

MARY BAKER EDDY: HER PURPOSE AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

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*"The 'still, small voice' of scientific thought reaches
over continent and ocean to the globe's remotest bound.
The inaudible voice of Truth is, to the human mind,
'as when a lion roareth.'"*
— Mary Baker Eddy

MARY BAKER EDDY

IT is impossible to contemplate the works of Mrs. Eddy without being almost startled by the vastness of the achievement. Forty-four years ago no one had heard of Christian Science. Today it is a vast organization, literally enfolding the world. Then there was one still small voice proclaiming the gospel which was new, yet old. Now the vast chorus of voices is proclaiming that gospel from the snows of Alaska to the Australian scrub, and from the pagodas of China to the South African veldt.

Wendell Phillips once declared that "one on God's side is a majority." Mrs. Eddy has quoted this saying, and proved the truth of it. Humanly speaking, she has had everything against her. The world, when it has any personal end to gain, can be revolutionary in its methods, but in ordinary circumstances it is conservative in its prejudices.

Its leaders, especially its religious leaders, had always been men, and it rebelled at the idea of "a Daniel come to judgment," when that Daniel was a woman. For untold centuries its wise men had thought along scientific lines, which had certainly been modified from time to time, but always on a material basis, and it grew almost passionate against the woman who came questioning its very premises and wrecking its first principles. It must be admitted that Christian Science was heterodox, according to the popular way of looking at matters; and yet, in bringing a professedly Christian people back to the theology and healing of primitive Christianity, it was the only orthodoxy.

It was in Massachusetts, in February, 1866, Mrs. Eddy has told us, in the little autobiography known as "Retrospection and Introspection," that she discovered the science of divine metaphysical healing which she afterward named Christian Science.

To the world, Christianity and science had become antithetical terms. That they are so no longer is one of the results of Mrs. Eddy's work. Yet there was never anything antecedently improper from an orthodox point of view in the combination of the two terms. There is a phrase used in the epistles which is translated "knowledge of God," but which should, of course, be translated full or exact, and so should be "scientific knowledge of God;" that is, of truth. The expression is used by Peter and Paul, and in

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a way corresponds to the use of the term "the truth" as opposed to that of mere "truth," in the fourth Gospel, to distinguish the absolute from the relative. The significance of this was not lost on the medieval schoolmen, who, with all their faults, at least strove to introduce some measure of science into their study of the Bible. The greatest of all these was Thomas Aquinas, the man who has been described by Huxley as possibly the most subtle of the world's thinkers. In the "Summa," Aquinas defines theology, which in its pure meaning is simply the word of God, as the only absolute science known, and dismisses every phase of natural science as purely relative. A little later Wyclif, the last of the great Oxford schoolmen, as he was the first Protestant, translating the well-known passage in Luke which in the King James version runs, "to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins," rendered it "to give science and health to his people unto the remission of their sins."

Six centuries passed by — centuries of turmoil from one end of Christendom to the other. The old bands of orthodoxy, loosened by the coming of Lollardy, gave way at the Reformation. The revival of learning brought with it not merely the recovery of the Greek tongue, and the institution of what may be termed textual criticism, it brought with it a wealth of daring speculation which developed, in time, into historic criticism.

The old superstitious regard for sacred things began to be appraised by the standard of rationalism, and then came a century, after the carnival of the "goddess of Reason," when the efforts of scientific research seemed to be largely directed to the attempted destruction of revelation. It was at this moment, when the high priests of natural science were building their altars to their unknown gods, that Mrs. Eddy's book "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" was given to the world.

"During twenty years prior to my discovery," she writes, on page 24 of "Retrospection and Introspection," "I had been trying to trace all physical effects to a mental cause; in the latter part of 1866 I gained the scientific certainty that all causation was Mind, and every effect a mental phenomenon. 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,

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and how to make others so."

The year 1866 was the eighth centenary of the Norman Conquest, but in it there occurred an event of infinitely greater importance to humanity than the landing of William of Normandy at Pevensey. That event was, as has been said, the launching of the Christian Science movement which was to restore the healing of primitive Christianity to Christendom. In that year Mrs. Eddy stood alone in the world with her discovery. She was devoid of all the means which are regarded as essential to the undertaking of a successful crusade, but she had found an understanding of divine Science which no one could take from her, and she realized the full import of her own words on page 99 of "Miscellaneous Writings": "In no one thing seemed Jesus of Nazareth more divine than in his faith in the immortality of his words. He said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away'; and they have not." Christendom had read these words for well-nigh twenty centuries, and had referred them to some future life, some kingdom beyond the clouds. Mrs. Eddy remembered that not only had Jesus come that men might have life abundantly, but that he had declared that the kingdom of heaven was in their midst or within them. She gave herself to the world to show that now meant now, and not tomorrow, and that practical Christianity meant a present salvation from the ills which men are heirs to.

