

"MARY BAKER EDDY, HER CHARACTER AND MISSION"
From the Fern Lodge Annual Meeting



The Healing Grace of Spiritual Activity – Robin Barben, Activities Director

A key goal of my work is to be awake to the ever-present activity of Christ, Truth, and to recognize the truth of being as the only expression of man, including the patients and employees at Fern Lodge. Watchful and wakeful consciousness is required to see spiritual growth, especially when the beliefs of age, apathy, sin and disease attempt to distract thought. Rousing thought to the apprehension of the ever-present qualities of man in God's image brings the demonstration of man's natural wakefulness, where in open view it ignites the atmosphere of human thinking with the light of Truth. In that light the reality of perfect man appears. I'd like to share an instance in which we experienced this awakening.

As we began a Bible Lesson reading, only two patients in our group had their eyes open. My prayer was to realize that no matter how unresponsive these dear individuals seemed to be, their recognition of divine Love never could be diminished. I was tempted to think that, since the patients were asleep, I must not have been doing my job very well. But prayer led me to remember that it's not my job to wake people up; that's Truth's job. My job is to acknowledge Truth's presence, to see it at work, to feel its activity. I refused to accept the suggestion that man wasn't receptive, and I affirmed the fact that man is responsive and awake to Truth, to God's loving message, RIGHT NOW. And I held to this prayer even when I heard someone start to snore.

At one point a patient read a Bible passage, and I asked, "How would you put that in your own words?"

How would you say that to someone who wasn't familiar with the Bible or *Science and Health*?" Her answer was expressed with such clarity and joy that a wave of ideas seemed to flood the whole group. Now three of them were awake and alert. However, there still was snoring, and so I told of an earlier experience that happened in our group. Then, during the whole hour of an invigorating discussion, one individual appeared sound asleep. At the end of the session, I asked what people were going to take with them of the ideas we had shared. At this moment, the lady who seemed to have been asleep promptly replied to my question and gave an accurate account of what had been said earlier. For the rest of that day she remained alert, and with greater control of her mobility.

Our study group liked that earlier demonstration, and as we continued to read, I asked some hard questions, ones that had troubled me for a while. I heard marvelous answers from the patients. I have called the ideas the patients shared, here and at other times, "Words from the Wise," and we are sharing some below. Soon a patient shared a testimony of healing that had to do with our topic, and by this time EVERYONE was awake. Even a patient whose hearing device seemed to be malfunctioning was able to hear every word.

Awakening of thought in each of us was an active, on-going prayer that was opening us all up to healing ideas, and we were seeing proof of the healing effect of Truth as these ideas were held in consciousness. We felt this as proof of the effect of our love for God and man.

Words from the Wise

We have to be willing to do our part. We have to learn to look for the good and live as if the good is all there is. —H.S.

Our sense of Truth is a beacon, which sends healing to the whole world. —M.F.

The power of God is in us when we love. —L.W.

How do we follow Truth? By listening only to Truth! —I.M.

No part of the mortal life is real; none of its antics and trappings are real. There is only the life divine in Christ. —R.B.

How do you keep loving someone who seems unloveable? Realize God didn't make error. —A.W.

“MARY BAKER EDDY, HER CHARACTER AND MISSION”

The featured talk at the 2007 Fern Lodge Annual meeting was of great interest to Christian Scientists, and of importance to mankind. Brad Stock, PhD, of Columbus, Ohio, shared many precious glimpses into the character of the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy. Today, Christian Scientists around the world acknowledge with gratitude the contribution Mrs. Eddy has made to mankind's understanding of God, of Christ Jesus, and of spiritual healing. We recognize Mrs. Eddy as an individual whose insights into Christianity, and also into human affairs, were acute and practical. And we are deeply grateful for the blessings of physical healing and character renewal that come through the realization of Truth and Love which Mrs. Eddy presents in her main work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, and in her other writings.

But what about the general public? Does mankind have a clear understanding of who Mary Baker Eddy was? Do they recognize her place in the unfolding history of Christian thought and practice? Do they realize the practical insights and inspiration her writings provide to help mankind solve contemporary human problems, such as disease, contagion, pollution, greed, and the epidemic of violence, including war? Do they realize that Mrs. Eddy, through her writings and the Church she founded, has brought the Comforter to mankind, as was promised by Christ Jesus? Sadly, the answer to all these questions is, No. Today, the vast majority of people, including those who are educated and religious, are ignorant of Mary Baker Eddy, uninformed about her life work, and, more significantly, unaware of the deeply Christian character of this remarkable woman.

