VOLUME 28 • NUMBER 1 FALL 2024

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A DAYSTAR FOUNDATION PUBLICATION

"Christian Science and Christian Scientists will, *must*, have a history...." — *Mary Baker Eddy*

WOMEN BUILDERS

of the early Christian Science movement

Part III

Lady Victoria Murray

The Biblical book of Acts (12:1-17) records a small but significant incident that involves a servant girl named Rhoda, who worked in the home of the mother of John Mark (the author of the Gospel of Mark, according to tradition[1]). A group of earnest Christians was praying for the imprisoned disciple Peter. During the prayer meeting, Rhoda responded to a knock at the gate, recognized Peter's voice, and in her exuberance, ran to tell the others before she admitted Peter, who had walked unbound out of the prison after "the angel of the Lord" roused him and guided him to freedom.

P01368, The Mary Baker Eddy Library. Photo by Henry Bullingham. Courtesy of The Mary Baker Eddy Collection.

Lady Victoria A. Murray, c. 1900

A Bible commentary provides perspective on the scene that followed: "...when [Rhoda] announces Peter's presence at the door, she is declared to be 'out of her mind.' This may reflect prejudice against a woman's, particularly a female servant's, word of witness. Nevertheless, as Luke [the traditionally accepted author of Acts] tells the story, Rhoda is vindicated by her persistence in claiming Peter's presence. Thus Luke presents Rhoda as an example to his audience that the testimony of a woman, even a female servant, can be trustworthy. He may be intentionally countering tendencies to devalue the word of a woman by showing that even a servant girl like Rhoda can be trusted."[2]

The account in Acts describes the prayer-meeting attendees as "astonished" when they realized it was indeed Peter waiting at the gate (see Acts 12:16). As a writer in the *Christian Science Sentinel* observed: "Did [the company] run to meet him with outstretched arms, in tearful gratitude at this answer to their prayers?...they told Rhoda she was mad....when they saw him, as we read, 'they were astonished.' Why should we be astonished at any startling answer to our prayers? Can we not be like Rhoda, who watched and listened while she prayed, her thought innocent of evil?"[3]

There was a similar reaction – disbelief, then astonishment – from Jesus' disciples when several women reported Jesus' resurrection: "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose

Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre...and departed, wondering..." (Luke 24:10-12).[4]

And during the walk to Emmaus, one of the two disciples said to the risen but unrecognized Jesus: "...certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre....Then [Jesus] said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken..." (Luke 24:22, 25).

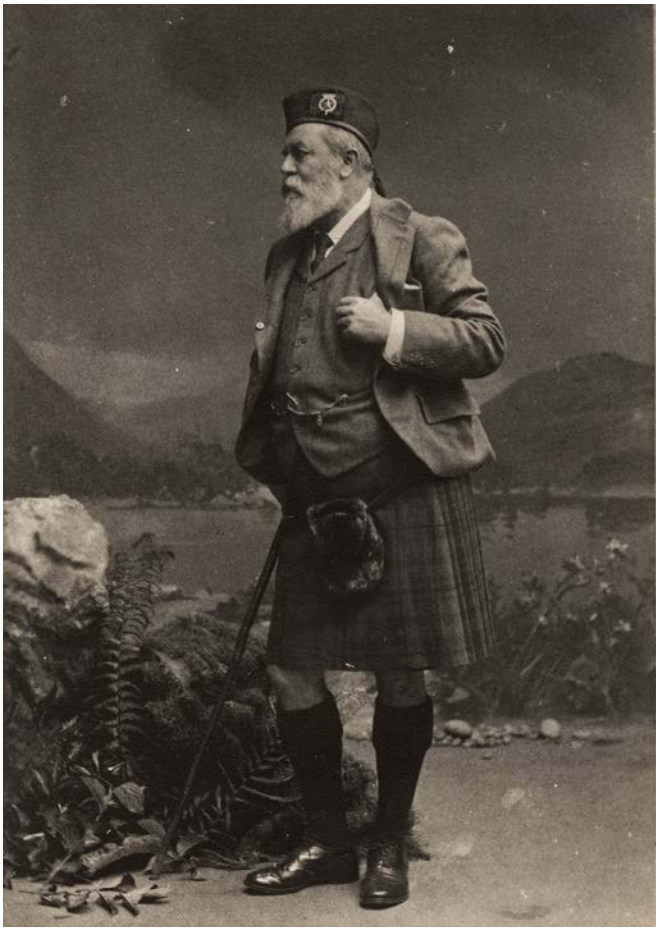
Let's compare the Biblical Rhoda to another spiritually receptive young woman who lived centuries later. The life of this individual, Lady Victoria Murray, a member of the British noble class, may seem far removed from that of the humble servant Rhoda, but the courageous stand for the Christ taken by both women serves to link their experiences.

Lady Victoria Murray, born in 1877, was the daughter of Charles Adolphus Murray, the 7th Earl of Dunmore, and his wife, the Countess of Dunmore (the former Lady Gertrude Coke). The Dunmores maintained close ties to the British royal family. Lady Victoria was named after Queen Victoria, who was her godmother. Lord Dunmore, Lady Victoria's father, was an officer in the British army, a prominent world traveler, explorer, and author of books on India and Central Asia.[5]

Because of the fragile health of Lady Victoria and her mother, Lady Dunmore, the family spent a great deal of time away from Great Britain in more temperate regions, including Kashmir in northern India. Hearing of Christian Science, Lady Dunmore obtained a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. Her health improved, which resulted in other family members taking up the study of Christian Science, including her husband and daughter. Lady Victoria experienced healing as well,[6] and she, a teenager at the time, soon became convinced that "Christian Science was the only thing worth living for."[7]

Lord Dunmore had a remarkable healing as well. His account of it, along with other details relating to his early experience in Christian Science, was published in *The Christian Science Journal* (April 1907) after originally appearing in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. He wrote:

> When I joined the Christian Science Church I had been suffering for four years with an ailment which one of the leading surgeons in London told me was incurable....I put myself unreservedly in the hands of a member of my family [his daughter Lady Victoria[8]], and after five weeks' treatment was completely healed. This took place nine years ago [1898]. Two years after I was healed I had occasion to be medically examined in Scotland, by a doctor attached to an insurance company in whose office I was about to take out a life-policy, and when I called his attention purposely to the fact that I had suffered from a physical ailment and been healed of it, he made a minute examination of me, and declared most emphatically that there was absolutely no trace of it, and asserted, in the same manner that the London surgeon had done, that such a malady was incurable. On another occasion a surgeon, a perfect stranger to me, having heard of my case, came to my house in London and asked leave to examine me, which I, in the interests of Christian Science, permitted him to do. He also pronounced me perfectly sound in that



Courtesy of Longyear Museum, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Charles Adolphus Murray, the 7th Earl of Dunmore
(Lady Victoria's father)

> respect, and it was not until I had shown him a letter, written to me by the London surgeon referred to, on the subject of my ailment, that he would believe that I had ever suffered from such a malady.[9]

The Dunmores were instrumental in introducing Christian Science in India, and Lady Victoria began to heal others through what she was learning. On returning to England, she for four years fulfilled the requirements of a young woman of her rank in society at the time. This would have included frequent entertaining and other social interaction with fellow aristocrats and other prominent people, finding a suitable, often titled, husband, and ultimately running a large household with multiple servants. But as one who knew Lady Victoria later stated, "...from the first her heart was never in it; Christian Science was the one thing in which she was interested...."[10] The author of a study on female members of the British aristocracy during the Victorian era speaks of "the move away from institutional religion, and the predominance of religious doubt in the late nineteenth century..." as well as "the increasing heterodoxy of belief in aristocratic circles...."[11] This seems to have been Lady Victoria's experience, reared as she would have been in the Church of England. Even during her years in society, she continued to share Christian Science with those with whom she came in contact, as did other members of the Dunmore family.

The Dunmores, including Victoria and her sister Mildred, traveled to the United States in 1898,[12] during which they had their first of several visits with Mary Baker Eddy, who encouraged them to work publicly for the Cause of Christian Science. This did not seem possible to the family; but within a year, the way opened up for them to honor Mrs. Eddy's request. As a result of that visit, Victoria committed herself to wholehearted work for the Cause. A historian has pointed out that at this period, the "preoccupation with religion...was a central area for the making of independent decisions by aristocratic women, often in the teeth of family opposition...."[13] The fact that Lady Victoria's parents consented to her giving up her place in society in favor of devoting "all her time and energies to the work in the Master's vineyard"[14] at least removed one huge obstacle that might have stood in her path.

Lady Victoria was not alone in her work. Florence Coutts-Fowlie, who was to become her close ally in the pioneering days of Christian Science in Great Britain, had had a remarkable healing of a supposedly incurable throat disease after reading *Science and Health*.[15] As described in a history of Christian Science in Manchester, England, "Miss Coutts-Fowlie was older than Lady Victoria, and on many occasions when it might not have seemed fitting for Lady Victoria, on account of her youth, to enter on some mission alone, Miss Coutts-Fowlie would go with her."[16]

In October 1900, Lady Dunmore, Lady Victoria's mother, received a letter from an individual in the North of England requesting help in Christian Science. This letter, which Lady Dunmore forwarded to her daughter, was to change Lady Victoria's life forever. The letter-writer was a medical doctor, Walter F. W. Wilding, who stated that his young daughter, suffering from tuberculosis, had been given up by the medical profession. Dr. Wilding had heard of Christian Science through his father, a former ship captain who with his wife and daughter had retired to Oakland, California. There Dr. Wilding's father learned of Christian Science and experienced a healing of an internal trouble in a few days.[17] Dr. Wilding's sister,

Courtesy of Longyear Museum, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

The Countess of Dunmore
(Lady Victoria's mother)

Hephzibah Wilding, became a student of a former physician and pupil of Mary Baker Eddy, Dr. Francis Fluno, C.S.D., in Oakland and upon her return to England was inspired to devote her life to the practice of Christian Science healing.[18]

Desperate to save his daughter, Dr. Wilding searched for Christian Scientists in England but could find none, even after putting ads in local newspapers. He then found a copy of *The Christian Science Journal*, saw Lady Dunmore's name there, and sent her the letter requesting help that Lady Dunmore forwarded to her daughter, who agreed to take the case.

When Lady Victoria arrived at the train station in Hindley (just west of Manchester) to be met by Dr. Wilding, he overlooked her completely. Here's a description of the meeting, recorded some years later:

> [Dr. Wilding] addressed several elderly and dignified persons only to be rebuffed each time. At last there were left on the platform only Dr. Wilding and a slender, beautiful, delicate-looking girl of twenty-three, wearing a green dress and a tam-o-shanter. Surely this could not be Lady Victoria was Dr. Wilding's thought. But at last he mustered courage to address her and to enquire, to find to his great astonishment, and in a degree, chagrin that this young girl was the one who had come to bring the message of Christian Science to him, a doctor.[19]

Railway station, Hindley, UK

Recall that those who gathered to pray for Peter's release at that prayer meeting in ancient time were "astonished" to find that young Rhoda's account of Peter's waiting at the door was indeed true. Similarly, Dr. Wilding reacted with "great astonishment" that a young woman was the one who had answered his call for help. It is a tribute to his receptivity that he overcame his prejudice sufficiently to trust Lady Victoria to heal his daughter, which she indeed did. The next day, the child was up and dressed, and within a week, she was riding her bicycle. Dr. Wilding, greatly impressed and moved by this healing, began to recommend Christian Science to some of his patients deemed incurable, and "a number of them were healed in a remarkably short time, many in one treatment."[20] Several years later he wrote: "After I was convinced of the truth of Christian Science, I gave up the practice of medicine....Such a step, taken by one who loved his work and profession, could only be justified by very powerful motives."[21] As he indicated to Lady Dunmore, "I will be an honest man if I have to break stones on the road."[22] Dr. Wilding soon became a Christian Science practitioner, listed in *The Christian Science Journal*.[23]