People frequently talk of Christian Science as if it were nothing more than a mammoth dispensary; as a matter of fact, that is an almost ludicrous misconception of what its healing means. It means — the eradication from the human consciousness of all those mental causes which produce sin, disease, and death. It means that in order to be healthier every patient must become a better man. It aims not merely at the destruction of sickness and pain, but of sorrow and want, of misery and vice. It is true that it lays stress on physical healing, but it does this because it is the teaching of Christ Jesus. If the records of the physical healing were deleted from the Bible, an enormous portion of the Gospels would be shorn away. Jesus used his power to heal, not only to lift the burdens of suffering humanity, but also as an object-lesson to prove the science of his teaching. When the disciples of John came to demand whether he was the Christ, it was his works and not his words to which he pointed, and when he sent out his own disciples to give the gospel of good

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news to the people, he bade them not alone to preach the gospel, but to heal the sick. In this way he, and no other than he made the ability to, in some measure, perform his works the test of genuineness of his professed followers' claims to the title of Christian, and it is a startling commentary on almost two thousand years of religious education that the one church which has accepted his test "in spirit and in truth" should be the one assailed by orthodoxy for its heretical teachings.

The day when the cry of "Heretic!" was potent to stir up the passionate superstitions of unthinking crowds has passed away. The world is recognizing that the heresy of yesterday is always the orthodoxy of tomorrow. The same spirit accused Jesus of blasphemy, dismissed Paul as a pestilent fellow, decried Wycliff as a forger of lies, and claimed Luther was a drunken friar. The criticisms of Christian Science, based on no more reasonableness than this, are rapidly finding their way into the repositories in which are preserved the curiosities of theological vituperation, and the world is beginning to see, in the life work of Mrs. Eddy, the fulfilment of the wonderful prophecy of Emerson, "When a faithful thinker, resolute to detach every object from personal relations, and see it in the light of thought, shall at the same time kindle science with the fire of the holiest affection, then will God go forth anew into creation."

It has been truly said that if Christianity is not scientific, or if science is not Christian, one or the other is unnecessary. Mrs. Eddy perceived this when she wrote, on page 313 of Science and Health, "Jesus of Nazareth was the most scientific man that ever trod the globe." From whatever point of view you approach his life you will be driven to admit this, unless you are prepared to consign the Gospels to the scrap-heap of mythology. He wandered among the Syrian lakesides, over the Galilean hills, and through the villages of Judea, preaching the most absolute truth the world had ever heard, the gospel of Christ, and when the Pharisees and the Scribes, the fishermen and herdsmen recoiled alike at the truth so fearlessly proclaimed to them, he fell back on the miracle, telling them that if they could not believe for the word's sake, they must believe for the very work's sake, and so he made these miracles the scientific and practical demonstration of the truth of his theory or theology. To Jesus the miracle was nothing more or less than the inevitable action of spiritual law, and so, with marvelous spiritual perception, Mrs. Eddy explains that the miracle is not a

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supernatural occurrence, but a divinely natural one. If any one questions this for a moment, it is only necessary to turn to the test of the New Testament. The words there translated "miracle" have not and never had any supernatural meaning until that meaning was grafted on to them in the centuries immediately succeeding Constantine. Even the Latin word *miraculum*, which Jerome substituted for them, in his later writings, was a simple scientific term in use among the pagan philosophers. The simple fact is that the primitive Church never questioned Jesus' command to heal the sick. It was too near the days when he had said, "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also," to make it possible, and the Epistle of James makes this indisputably clear in that terrific warning, "Faith without works is dead."

In spite of this Christendom continued to attempt to part the seamless garment. It more and more set apart a priesthood to preach the gospel, while handing over the healing of the sick to the medical profession, which might be purely infidel.

It was called upon necessarily to defend its deviation from the clear message of the gospel, and it has done so in the extraordinary contention that the growth of Christianity is to be traced in the growth of hospitals. No statement could possibly have been farther from the truth. It is the temporary failure of the Christian church which the growth of hospitals has stamped on the face of Christendom. The hospital was originally a temple in which pagan worship was at last combined with the ministrations to the sick. That those ministrations took the form of the grossest superstition we know, nor when men took to less occult and more purely material remedies was the change very much for the better.

