I’m always impressed each time I see Christian Scientists gather together to affirm the spiritual reality of things. Your presence here this afternoon conveys a message more profound than any words I can say today. It tells the world where your treasure is, what you value most—hence it reveals where your heart is, what’s uppermost in your affections. It testifies to your obedience and devotion to God, the divine Truth of all being, and consequently to Truth’s messenger to this age and our faithful Leader, Mary Baker Eddy.

It has been my privilege over the years to speak at various Christian Science nursing facilities and related activities. From Arden Wood on the West Coast to Tenacre and Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association on the East Coast. From New Hampshire and Pennsylvania to Ohio and Florida. Wherever I’ve been, I’ve seen the same motivating spirit at work: Christian Scientists united in their healing efforts to help their brethren in time of need. And in each instance when and where this Christ-spirit is expressed, a reciprocal blessing embraces both the one who helps and the one who is helped. Hence the title of today’s talk: “Helping Ourselves by Helping Others.”

I arrived at this title by way of a letter Mrs. Eddy wrote to two of her students—an extract of which was published in the Christian Science Sentinel of April 3, 1937. Our Leader affirmed: “Help others and you are helping yourself, help yourself and you will help others.”

That in a nutshell is what I’ve come here to say this afternoon. Anything else you hear from me will be simply a matter of elaboration.

Help that is of God

As with all things, Christian Science elevates one’s concept of help from the human to the divine, from the personal to the infinite Principle of all being. It validates the Biblical truth that God is “a very present help in trouble.” Omnipresent Spirit is an immediate help because God’s allness leaves no room for matter and its concomitants, sickness and sin. Fear and hate have no place to occupy because universal Love fills all space. Everlasting Life manifests the continuous operation of all things, without stoppage or disruption. Omniscient Mind—conscious only of the verities, or thoughts, of immortal goodness—is the preservative medicine that maintains all creation in perfect harmony and health.

An understanding of these truths brings with it the certainty that you and I can never find ourselves in a helpless situation where we’re unable to be helped—or to be of help. That’s because our true nature, in the divine likeness, is both the object and the expression of the good God is and does. Being the motive-power of man, God works in each of us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Divine Mind inspires right thought. Life animates right action. Love impels true benevolence.
The Bible instructs us “to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” An unwillingness to comfort others, to render needed help when it’s called for, finds its rebuke in Jesus’ parable about a priest and a Levite who “passed by on the other side” without stopping to aid a man who had been left half dead by thieves. Such callous disregard, such hardness of heart, is an impossible mental state for God’s man, the outcome of an all-loving and all-caring Father-Mother. Not to care, not to pray for mankind, not to act in accord with our prayers by helping others, does more than deprive the world of the benefit of the good we can express. It diminishes our own sense of good within us. It shrinks our faith, curdles our joy, constricts our usefulness. Withholding from others what is in our power to give—namely, the good thoughts and good deeds God inspires in us—devalues our conscious worth. It makes us narrowly self-centered, instead of broadly God-centered.

It’s impossible for any of us to work out our own salvation while ignoring the needs of our fellowman. That’s because the perfect consciousness we seek to demonstrate—the same Mind which was in Christ Jesus—doesn’t permit a selfish motive to exist within it. Mary Baker Eddy, who in this age was the most selfless person to follow the healing example of the Master, tells us: “To disregard the welfare of others is contrary to the law of God; therefore it deteriorates one’s ability to do good, to benefit himself and mankind.”

The counterpoint of our Leader’s statement is equally true. To regard the welfare of others, in obedience to God’s law, increases one’s own ability to do good, thus benefitting both oneself and everyone, in accordance with Mrs. Eddy’s promise: “Rest assured that the good you do unto others you do to yourselves as well . . .”

Help given and received

The selfless labor of love taking place here at Glenmont, and at Christian Science nursing facilities everywhere, furnishes practical proof that the only true help we can ever give another, or can ever receive from another, has its impulsion and fulfillment in God, the Alpha and Omega, the All-in-all.

When a cripple begged for alms at the temple gate called Beautiful, he received from the Apostle Peter a form of help greater than any amount of money. He gained his healing. But a healing of what? The quick answer is that of lameness. But what does that mean? To the materially minded, it means a physical condition cured. To a Christian Scientist, however, it signifies a mental transformation—the correction of various erroneous thoughts embodied in the lame man’s concept of himself, in the way he and the rest of the world wrongly identified who he was and what he was.