The healing of Dr. Wilding's daughter brought so many patients to Lady Victoria that she decided to remain in the environs of Manchester, an industrial city with a large population of mill workers, a number of whom were young women who turned to her for prayerful help.[24] This close association with individuals from humble backgrounds and with little formal education was a very different experience from the privileged life Lady Victoria had lived with her parents and was not one that would have been sanctioned by many from her social class. But her kindly and unassuming manner endeared her to those who knew and worked with her. Her good friend Florence Coutts-Fowlie joined her in Manchester in November 1900, and both women became very active Christian Science practitioners. They started to conduct Christian Science services in their rented rooms (the first service had seven in attendance) but moved very quickly to several other locations because of resistance to Christian Science. In January 1901, they rented space for services in a bank building, where they remained for a year, and the two women became First and Second Readers. They also attended to various other church-related duties, including the distribution of *Science and Health*.[25]

Apparently Lord Dunmore had second thoughts about his daughter's leaving the parental roof to live and work in such humble conditions and pressed on her to come home. Lady Victoria, however, was quite convinced that God had called her for the

Market St., Manchester, UK, c. 1900

work, and she did not return to London. However, this meant that her financial situation was extremely limited, and she had to work out her supply on her own. This required her and her co-worker Florence Coutts-Fowlie to take over their own domestic duties, including, as a later colleague put it,

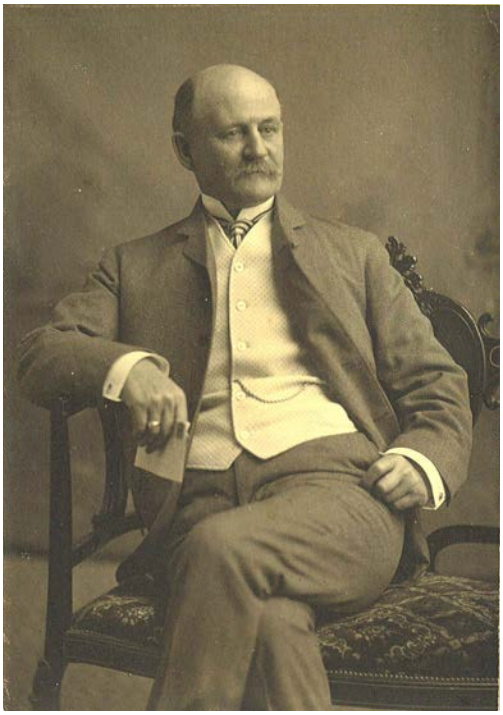
> ...scrubbing the floors and cleaning the steps. Often they would be out all day visiting patients, returning late at night to be faced with the necessity of preparing a meal and doing the housework before retiring. In addition to this Lady Victoria frequently would be up all night with urgent cases....these two ladies... counted no difficulty too great for them to face to demonstrate the healing power of Christian Science and to establish it firmly in the North of England.[26]

Eventually Lord Dunmore learned to appreciate the unselfed work his daughter was doing and periodically visited her in Manchester.

In October 1901, church services were again held in Lady Victoria's home, for she had moved to larger quarters that could more comfortably accommodate the approximately 28 attendees.[27] Earlier that year, Mrs. Eddy had invited Lady Victoria, her sister Lady Mildred, and their parents to attend a Normal class in Christian Science to be held in Boston in June and taught by Edward Kimball. Here is Lady Victoria's account:

> We knew that these classes were designed to prepare students of Christian Science to become teachers, but we had not entertained the idea of teaching and, therefore, never contemplated the possibility of being present. None the less, we were very glad to avail ourselves of the glorious opportunity thus provided of gaining further understanding. Immediately after, we were called to Pleasant View and given a beautiful and inspiring talk on the application of Christian Science, being informed at the same time that we were now teachers...Seeing that none of us had anticipated for a moment such a calling, we probably seemed hesitant, but Mrs. Eddy was firm and gave us additional counsel, expressing the while much satisfaction with the healing we had already done. It was evident to us that everyone was expected to be at work and that whatever our seeming lack Mrs. Eddy knew we could reflect the One Mind – the only Teacher and Healer.[28]

It is noteworthy that at the conclusion of the class, Edward Kimball had written Mrs. Eddy with a detailed assessment of the members of the June 1901 class. In the letter, Mr. Kimball expressed his feeling that the Dunmores had not been ready for the class, although he was impressed with Lord Dunmore's love for Christian Science and "*many* admirable traits" and Lady Victoria and Lady Mildred's "sensible understanding & application." He felt, however, that "considering the fact that [the Dunmore family] have been of the effete nobility of Great Britain, I think they are doing pretty well, but are far from the standard of our best American Scientists."[29]



Courtesy of Longyear Museum, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Edward A. Kimball

Evidently Mrs. Eddy saw valuable qualities and spiritual receptivity beyond what Mr. Kimball had glimpsed at that point, for she herself presented all of the Dunmores certificates as teachers.[30] She afterwards continued to support their efforts, particularly those of Lady Victoria, to establish Christian Science in Great Britain. Any "seeming lack" being overcome in the Dunmores' expression of the one divine Mind points to Mrs. Eddy's perception of their teachableness and earnest desire to progress in their understanding of Christian Science. Certainly Lady Victoria's experience is a testament to her demonstration of these qualities, as well as her humility.[31]