The Christian era saw the hospitals in the temples of Asklepios transferred to the monasteries, and then finally severed from religious institutions, but it witnessed, if anything, a deepening of material views of medicine. Gradually, however, there grew up an orthodox medical profession as there had grown up an orthodox church. So that already in medieval times we find a court physician treating a royal prince for smallpox by draping him in red cloth, and an unfortunate irregular practitioner being set in the pillory for hanging a piece of cardboard round a woman's neck. The appalling prescriptions mentioned by Pliny had scarcely

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been improved upon at the Renaissance, and the prescriptions of the Renaissance were not more objectionable than those of the beginning of the last century, a fact which should not be lost on the critics who demand why the world should have had to wait all these centuries for the discovery of Christian Science.

"God's in His heaven," says a great poet, "all's right with the world," but God was in his heaven when the pagan priests were exhibiting their serpents in the temples of Cos just as much as when Christ Jesus was healing the sick in the streets of Capernaum, and just as much when the Elizabethan physicians were scraping powder off mummies or the Georgian ones trying to expel smallpox by inoculation. Jesus, speaking of his spiritual selfhood, the Christ, declared, "before Abraham was I am," while, later again, at the moment of the ascension, he declared, still speaking of the Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Though God was in his heaven, though Christ is eternal, the world had to wait many centuries to learn from Jesus what God, and heaven, and Christ really were, and when in the long night which followed the time of Constantine it forgot its lesson, it had to wait for Mrs. Eddy to rediscover and again make practical the teaching of "the most scientific man who ever trod the globe."

This does not mean that in all those centuries of darkness the fact that God was in His heaven was entirely hidden from the world. Again and again, both before and after the Christian era, men had arisen who, in moments of intense spiritual perception, had grasped the omnipotence of spiritual truth sufficiently to be able to heal the sick, and stay the hand of death. The voices of such men were, however, voices crying in the wilderness of doubt and animality, and their lives were like solitary stars making almost clearer the darkness of the night, whereas the coming of Christ Jesus was the rising of the sun of righteousness with healing in its wings. Such pioneers, in the centuries of the Christian era, were Stephen Harding and Sebald, Luther, Fox, and Wesley. These men, however, achieved all they did by reliance on divine Love, in spite of the fact that they believed human suffering to be the dispensation of Providence, and plagues and wars the visitations of God.

The first person to see the impossibility of this, the first person to

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recognize the infinite goodness of God, not as an occasional experience, but as an immutable law, was Mrs. Eddy, and grasping this, she grasped the science of being. "I knew," she writes, on page 109 of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," "the Principle of all harmonious Mind-action to be God, and that cures were produced in primitive Christian healing by holy, uplifting faith; but I must know the Science of this healing, and I won my way to absolute conclusions through divine revelation, reason, and demonstration." In the face of all these circumstances Mrs. Eddy was compelled to begin her work by teaching, but her teaching was essentially scientific, and so could in no way be divorced from demonstration. She explains, herself, on page 9 of the preface of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," that her "first pamphlet on Christian Science was copyrighted in 1870; but it did not appear in print until 1876, as she had learned that the Science must be demonstrated by healing, before a work on the subject could be profitably studied." The works, therefore, of physical healing went steadily on, but they did not in any way detract from the teaching. From first to last the command to preach the gospel and heal the sick was steadily adhered to.

From the first moment Mrs. Eddy perceived that the movement she had founded could only be built up by the elimination of personality. She had taken deeply to heart that pregnant saying of Christ Jesus, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." "There was never," she wrote in her article on "Personal Contagion," "a religion or philosophy lost to the centuries except by sinking its divine Principle in personality." In fixing the final form of service for the Christian Science churches her wisdom was manifested not alone in choosing a form which gave no scope for human ambitions, but in selecting one of extraordinary simplicity which could be read simultaneously throughout the entire field.

The fact is that, like everything else in Christian Science, the services are designed to have a healing and not an artistic or emotional effect. The reading of the Bible and "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" heals the mind and so the body, for did not Jesus declare, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" The therapeutics of Jesus were spiritual. He never, in the whole course of his ministry, made use of a material remedy, and he declared that he was "the

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way."