In his talk, Brad read excerpts from a wide range of sources. All were accounts of people who had met Mrs. Eddy or heard her speak. Between his readings, Brad shared insights on what the individual accounts revealed of Mrs. Eddy's character. He also related the importance of her example to those who would follow her in the healing, nurturing practice of Christian Science today. There is no adequate substitute for hearing the full presentation, but in this *Focus*, we will share a few of the accounts Brad read, and tell why these mean so much to us.

Our hope is to help mankind gain a better appreciation for Mary Baker Eddy. One step might be for people to regain the recognition of Mrs. Eddy that was common in her time. Here is what a broad spectrum of newspapers published shortly after Mrs. Eddy's passing in 1910. The following was compiled from many sources, which can be found in the book, *Tributes from the Press: Editorial Comments on the Life and Work of Mary Baker Eddy*.

“With the death of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy there passes from this world's activities one of the most remarkable women of her time.... She has builded...a great religious institution, a faith wide-spread and held by hundreds of thousands of believers. And not only is the number of her following notable, but likewise its character. Mrs. Eddy has not swept into her church myriads of the unthinking and uneducated. On the contrary, her teachings have appealed to the highest classes, and the level of the character and intelligence of the Christian Scientists is everywhere high.”

“Thoughtful men and women...must pay a tribute of respect and admiration for this earnest and forceful character who made such an imprint upon modern thought.” “The story of her life forms one of the most remarkable records among the histories of the religious leaders of the ages.” “She was the moving spirit in and the chief exemplar of a religious and spiritual phenomenon affecting...nearly the whole of the civilized world.” “That [her] message should appeal in a compelling way to a million or more intelligent men and women in the most searching and critical age and among the most mentally acute peoples of earth, is one of the most significant historic facts of the present.”

“She was a pioneer—one of the most extraordinary of whom there is a record—and there are few now who doubt that the body of facts and experience which has resulted from her pioneering is a valuable gain to knowledge.” “[Her] life's work will go down in...history as the equal of Wesley, Calvin, Luther, and others of like prominence.” “[She] has been one of the world's greatest benefactors” [and] “has contributed in a greater measure than any other man or woman since Calvary to the sum total of human happiness.” “[She] has been a power for good.”

"MARY BAKER EDDY, HER CHARACTER AND MISSION" — EXCERPTS FROM

"More than an ordinary woman[, Mrs. Eddy] was a great woman" "of rare power and intellect", [and] "she deserves to be ranked among the most striking, the most interesting, and the strongest figures that ever graced ... the annals of her sex." "She was [also] a profoundly good woman" [whose] "life was devoted to the uplift of mankind." "No other woman in modern times has ever reached anything like Mrs. Eddy's heights." "None other has had more widespread influence or is regarded with greater reverence by more people." "The history of womankind has no parallel to the career of Mary Baker Eddy." "From the present day back to where disappears in the mists of tradition the initial mileposts of... civilization ...[,] the pages of history are resplendent with the glory of earth's great women. Viewed from a broad perspective, however, they stand as a sisterhood of similarity - all save one. Like her there was none." "We believe her to have been the greatest woman the world ever knew."

[But Mrs. Eddy was] "not merely one of the world's great women [, she was also] one of the world's great personages...She must be adjudged great if measured only by the extent of the influence she exerted over the minds and lives of men and women all over the earth." "[She was] a great leader of superior ability," "one of the world's most brilliant executives and organizers," [and] "the most powerful religious leader of this age." "[She was also] one of the greatest intellectual forces of the world's history," and "her life-work, SCIENCE AND HEALTH, will have an eternal place in English literature." "She kindled a new light on earth." "[She] has done a great work in the world for good."

Although these tributes are touching and reassure us that Mrs. Eddy was recognized and honored, it is clear that the public misunderstood something of her true character and the real nature of her life work. We believe that if Mrs. Eddy is more accurately understood, mankind will receive a great blessing. Perhaps more important, if Mrs. Eddy is better understood among mankind, the students of Christian Science will be blessed. This is not wishful thinking. In a letter to one of her students she wrote, "Keeping the truth of [Mrs. Eddy's] real character before the public will help the students and do more than all else can for our Cause," (*The Emergence*

of *Christian Science*, Gottschalk, p.165). Plainly it is important for Christian Science nurses and practitioners to understand not only the theology of Christian Science contained in Mrs. Eddy's writings, but the Christian character that impelled Mrs. Eddy to pursue faithfully and to share unselfishly the understanding of divine Love, Life, and Truth.