The importance of the latter quality was emphasized by Lady Victoria in her account of that meeting at Pleasant View after the 1901 class. She wrote of the effect Mrs. Eddy had on her and the profound spiritual lesson she learned:

> I remember...when Mrs. Eddy was speaking of the things of Spirit...that I gained something for which I had been continually striving for a very long time. I cannot recall a single word she said but I can rehearse the joy and new-born sense that was mine from that hour. As she talked in her own rapt way, looking far into space, as forgetful of herself as of us, there dawned upon my thought the great spiritual import of those words on p. 445 of our text book, Science and Health; "Teach the meekness and might of life hid with Christ in God." Here then was a true idea of humility. Here alone was peace. Here was the secret of her marvelous power and dominion....Not in vain, then, my long and earnest striving for the right idea of humility, for now at last I beheld it. When Mrs. Eddy revealed it to me, it was not by the spoken word, for she did not allude to the subject. Her very presence breathed it....I had seen the star – the bright light of the majesty and meekness of self-oblivious love. What a benediction![32]

No doubt this lesson provided unspeakable comfort and strength to Lady Victoria when she taught her first class in Christian Science in Manchester with eight students in December 1901, just months after her visit with Mrs. Eddy. This was not an easy assignment for a young woman who was known for her shyness. Apparently her timidity about teaching was so great that her friend Florence Coutts-Fowlie, behind the scene, had to occasionally give her a gentle nudge into the classroom to conduct the class![33] That Lady Victoria overcame this reticence is evident in that she continued teaching classes for another quarter-century. She had around thirty pupils in each subsequent class, who mostly came from the county of Lancashire (where Manchester is located) and surrounding counties, as well as several from continental Europe.[34]

On May 8, 1902, a Christian Science lecture was held for the first time in Manchester. The lecturer was Judge William Ewing from Chicago, the first member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship to tour Great Britain. He became a strong supporter of the work done in Manchester. His lecture there was described as "a triumph and a feast" and that those attending "filled the place to overflowing, – a very large representative audience, and this from a community that less than five years ago had probably never heard of Christian Science."[35] Lady Victoria cabled Mrs. Eddy: "Manchester lecture immense success. Thousand people present and many turned away for lack of room. Our grateful thanks for sending Judge [Ewing]."[36] Spurred on by this success and finding their church services attracting more interest, just two months later, on July 5, 1902, fifty-seven members officially organized as First Church

Courtesy of Longyear Museum, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Judge William G. Ewing

of Christ, Scientist, Manchester. Lady Victoria and Miss Coutts-Fowlie were appointed First and Second Readers.[37]

The next step was finding a location to accommodate the larger number of attendees and to solve the continuing problem of renting space from those who were bitterly opposed to Christian Science. Even the members' efforts to purchase *land* on which to build a church came up against opposition. A Manchester church history records: "Efforts were made to secure a number of plots that might have been suitable, but when it was found what was the purpose for which the land was desired the vendors refused to sell."[38] This resistance was finally broken through, and suitable land in Victoria Park was found and negotiations for its purchase were completed in March 1903. Lady Victoria became chairman and treasurer of the church's newly formed building committee.

Dr. Wilding, an active member of the Manchester church, provided a preliminary sketch so that the architect would have an idea of the church's needs.[39] The committee found an outstanding architect – Edgar Wood, who was much respected within the Arts and Crafts movement of art and architecture, which was growing in popularity in Great Britain. His design for the Manchester congregation in 1903 may appear unorthodox for a Christian Science church but is considered by a noted architectural historian as "one of the most original buildings of that time in England or indeed anywhere....It is a pioneer work, internationally speaking,...and it stands entirely on its own in England."[40]

Standout features of the church architecture include a steep gable, a stone chimney stack, two wings that "project diagonally from [the] centre" of the church, as well as one extending from the back, and a "round tower with a conical roof." The interior has a marble panel with a cross-and-crown bas-relief and "a superb Arabic style openwork organ screen."[41]

The edifice was to be the first built specifically for Christian Science services in Great Britain.[42]

Since church services in the rental quarters at that time were so crowded that individuals attending had to either stand or sit on the stairs, the building committee was impelled to move swiftly with the project.[43] The building committee decided to proceed with the construction of the main edifice without the two wings that were part of the original plan.

Edgar Wood, architect of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Manchester, UK

Shortly after the purchase of the land, the church's cornerstone – a block of Concord granite imported from Mrs. Eddy's home city – was laid. Lady Victoria conducted a quiet, open-air ceremony on May 30, 1903, before a group that included her father, Lord Dunmore, and her sister Lady Mildred. The stone had this carved inscription:

> This stone, from Concord, U.S.A., was laid by Victoria Murray in gratitude for the spiritual truth and physical healing found in Christian Science. "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." "These signs shall follow them that believe." – Jesus.[44]

Lady Victoria read from I Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 2, as well as an extract from Mrs. Eddy's writings; silent prayer and the Lord's Prayer followed.

Judge Ewing, who, as mentioned earlier, had given the first lecture in Manchester, was present and gave an address at the ceremony. While pointing out that Christian Scientists believe "in the same all-wise and ever-present God" as other Christian churches, Judge Ewing also noted the uniqueness of Christian Science:

> A striking difference between our belief and theirs lies in this, that we shall be judged by what we do, and not by what we say we believe. This little church is simply a product

Courtesy of Longyear Museum, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Lady Victoria Murray at laying of cornerstone of First Church, Manchester, UK, May 30, 1903;
Judge Ewing at far left; Lord Dunmore, far right.

> of that conviction, and I am sure that the time will come when we shall realize that our thought is the truth, that no good has ever come or will come to us in this world that is not the reflex of some good that we have done to some one else.[45]

Judge Ewing's remarks were followed by the actual laying of the cornerstone "in the name of the Great Architect of the universe," as stated by Lady Victoria.[46] The service concluded with the singing of Mrs. Eddy's hymn "Feed My Sheep."

