

# The Warm Embrace

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## Introduction

Thank you for that warm introduction and thank you to the Board of Directors for hosting today's meeting and inviting me to give an inspirational talk. It is truly an honor and delight to be here with you today.

At the heart of any Christian Science gathering is a singular motive, to express love. In Christian Science, every interaction is an opportunity to give and receive love; every trouble, pain, and challenge is a call to employ God's love. This practice is not mere abstraction based on nice-sounding words, but comes from the experience of the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science. In a biography titled *Mary Baker Eddy: Her Mission and Triumph*, the author shares an account of young Mary, a child ill with fever. Her mother told her to "turn to God in prayer and rest in His love" (Johnston, 1946, p. 6). She did so and felt an "ineffable joy" that removed the fever and healed her. She took note of this and with this healing experience, she said that she gained proof "of the God who is Love, and of the nature of Love to heal" (Johnston, 1946, p. 6). Think about that for a second. The young child had a fever removed by simply thinking of God and His love for her. This became proof to her that the nature of God is Love and that Love's nature is to heal.

Through the entire course of her life, Mary Baker Eddy carried this sense of God with her and "it was this sense of God that touched the deepest feelings of men and women" (Johnston, 1946, p. 112) and woke them to feel a measure more of their own oneness with divine Love. Feeling oneness is the feeling that we get when we are held in a physical embrace. So, if people felt that oneness in the presence of Mary Baker Eddy, someone close to God, weren't they also feeling the embrace of the tender, firm love with which God holds each one of us, His beloved sons and daughters?

Love that comes from a divine source is loving the concept of man as an idea of purity, goodness, and right action. God's ideas are beautiful, always. God's ideas are pure, perfectly formed, and untouched by human circumstances. It is on this basis that I come to you today with a talk called, "The Warm Embrace", for our present state is one that is

embraced, as an individual idea, a collective group, a church activity, and our rightful action is to feel that embrace and to embrace others with that knowledge.

In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science asks, "... why is it more difficult to see a thought than to feel one? Education alone determines the difference. In reality there is none." (SH 86:21)

The goal of this talk is for you to better see the thoughts that are put into the structure of the Christian Science church organization and its embrace of each of us with the desired outcome of our ability to embrace others mentally, rightfully, purposefully, with the outcome of healing.

## Be embraced

The concept of embrace is taught to our Sunday School students from the earliest moments. Teachers prepare all week to receive the students who will come to Sunday School via Zoom or in a room, to share in an engaging, uplifting, encouraging atmosphere. Whether it's one student in a class or several, the motive is for love to be felt, understood, and manifested. In every Christian Science Sunday School, pupils are taught that God *is* Love and that God is ever-present, always attuned to meet your needs, and for that ever-present provision, children will naturally understand that God is all-knowing good. Because Christian Science teaches that God is Love, it is easy to want to honor God, divine Love. For if divine Love is the infinite God, it is a supreme power that is ever-present, actively knowing that we are very good, and intending to have our needs perfectly met all the days of our lives. A first hymn that students learn is Hymn 53, which begins, "Everlasting arms of love are beneath, around, above. God it is who bears us on, His the arm we lean upon" (*Christian Science Hymnal*, 53).

As a mother of three boys, I recall my little children sometimes falling down and crying. As a Christian Scientist, what should I do? Do I affirm the truth and tell them they are not hurt? Should I ignore them and trust that God will work it out? Should I yell at error, supposedly causing problems? These are questions that I struggled with as a parent. And then that hymn sang itself to me, "Everlasting arms of Love are beneath, around, above." How would my children be able to understand the embrace of God's love if they didn't feel the embrace of their mother's arms when they needed it most? I decided to be an instance of God's presence and hold them tenderly when they were hurt. I would scoop them up and tell them to stay right with me. I would tell them they are spiritual ideas and that they cannot be hurt and then I would tell them to let me know when they were ready to go and play again. I loved these moments of waiting because I was

affirming Christian Science truths in my own thought: “They are okay and they know it.” “They are spiritual and unable to be impacted by a material force of any kind.” “They are God’s perfect ideas that cannot be hurt.” It would rarely be more than a minute before they were playing again. The calm assurance of the presence of divine Love was felt and the response was nearly immediate.

