

Mary Baker Eddy: A Lifetime of Christian Service – Study Guide

A talk by Brad Stock – Canterbury Crest Annual Meeting (April 17, 2016)

As Mary Baker Eddy writes in a church by-law: “A Christian Scientist is a humanitarian; he is benevolent. . .” (*Manual of The Mother Church*, p. 46). That is our job description! Dr. Stock emphasized the fact that *benevolence* does not necessarily relate to *money*. According to a dictionary, benevolence is “the disposition to do good; good will; kindness; charitableness; the love of mankind.” True benevolence involves healing, for it relates directly to man’s reflection of God’s overflowing love for His creation. Thus, benevolence is at the heart of Christian Science.

In *Science & Health*, Mrs. Eddy sets forth two laws which are important to Christian Science nursing. On p. 8, she writes: “If we turn away from the poor, we are not ready to receive the reward of Him who blesses the poor.” And on p. 79, she writes: “Giving does not impoverish us in the service of our Maker, neither does withholding enrich us.” These laws are foundational to the ongoing success in Christian Science nursing. These are not abstract laws; they are practical. They increase our ability to do good, to be of service, to prosper. They are laws of benevolence. They enable us to live lives of Christian service.

Dr. Stock’s talk was organized into three sections: (1) the Christianity of Christian Science (emphasizing Mrs. Eddy’s Christian upbringing); (2) Mrs. Eddy’s lifetime of service (based on the Science of Christianity); and (3) an overview of the metaphysics of Christian benevolence. The following readings may help us explore our Leader’s example of Christian service.

I. The Christianity of Christian Science (in Mrs. Eddy’s Words):

- “I became early a child of the Church, an eager lover and student of vital Christianity. . . . [T]he Bible, especially the First Commandment . . . and Ninety-first Psalm, the Sermon on the Mount, and St. John’s Revelation, educated my thought many years, yea, all the way up to its preparation for and reception of the Science of Christianity. . . .” (*Message to 1901*, p. 32).
- The next year, she wrote to the daughter of her childhood minister: “*The religion that he taught and lived, I honor and love. It was the vestibule of Christian Science*” (Smith, *Historical Sketches*, p. 53).
- “It was an inherent characteristic of my nature, a kind of birthmark, to love the Church. . . . I never left the Church. . . . I but began where the Church left off” (*Message to 1902*, p. 2).
- “When a child of about thirteen years I united with the Congregational church, and never left it until I had one built on its foundations. The only difference being the spiritual element taking the place of the material in its forms and doctrines” (Yvonne von Fettweis and Robert Townsend Warneck, *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer*, Amplified Edition, p. 22).
- She loved “the prosperity of Zion, be it promoted by Catholic, by Protestant, or by Christian Science” (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany*, p. 270), and predicted that Christendom would be united by spiritual healing (*Pulpit and Press*, p. 22). “Christian Science and Christianity are one” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 372).

II. Mrs. Eddy’s Lifetime of Service (A Model of Active Benevolence):

Mrs. Eddy wrote, “The true leader of a true cause is the unacknowledged servant of mankind. Stationary in the background, this individual is doing the work that nobody else can or will do” (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 266). The following examples can be found in Irving Tomlinson’s record of Mrs. Eddy’s life, *Twelve Years With Mary Baker Eddy*, Amplified Edition:

- p. 43 Mrs. Eddy's vow to God in 1857.
- p. 60 Her healing of a child in Rumney, NH, in the 1850s, solely through prayer.
- p. 45 Her willingness to endure poverty while discovering Christian Science.
- p. 130 The hostility directed toward her as she recorded her Christian discovery.
- p. 42 Her desire to find even one person who was interested in Christian Science.
- p. 163 Her effort to take herself out of the way and allow God to lead the Cause.
- p. 165 Her willingness to give up all for the Cause.

III. A Model of Christian Benevolence (from the Bible and Mrs. Eddy's Writings)

- "The Lord gave the word..." (Ps 68:11).
- "...and without him [the Word] was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3,14).
- "...he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things..." (Acts 17:25).
- "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 9:15).
- "...by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).
- "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17; Isaiah 55:1).
- "Shall we plead for more at the open fount, which is pouring forth more than we accept?" (*Science and Health*, p. 2).
- "Christian Science comes to reveal man as God's image, His idea, coexistent with Him — God giving all and man having all that God gives" (*Miscellany*, p. 5).
- **"The human affections need to be changed from self to benevolence and love for God and man; changed to having but one God and loving Him supremely, and helping our brother man. This change of heart is essential to Christianity, and will have its effect physically as well as spiritually, healing disease"** (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 50).
- "Judge Medicine then proceeds to pronounce the solemn sentence of death upon the prisoner. Because he has loved his neighbor as himself, Mortal Man has been guilty of benevolence in the first degree, . . ." (*Science and Health*, p. 433).
- "God does not reward benevolence and love with penalties; and because of this, we have the right to deny the supposed power of matter to do it, ..." (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 199).
- "Human reason becomes tired and calls for rest. It has a relapse into the common hope. Goodness and benevolence never tire. They maintain themselves and others and never stop from exhaustion. He who is afraid of being too generous has lost the power of being magnanimous. The best man or woman is the most unselfed" (*Miscellany*, p. 165).

Mrs. Eddy writes:

"The reformer has no time to give in defense of his own life's incentive, since no sacrifice is too great for the silent endurance of his love. What has not unselfed love achieved for the race? All that ever was accomplished, and more than history has yet recorded. The reformer...may labor for the establishment of a cause which is fraught with infinite blessings, — health, virtue, and heaven; but what of all that? Who should care for everybody? It is enough, say they, to care for a few. Yet the good done, and the love that foresees more to do, stimulate philanthropy and are an ever-present reward. Let one's life answer well these questions, and it already hath a benediction: "Have you renounced self? Are you faithful? Do you love?" (*Miscellaneous Writings* p. 238).

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