As construction of the building proceeded, it was found that the legal documents for the purchase of the land had not been properly prepared; thus the lawyer for the sellers stated that the sale would not be completed and the walls that had started to go up would have to be removed. A Manchester church history describes what followed:

> The chief vendor, Sir William Agnew, was personally known to Lady Victoria Murray, so immediately…she went to London to interview him. She did not know that the Solicitor [lawyer] for the vendors was travelling on the same train, also on his way to visit Sir William Agnew, but it so happened that she arrived at Sir William's house half-an-hour before the Solicitor, and all differences had been swept away and the agreement to sell endorsed by Sir William before the Solicitor arrived.
>
> When the outcome of Lady Victoria's journey to London was made known to them

the joy of those early workers, who had been steadfastly realising God's loving government in face of a great temptation to be afraid, may be imagined....

The work that had been done in Manchester... was so noteworthy that word of it extended throughout the field of Christian Science, and contributions from far and wide came to the Building Fund from those who loved the work of God....

Through [Judge Ewing's] instrumentality many contributions came to the Building Fund of our Church from Christian Scientists in America.[47]

Though church funds at times seemed inadequate, the historical account emphasizes the quality of thought among the congregation at that critical period of church building:

...the local Christian Scientists were seeking diligently and with much consecration to erect the true thought of Church in consciousness and their work was so effective that throughout the whole building of the Church there never was a bill presented for which the funds were not in hand on the due date.[48]

This consecration is reflected in a letter the building committee wrote to Mrs. Eddy on April 19, 1904. Following is an excerpt:

For over a year we passed through deep waters of seeming failure and insurmountable obstacles. We toiled long and caught nothing. When, however, we recognized that these experiences were the result of having cast our net on the wrong side, and when we changed our methods, exercised "more faith in God and His spiritual means and methods, than in man and his material ways and means" (Miscellaneous Writings, p. 153), Love secured for us one of the most beautiful sites in Manchester....

The building of this church has called forth spiritual qualities, – the sacrifice of material sense and self, and a greater sense of the unity of brotherhood, – all of which we know you will treasure more than any material structure....We all know you have prayed for us, and helped us, and it is our earnest prayer that we may always express in our lives the gratitude which we owe you for the new understanding you have given us, whereby we know that God is with us in all we do....[49]

The first service in the completed church building was held on April 20, 1904, just a day after the above letter was written.

First Church of Christ, Scientist,
Manchester, UK

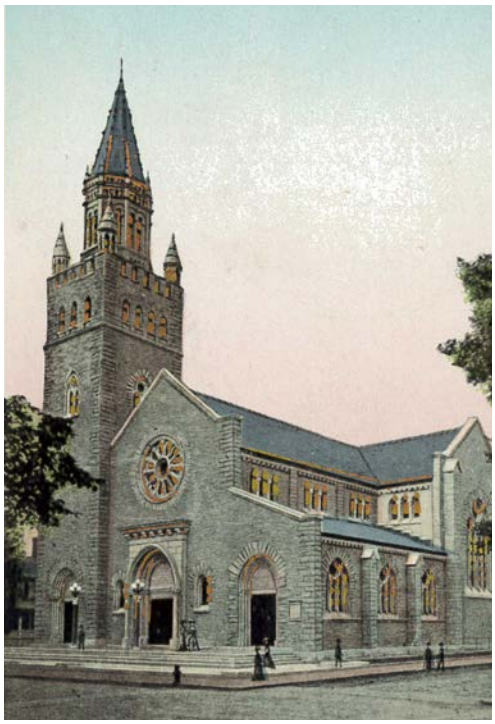
A month before the opening, Mrs. Eddy, in a tender, supportive letter to Lady Victoria, had praised the young woman's "faithful labors," indicated that she had prayed for her, and included a remarkable tribute: "What if the strong faith of your godmother, the good Queen Victoria, dropped upon you at your birth the mantle of her excellence!"[50] And in a letter to the Dunmores the following year, Mrs. Eddy again commended their "dear daughter Victoria" who "is accomplishing much for the race."[51]

Seeing beyond the limitations that society had imposed on womanhood, Mary Baker Eddy commended the *qualities* essential for church building and growth, which Lady Victoria expressed in such a large degree. Mrs. Eddy had earlier written in her work *No and Yes* her convictions about true womanhood: "In natural law and in religion the right of woman to fill the highest measure of enlightened understanding and the highest places in government, is inalienable, and these rights are ably vindicated by the noblest of both sexes. This is woman's hour, with all its sweet amenities and its moral and religious reforms."[52] She also spoke of having to learn "the lesson of the grass," which she related to her womanhood: "When the wind blew, I bowed before it, and when mortal mind put its heel upon me, I went down and down in humility and waited, – waited until it took its heel off, and then I rose up."[53]

As one of Mrs. Eddy's biographers observed: "...the lesson of [Mrs.] Eddy's life and of the work of women who shared the purpose of that life was that in this womanhood there was great and sustaining strength. She did not see that womanhood and that strength as the exclusive property of women. Even if women exemplified it more often than men, she believed, the qualities of womanhood and of manhood belonged generically to all God's children."[54]

Another church building project that was spearheaded, generously funded, and directed by a woman, Mrs. Eddy herself, was that of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Concord, New Hampshire. The construction of both the Concord and Manchester, England, churches occurred between 1903 and 1904. The Concord cornerstone was laid on July 16, 1903, in a modest ceremony. Lady Victoria sent as a gift a silver trowel described as "a beautiful implement of solid silver with ivory handle" that was used on that occasion.[55] Soon after, however, Mrs. Eddy was encouraging simpler observances when church cornerstones were laid. She later included a By-law in the *Church Manual* that prohibits the use of a "special trowel" on such occasions.[56]