The beauty and power of Christian Science is that the structure of the Church is divine Principle, which stays steady through the fluctuations of human thought. The foundation of the religious teachings points its followers to a reliable, unchanging, ever-active Principle, called God, divine Love, whose nature it is to heal, to lift, to inspire, to lead in paths of progress, provision, and purpose.

In her the pamphlet titled *No and Yes*, Mrs. Eddy tells us that Christian Science was named such because “the two largest words in the vocabulary of thought are ‘Christian’ and ‘Science.’” She explains, “The former is the highest style of man; the latter reveals and interprets God and man; it aggregates, amplifies, unfolds, and expresses the All-God.” (Eddy, 1891, p. 10).

To track the ever-expanding embrace that is woven into the history of Christian Science, is to track the unfolding of the divine Principle called Love in the human consciousness of its founder. As her thought evolved, so did the church organization. In fact, understanding divine Love through Christian Science opens up an infinite range of divine Love as both a presence and a power, an “is” and a “does”. If we do a search for the word Love, capitalized, in Concord, the online concordance of Christian Science writings, we receive 370 results in the denominational textbook alone. Going through those results, we can classify them into two categories: “What Love Is” and “What Love Does”. Looking just at the Chapter called Prayer we find that Love is “impartial” (p. 12), “universal” (p. 12), and “infinite” (p. 17). In that same chapter, we find that Love does things too. It “corrects” (p. 6), “governs” (p. 6), and “is reflected” (p. 17).

When anything is looked at as the relative expression of “is” and “does”, it is easier to see the thought that comprises it, for thought governs all action. If our actions are governed by our thoughts, then our being is governed by God’s thoughts. God’s thoughts are of the same substance as His being: good. From here, we can see the truth in the biblical statement that we live and move and have our being in Him, divine Love (Acts 17:28). To live as the being of divine Love is shown in many Biblical instances of divine power that saves, but there is one who distinctly heard the glory of the divine embrace.

Coming out of the water after baptism by his cousin John, Jesus heard these words, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17). This divine blessing was not given after a great work, but was given as an anointing to go and do what his divine Father, God, put him here to do: namely, to demonstrate the power of God on minds and bodies (SH 110:25–26). This same divine anointing was announced more than once to Jesus.

In fact, it wasn't just Jesus who heard and felt God's approval. It is recorded in I Peter 1 that Simon Peter and the disciples also heard the divine anointing of Jesus. Simon Peter writes, “For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” (II Pet. 1:17, 18) Simon Peter makes this revelation to later Christians; who had not known that disciples heard this voice, but, indeed, in Luke 9, we find Jesus at the mount with disciples and God speaks directly to the disciples in these words, “This is my beloved son; hear him.” (Luke 9: 35, 36). While Jesus lived in a different time, the reach of divine power remains vital throughout all time.

Bible commentary by J. R. Dummelow (1908) says that the highest sense is to be given to these words, for they signify a timeless message of grace to Jesus and to all of mankind. In them, “The Father bears witness, not only to Christ's Messiahship, but to His eternal and divine Sonship, in virtue of which He is from all eternity ‘in the bosom of the Father,’ loving and beloved (Dummelow, 1908, p. 632). Dummelow (1908) goes on to say that the words were not bestowed because Jesus was baptized, but as an acknowledgement of Him as “absolutely sinless” (p. 632). To share this divine anointing we must be in Him and the only way we can be there is to acknowledge his divine nature as our own, complete as the spiritual reflection of God, absolutely sinless.

To mentally envision Jesus wrapped in love because of God's timeless knowledge of him as “absolutely sinless” creates an embrace of love that we can see. Not only can we see it for Jesus, but for ourselves. For in Christian Science, we learn that the scientific statement of our being is found in the absolute truth that we are spiritual, therefore untouchable by any material circumstance, illness, transgression, or negative influence. To God, we live as “absolutely sinless” distinct forms of the one true idea of man, the Christ, the divine nature that Jesus exemplified and that we have as our divine heritage too.

Knowing our absolute spiritual selfhood is the point for all healing. Not only did God bestow a statement of divine glory on His son, but his son showed no uncertainty about

accepting it. In fact, the Bible tells us that he was so full of the Holy Ghost following the baptismal blessing, that he was led to a mountain to demonstrate the power of the Holy Ghost over the temptations of the devil (Matt. 4: 1-11). It is on these examples of present, divine power and its natural effect to protect and heal, that both Jesus and Mary Baker Eddy formed the concept of church.