Seldom does one error stand alone in thought. As the saying goes, “misery loves company.” In the case of the crippled man, lurking behind the physical appearance of lameness was a pack of lies, linked together like a band of conspirators against this man’s welfare. The man, we’re told, had been “lame from his mother’s womb.” Ergo, the lies of heredity and birth defect, testifying falsely about the origin of individual existence. And you can be sure that where heredity goes, its ugly twin—the lie of incurability—is bound to follow, arguing that it’s too late to undo what matter has done.
The lame man was cramped economically as well as physically. Daily he had to be carried to the temple so he could “ask alms of them that entered” in. Here again, more lies about this man’s status as an heir of God! Lies of destitution and despair, of helpless dependence on others to get him somewhere so he could beg for his meager bread. Ignorant of his God-given right of self-government, the lame man had succumbed to his miserable lot in life as a mortal—to a life, not of abundance, but of beggarly subsistence. Linked to his entrenched sense of helplessness was a resigned hopelessness of his ever being healed of the tandem errors of paralysis and poverty, which cohabited his thinking like two rotten peas in the same pod!

Then Peter showed up, along with John. At first the lame man must have been disheartened to hear Peter say: “Silver and gold have I none.” In saying this, Peter wasn’t admitting to penury. Unlike the enfeebled beggar who knew only how to measure wellness in bodily terms and supply in monetary terms, Peter understood that health and wealth are metaphysically the same, being spiritual ideas that belong universally and impartially to all of God’s creation. The Apostle’s spiritual understanding of these facts—his possession of these right ideas—empowered what he said next to the lame man: “But such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”

And the man did just that. A crippled beggar no more, he was now a walker. And a leaper. And a praiser of God. No longer was he stuck outside the temple, beholden to the charitable pity of others who went in to worship. Now he was able to enter the temple on his own, with Peter and John at his side, and glorify his Maker. The erstwhile beggar was now giving—I repeat, he was giving—praise to God.

Metaphorically and metaphysically considered, we can say that in entering the temple (a Biblical term Mrs. Eddy defines as “body; the idea of Life, substance, and intelligence; . . . the shrine of Love”9) the man was actually entering into a new understanding of himself, of the way divine Love creates all identities in its perfect likeness—forever free and fetterless, beautifully formed and preserved. An incapacitated sense of body no longer possessed the healed man. Instead he possessed his own embodied thought, over which he had dominion. He was master of his body, bringing it into subjection. He had self-control. The man experienced in far greater measure than before his right to self-government—a right that the Discoverer of Christian Science states as an imperative: “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.”10

**Imparting good, without depleting it**

As for Peter, in doing what he did by helping and healing the man, the Apostle was being true to himself, true to his purpose in life to glorify the creator of all. His statement “Such as I have give I thee” testifies to what it means for you and me to possess all the good God bestows—as well as to what it means for us to help others by imparting that good. The truth voiced by Peter is the same truth Christian Scientists are called on to express. Mrs. Eddy writes, “. . . may each member of this church rise above the oft-repeated inquiry, What am I? to the scientific response: I am able to impart truth, health, and happiness, and this is my rock of salvation and my reason for existing.”11
Imparting truth, health, and happiness is the very essence of divine help. It’s the Christly way we let our light “so shine before men” that they see our good works and glorify God as the Giver of all good on earth and in heaven.\textsuperscript{12} Infinite divine Love causes a God-bestowed consciousness to impart its understanding. In this way God’s blessing for one becomes a mutual blessing for all.

But we can only give what we have first received from God. The pure affection expressed in a mother’s care and prayer for her child derives from a source higher than that of the human self. “Prayer,” Mrs. Eddy says, “is the utilization of the love wherewith [God] loves us.”\textsuperscript{13} The illusory world of many private minds believes also in many private loves, conveyed from person to person. But the fact is, God’s universal love for His sons and daughters, for you and me as His spiritual ideas, is the only actual love there is—a quality individualized in infinite variety and utilized by us in our affections toward one another. Good in its multifarious forms is individually expressed, not personally exchanged.