Lady Victoria, along with Miss Coutts-Fowlie and Dr. Wilding, attended the dedication of the Extension of The Mother Church in June 1906. Mrs. Eddy invited Lady Victoria to serve as an attendant in Mother's Room in the original Mother Church during the week following the dedication. Lady Victoria considered this a rare honor, as she noted in a letter to Mrs. Eddy:



First Church of Christ, Scientist,
Concord, New Hampshire

> ...I feel so happy to have been allowed the privilege of taking charge of your Room at The Mother Church. To hundreds and hundreds I have had the joy of showing it. I have been in charge there daily this week, and it has been one of the most precious privileges I have ever been allowed. Oh, if you could only hear and see the love and gratitude that the people expressed.[57]

Church building in Manchester continued, as the two wings (representing "the outstretched, welcoming arms of Love"[58]) that had been part of the original plan were added to the Manchester church in March 1905. A Reading Room and Sunday School could then be accommodated. Not long after this, in August 1906, the members again decided to enlarge their church building, which needed room for 500 to 600 people. A second building committee – which, as before, included Lady Victoria – was formed. Financial demands were so great that in order to help in this extremity, Lady Victoria planned to sell "her most prized earthly possession, the pendant which Queen Victoria had given to her at her christening, and to donate the proceeds to the funds of the Church."[59] Her fellow church members, however, would not permit her to do so, and the needed financial support came through. The dedication of the completed

church, free from debt, took place on January 4 and 5, 1908. Lady Victoria opened the doors of the church with a golden key that had been given her by the building committee, along with the builder who wished to express his high regard for the Christian Scientists with whom he had worked.[60]

A fellow member recalled with affection Lady Victoria's shepherding of the building of the Manchester church:

> ...from the beginning to the end, the unity, earnestness, love and enthusiasm of the Building Committee were marked, and every single decision taken was a unanimous one. Throughout all the difficulties, problems and doubts that arose, and they were many, the Committee owed most of its success to the unselfish, consecrated, active and energetic labours and advice of Lady Victoria Murray, well seconded by Miss Coutts-Fowlie. Lady Victoria was the moving spirit and encouraged all those early workers, every one of whom was but a babe in Christian Science.[61]

In being the "moving spirit" in the building of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Manchester, Lady Victoria became also a servant. Like the Biblical Rhoda, she applied herself diligently and courageously to the humblest work, and in so doing she rose to the highest. She seemed comfortable with simplicity and, indeed, rusticity. In her later years, she even had the opportunity to operate a farm outside of Manchester.[62]

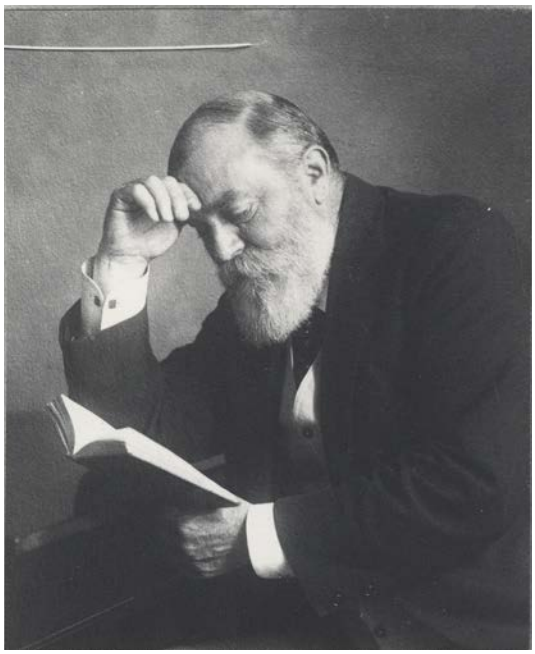
The completed edifice of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Manchester, UK

Lady Victoria's focused thought on the importance of *building* – that is, building first in the correction and spiritualization of thought before putting thought into action through the actual construction of a church edifice – can be seen in her words from an article she wrote for the Christian Science periodicals not long after she first arrived in Manchester:

> [Jesus] has pointed out the way, and we cannot build on any other plan, but must carefully construct with the same materials and on the same foundation, that we may have a pure Temple, and that Love may abide therein. Now Jesus built his temple on a spiritual foundation of Truth and Love, which proved a rock in the spiritual kingdom that all the world's hatred and malice could never overthrow.[63]

Lady Victoria at work on her farm near Macclesfield, UK, c. 1921

On August 27, 1907, her father, Lord Dunmore, unexpectedly passed away, just days after the collapse of the "next friends" suit – a misguided and malicious attack on Mrs. Eddy and her right to make independent decisions. Lord Dunmore had been particularly helpful in responding to inaccurate characterizations in the press about Mrs. Eddy,[64] and his passing brought forth a tender message of condolence from her to the Dunmore family.[65] Lady Victoria responded: "Words seem so empty and it is so impossible to express my feelings to you in regard to father, for I and others are grateful for the good friend you have been to him. The change your teachings brought to his sense of life and happiness truly enabled him to rise somewhat to man's real and divine self, the son of God....He loved and still loves you very loyally and earnestly for it."[66]



Courtesy of Longyear Museum, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Lord Dunmore

Mrs. Eddy lovingly responded by inviting Lady Dunmore, Lady Victoria, and Lady Mildred to visit her at her home in New Hampshire. Lady Victoria later recorded what that experience meant to her:

> My last visit to Pleasant View was in [October] 1907 with my mother and sister after the passing on of my father....Nothing could exceed the kindness and sympathy shown to us at that time, especially to my mother who was suffering severely from the sense of loss. Mrs. Eddy, "moved with compassion," tenderly assuaged my mother's grief, lifting her to a higher recognition of Life[. T]hen turning to me, she asked if I had any questions. "Yes," I replied, "I would like to know how you heal the sick." Leaning back in her chair she smilingly said, "I will tell you. I heal the same way today as I did when I commenced. My original way was instantaneous. The students did not understand any more than an English scholar could understand a foreign language without learning it. They therefore put it into their language. The argument used in healing is simply tuning-up. If your violin is in tune, it is unnecessary to tune it up. Keep your violin in tune." This last sentence was repeated quite imperatively and much emphasized.[67]

Mrs. Eddy's home, Pleasant View, Concord, New Hampshire

Until her passing in 1925, Lady Victoria's selfless commitment to keeping her "violin in tune" remained constant. Her respect for, obedience to, and recognition of the unique place of the Founder of Christian Science lay behind all her impressive achievements and resulted in untold blessings for the Cause of Christian Science in the North of England. As a fellow worker fondly observed:

> [Lady Victoria] was little more than a girl when she settled in Manchester...and...began that work which was destined to grow so rapidly and to be an enduring memorial to her faith in and love for God and man and to the truth and power of Christian Science.[68]

Kathleen Wagner Starrett

NOTES

1. See Frank E. Gaebelein, general editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 606-607. For an unorthodox view as to the identity of the author, see David Noel Freedman, editor-in-chief, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* Vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 542: "...although tradition assigns the authorship [of the Gospel of Mark] to a man, there is no inherent reason why, given the gospel's own anonymity, it could not have been written by a woman, many of whom were prominent in the primitive Church (for the names of a few prominent women in only one of the churches Paul wrote to, see Romans 16:1, 3, 6, 12, 15). While we will follow the tradition, and will refer to the author in the masculine form, we will do so without prejudice to the real but unknown identity of the author."
2. David Noel Freedman, editor-in-chief, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 719.
3. Marguerite Scott Till, "Rhoda's Steadfastness," *Christian Science Sentinel*, July 13, 1935, 911.
4. See also the *New English Bible* translation of verse 11: "...the story appeared to them to be nonsense, and they would not believe them."
5. Lord Dunmore wrote a detailed account of a three-month expedition, entitled *The Pamirs; Being a narrative of a year's expedition on horseback and on foot through Kashmir, Western Tibet, Chinese Tartary, and Russian Central Asia*, published in London in 1893, around the time the Dunmore family first heard of Christian Science. Dunmore and his travel companions faced exceptionally harsh conditions due to altitude challenges, an avalanche, flood, storms, disease, loss of pack animals, lack of provisions, and extreme cold and heat. On June 23, 1892, Lord Dunmore wrote in his journal, after reaching an altitude of around 18,000 feet at the Kardong Pass in northern India: "Notwithstanding our being at an altitude of over 2000 feet higher than the top of Mont Blanc, neither [my companion Major Roche] nor I felt any discomfort like last night, in fact we remained at the top for half an hour waiting for our stragglers, during which time he took two or three photographs and I made an attempt at a sketch" (*The Pamirs*, Vol. 1 [London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1893], 158).
6. Lady Victoria later indicated that before finding healing in Christian Science, she had been "dangerously ill with consumption and spinal disease" (see "From an English Paper," *Daily Dispatch* [Manchester, England], reprinted in the *Christian Science Sentinel*, November 11, 1905, 166). Also see Lady Victoria's reference to her healing in her introduction of Christian Science lecturer Hermann S. Hering as reported in a local newspaper and reprinted in "The Lectures: Manchester, England," *Christian Science Sentinel*, July 18, 1914, 913.
7. B. Tatham Woodhead, *An Historical Sketch of the Beginnings of Christian Science in Lancashire and the North of England, and the Early Days of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Manchester* (Manchester: The Queen's Press, 1934), 8.
8. See "Lord Dunmore," *Christian Science Sentinel*, September 14, 1907, 30. This tribute to Lord Dunmore after his passing stated: "...[Lord Dunmore] gave remarkable testimony of the cure effected by his own daughter, under whom he placed himself for treatment by Christian Science."
9. "The Truth about Christian Science," *The Christian Science Journal*, April 1907, 2-3.
10. Woodhead, 9.
11. K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2008), 79.
12. The Dunmores, without Lady Victoria, also visited Boston the following year, 1899, and attended the Communion service on June 4 at The Mother Church. Also representing the family that year was Lady Victoria's brother, Alexander, known as Viscount Fincastle, who had recently received the Victoria Cross for his distinguished service in the British army. He had arrived in Boston straight from his regiment in India. It was reported that as The Mother Church became crowded at the Communion service, he and his sister Lady Mildred "arose and surrendered their seats to two older women. They stood in the aisle during the remainder of the service" (see "Communion Service at the Mother Church," *Christian Science Sentinel*, June 8, 1899), 5.
13. Reynolds, 73.
14. Woodhead, 10.
15. See Florence Coutts-Fowlie's testimony, "Healed by Reading Science and Health," *Christian Science Sentinel*, June 20, 1901, 674.
16. Woodhead, 11.
17. See "Selected Articles," *Christian Science Sentinel*, September 12, 1908, 27-28, which includes Dr. Wilding's response to a magazine article that had been critical of Christian Science. Speaking of his initial antipathy to what he thought Christian Science to be, Dr. Wilding wrote: "[My father] was completely healed in a few days' treatment. The report of this healing raised such a bitter feeling of resentment in me that I think I should have been more pleased if the cure had failed, for I then deemed Christian Science to be quackery." For background on Dr. Wilding's family and their introduction to Christian Science, see Woodhead, 21.
18. See Woodhead, 28. Hephzibah Wilding was first listed in *The Christian Science Journal* as a practitioner in 1903.
19. Woodhead, 22.
20. *Ibid*., 23. Also see "A Doctor's Tribute," *Christian Science Sentinel*, November 4, 1905, 150, for Dr. Wilding's account of some of the healings in Christian Science of his patients who had been pronounced incurable. These included, in addition to his daughter's healing of tuberculosis, that of heart disease and diseased bones of the knee joint. As he described: "When I first put Christian Science to the test with these cases I was not a believer, and knew practically nothing about it. I thought much as other

medical men, until the proofs of the superiority of Christian Science healing convinced me."