To be with Jesus in the holy mount may seem like something far away in a distant land and time, but the embrace of God is an eternal principle that is always operative, always present, always supplying answers that rightly meet the need and have a healing effect. This spiritual fact brings us together today and binds us together forever with the silver thread of Christian healing.

## Embrace others

In Christian Science, Love is not a thing, but a power. The Discoverer and Founder of this Science, says that she made great demands upon love, writing a brief exposition on it, stating, "Love cannot be a mere abstraction, or goodness without activity and power" (Mis. 250:20–21). Only in the religious teaching of Christian Science will you find God as divine Love, the power that heals and saves. In *The People's Idea of God*, Mary Baker Eddy, says that we learn what God is and what God does (Peo. 2:5–7).

Just the other night, in my own family, we had another proof of the power of Christian Science. I hope I might share it with you today. It was night and I was picking up my youngest son from music lessons. He's of the age where he is used to sitting in the back, but I think he'll sit in the front. I didn't realize that the seats were down in the back seat and he asked me to adjust the driver's seat to accommodate him lifting up the back seats. As I manually shifted the seat, the car rolled forward. "That's my foot," he said. "The car is on my foot." I managed to put the car in reverse and move it off his foot and told him to come around to the front to get in. When he did so, his face turned to me immediately, not sure whether to be scared and cry or to feel strong. The intensity of his gaze was a mental demand for me to hold him. And hold him I did. My eyes didn't waver from his. When words did come out, they were of higher thought, talking about how he is a spiritual idea, a body of Truth that cannot be hurt. Foot is Truth's idea that cannot be changed by a car, a mom, nor anything material. In the silent moments, our eyes continued to hold each other. He was searching, working in his thought to displace anything that argued against wholeness. I was working in my thought as the presence of divine Love, knowing that he was not hurt. No moment of hurt ever really entered my thought. There was simply no space for it as we held each other's gaze, completely, focused on God. After a full minute, he said, "There, my foot is feeling better already." I

didn't take him home immediately. I wanted to hold that thought in the sanctuary of our divine connection, so we drove to the top of a mountain in our town and looked at the layers of surrounding storm clouds and the twilight still illuminated below them. Wind, gentle rain, and streaks of lightning began to appear. It was beautiful. He twirled and admired and we hugged. He was totally free of pain and remains so. Was the embrace in that final hug? No. It was in the car, when we never touched and barely spoke, and just held each other firmly in the embrace of divine Love and its eternal knowledge of a child and foot, each spiritual in concept and form, perfect, whole.

God never gives us more to do than we are equipped and able to do. God, divine Love, always provides an opportunity to accomplish the good that is set before us that is ours to do. We are never without perfect guidance and we are never without perfect ability--because the demand and the supply are one. They are governed under the divine principle called Love. Love governs with the perfect law of supply and demand. God is Love and God needs to be expressed through us. You are an expression of divine Love. You are a smile of God. You are the outpouring of divine Love, right now. "This is the doctrine of Christian Science: that divine Love cannot be deprived of its manifestation, or object;..." (SH 304:9–14 to ;).

The identity as an idea of divine Love is to be defended. The institutions upholding man's identity as an idea of divine Love are to be defended and engaged. Each of us here today is doing that work, the work for church, yes, but more importantly, for an institution that is upholding your highest self with the absolute certainty that it is achievable today to feel and be that self. In her dedicatory sermon to The First Church of Christ Scientist, on January 6, 1895, Mrs. Eddy said to the attendees, "Know, then, that you possess sovereign power to think and act rightly, and that nothing can dispossess you of this heritage and trespass on Love." (Pul. 3:7–9)

Our roles then are not to simply do a job, but to defend divine Love and its manifestation. We can support and uphold others because we are upheld this way. Mrs. Eddy knew the potency of divine teachings and designed her church to not just be a building, but a wrap-around system of support.

She gave us a Mother Church, steeped in love and adorned with the title of Mother. A good mother is one that nurtures, sets an example, and upholds the highest concept of the child. The example and words that Mary Baker Eddy left us in her writings perpetually guide us in an ever-expanding appreciation of the dear love that she had for this church, its adherents, and *Manual*-based activities.