The occasion of his anointing the eyes of the blind man with clay has been used as an argument in support of material remedies, but this only proves how desperate is the case of those who, in the words of Mrs. Eddy, on page 78 of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," would "hold spirit in the grasp of matter."

That the man who stilled the tempest, walked on the water, and raised the dead by the simple realization that God heard him always, and that the spiritual law was always available by those who knew how to apply it, could not heal a case of blindness without resort to the medical methods of the men who attempted to destroy blindness with charred viper's flesh or the blood of red he-goats is in itself a sufficiently amazing argument.

It is this note of healing which rings incessantly throughout the entire movement, in its church service, in its literature, and on its lecture platforms, just as much as by the bedside of the sick. In the first half century of the movement the incessant efforts of the great leader have been devoted without stint to fulfilling the vision she describes on page 226 of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," "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 today, as of yore, hold the children of Israel in bondage." In order to do this it was necessary, too, for Mrs. Eddy to educate her followers in Christian Science. In about the year 1867 she opened the first school of Christian Science Mind-Healing, with a solitary student, in Lynn, Massachusetts. Fourteen years later she obtained the charter for the Massachusetts Metaphysical College, in which, during the following seven years, she taught upward of four thousand students. In this way "the Grand Army" of Christian Science was first enlisted, and enlisted, in her own words, on page 450 of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," "to lessen evil, disease, and death." Wherever this army marches it carries with it its banners on which are inscribed the words "Slavery is Abolished," not the mere slavery of men's bodies alone, but the more remorseless slavery of men's minds, to the laws of custom, belief, and disease.

Among Mrs. Eddy's provisions for the rescue of humanity was the

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Christian Science Board of Lectureship, an organization which in its inception carries one back to the days of primitive Christianity. In this conception what Monsieur Jusserand has so beautifully termed "La Vie Errant" has found its resurrection. The Christian Science lecturer can scarcely be said to have a home. He may, at any moment, be called upon to take up his abode in some city far from his native land. At the request of those who need his help he sails for China or Australia, just as the early workers loosed from Troas, or sailed unto Cypress. All countries are alike to them. They mingle with men of every nationality and every temperament, but wherever they go they preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven, the reign of harmony on earth, is at hand, and so bind up the broken-hearted, and bring peace to the weary and heavy laden. The platform of the Christian Science lecturer is not designed to rival the Roman rostrum, but to imitate, however feebly, the boat anchored by the shore of Galilee.

As it is with the lectures, so it is also with the literature. In April, 1883, in order to meet the ever-broadening requirements of the movement, Mrs. Eddy started the monthly *Journal of Christian Science*, of which she was at first not only editor, but publisher, and some years later the weekly paper, known as *The Christian Science Sentinel*. The object of these periodicals was not only to provide a wider exercise for the energies of Christian Scientists, it was to carry Christian Science healing to a greater public; and not a single issue of these now well-known periodicals has ever gone out from the publishing house which has not carried to its readers some story of healing through Christian Science.

Meantime, in spite of all these Herculean labors, Mrs. Eddy was steadily adding to the list of her own writings. The greatest, the most famous of all these is, of course, the textbook of Christian Science, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures"; "the precious volume," as she has herself termed it, the book which has attained the greatest circulation of any book ever known during the lifetime of its author. This was, however, only the most vital of her writings. In her ninetieth year she published her last volume, the beautiful little edition of her collected poems, one stanza of which illustrates so perfectly her attitude to the world:

Beneath the shadow of His mighty wing;

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In that sweet secret of the narrow way,
Seeking and finding, with the angels sing:
"Lo, I am with you always: — watch and pray."

Of all Mrs. Eddy's literary labors, however, the one which will probably continue to strike the public with most astonishment is the foundation of *The Christian Science Monitor*. In publishing this paper she fulfilled, at eighty-seven, a plan she had never lost sight of for twenty-seven years. The conception of it, the name, the motto, all were her own; and at her bidding her devoted followers performed what to the world was a miracle, when within three months of her request they cleared the ground, built the offices, equipped, and brought into existence a daily paper, which in two years has acquired a unique circulation which extends entirely round the globe. Its mission is to bring healing to mankind, not by reporting what is worst of men and nations, but what is best; not by relying on sensationalism, but on a sober regard and examination of facts; not by standing for a party, but always for the state.

In this way it is fulfilling the destiny marked out for it in the motto selected by its founder, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear."