21. "Selected Articles," *Christian Science Sentinel*, September 12, 1908, 27.
22. Quoted in Woodhead, 28.
23. Dr. Wilding was listed in the *Journal* as a practitioner beginning in 1903.
24. See "Women of History: Lady Victoria Murray," The Mary Baker Eddy Library, published May 13, 2015, marybakereddylibrary.org/research/lady-victoria-murray/. Retrieved August 2024. The healings among mill workers included one of blindness, according to a report of a testimony given by Lady Victoria in Boston in 1903 (see "The Wednesday Evening Meeting," *Christian Science Sentinel*, July 11, 1903, 713-714).
25. See Woodhead, 23-27, for details related to Lady Victoria's early days in the Manchester area.
26. *Ibid*., 25.
27. See *Ibid*., 26-27.
28. Quoted in *Ibid*., 13-14. Lady Victoria had had Primary class instruction in London with Julia Field-King, a pupil of Mary Baker Eddy who had been sent by her to England in 1896 to help establish Christian Science there (see Yvonne Caché von Fettweis and Robert Townsend Warneck, *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer*, Amplified Edition [Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 2009], 442, 477).
29. Edward A. Kimball to Mary Baker Eddy, 1 July 1901, 155DP2.25.009, The Mary Baker Eddy Library. Courtesy of The Mary Baker Eddy Collection.
30. See Woodhead, 27.
31. Although the names of the Earl and Countess of Dunmore and their daughters Lady Victoria and Lady Mildred Murray appeared as practitioners in *The Christian Science Journal* from 1901 to 1904, only Lady Victoria's listing, as practitioner and teacher, remained after that time. She was first listed in 1900.
32. Quoted in Woodhead, 14-15.
33. See Woodhead, 27.
34. See *Ibid*., 42.
35. See "Lectures Abroad: In Manchester," *Christian Science Sentinel*, June 5, 1902, 641.
36. See "Judge Ewing's Lectures," *Christian Science Sentinel*, June 12, 1902, 656.
37. See Woodhead, 30.
38. *Ibid*., 33. See also 33-40, for background on the building of the Manchester church.
39. See *Ibid*., 34.
40. Nikolaus Pevsner quoted in Clare Hartwell, *Manchester* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 338.
41. Hartwell, *Manchester*, 338.
42. See Woodhead, 38, 58.
43. *Ibid*., 34.
44. See the *Manchester Guardian* article reprinted in "Among the Churches: Christian Science in Manchester, England," *Christian Science Sentinel*, July 4, 1903, 702-703.
45. Quoted in *Ibid*.
46. *Ibid*.
47. Woodhead, 36, 37.
48. *Ibid*., 37.
49. "Letters to our Leader," *Christian Science Sentinel*, May 7, 1904, 569.
50. Mary Baker Eddy to Lady Victoria A. Murray, 21 March 1904, L08760, The Mary Baker Eddy Library. © The Mary Baker Eddy Collection.
51. "A Greeting from England: Mrs. Eddy's Reply," *Christian Science Sentinel*, December 30, 1905, 280.
52. *No and Yes* (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1936), 45.
53. Quoted in *Reminiscences of Daisette Stocking McKenzie, C.S.B., and William Patrick McKenzie, C.S.B.*, The Mary Baker Eddy Library, 28.
54. Stephen Gottschalk, *Rolling Away the Stone* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 192.
55. See reprint from the *Concord (N.H.) Patriot*, "The Laying of the Corner-Stone in Concord," *Christian Science Sentinel*, July 25, 1903, 743. Two to three thousand individuals planned to attend, but Mrs. Eddy discouraged this, and only about 100 were present at the ceremony.
56. Article XVII, Section 3, *Manual of The Mother Church* (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1936). The entire By-law reads: "No large gathering of people nor display shall be allowed when laying the Corner Stone of a Church of Christ, Scientist. Let the ceremony be devout. No special trowel should be used. (See Science and Health, page 140.)"
57. "Letters to Our Leader," *Christian Science Sentinel*, June 23, 1906, 683.
58. Woodhead, 44.
59. *Ibid*., 53.
60. See *Ibid*., 55-56.
61. *Ibid*., 56.
62. See "A Practical Farmeress," *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), December 31, 1921. The newspaper item states: "Lady Victoria Murray... is now running a farm of 300 acres at Whitely Hey, Rutley, near Macclesfield, in Cheshire. She took over the farm as a hobby, but developed it on thoroughly practical lines, and finds that it is proving a great success."
63. "Love's Temple," *The Christian Science Journal*, December 1900, 559.
64. See, for example, Lord Dunmore's article, "The Truth about Christian Science," in which he earnestly tells of his experience in Christian Science and deep respect for Mrs. Eddy. It originally appeared in *Cosmopolitan* magazine and was reprinted in *The Christian Science Journal*, April 1907, 1.
65. See "A Benediction," *Christian Science Sentinel*, September 14, 1907, 30. It was later reprinted in *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, 295. Mrs. Eddy's message to the family reflects her high regard for Lord Dunmore: "Divine Love is your ever-present help. You, I, and mankind have cause to lament the demise of Lord Dunmore; but as the Christian Scientist, the servant of God and man, he still lives, loves, labors."
66. "Letters to Our Leader," *Christian Science Sentinel*, October 5, 1907, 91.
67. Quoted in von Fettweis and Warneck, 264-265.
68. Woodhead, 7.

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