“Man shines by borrowed light,”\textsuperscript{14} Mrs. Eddy says. To love another as yourself reflects a shared light emanating from divine Love. \textit{Science and Health} explains: “Happiness is spiritual, born of Truth and Love. It is unselfish; therefore it cannot exist alone, but requires all mankind to share it.”\textsuperscript{15} For you to impart comfort or happiness or love to others, in thought and deed, takes nothing from you. In spiritual giving there are no diminishing returns. To share your joy with another doesn’t make you less happy but more so. To teach a child how to multiply doesn’t mean that as the child gets smarter you get dumber! Intelligence utilized is never used up.

In metaphysics we always retain what we impart. That’s because an infinite, all-giving Father manifests His qualities in man without ever depleting Himself. “God is not separate from the wisdom He bestows,”\textsuperscript{16} we’re told. In the divine economy infinite Love gives all \textit{without ever giving anything away}—in accord with the divine law, or Science, which “operates unspent.”\textsuperscript{17}

As we understand and express more of the inexhaustible nature of divine help, we’re better able to impart health, happiness, and love to others without losing anything good ourselves—including our energy in laboring for mankind and our just recompense for imparting truth. Our Leader assures us that “consciousness of right-doing brings its own reward”\textsuperscript{18} and that “giving does not impoverish us in the service of our Maker, neither does withholding enrich us.”\textsuperscript{19}

The immortal fact that all of God’s creatures are useful, as our textbook states,\textsuperscript{20} is the spiritual rationale for our loving and helping others—our brother, our neighbor, the stranger within our gates, even an enemy, so-called—for our doing good to one and all. Because usefulness is as much a quality of God as is joy or health or intelligence, our being useful—ever about our Father’s business in expressing His goodness—underpins all the good we do.

Mrs. Eddy assures us: “Of two things fate cannot rob us; namely, of choosing the best, and of helping others thus to choose.”\textsuperscript{21} Some years ago I quoted this statement by our Leader in a \textit{Sentinel} article entitled “Helping others.” Fortunately the timelessness of a truth always makes that truth as relevant now as before. So I’m taking an author’s liberty to quote himself! What I said then, I say now: “Our helping another to choose the best does not infringe on
his free moral agency—his absolute necessity to work out his own salvation by choosing for himself. In an election year various groups may help get voters to the polls, but each voter, thus helped, must still cast his own ballot as he thinks best."22

The Bible is replete with examples of how divine service is translated into cooperative effort. When Moses’ hands grew heavy holding the rod of God during the daylong battle with the forces of Amalek, we’re told that “Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”23 And the victory was won.

Mind you, Moses didn’t hand over the rod to Aaron and Hur for them to hold. He did what was his alone to do; but he accepted their help in supporting his efforts at right doing. Together all three were in God’s service, fulfilling His purpose, expressing the eternal Christ—the spirit of one all-governing Principle. They demonstrated a timeless truth that centuries later St. Paul would put into words: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”24

The selfless thought impels the unselfish act

The divine impetus impelling us individually—and thus collectively—to work together for good, to be of help to one another, is the office of Christ, Truth. Doing good to others is infinitely more than human do-goodism or philosophical altruism. The essence of all right endeavor is the thought that impels the act. Our Church Manual does not have a By-Law entitled “Two Rules, one for Motives and one for Acts.” What it has is a single Rule that covers in equal measure what we think and what we do because both aspects of our lives are fundamentally the same.25 Work in Christian Science is at bedrock mental. Mrs. Eddy indicates this by writing in Science and Health: “People with mental work before them have no time for gossip about false law or testimony.”26

Mental work depicts the correspondence of thought and deed. The metaphysical essence of right labor accomplishes all that’s worthwhile in the world. It exemplifies the fact that in divine Mind there is no idle thought, no aimless idea, no wasted motion, no ineffectual help. God’s knowing constitutes its accomplishment, the very doing of what He knows. “For he spake, and it was done.”27

Christly work ensures that our Manual duties stay free of any personal sense of pride or burden or any bureaucratic sense of officialism. Mental work does not let perfunctory thinking or acting—the routine of daily life—overtake inspiration and spontaneity in our branch churches, nursing facilities, institutional committees, or any organized effort by fellow Christian Scientists for the common good. Mental work maintains the spiritual purpose of a right endeavor.

I remember once hearing Naomi Price address a graduating class of Christian Science nurses. I had the privilege of working with that indomitable Englishwoman, who at the time was an Associate Editor of the Journal, Sentinel, Herald. Mrs. Price recounted a story told to her years before by a venerable woman who had worked in Mrs. Eddy’s household. When called to serve, this woman immediately left her large healing practice, eager to serve the one she loved as God’s messenger to this age. Upon arriving at our Leader’s home,
she was immediately put to work—dusting a room! Her initial response was as quick as it was indignant. She felt she should be doing something more important than dusting!