The unerring wisdom of Mrs. Eddy in nursing and directing the energies of the movement she has founded has been briefly summarized, but her efforts did not cease here. In the Committees on Publication, which have their offices in every corner of the globe, she has built up a great bulwark of defense, the strength of which it would be difficult to exaggerate. The motto of these committees might be said to be "defense, not defiance." Their duty is not to attack the opinions of other people, it is to defend their own cause, and to do this by firmly yet temperately working to see that the truth and nothing but the truth shall be circulated on any particular point. It is here that the wisdom of Mrs. Eddy has been peculiarly apparent, and with this wisdom necessarily her love for humanity. While nearly all other movements are dissipating much of their strength in attacking the opinions of their neighbors, Christian Scientists are giving every moment of their time to patiently demonstrating the truth of their own. There is an old saying that a grain of proof is worth a pound of argument, and the proof of Christian Science is a living proof, walking

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about the lanes and cities of the whole world in the shape of men and women rescued from pain and sorrow, from disease and from the grave. The opponents of Christian Science may shake their heads, may explain with unwearying perseverance that the patients were not so bad as they thought themselves, or, as a last resort, that the medical diagnosis was wrong, and that the sufferers would have got well anyhow. They may convince those who were convinced before, but on the patients themselves, on their families, to whom they have been given back, or on their relatives and friends who have witnessed what has been accomplished, these arguments amount to *Vox et præterea nihil*. Who can undertake to say how bad a man may have thought he was, and if the diagnoses of the medical profession are wrong in all these cases, then there is more need for Christian Science than Emerson's "man in the street" has ever dreamed of. History repeats itself: these were the very arguments used by the Jewish doctors to the man who was born blind. First they attempted to suggest through his parents that the history of the disease had not been fully established; then, failing in this, they attempted to destroy the credit of the "healer of Gennesaret," with the sole result that there has come ringing down the centuries the half-contemptuous and wholly triumphant answer of the sick man, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

It was for the purpose of giving the public the opportunity of hearing these testimonies of healing first hand, that the Wednesday evening testimony meetings were established by Mrs. Eddy. These meetings constitute one of the most marvelous factors in the chain of evidence which is binding Christian Science round the hemispheres. Every Wednesday evening, at about eight o'clock, these meetings begin, and as the sun travels west, or seems to travel west, across the sky, they follow it, through every country and amidst every people, until the story of Christian Science healing has been told round the entire earth. In those twenty-four hours a minimum probably of five thousand testimonies of the healing power of the Christ have been given; and, in another week, the chain of Christian Science healing will be stretched right around the earth.

It is thirty-one years since The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, was established in Boston, when, on the 19th of April, 1879, Mrs. Eddy and a handful of her students met, in the words of "Retrospection and Introspection," on page 44, "to organize a church to

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commemorate the words and works of our Master, a mind-healing church, without a creed, to be called the Church of Christ, Scientist." In those thirty-one years hundreds upon hundreds of branch churches and societies have grown from the parent stem, and weekly in the meetings of these churches and societies, by the wise provision of the leader of the movement, the story of Christian healing is told by men and women whose gratitude impels them to give words of help and encouragement to those who attend the services.

There is an expression to which everyone is accustomed that when there is fighting to be done it is the man behind the gun who counts. The Christian Science movement is a militant movement, though it wrestles "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." All Mrs. Eddy's care and wisdom would have been wasted if she could not have found the man behind the gun, the genuine Christian Scientist. Of course she had to train the army of Christian Science, to try to instil into its soldiers something of the selfless love for humanity she herself felt. She had to teach them to strive to deny themselves, and to begin to live for the world; she had, in a word, to teach them Christian Science. In this as in everything else she has been so successful that she has trained a great body of workers, which is carrying the mind-healing which the original Christian Science Church was organized to demonstrate, into every land. This is why the future of Christian Science is assured, because Mrs. Eddy has pointed her followers steadfastly to principle and not to person. "What went you out for to see?" she asks in "Personal Contagion," "a person or a Principle? Whichever it be determines the right or the wrong of this following."

No Christian Scientists, toiling along the road from sense to soul, could ever stray from the path if they would only remember the concluding words of her article "Pond and Purpose," on page 207 of "Miscellaneous Writings": "As you journey, and betimes sigh for rest 'beside still waters,' ponder this lesson of love. Learn its purpose; and in hope and faith, where heart meets heart reciprocally blest, drink with me the living waters of the spirit of my life-purpose — to impress humanity with the genuine recognition of practical, operative Christian Science."