Christian Scientists are embraced in a system designed to guide us rightly to meet relative, everyday needs of organizations and personal well-being:

- The *Manual* (Eddy, 1895) gives guidelines for good citizenship in the world and fairness to self and to others, as well as practical guidance for organizations of church.
- The weekly Bible lesson is a gift that gives us access to higher thought and provokes us to consider and reconsider topics of universal import. In Christian Science, we don't wait till Sunday to hear a sermon or talk to the pastor because the pastor is in our homes, held in our own hands, as the *Bible* and denominational textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. We are allowed to form an intimate relationship with the Pastor, and to gain so much knowledge of God that we can truly see him as the "Adorable One" (SH 16:29)
- There is a global network of Christian Science practitioners prepared to receive calls, texts, emails requesting mental treatment nearly 24/7.
- There is a Sunday church and Sunday School that embraces its attendees before they get there.
- There is a mid-week meeting where people can spontaneously share healings and insights that have come from the practice and study of Christian Science. This often feels like a midweek pick-me-up.
- There are teachers of Christian Science who hold classes to teach how to give effective mental treatment for self or others.
- There is a publishing society that delivers content designed to heal and lift thought to see solutions. Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly content can be delivered electronically, in paper, or audibly.
- There is *JSH-Online* and Concord, online database resources where people can discover articles and citations to show how prayer heals.. At times in my own life, the Concord program was my constant companion, where I could reconcile the worldly and divine meanings of a word and gain spiritual understanding that enhanced my work and life.
- There is a Reading Room, well-located, for people to come and discover the healing power of the positive word of divine Truth, God, embracing each of us right now.
- There are those advertising as Christian Science nurses, equipped with knowledge of mental healing and practical physical care.

The Christian Science church is designed for us to feel the embrace of God, through man, and to embrace God right back. Bible promises assure us of God's love for us. Our Leader reminds us, "If we are Christians on all moral questions, but are in darkness as to the physical exemption which Christianity includes, then we must have more faith

in God on this subject and be more alive to His promises” (SH 373:1–5). Our church is designed for us to feel loved, secure, and wrapped up in an embrace of care and love, like a good mother would do. From the Bible, the Word of God, we find the inspiration for this church in the promises of care from God, such as these:

- His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. (Song 2:6)
- Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isa. 41:10)
- For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (Jer. 29:11)

The main question in the concept of an embrace is are you ready to receive it? For a truly satisfying embrace, both parties engage. Are you open to acknowledging yourself as loved, lovely, loving? Those here today most certainly are and support the paths of others who are waking to their own acceptance as a child of God. Whether fast or slow, the journey is winged with the angels of God, encouraging, supporting, and steadying through any faltering step. All that is required is for us to embrace God back, to trust God more as an active, present, power--a best friend.

Wayside House is expanding its embrace. It continues to outstretch its arms to reach those throughout Canada who want care that is entirely based on present wholeness. Due to increased love and support from the Christian Science field and the overall movement of its thought, funds are becoming easier to find for those who want to stay or work here. The recognition of the importance of nursing, the supportive mental embrace that people feel when they are in a Christian Science environment, continues to open thought to extend to the general seeker of health in this type of environment. Expanding thought cannot be stopped, for it is carried on the spiritual pinions of right motives, which give “strength and freedom to speech and action” (SH 454:19-21).

## Action of Love

The role of a Christian Science nurse reaches the very heart of existence, touching lives in physical and spiritual ways to help them feel embraced, loved, cared for. The nurse fills a unique role in society. In medical practices, it continues to grow in importance, respect, desirability, and responsibility. Same for the Christian Science movement, where nursing continues to gain viability, visibility, import, and respect. It is because of places like Wayside House, expanding its reach and influence of good, that Christian Science nursing remains vital. It is because of the growing love in the Mother Church

that assistance for nurses continues to grow. Not every sick person will have the privilege of coming here, but those who do will certainly feel the impetus of divine Life being lived through the activity of divine Love.