Her next response was equally quick but far more humble. She realized that she wouldn’t last the day under Mrs. Eddy’s roof if she didn’t get a right understanding of what it meant to serve her Leader. Her answer came with this angel-thought: “A homely task is a holy task without the me.” (Now, the first time I heard this statement, it took me a moment to grasp it. Take m-e out of the word “homely” and—lo and behold!—you get the word “holy.”) But this me we’re to get rid of is never the true identity of anyone. In every case it’s a false personal sense of self, a counterfeit of the one divine Ego, the infinite I AM.

Mrs. Price’s story underscores what our Leader once said about those Scientists who were called to work at her home: that they could acquire in one year an understanding of Science that might otherwise take them a half century to gain. But, she added, that shouldn’t be the incentive for serving her. “Better far,” she said, “that Christian Scientists go to help their helper, and thus lose all selfishness, as she has lost it, and thereby help themselves and the whole world, as she has done, according to this saying of Christ Jesus: ‘And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.’”

“A homely task is a holy task without the me.” The same Christ-spirit of unselfishness that enabled faithful members of Mrs. Eddy’s household to perform their varied duties (as maid, cook, gardener, secretary) is the same selfless spirit needed today by Christian Scientists in their mutual endeavors to serve the Cause of Truth.

Another story, this one recounted by one of Mrs. Eddy’s pupils (Janet Colman), illustrates our theme today: “Helping Ourselves by Helping Others.” It exemplifies how “in the scientific relation of God to man, . . . whatever blesses one blesses all . . .,” as we learn from our textbook.

The story is about two travelers in the Alps. “The cold was intense as they journeyed, and after a while one of them became overpowered with sleep, and fell down in the snow. The same feeling was felt by the other, but he knew the fatal consequences of falling asleep, so he began vigorously to shake and pound his companion in his efforts to rouse him. At last he was rewarded and he became warm himself through his exertions to help another.”

To me, this story points to the fact that our success in helping others is in direct ratio to our success in working out our own salvation by right knowing and right acting. Let’s face it: we can be of no earthly good to others if we’re not first good ourselves.

Willingness to be helped

While the primary focus of this talk has been about our willingness to be of help to others, in obedience to the divine law of loving our neighbor as ourselves, a corollary issue deserves some consideration. God inspires in us not only a readiness to render help when it’s needed but a readiness to receive help when that’s needed. Our Leader links together these two aspects of metaphysical healing. She writes: “When we are willing to help and to be helped, divine aid is near.”

That’s an intriguing statement, isn’t it? Especially the idea that we must be “willing . . . to be helped” in order to be so. Now, you’d think it would be a given that someone in distress would eagerly consent to be helped. Yet at the pool of Bethesda when Jesus asked a man who
had been afflicted for thirty-eight years, “Wilt thou be made whole?” the man surprisingly
did not answer with a definite “Yes.” Instead he argued why he wasn’t able to be healed:
“Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming,
another steppeth down before me.”

How typical of mortal thinking, which judges life’s tribulations through the dark lens
of a false personal ego, casting aspersions right and left. On the right hand, mortal mind would
place blame on one’s self for not being able or deserving enough to be helped. It would entice
us to malpractice against ourselves by thinking and saying: “I have no man to put me into
the pool”; “I’m too old”; “I lack inspiration”; “I can never forgive myself for past mistakes.”
And on the left hand, a mortal mentality would justify our being in a helpless state by blaming
someone else for our predicament: “Another steppeth down before me”; “the other applicant
got the job instead of me”; “my friend betrayed me”; “a drunk driver injured me.”

Fortunately for that excuse-making man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus showed, by
healing him, that a spiritual understanding of God’s will trumps self-justification.

To be willing to be helped scientifically, it’s not enough just to impersonalize our
troubles. We must also be willing to stop looking for the solution to our problems in personal
terms. In Christian metaphysics, infinite divine Principle, incorporeal Love—and not
human personality (not even that of a loved Christian Science practitioner or nurse)—is
the empowering source of divine aid, in both the giving and the receiving of it. A Christian
Scientist blesses his fellowman by reflecting the divine help that’s ever-present to meet
the human need. The good that is reflected by man, through man, as man, emanates from
God, the supreme First Cause—the only I, or Us; the one infinite Person, or Ego.