The purpose of Fern Lodge is to heal. We work and pray to realize the Truth of God as Love and to recognize Love's immediate, present, and practical care for everyone. Our purpose is to heal, and the Christian Science nurses on our staff understand that their work is essential to the healing mission of Christian Science. They know that their healing influence does not depend on specific treatment for patients, but on the unerring healing influence of grace, which accompanies every demonstration of Christian character. In *Miscellaneous Writings*, page 101, Mrs. Eddy indicates that healing "becomes spontaneous," and in *Rudimental Divine Science*, 9:21, she writes, "The spiritual power of a scientific, right thought, without a direct effort, an audible or even a mental argument, has oftentimes healed inveterate diseases." The following two reminiscences show how we all can expect healing to result from the understanding of God, unselfishly expressed in genuine, loving Christianity.

Bertha Reinke was a young German woman who came to the United States to study medicine in search of a cure for her physical problems. She went to hear a "lady preacher" merely "out of curiosity, because it was unheard of in her country for women to preach. She had never heard of Christian Science and had not known of its focus on healing." She tells of her experience as follows: "Escorted by a gentleman, the 'Lady Preacher' appeared on the stage. For a few moments she gazed silently over the audience. I felt an atmosphere such as I had not known before. She spoke with a gentle, low, but very clear voice. As I was not accustomed to hear an address in English... , the words themselves were not understood. But as I listened, I experienced an inexpressible feeling of relief, and the pains and misery...had fallen away.... Not knowing to whom I had been listening, I asked an usher for the name of the Lady Preacher. In utter astonishment he

looked at me and answered, 'Why, that was Mrs. Eddy!' — Mrs. Eddy!? I had never heard the name before — I left the hall free and well" (*Christian Healer* 128-129).

The second account is by Mary Dunbar, a newcomer to Christian Science. "Mrs. Dunbar resolved to go and hear...Mrs. Eddy preach.... On her return home her family were waiting.... They asked her if she had actually seen Mrs. Eddy and what she looked like. Mrs. Dunbar replied that she had seen her but did not know what she looked like. They then asked what Mrs. Eddy wore, and Mrs. Dunbar replied, 'I do not know.' They inquired what Mrs. Eddy had said and again Mrs. Dunbar replied, 'I don't know.' In jest, they then asked her what she did know. To this Mrs. Dunbar replied, 'I know I have found the Truth. I know I have found that for which I have always sought.'" Mrs. Dunbar's young daughter was healed that night of a crippling bone disease without any specific treatment from a Christian Science practitioner (*Christian Healer* 127).

This kind of spontaneous healing, experienced by individuals who were in Mrs. Eddy's presence and who heard her speak, apparently was quite common. These days, in part because of the aggressive influence of a health care industry with a focus on material medicine, it is tempting for people to think that such healing was just the result of a remarkable, charismatic personality. Such healings might be interesting as "miracles," but they are seen as not within the realm of science and certainly not something most people should expect in their own lives. Mrs. Eddy emphatically teaches exactly the opposite. She writes, "Divine metaphysics...enables the learner to demonstrate the divine Principle, upon which Jesus' healing was based, and the sacred rules for its present application to the cure of disease" (*Science and Health* 146:31).

It is important to remember that while we respect and honor Mary Baker Eddy's Christian character, we do not believe that her influence for good and her healing authority were the outcome of her human personality. Nor do we believe that we can become better healers by nurturing our own personalities. Two passages from Mrs. Eddy's unpublished writings bear witness to the healing grace of true witnessing

and reveal an important aspect of spontaneous or instantaneous healing. In the first passage, she shares her own experience:

"I first gave to the world the Truth, Life, and Love that was revealed to me. I now give to the world the Truth, Life, and Love that I am experiencing. I did not understand in the first instance, but could tell what was revealed. I do understand in the second instance, and can testify from experience. What I did in healing at first was a manifestation of Divine power not understood. What I now do in healing is the manifestation of grace and spiritual understanding" (*The Christian Science Journal*, March 1997, p. 16).

Our Leader makes it clear that each one of us can expect in our lives the natural transition from healing as an expression of power to the manifestation of grace. And she tells us how. If we would be more effective healers, we must not dwell on cultivating our personalities, making ourselves look good in the eyes of others. Healing is the natural outcome of thought focused on God, divine and impersonal Love, not on the personalities, even the apparently loving personalities, of men and women. How important this lesson is for Christian Science nurses! Here's what Mrs. Eddy says in a letter to one of her students:

"The healing will grow more easy and be more immediate as you realize that God, Good, is all and Good is Love. You must gain Love, and lose the false sense called love. You must feel the Love that never faileth — that perfect sense of divine power that makes healing no longer power but grace" (*Christian Science Sentinel*, April 10, 2006, p. 9).