The requirements of a Christian Science nurse are laid out under Discipline, Guidance of Members, in the *Manual* of The Mother Church, and communicate these three distinct responsibilities (Man. 49:7, Section 31). A Christian Science nurse is one who

- Has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice
- Thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room
- Can take proper care of the sick

Think for a moment what the difference is in thought between a Christian Science nursing care interaction and other forms. Both may enter a sick room. Both may use words to communicate in some way. Both will want the patient to improve. Wouldn't the one difference be that Christian Scientists are coming from a place of certainty about the situation? Yes, of course, we come from the position that man is whole, complete, functioning harmoniously, reflecting divine Love's being right now. Mrs. Eddy says in the Christian Science Practice chapter of our textbook, "Tell the sick that they can meet disease fearlessly, if they only realize that divine Love gives them all power over every physical action and condition" (SH 420:24). The demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice is to be able to both see progressive steps of healing and to assess the mental environment so that he or she can work effectively with the practitioner on the case.

The practice of Christian Science healing starts with the end point. The end point is always wholeness for wholeness is the moral order of God and man. A whole idea has no space for anything else to enter. There is no opening, no void, no gap, no contusion in the absolute and divine model of man. In divine Mind, man is the full expression of the one God, good (SH 591:16) and the relations of God and man are indestructible (SH 470:32), making them impenetrable.

We expect the body to conform to the divine model of wholeness because matter has no intelligence of its own with which to act contrary to divine Mind and we cannot be made through our human minds to give it power. The only true intelligence is divine because there is one Mind, God, who is omniscient, all-knowing, and holds all that is worth knowing. God holds harmony, God holds perfect control, God holds balance. And we are the holding of God. We are held as a thought of God now, then, always. We are designed to conform to the divine structure of that thought as the expression of balance, harmony, and control.

In *Rudimental Divine Science*, Mrs. Eddy states, “Health is the consciousness of the unreality of pain and disease; or, rather, the absolute consciousness of harmony and of nothing else” (Rud. 11:13–15). Who has an absolute consciousness of harmony but God? Our goal is to have our thought resemble God’s in its persistent defiance of error by being conscious of the absolute presence of harmony. Anything unlike harmony is error and we have a divine right to take a stand and work mentally to destroy the seeming reality of inharmony. Humans were given the faculty of reason and are able to array our mental power against false claims to power, called inharmony, ignorance, anger, resentment, aggression. This is working in Christian Science and these mental treatments carry the potency of divine Truth to unclasp the seeming hold of error, whether showing up in the flesh, the political system, the social system, the family system, the personal system, the motivational system.

The motivational system is an interesting one to consider for it underlies even the very willingness to give a Christian Science treatment. Modern neuroscience reports that love is not a singular emotion, but a state of motivation that activates and controls goal-oriented activity (Perrin, 2018). Christian Science explains divine Love as a force of good and ourselves as the manifestations of divine Love. If we are comprised of Love, then every function of the body and mind is designed to respond rightly to the demands of divine Love. In this, the Bible encourages us, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:17, 18). Mary Baker Eddy explained the infinite reach of divine Love to motivate good works in every constitution of body.

She writes, “You embrace your body in your thought, and you should delineate upon it thoughts of health, not of sickness” (SH 208:29–31). Whether it is the body of a nursing facility, a flesh body, a religious body, shall we agree today to work together to embrace that body mentally and to delineate thoughts of health upon it? This is an interesting task for anyone to undertake, whether a parent, business leader, nurse, or patient. Remember our Leader asks us to defend ourselves as the highest ideas of God (SH 503:3), saying, “Know, then, that you possess sovereign power to think and act rightly, and that nothing can dispossess you of this heritage and trespass on Love.” (Pul. 3:7–9)

## Conclusion

To close, let’s each pause in a moment of wonder to feel the embrace that we are being held in right now as members of The Mother Church, as attendees at today’s annual

meeting of Wayside House, as workers in the field of Christian Science, witnessing and sharing firsthand the love and power of God. May we each look in gratitude at each other grateful for the role that they are filling in our movement. May we rest in knowledge of the supremely-designed support system that Mary Baker Eddy created in the Church, through its *Manual*-based activities, to provide opportunities for us to feel wrapped up in love at every step of our journey. But most of all, may we each enjoy a moment of truly feeling God's love for us, just as Jesus heard it, "Thou are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

To echo the sentiments of joy and freedom and love that we sang earlier in Hymn 58, we can rest on Hymn 517 in the new *Christian Science Hymnal*, which says "Joyfully we're singing of our dear God's grace, / Living every day within Love's warm embrace.

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