With this understanding, a Christian Scientist is able to help another without being
a “buttinsky,” to comfort others without smothering them, to be of service without allowing
himself to be treated in a servile manner, to impart wisdom without usurping the free thinking
of another.

And with this same spiritual understanding, a Christian Scientist is able to accept
the help of another without ever surrendering his own individuality, to be grateful for
assistance without feeling inferior, to be humble without being embarrassed, to be patient
temperamentally without being passive mentally.

The office of the healing Christ at work in us

Now I realize that in saying all this I’m preaching to the choir here at Glenmont.
You already know this because every day you’re putting this into practice. I’m sure you’d
agree, though, that a reaffirmation of the truth is always a welcome reminder.

I needed such a reminder several years ago, when in a startlingly short amount of time
I was immobilized and unable to walk freely. Alone in my apartment, I wrestled, like Jacob
did at Peniel, with material error—with fear and negativity, predicated on the false premise
of life and sensation in the physical body. Using a sturdy umbrella as a walking stick, I just
barely was able to hobble about. Each step was painful and slow.

But I don’t want to leave you in suspense! My story has a happy ending. Within ten
days I was healed. I spoke about this healing at Arden Wood’s annual meeting last year, but
there’s one aspect of the experience, as it relates to today’s discussion, that I didn’t mention then.
Soon after the difficulty began, I called for the prayerful assistance of a practitioner and was grateful for the inspired mental support. Yet despite the obvious physical challenges, I resisted asking for the practical help of a Christian Science nurse. Having never needed such help before, I wanted to manage on my own. But the morning came when I could not get out of bed by myself. Sheer grit and determination were of no avail. That’s when I knew I had an important lesson to learn.

I thought about a passage in *Science and Health*. For the first time I appreciated how its message could be applied, not just to the work of a practitioner, but to every form of aid provided for in the *Manual*. Mrs. Eddy instructs: “If students do not readily heal themselves, they should early call an experienced Christian Scientist to aid them. If they are unwilling to do this for themselves, they need only to know that error cannot produce this unnatural reluctance.”

I humbly picked up the phone and asked a nearby friend who was a Christian Science nurse to come and help me, which he promptly did. No sooner had I put the phone down than I felt a mental release. The physical condition hadn’t changed. Yet I was certain that I was being cared for—and that the essence of this care was spiritual, separate and distinct from any personal considerations. In a flash I appreciated anew that the *Manual* activities of practitioner and nurse are not actually the domain of material persons but are the office of the healing Christ at work in us, helping to lift thought above the mortal, sickly, and sinful to the immortal, healthy, and pure. Mrs. Eddy says that he who demonstrates Christian Science “thinks of every one in his real quality, and sees each mortal in an impersonal depict.”

I also took to heart the earlier experience of a dear friend, a saintly woman, who had been taught by one of Mrs. Eddy’s students and who had devoted a long and fruitful maiden life to the Cause of Truth. In her time of immediate physical need the only Christian Science nurse available to come to stay at her home was a young man. This dear venerable woman hesitated at the prospect of having a man attend her. The practitioner reassured her: “Instead of seeing the presence of a male nurse, see the presence of a Christian Science nurse.” The practitioner’s words lifted her thought above human personality, her own or another’s, to the Christly office, the spiritual idea, at work in her behalf, and she gratefully accepted the help.

Friends, with the telling of this experience I’ve come to the end of my allotted time. It’s important for a speaker to know when to stop, especially if he’s speaking at a facility where punctuality is a requisite quality of nursing! So to wrap things up, I propose to let Mrs. Eddy have the last word. I’ve learned from experience that’s always the best policy!

In a well-known passage, the truth of which can never be worn thin by repeating it, what our Leader has to say sums up today’s discussion:

*The rich in spirit help the poor in one grand brotherhood, all having the same Principle, or Father; and blessed is that man who seeth his brother’s need and supplieth it, seeking his own in another’s good.*

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2. Ps. 46:1.


4. II Cor. 1:3, 4.


6. Retrospection and Introspection 72:3-6.


9. Science and Health 595:7-9 (to ;).


14. Retrospection and Introspection 57:15 (only).


17. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany 353:15 (only) to spread.

18. Science and Health 37:13 (only) (to ;).


23. Ex. 17:12.


27. Ps. 33:9.


32. John 5:6, 7.