Each one of us has the potential and the ability to demonstrate the Christianity that heals spontaneously. The Christianity of one's character, far more than an attractive personality, is essential in a Christian Science nurse. For Christian Science nurses to fulfill their mission effectively, they must be obedient to the guidance Mrs. Eddy gives in *Science and Health*, page 395, "An ill-tempered, complaining, or deceitful person should not be a nurse. The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, —receptive

to Truth and Love." Isn't that a clear and concise description of Christian character expressed? A comforting distinction between human personality and Christian character is the difference between the origins of each. An individual's human personality is supposed to arise from a combination of genetics, or physical heredity, and the environment in which one is brought up. These influences, genetics and environment, presume men and women to be material mortals, who are at the mercy of circumstances, both before and after birth. But we trust the Bible, which teaches that man, male and female, is the image of God. The ability to demonstrate a Christian character is a gift of God to every one of His children.

On the front piece of the book, *MARY BAKER EDDY Christian Healer*, is the following quote by Phillips Brooks: "God has not given us vast learning to solve all the problems, or unfailing wisdom to direct all the wanderings of our brothers' 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." Following this quote is Mary Baker Eddy's response: "The secret of my life is in the above."

How are we to make the choice to be spiritual? What can Christian Science nurses do to ensure that their character is the outcome of God, good, and that their daily work demonstrates the presence of Love, which heals spontaneously? In his talk, Brad shared the following reminiscence by Calvin Hill, which is included in the book, *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy*, on pages 160-161.

[In my first private interview with her] she...asked me many questions...testing my grasp on Christian Science.... Finally, in a flash of apparent satisfaction with one of my answers, she said, "By the way, who is your teacher?" "Well, Mrs. — Mother," I replied, "I believe I shall have to call you my teacher. I have been studying your book, Science and Health...for the past four years and if what is said to me by one of your own students or by one of your students' students is not backed up or verified by your writings, I take no stock in his statements, none whatever!"

Mrs. Eddy stepped forward, placed her hand on my shoulder and patted it gently, saying, "My child, my child, my child, you're safe, you're safe, you're safe!"

....She then inquired if I had any questions..., but I was so impressed with her purity and greatness and my own impurity and unworthiness...that tears were running down my cheeks, and I could only reply..."No, Mother." I was aware that I was in the presence of the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science—the woman who, like Jesus, perceived the reality and allness of Spirit and the utter unreality and nothingness of matter, and who brought to mankind the Comforter of which he spoke.

Those who heard the Fern Lodge annual meeting were given an opportunity to grasp a clearer concept of Mrs. Eddy's character and to learn more of how to repeat today her remarkable healing work. We are convinced that through faithful obedience, Christian Science nurses at Fern Lodge, and Christian Scientists everywhere, should expect to heal spontaneously those who are yearning for comfort and aid. Through consecrated prayer, along with study of the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, we can ensure our protection from a sense of material personality,—either good or bad, our own or another's—and we can increase the daily demonstration of our God-given Christian character. In this way we will be faithful followers of the Master, Christ Jesus. In this way we will more clearly recognize and honor the life and work of our Leader. And in this way we will help mankind to gain and keep a better, more spiritual, understanding of Mary Baker Eddy and of the promised Comforter, divine Science.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Brad Stock is uniquely qualified to speak on the topic, "Mary Baker Eddy, Her Character and Mission." Brad received a doctoral degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has served as Manager of the Church History Department of The Mother Church, and as Special Researcher in the Office of the Christian Science Board of Directors. Brad now serves as Administrator of Glenmont, a Christian Science nursing facility near Columbus, OH. His work in the Christian Science nursing ministry has given him clear insights into the healing impetus of a Christian character and the grace of God.

What do Patients Think about Christian Science Nursing?

