie about them. She wanted it to enable the reader to learn of the difficulties facing the world and provide an opportunity to pray about and heal those difficulties. It is a daily newspaper.

She told her students, "When I established *The Christian Science Monitor*, I took the greatest step forward since I gave *Science and Health* to the world" (ibid, p.311).

Yet, Eddy's contribution to journalism didn't begin with the *Monitor*. Many years earlier in 1883 she had established *The Christian Science Journal*, a monthly periodical; and in 1898 the *Christian Science Sentinel*, a weekly periodical. With these she touched the world. Each issue, although having different missions, share testimonies of healing and spiritual insights into her teachings. As a result, through her writings, in what she wrote in her periodicals, her newspaper, and in her books, have changed earth's scenes by

offering us a way to see a more heavenly view of an earthly experience.

CONCLUSION

Mary Baker Eddy was a thinker. Her thoughts and actions have changed earth's scenes for the better. Who she is is to be seen in what she has done.

Throughout her life she turned to God, and even though there were difficult experiences she was never without her Bible. Like most things, her Discovery wasn't discovered with a bang. It was discovered with a life, selflessly searching for God – the God who Mrs. Eddy felt in her heart, but hadn't yet definitively seen with her eyes.

Gradually throughout the years Mrs. Eddy learned more and more of how thought affects the body. Specifically, she learned how spiritual thinking heals the ill effects of material thinking.

Her prayers echoed her thoughts and the result was a Discovery based solely upon the teachings of Christ Jesus. It was her selflessness, her devotion to God, her humility that led her to God, to hear His voice, to follow His word.

So, when you go home tonight and think about what we have talked about here, the fact that Mrs. Eddy began a church, established periodicals and an international newspaper, and wrote *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, although indispensable to humanity, might not lead you to a deeper sense of God.

But, as you get to know Mrs. Eddy, as you see for yourself what she has done, as you read her writings, you will begin to recognize and feel the influence of her teachings upon mankind.

It is because of these teachings that you and I are in position to gain a greater knowledge of God, in knowing about His presence and power in our lives today. Certainly, Mrs. Eddy was a 'leader of thought', one of 'earth's actors who have changed earth's scenes' for the better.