Patients at Fern Lodge, when asked to express what has especially touched them about Christian Science nursing, revealed surprising and thoughtful answers. It often is the simplest things we do out of pure love that hold the power to help a patient keep his or her thought in line with Love, and away from fear or confusion. Here are a few sample comments:

- “Just to have someone help me get up in the morning is something I really appreciate. The willingness of the nurses to do what I cannot do for myself, helps me to feel that I am still active in Life.”
- “All one has to do is look as though you need something, and it will be there! I find that to be such a pure reflection of Love! That is so much like God. It makes me feel very much cared for, to know that my needs are met with Love.”
- “Every nurse expresses love. To feel this love makes me feel cared for...it is such a sweet feeling to feel love in the little things.”
- “I love the nurses because they are so honest and helpful, and they never complain. I am very grateful for this help. It makes me feel that I can do anything the Lord asks me to do.”
- “The tenderness and jovialness of the nurses gives me hope.”
- “It is so comforting to feel the Christ in their presence. The nurses are so sincere and honest and loving. Love is always present when they are near.”
- “The nurses are so expressive of Love and Truth. The feeling I get of Love when they come into my room and talk to me from the heart of Christ makes me feel God’s presence, and I forget what error is telling me.”
- “I love how the nurses are always so focused. That focus gives me strength to deal with challenges. It really brings a smile to my face, just when I think it is an unsmileable situation. The love of the nurses expressed makes me feel enfolded in a great big hug.”

A group of patients got together and wrote to Sharon Strong, the Fern Lodge Director of Christian Science Nursing, “Thank you for all the times you remember who we really are in the exact moment when we forget. You see, the battle wages fiercely some days, and we are too busy trying to wield our sword of Spirit to thank you in the ways we know we should. The truth is that we can never thank you enough for coming into the battle and wielding your sword right along side us. Thank you, dearest friend, for the warfare you do on our behalf, and for the Christ-light of your love, which speaks a language beyond words, a language filled with light, that makes us feel that darkness cannot last.”

Our Purpose is to Heal

We are glad to witness healing as a result of the practice of Christian Science. Recently patients have come who were confined to bed when they arrived, but have made steady progress in regaining their God-given ability to be up and walking freely. Two individuals came at different times for care due to injuries that appeared to be sustained because of falls. Our Christian Science nursing staff worked with them to affirm that man is “unfallen, upright, pure and free,” (Science and Health) and that there can be no effect from the belief that man has fallen. Both returned home quickly, with freedom of movement and able to care for themselves.

It always is inspiring for us to see that the patients who remain at Fern Lodge praying to overcome the difficulty that led them to ask for our care, have significant healings while at the facility. Many of these patients have been healed quickly and completely of the symptoms of conditions that are believed to be seasonal or contagious, without any effect on other patients. We are especially grateful for instances in which severe decline in a patient’s condition has been reversed, and the patient has regained the freedom they formerly expressed.

Fern Lodge's Benevolent Focus

Our message to you is simply, "Thank You!" Thank you for your metaphysical and financial support. Fern Lodge depends on contributions from friends, and friendly organizations, to support our benevolent policies, and without that support Fern Lodge could not continue to operate as it now does.

Let me lay out the need in the simplest form,

- Each year Fern Lodge gives about \$975,000 in benevolence, or
- Each month we give \$81,000 in benevolence, or
- Daily we give \$2,700 in benevolence, or
- Hourly we give \$111 in benevolence.

So for every \$111 you donate, we can give one hour of benevolence to all of the patients at Fern Lodge who need financial assistance for Christian Science nursing.

Earlier this month a client called me, and during our conversation she mentioned how much the phrase, "Out of the amplitude of his pure affection, he defined Love," meant to her. As I reflected on our conversation, I thought, if there was ever an angel thought this was it, so I looked up the reference in

Science and Health, by Mary Baker Eddy. Interestingly, the first thing I noticed was the marginal heading, which says, "Inspiration of sacrifice."

Mrs. Eddy is referring to Christ Jesus and his work, but studying this reference brings clarity to the purpose of Christian Science nursing and Fern Lodge. Here is the quote from *Science and Health*, 54:3, 13-17: "Out of the amplitude of his pure affection, he defined Love. With the affluence of Truth, he vanquished error. The world acknowledged not his righteousness, seeing it not; but earth received the harmony his glorified example introduced. ... In witness of his divine commission, he presented the proof that Life, Truth, and Love heal the sick and the sinning, and triumph over death through Mind, not matter. This was the highest proof he could have offered of divine Love."

And so it is with Fern Lodge and Christian Science nursing.

Thank you for your love and support,

Robert Burch
Fern Lodge Treasurer

On our wish list

Fern Lodge has a need for a light- to medium-duty pickup truck, not in need of immediate repairs, for shopping and maintenance tasks. Please call George Strong at 510-886-2448, if you have one to donate.

Fern Lodge Focus — September 2007

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Castro Valley, CA 94546**

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